



# *Pa Kua Chang*

## JOURNAL

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### *Ba Gua Zhang Weapons*

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

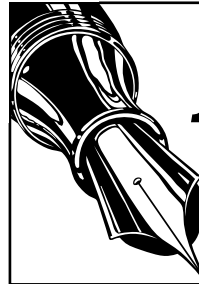
The *Pa Kua Chang Journal* is published six times a year. Each issue features an interview with, or article by, one or more Ba Gua Zhang instructor(s) from mainland China, Taiwan, the United States, and/or Canada. The interviews will report on each instructor's background, current program, training methods 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*

### **What to Expect in 1996**

Happy New Year! I trust everyone has had a great holiday season and you are ambitiously undertaking all of those New Year's resolutions to practice harder this year. It has been a very busy time of the year around here. Not only has the release of Park Bok Nam's new book, our new Winter Catalog, and the usual Christmas rush kept us busy, but my wife, Mariann, is due to give birth to our daughter, Emily Nicole Miller, on January 6th. If this issue of the Journal arrives at your mail box a little bit late, I apologize, but it has been quite hectic around here and I'm running a little late.

Those of you who subscribe to the Journal will see that our new winter catalog is packed with many new items and we are already promoting a couple of items that will be released soon. You will notice that Joe Crandall will have some new translations coming out in February, one on Sun Xi Kun's Ba Gua and another on Hunan style Xing Yi. Additionally, in March, Tim Cartmell will be coming out with a new book and video on *Effortless Combat Throws*. This book and companion video are outstanding. Tim has done an excellent job in explaining the principles and techniques of the throwing art. If you practice martial arts for self-defense purposes, you will definitely want to have this book.

Later in the year we will be publishing a book that I have put together titled, *The Masters of Ba Gua Zhang*. This book focuses on the biographies of the first several generations of Ba Gua Zhang practitioners and includes information about the characteristics of their Ba Gua styles. Later this year we will also be publishing Sun Lu Tang's Tai Ji Quan book and a book on Liu He Ba Fa which was written by Khan Foxx.

As far as the *Pa Kua Chang Journal* is concerned, we are looking forward to a great year in 1996. I have tentative plans for all of the issues we will be publishing this year and I have had some great support from instructors around the country who are busy writing articles for the upcoming issues as we speak. This issue on Ba Gua weapons will be followed by another on weapons. Later in the year we will also have issues which focus on the double palm change, body mechanics for developing Ba Gua power, and Ba Gua practical applications.

### **On the Cover**

The famous Ba Gua Zhang and Xing Yi Quan instructor Jiang Rong Chiao (1891-1974) poses with his straight sword



# An Introduction to Ba Gua Zhang Weapons

Welcome to the first of two consecutive issues focusing on Ba Gua Zhang weapons. For the Ba Gua Zhang practitioner, weapons training is an integral part of the Ba Gua Zhang art. In the old days, the need to become skilled at wielding various weapons was a necessity for those who used their Ba Gua art in their jobs as bodyguards, caravan escorts, and/or residence guards. As history shows, many of the first few generations of Ba Gua Zhang practitioners were employed in this capacity, and all of them specialized in the use of various weapons.

In the Ba Gua art, there are literally dozens of weapons that are practiced and utilized. Many of the Ba Gua Zhang instructors I have interviewed in both Taiwan and Mainland China have told me that someone who is adept at Ba Gua can use anything for a weapon. When I was in Taiwan, I asked Zhang Jun Feng's (張峻峰) top Ba Gua student, Hong Yi Mian (洪懿綿 - see *Pa Kua Chang Journal*, Vol. 3, No. 5) what weapons are employed in the Ba Gua art. Hong quickly replied, "A Ba Gua practitioner can use anything as a weapon!" So saying, he stood up, picked up the stool he had been sitting on and began wielding it, Ba Gua fashion, in combat with an imaginary opponent. He set the stool back down and said, "See! If you know Ba Gua, you can automatically use anything as a weapon!"

While the "standard weapons" such as the straight sword, the broadsword, the staff, and spear, have all been used extensively by Ba Gua Zhang practitioners, other "specialty" weapons, such as crescent moon swords, deer horn knives, chicken knives, and wind and fire wheels, have become well known in the Ba Gua community. Many of the Ba Gua specialty weapons are double short knives of various designs which could be easily concealed in the practitioners coat. They were pulled out at the opportune moment and the Ba Gua practitioner used his characteristic turning, twisting and rotating motion to transform himself into a "human vegamatic." Additionally, the Ba Gua Zhang practitioners became quite famous for their use of large training weapons. Various styles of Ba Gua Zhang utilize extra large straight swords, broadswords, staffs, and spears in developing certain characteristics of Ba Gua Zhang power and application.

In most styles of Ba Gua Zhang, after the student has been initiated into the art through the practice of rudimentary training drills and bare hand forms and exercises, the student will then be introduced to weapons. The usual progression is: staff, broadsword, spear, straight sword, and then specialty weapons. In the old days, the progression to the use of weapons to defend oneself was obvious. Since the opponent's would be attacking with weapons in an attempt to take your life, it was imperative that you became skilled in the use of weapons in order to save your life. In our modern world, we do not encounter this kind of

situation. If someone is going to attack you with a weapon, it is usually going to be a gun. So we are not going to go to the shopping mall with a sword across our back. However, weapons training is a very valuable part of the art whether you are practicing for bare hands fighting or health maintenance.

The movements associated with each weapon will help to develop the body in ways that are not accomplished as efficiently with open hand forms and exercises. In order to develop the body in terms of balance, flexibility, alignment, strength, stability, and coordination, weapons training is a necessary follow on to open hands training. Having the weapon in your hand changes the way the body moves and changes the mental awareness and intention. The body has to move in harmony with another object and the mind has to be acutely aware of that other object and its relationship with the body. There is both a physical and mental shift when a weapon is added to the practice. The weapon adds a new dimension.

If you are studying Ba Gua Zhang as a self-defense art, the new dimension which is added by weapons practice is an excellent introductory step towards two-person practice. In the practice of solo bare hand forms and exercises, your intention and awareness was initially focused on the perimeters of your own body movement and your physical coordination and alignment only dealt with your own body. With a weapon in hand, your awareness and intention must extend all the way out to the perimeter of the weapon's length and your body coordination and alignment must now adjust to the weight and length of that weapon. You have to learn how to not only control your own body, but you have to learn how to control another object and form a harmonious relationship between you and that object. Making that physical and mental shift during weapons practice significantly aids the physical and mental shift which must occur when an opponent comes into play.

There is a famous saying in martial arts, in the relation to open hands fighting, that states, "Before one can learn to control another person in combat, he or she must first learn to control themselves." This means that unless you have complete awareness and control of your own body, you cannot hope to be able to control another person's body. To become skilled at fighting, you have to be completely aware of your body, your opponent's body, and the relationship between the two. In other words, if you are uncoordinated and awkward in solo practice, you shouldn't even begin to think that you will be able to execute applications with any level of skill. First, you learn to control and coordinate yourself, and then you worry about moving on to applications. A logical step in-between, and in conjunction with, the two is the practice of weapons because you can execute solo exercises and routines while practicing to coordinate your body and mind in relationship to another object.

# AN INTRODUCTION TO SUN STYLE BA GUA SWORDPLAY

by Tim Cartmell

Following is an introduction to the concepts and practice of the Sun Lu Tang (孫祿堂) style Ba Gua straight sword. Although Sun Lu Tang himself claims the Ba Gua straight sword method was passed down through Ba Gua Zhang's founder, Dong Hai Chuan (董海川), this particular method of swordplay is unique to the Sun style. Its theory of use and the flavor of its movements closely parallels Sun style Ba Gua Zhang (the empty hand art) and truly serves as an armed counterpart to the original weaponless system.

The following text was translated from the first six chapters of Sun Lu Tang's book, *Ba Gua Jian Xue* (A Study of the Ba Gua Straight Sword), originally published in 1925. I've translated the text in "outline" form, while attempting to relate the most important concepts of Sun style Ba Gua swordplay. (Any comments I have added for purposes of clarification are in parenthesis).

## INTRODUCTION

Passed down from antiquity, the name of the originator of the Ba Gua sword art is lost. When Dong Hai Chuan arrived in Beijing, he passed on this method to his student Cheng Ting Hua (程庭華). Cheng Ting Hua modified the method somewhat before passing the art on to me. The essence of the method is found in the changes between Yin (陰) and Yang (陽), changes without end. Its original nature springs from the pre-heaven stillness ("pre-heaven" refers to the a-priori or innate condition which precedes conscious intention). Its use is made manifest in the post-heaven motions of rising/falling and opening/closing ("post -heaven" refers to the utilization of a things innate nature through conscious intention). Its original nature creates the *Tai Ji Jian* (太極劍 - the sword of ultimate extremes); its application creates the *Ba Gua Jian* (八卦劍 - the sword of the Eight Trigrams).

The method is divided into eight sections. From the combination of these eight are formed the sixty-four methods (sixty-four represents the sum total of all possible changes). The source of all changes is in the undifferentiated completeness of the Tai Ji. The most important requirement for success is to realize that our bodies repose in the center of the Tai Ji, and all begins from this point.

## EIGHT CHARACTERS OF THE ESSENTIAL METHOD

The eight characters which represent the basic energies of the art are as follows: *Zou* (走 - to walk), *Zhuan* (轉 - to turn), *Guo* (裹 - to wrap), *Fan* (翻 - to overturn), *Chuan* (穿 - to pierce), *Liao* (撩 - to scoop), *Ti* (提 - to lift), and *An* (按 - to press). "Zou" refers to

walking in a circular pattern. "Zhuan" refers to turning left and right. "Guo" refers to the energy of twisting the wrist inward. "Fan" refers to the energy of twisting the wrist outward. "Chuan" refers to piercing (stabbing) forward and backward, left and right and up and down. "Liao" refers to cutting with the palm up or down in arcing or circular motions. "Ti" refers to lifting the hilt of the sword upward. "An" refers to pressing the sword downward with the palm down.

## THE STUDY OF THE WU JI SWORD

The essence of the *Wu Ji* (無極) sword is to hold the sword and stand without moving (*Wu Ji* refers to the state of undifferentiated chaos which precedes the *Tai Ji*, the separation of the undifferentiated energy into Yin and Yang, positive and negative). The heart (mind) is empty and the *Qi* (vital energy) is homogeneous and complete. This is the pre-heaven Way. Motion is born of stillness and unity.

Stand up straight with the heels together and the toes open to a 90 degree angle (the toes of the right foot point toward the center of the circle). The arms hang down by the sides with the right hand holding the sword, the right palm facing the right leg. The sword is held vertically (the edge of the sword is vertical) and level with the earth. The left hand hangs by the left leg with the fingers straight. There must be no movement whatsoever.

Empty the heart and calm the mind. Look straight ahead; the eyes must not wander. The position and intent are identical to the *Wu Ji* posture of Ba Gua Zhang. The theory of Ba Gua Zhang encompasses and may be applied to all weapons (see Figure 1).

## THE STUDY OF TAI JI SWORD

From the *Wu Ji* comes the *Tai Ji*. Here the *Tai Ji* is represented by the *Qian* Trigram (乾卦) and the *Kun* Trigram (坤卦 - the *Qian* trigram is pure Yang while the *Kun* trigram is pure Yin). When the posture and intent are correct, the sword becomes "the sword of wisdom which purifies the body and dispels negative energy in the environment."

Relax the waist downward and press the head upward. The shoulders sink. The tongue touches the roof of the mouth. The mouth is lightly closed. Breathe naturally through the nose, without using force. The feet feel as if they are pressing your body up off the ground. All is under conscious control, one must not over exert mentally or use brute force.

Form the sword hand with your left hand. Your index and middle fingers are extend. Your little and ring fingers curl downward until the tips of the fingers touch the base. The thumb is held outward and is stretched



straight. Fold the fingers without undue force, this is different from other styles (the position of the left hand in Sun style swordplay is different from that of other styles. Most styles curl the thumb down to press the little and ring fingers toward the palm. In the Sun style, the thumb is extended and the “tiger’s mouth” or space between the index finger and thumb is kept rounded). The hand position may change as circumstances demand (the left hand’s position changes in response to the position and movement of the sword). Turn the right foot in until the feet form a 45 degree angle (the tip of the sword turns to point toward your left front). The arms still hang by the sides. Now slowly bend the legs until they are gently curved. As you squat, raise the arms out to the sides to shoulder height, palms down. Cross your arms piercing with the tip of the sword toward your left front as your left arm moves under your right, the fingers pointing toward your front right. Keeping the arms close to the body, pierce across until your left hand is below your right elbow (your arms are crossed in an “x” shape). The sword blade forms a right angle with the direction your left toes are pointing (see Figure 2).

Look at the tip of the sword and concentrate your spirit. Press upward with the head and keep the shoulders relaxed and sinking downward. Move naturally and without undue force. This will allow the *Qi* to flow smoothly and fill the *Dan Tian* (丹田 - the center of

gravity).

### THE STUDY OF THE QIAN GUA SWORD

The Qian Gua sword is born of the Tai Ji sword. Because the intent is to circle to the left, this section is named the Qian sword.

#### The First Movement - The Sleeping Dragon Turns

**Over:** Separate the hands moving the sword upward until the back of the right hand is close to the right side of the forehead, the blade vertical. The sword angles downward with the tip at the height of the heart. This movement uses the principal of “moving the root (handle) without moving the tip (swordpoint).” The left hand simultaneously moves down in front of the lower abdomen with the palm turning outward so that the index and middle fingers point downward. The back of the forearm presses the waist. As the arm extends downward, sit in the waist and bend the legs a little deeper. The head continues to press upward with the shoulders sinking downward. Lift the left heel a little with the ball of the foot remaining on the ground. The bodyweight shifts to the right foot. The above movements are executed simultaneously. Lead the movements with the intent, moving naturally and smoothly (see Figure 3 on the next page).



Figure 1 - Wu Ji

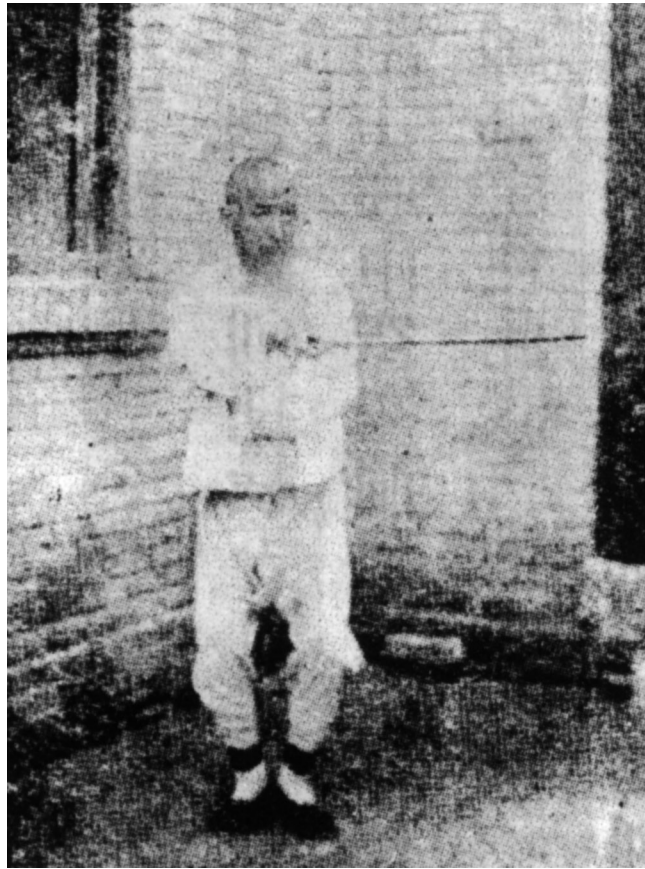


Figure 2 - Tai Ji





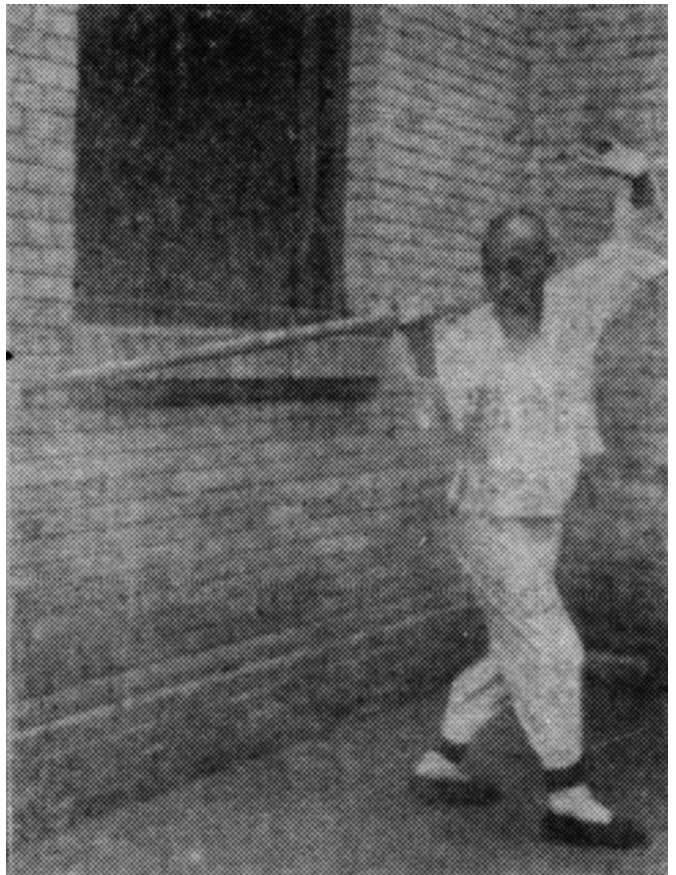
**Figure 3 - The Sleeping Dragon Turns Over**



**Figure 4 - Sweeping the Moon out of the Sky**



**Figure 5 - Sweeping the Floor Looking for the Root**



**Figure 6 - The White Ape Holds Up the Peach**



**The Second Movement - Sweeping the Moon out of the Sky:** Separate the arms with the right hand moving out to the right side to shoulder height, the sword sweeping upward and to the right in an arc. The tip of the sword is slightly higher than the handle and is level with the top of the head. The blade is horizontal. The left hand simultaneously moves out to the left and up a little wiping in an arc toward the rear until it is above the left knee, palm down. As the hands move, the left leg steps out to the left, with the toes turning in slightly (the legs are wider than shoulder width). The head presses upward, the shoulders relax and open and the waist presses downward. The legs feel as if they are contracting inward. The movement is controlled by the intent, you must not use force. The right side of your belly is above your right leg (turn your waist to the right a little). The eyes look at the center of the sword (see Figure 4 on the next page).

**The Third Movement - Sweeping the Floor Looking for the Root:** Cut down to the left with the sword turning your right palm up. Your right hand stops in front of your lower abdomen with the tip of the sword angled down toward the ground. Your right elbow is against your right ribs with the hand lower than the elbow. As you cut down with the sword, your right foot simultaneously toes in to form a “reverse character eight step” (a pigeon-toed stance with the toes an inch or two apart and the heels turned outward to about a 90 degree angle). As you step and cut lift the left hand directly upward until the palm faces upward (at a 45 degree angle) and the thumb is two or three inches away from the left side of your forehead. The left arm is curved. Look at the tip of the sword. Sink the waist, contract the legs inward, press the head upward and relax and open the shoulders. The belly should be relaxed and “empty” (see Figure 5).

**The Fourth Movement - The White Ape Holds Up the Peach:** Sweep the sword upward until your right hand is level with the mouth. The sword moves in an arc until the handle is level with the mouth and then continues moving forward, piercing toward the center of the circle. The right arm is curved. The tip of the sword, the right hand and the right elbow form a triangle. As you lift the sword, turn your hips and waist to the right. Pull in the right hip so that it is curved. As you cut and pierce with the sword, your left hand simultaneously pushes forward and upward. The tiger’s mouth of your left hand points toward the tip of the sword. The left shoulder is one or two inches away from the left ear (be sure to keep the shoulder relaxed). As the arms move, the right foot toes out a little and takes a step forward. The space between the left and right foot forms a rectangle. Your weight remains over the left leg and the body should not move as the right leg steps forward. Look at the tip of the sword. Although you pause between the four movements of the form, the intent does not stop. From beginning to end the Qi is united (see Figure 6). (From this position, you walk the circle keeping the tip of the sword

aimed at the center of the circle and your eyes focused on the tip of the sword. This is the first of the eight changes in Sun’s Ba Gua sword system).

## THE TEN CHARACTER METHOD OF SUN STYLE BA GUA SWORD APPLICATION

The Ten Characters which describe the method of applying the Sun style Ba Gua sword to combat are as follows:

**Tiao (to support),**

**Tuo (to uplift),**

**Mo (to rub),**

**Gua (to hang),**

**Pian (to slice),**

**Sou (to search),**

**Bi (to close),**

**Sao (to sweep),**

**Shun (to follow) and**

**Jie (to intercept).**

挑  
托  
抹  
掛  
刷  
搜  
閉  
掃  
順  
截

- 1) “Supporting” refers to cutting up under an enemy’s wrist from inside his blade (see Figures 7, 8 & 9).
- 2) “Uplifting” refers to cutting forward under an enemy’s wrist from outside his blade (see figures 10, 11 & 12).
- 3) “Rubbing” refers to walking and cutting an enemy after I have applied either supporting or uplifting (see Figure 13).
- 4) “Hanging” refers to withdrawing my body and leading an enemy’s sword in when he chops at me from the right, then looking for an opportunity to attack (see Figures 14, 15, 16, 17 & 18).
- 5) “Slicing” refers to cutting across toward the shoulder as I insert my left hand under my right (see Figures 19, 20 & 21).
- 6) “Searching” refers to shaving across an enemy’s wrist from the left or right, my blade moving out and back as fast as lightning. I apply this method when the enemy cuts at me above or below, my intent arriving before his attack (see Figures 22, 23 & 24).
- 7) “Closing” refers to striking an enemy’s hand and preempting his attack just as he is about to strike (see Figures 25, 26 & 27).
- 8) “Sweeping” refers to cutting above or below with arcing strokes. I support an enemy’s wrist from below. He seeks to change and free himself. I quickly encircle



**Character One: Tiao - Supporting:  
refers to cutting up under an enemy's wrist from inside his blade**



**Figure 7**



**Figure 8**



**Figure 9**

his wrist and prevent him from changing. This is called “sweeping above.” If an enemy attempts to cut my wrist from the inside or outside, I quickly contract my body and slash at his legs from the left or right as if sweeping the floor. This is called “sweeping below” (see Figures 28, 29, 30, 31 & 32 for an example of sweeping below).

9) “Following” refers to “coaxing” an enemy to attack and following the attack in. As the enemy withdraws his blade, I follow him back and enter. You must not be forceful or hard when applying this method, but rather lead the advancing and retreating with your intent (see Figures 33, 34 & 35).

10) “Intercepting” refers to blocking an enemy’s blade at his wrist or on his blade with my own blade as he attacks. The enemy is prevented from taking an advantageous position. I can use this method to intercept high, middle or low attacks (see Figures 36, 37 & 38).

Although the above Ten Characters represent

the essential methods of applying the sword to actual combat, the key is to unite the internal spirit and intent with the external movements of the hands, feet and sword, thereby forming a wholistic entity. Only when the internal and external unite as one can the method be used as you wish, containing changes without end.

The author wishes to thank Neil Kagan for posing as the “enemy” in the photographs.

*About the Author: Tim Cartmell has studied the martial arts for over twenty years, including ten years in China. Among his teachers were Sun Jian Yun (Sun Lu Tang’s daughter) and her student Liu Yan Lung, with whom Tim studied Sun style Ba Gua Zhang and the Sun style Ba Gua Sword. Tim Cartmell was feature in the Pa Kua Chang Journal, Volume 5, Number 4.*

**Character Two: Tuo - Uplifting:**  
refers to cutting forward under an enemy's wrist from outside his blade



**Figure 10**



**Figure 11**



**Figure 12**



**Figure 13**

**Character Three: Mo - Rubbing:**  
refers to walking and cutting an  
enemy after I have applied either  
"supporting" or "uplifting"



**Character Four: Gua - Hanging:**

**refers to withdrawing my body and leading an enemy's sword in when he chops at me from the right, then looking for an opportunity to attack**



**Figure 14**



**Figure 15**



**Figure 16**



**Figure 17**



**Figure 18**



**Character Five: Pian - Slicing:**  
refers to cutting across toward the shoulder as I insert my left hand under my right



**Figure 19**



**Figure 20**



**Figure 21**





**Character Six: Sou - Searching:**  
refers to shaving across an enemy's wrist from the left or right, my blade moving out and back as fast as lightning. I apply this method when the enemy cuts at me above or below, my intent arriving before his attack



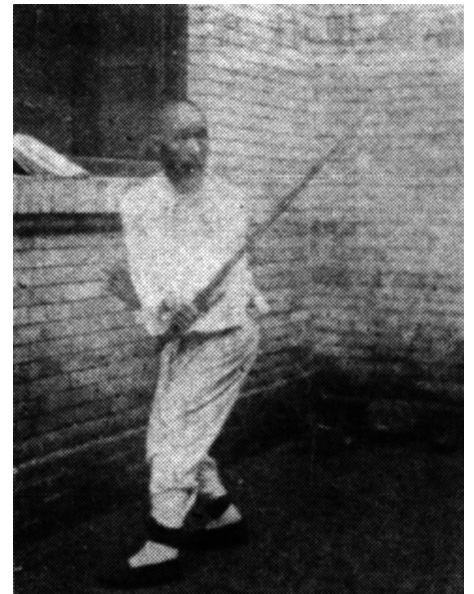
**Figure 22**



**Figure 23**



**Figure 24**





**Character Seven: Bi - Closing:**  
refers to striking an enemy's hand and preempting his attack just as he is about to strike



**Figure 25**



**Figure 26**



**Figure 27**





**Character Eight: Sao - Sweeping:**

refers to cutting above or below with arcing strokes. I support an enemy's wrist from below. He seeks to change and free himself. I quickly encircle his wrist and prevent him from changing. This is called "sweeping above." If an enemy attempts to cut my wrist from the inside or outside, I quickly contract my body and slash at his legs from the left or right as if sweeping the floor. This is called "sweeping below"



**Figure 28**



**Figure 29**



**Figure 30**



**Figure 31**



**Figure 32**



**Character Nine: Shun - Following:**  
refers to “coaxing” an enemy to attack and following the attack in.  
As the enemy withdraws his blade, I follow him back and enter.  
You must not be forceful or hard when applying this method, but rather lead the  
advancing and retreating with your intent



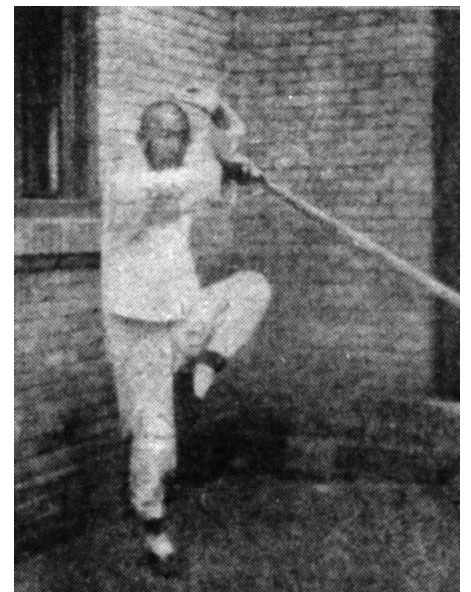
**Figure 33**



**Figure 34**



**Figure 35**





**Character Ten: Jie -Intercepting:**  
refers to blocking an enemy's blade at his wrist or on his blade with my own blade as he attacks. The enemy is prevented from taking an advantageous position. I can use this method to intercept high, middle or low attacks



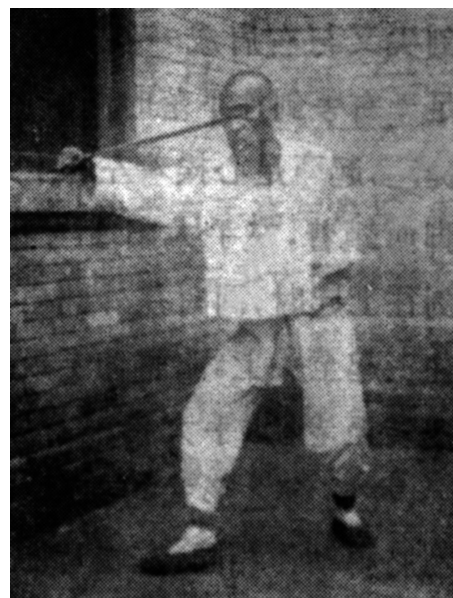
**Figure 33**



**Figure 34**



**Figure 35**





# Ba Gua "Eight Immortal" Sword

by Park Bok Nam and Glen Moore

Through many dynasties in China tales and legends have been told about Daoism; balance in nature, mysticism, immortality. Among some of the most popular are stories about the *Ba Shen* (八仙) or "Eight Immortals." Stories about them have affected China's philosophy, religion, and martial arts for centuries. Many such tales or stories are still as popular today as they were hundreds of years ago. Many gift shops in Chinatown areas of the United States sell paintings, ink drawings, carvings, statues, and figures carved in jade, ivory, or exotic woods that portray the Eight Immortals.



**Ba Gua Zhang instructor Lu Shui Tian (1894-1978) of Ching Dao City, Shandong Province, China, poses in the beginning posture of the Ba Gua Eight Immortal Sword Form**

The immortals were often portrayed in stories as mystics who interceded themselves into the everyday lives of mortals to teach and/or demonstrate the ways of Daoism. This was sometimes done with great humor or mischief, but generally always with compassion for the suffering of the oppressed. In this article we are going to present a poem about the Eight Immortals which was written in relation to the *Ba Gua Jian* (八卦劍 - straight sword) and its use in Ba Gua Zhang. This poem was handed down to me by my teacher, Lu Shui Tian (盧水田). Please do not judge my translation of the poem too harshly as it was very difficult to render a good representation of the true meaning into English and still capture what the author was trying to convey.

The author of the poem is unknown, but when Lu Shui Tian passed this poem to me, he explained that it had been given to him by one of his Ba Gua Zhang teachers. Lu was also taught an eight section Ba Gua sword form which corresponds to the words and meaning of the poem. He gave me this poem when I was taught the form and he used the words of the poem to help transmit the important principles of eight sections of the form. I regret to say that I did not ask which one of his teacher's gave him this poem.

This poem is titled "Ode to a Ba Gua Swordsman," and it implies that a sword form called *Ba Gua Ba Shen Jian* (Ba Gua Eight Immortals Sword) was created in recognition of the Eight Immortals utilizing each immortal's special skills, traits, and characteristics. Each line of the poem addresses something about one of the individual Eight Immortals and their contribution to the form. The poem, in Chinese (on the following page) and English, is as follows:

**Iron Cane Li (Li Tie Guai) possessed supreme swordsmanship,**

**Guo Lao (Zhang Guo Lao) not only can split sawgrass flowerettes, but can slice the Phoenix's feather with his sword,**

**Dong Bin (Lu Dong Bin) carries his sword on his back and chooses to live a life of moderation,**

**Zhong Li (Zhong Li Chuan) demonstrates the best martial arts stance and form.**

**Guo Jiu (Cao Guo Jiu) is feared greatly by both ghost and goddess wherever he goes.**

**Cai Ho (Lan Cai Ho) spreads four gates and her sword shines through,**

**Xian Gu (Ho Xian Gu) is the best at setting the Ba Gua pattern,**

**No one can survive Xiang Zi's (Xiao Xiang Zi) soul chasing sword.**

八 仙 劍 譜  
 拐 李 先 生 劍 法 高  
 果 老 斬 蘆 削 鳳 毛  
 洞 賓 背 劍 清 風 客  
 鐘 離 會 善 架 式 高  
 國 舅 走 動 神 鬼 懼  
 彩 和 四 門 放 光 毫  
 仙 姑 擺 下 八 仙 陳  
 湘 子 追 魂 命 難 逃

in the world. Lu Shui Tian said that his contribution to the Eight Immortal Sword form was strategy because he appeared as a clown and beggar, but possessed the highest sword skill of all the Eight Immortals.

The Eight Immortal sword form is simple, yet elegant in its movement. You will find no gymnastics in this form, but movements that are very efficient and effective. Just like the old Daoist saying, "The sage is always quietest before he strikes." Lu Shui Tian also said that since Iron Cane Li acted like a clown, carefree and uninhibited, that he exhibited the Daoist characteristic of living without stress. Stress that

What follows is a loose translation, given line by line, and a small attempt to provide some of the explanation given to me by Lu Shui Tian.

**Iron Can Li (Li Tai Guai) Possessed the supreme swordsmanship**



**Li Tie Guai**

This immortal was named Li Tie Guai and referred to as "Iron Cane" Li because of the iron crutch that he carried. Li is depicted as a beggar with a crutch for the following reason. The story is told that Li had attained high level magic skill and thus was often called from Earth to the Celestial Heavens to preform his magic. When Li traveled to the celestial regions, he traveled only in spirit, leaving his body on Earth in the charge of one of his disciples. On one occasion, Li was gone longer than usual

and the disciple thought that Li had actually died and subsequently burnt his body. When Li returned to Earth, he found his body was gone and thus looked for another body of a recently deceased individual to enter. The only body he could find was the body of a lame beggar. Li entered this body and thus is always depicted as a beggar with an iron crutch. He also carries a pilgrim's gourd and he is sometimes shown standing with a deer or standing on a crab.

It was said that Li Tie Guai possessed the supreme swordsmanship but most often appeared poor, down trodden, and acted like a clown, not having a care

we create by being too serious about mundane everyday life can disrupt our *qi*.

**Guo Lao (Zhang Guo Lao) not only can split sawgrass flowerettes, but can slice the Phoenix feather with his sword.**



**Zhang Guo Lao**

Zhang Guo Lao was a recluse who had supernatural powers. He could turn himself invisible and when summoned to serve in the Emperor's court replied that he preferred the wondering life of a hermit. It is said that he traveled backwards on a white mule and thus he is often depicted riding a mule in this manner. His emblem is a bamboo instrument that is struck with two rods.

This line of the poem describes the extreme precision with which the sword is wielded. Although the form has many different motions, most are accomplished with articulations of the wrist or small, precise movements of the arm that emanate from the body. These small motions add great speed and precision to the movements of the sword. This degree of precision depicted in this line of the poem can be easily perceived if you were to observe saw grass flowerettes, which are tiny delicate flowers on the saw grass. It would take a deft hand indeed to cleave such a tiny delicate thing. Lu Shui Tian always emphasized precision in movement when he demonstrated sword skills and he had me practice





**Zhong Li (Zhong Li Chuan) demonstrated the best martial art stance and form**

Zhong Li Chuan was the Chief of the Eight Immortals. He is usually depicted as a fat man holding a fan. Sometimes he also holds a peach.



**Zhong Li Chuan**

Lu Shui Tian said that this line of the poem illustrated that any form, no matter whether it was an empty hand or weapons form, had to have good footwork. This was especially true in Ba Gua Zhang as the same footwork is applied for both empty hand and weapons. Lu went on to explain how the correct footwork placed the practitioner in a position of advantage and protected him from counter techniques. In order for this to happen, all of the footwork must meet the required principles and theories of the Ba Gua trinity: the *Ba Gua* (from the *Yi Jing*), *Yin-Yang*, and the *Wu Xing* ( five elements). Lu Shui Tian also said that even though the footwork was extremely important, it must be in balance with the body and the mind so that no extreme existed and everything could then be in balance or moderation.

many hours of repetitive exercises which involved hitting small balls, bamboo reeds, or string, in order to improve my precision with the sword.

**Dong Bin (Lu Dong Bin) carries his sword on his back and chooses to live a life of moderation.**



**Lu Dong Bin**

Lu Dong Bin was a scholar who studied Daoism with Zhong Li Chuan, the Chief of the Eight Immortals. Lu is usually depicted holding a Daoist fly-brush in his right hand and has a sword slung over his back. It is said that he was given a series of ten temptations to overcome in order to demonstrate his purity and virtue. Having overcome all ten temptations, Lu was given a supernatural sword. He used to sword to sly dragons and demons, riding the world of evil.

Lu Dong Bin's sword's name was Chan-yao Kuai which, when loosely translated, means "Devil Slayer." Carrying the sword on his back and living in moderation meant that he was always vigilant in not straying from the middle path. Always using the sword to cleave away any temptations to stray, Lu Dong Bin stayed true to his path, even when presented with the ten most difficult temptations. In the Eight Immortal Sword form, this means that there are no excesses or insufficiencies and that every technique adheres to the middle, or balanced, path.





**Cai Ho (Lan Cai Ho) spreads four gates and her sword shines through.**



**Lan Cai Ho**

Lan Cai Ho's emblem is a flower basket. This particular immortal is sometimes depicted as a female and sometimes as a male. As such, he or she as you may choose, represents change and is the representation of *yin* and *yang* within the Eight Immortal Sword form.

In this character we also find a representation of unpredictability that is always present with a lunatic, or one who may be referred to as "touched by the Gods." The poetry line reference to the "four gates" points to a particular type of sword entry into the space of an opponent and, with quick wrist maneuvers, rendering damage, or as the line states, "shining through."

**Guo Jiu (Cao Guo Jiu) is feared greatly by both ghost and goddess wherever he goes.**



**Cao Guo Jiu**

Cao Guo Jiu was not a popular immortal because he was so fierce. It was said that he was a member of the imperial court and a very dangerous person to tangle with. He was the son of a military commander and brother of the Empress Cao Hou of the Sung Dynasty. His symbol is a pair of wooden castanets which were made from the court tablet.

Many people believed that he was elevated to the level of immortal only because the other seven thought he may prove useful. Lu Shui Tian brought out two things from this implication. First, don't waste time with things that are not useful. He felt that this illustrated that none of the movements in the form were put there just for the beauty or elegance, everything there was useful in combat. Second, he felt that Cao's fierceness showed that the form wasn't just performed without intent as many forms are executed today. He felt that without intent, the *qi* would not flow properly nor would the form look correct. Without proper intent the form would appear dead or lifeless. He always referred to a form that was done with the proper rhythm and intent as "bright" or "living" and a form that did not exhibit these traits as "dark" or "dead." This is also how he referred to the eyes in most instances when he was referring to intent.

**Xian Gu (Ho Xian Gu) is the best at setting the Ba Gua pattern**

Ho Xian Gu is the only true woman of the group







**Ho Xian Gu**

is perceived as being very wise and a good organizer. Having eaten a supernatural peach, she became a fairy wondering the hills. It is said that once she was in danger of being overcome by a demon, but Lu Dong Bin saved her using his magic sword.

It is thought that she is the one who pulled the other immortals together to create the form and that she herself was chosen to set the pattern for the form. Every form has a particular pattern and a rhythm within the pattern. As

Lu Shui Tian said many times, without rhythm, the form is "dead." The organization skills of Ho Xian Gu remind us to adhere to natural patterns and rhythms in martial art practice.

**No one can survive Xiang Zi's (Xiao Xiang Zi) soul chasing sword.**

Xiao Xiang Zi was the son of a famous scholar and it is believed that he could make flowers grow and blossom instantly. He was a student of Lu Dong Bin, who took him to the supernatural peach tree to become immortal. His emblem is the flute and he is the patron saint of musicians. It is said that whenever he was given money, he scattered it about on the ground because he had no need for it.

It is believed that Han Xiang Zi was depicted as very young and that he did not like to utilize his sword, but when he did, no one could escape. It is also said that Han traveled the country side playing his flute and attracting birds and beasts of prey with the beautiful sound. This sets the tone for the mortality of the use of the weapon. It should only be used in extreme cases but when it becomes necessary it should be wielded with authority. Han Xiang Zi is depicted many times carrying a flute and one of the techniques in the form resembles someone playing a flute. Lu Shui Tian also said that this meant that we should try to live in balance and harmony but when things are interfering with that harmony, we should not hesitate to cut them out, or balance them. Given the right discipline, we should never fail to set things just as Han Xiang Zi did and metaphorically cut them out.

Lu Shui Tian explained to me that the use of the *Jian* (straight sword) is not for a beginner in the



**Xiao Xiang Zi**



internal martial arts. He said that of all the Ba Gua weapons, the *Jian*, in particular, required a meticulous foundation of the body, footwork, and mind before one could hope to master this weapon. The *Jian* is considered a very high level weapon, meaning that it requires a great deal of skill to wield it properly. It requires wrist, shoulder, and waist training along with proper utilization of whipping body principles to make the weapon effective. Many times today I go to tournaments and watch people perform with the *Jian*. It is extremely rare that I am rewarded with a pleasant sight. People are attempting to perform the *Jian* that are really beginners and the forms are not bright, but are lifeless. I use the term lifeless figuratively, but it could be taken literally, as I see these practitioners cutting themselves to ribbons, forgetting that the *Jian* is a double sided weapon. I hope that in the future we will see people utilizing this weapon with the proper techniques, proper intent, and with a properly prepared body.

The *Jian* is a wonderful weapon and the Eight Immortal Sword is a wonderful form. In my style of Ba Gua Zhang, the training is long and rigorous and there are many basic sword techniques to practice before the form will be taught. After students complete the form, they will not just know a form, but will understand numerous uses and applications of the movements within the form. I know that today no one will walk down the street carrying a *Jian* in preparation for a confrontation, but it is necessary to understand intent and use in order for the *qi* to flow properly. This should allow the form to be bright and have the proper rhythm.

This has been a very brief introduction to the *Jian* as a Ba Gua weapon and I hope it has been entertaining. It is my intent to present you with another article in the future detailing some of the basic exercises for the use of the *Jian* as a combat weapon. We should all share as much knowledge as possible so that Ba Gua does not become a watered down, or lost art. I fully believe that the internal arts offer a better life for all who practice them and it is my hope to be a part of the new and exciting future that we have before us.

# A Weapon is an Extension of the Mind

by Carlos Martin Casados

*"That the warriors of old came to our peaceful hermitages to foster their martial skill is no paradox. They came to learn how to apply the secret of emptiness, how to ensure that the enemy's sword, though aimed at flesh, encounters void, and how to destroy the foe by striking with dispassion. Hatred arouses wrath; wrath breeds excitement; excitement leads to carelessness which, to a warrior, brings death. A master swordsman can slay ten enemies besetting him simultaneously, by virtue of such dispassion that he is able to judge to perfection how to dodge their thrusts. A swordsman or an archer's aim is surest when his mind, concentrated on the work in hand, is indifferent to failure or success. Stillness in the heart of movement is the secret of all power."*

- John Blofeld, *The Secret and Sublime*



**Ba Gua Zhang instructor Carlos Casados**

Over the years I have heard many stories in which the master teacher has been engaged in either mock or real combat with an opponent and the opponent is unable to beat him. In some versions, the adversary is so desperate to prove himself that he calls for weapons to be used on the grounds that only then their skills will be truly tested. In most instances, despite a succession of weapons used, some of which may be the opponent's specialty, the master defeats the aggressor with as much ease as he did in the empty handed combat. While the aggressor expresses his confusion and amazement, the master calmly responds that weapons are merely extensions of the body. He explains that if he could defeat him without weapons, then most assuredly he could defeat him with weapons.

We could extend this analogy quite easily to mean that the weapon is an extension of the mind. In classical internal martial arts theory, the mind plays a very important role in all aspects of training, including weapons training. The mind is seen as more than just a recorder telling us which move comes next or a mechanism inputting visual signals. It actually shapes our experience or reality. The moment you begin to wield a weapon your mind automatically forms a concept of it, therefore, the mind is inseparable from your actions.

I would like to direct the reader's attention to another aspect of this weapon-mind connection. Weapons training, in particular, weapons combat, allows for certain awareness and cognitive shifts which can greatly benefit one's practice of Ba Gua Zhang. There may come a point during lengthy practice when the student's mind begins to do a certain amount of wondering. I use this term with some hesitation because the student hasn't necessarily lost focus on what he is doing, instead, he is experiencing an abstract perceptual shift. To describe this more fully, flashes of insight can occur in which certain patterns of movement between himself, the weapons, and his fellow practitioner become instantaneously simplified into some abstract, internalized pattern. Some may refer to this as connecting into higher brain functioning. I call it superconscious integration.

At first glance, all of this may seem overwhelming or even inaccessible, but I assure you that many of us are doing this from time to time without realizing it! Under the right circumstances, this experience may even be induced consciously. This, I believe, is one of the timeless functions of training with classical Chinese weaponry. As I will mention later, weapons also serve as biofeedback devices to the ardent martial artist. If this process is allowed to happen in a natural way and is carried all the way through to its conclusion, great insights into body mechanics, combat strategy and



even *qi* training may be gained.

As I understand the experience, prolonged and continuous practice with weapons eventually exhausts the exterior parts of our consciousness to the point that a certain melding occurs where the weapon quite literally begins to feel like an extension of our arms or hands. Even the slightest pressure of the air as it is cut by the weapon is perceived. I can recall stories of Chinese and Japanese swordsmen actually throwing their opponents while maintaining only sword to sword contact! Naturally, this seems very incredible to us, but is an ideal example of the limitlessness of weapons training. Now, developing the ability to feel, or listen, and the Chinese say, is crucial in internal weapons study. Imagine that you became so adept at this skill that you could extend this listening outside of your body and into another person. How much more effective would your attacks and counters be if you could feel your opponent's weaknesses and strengths? The answer is obvious. This is why sensitivity training should be incorporated into any extensive weapons training.

There are also other aspects which indicate that weapons are an extension of the mind. The first of these occurs after the general mastery of movement happens. A traditional teacher may introduce more combative aspects and during the ensuing battles much about our inner nature is revealed. For our example, we will take sword play and/or stick combat as an analogy. Now, for those of you who have ever "engaged," as they say, in sword play or stick fighting, you will surely note the often painful effect of hesitation or blind aggression in combat. For those of you who have not, you may well imagine that the broken or bleeding reminder is often enough to teach a plethora of lessons. This type of training offers a plus over mere empty handed training because the message is often more direct and shall I dare say, pointed!

Now that I have explored some of the connections between mind, body, and weapon, I would like to go over some of the basics of good Ba Gua weapons



training. These points are vital in setting a student up to excel in any weapons practice. The first element to be cultivated is naturalness. In the beginning, a weapon may feel awkward and the practitioner might be too conscious of the weapon itself, unable to feel anything except for robotic movements which lack grace and power. I suggest that along with learning the individual movements of the form, simply walk the circle with your weapon. Let go of any goals you might have for a moment and attempt to "blend" with your weapon. Listen to what your mind and body tell you. Does the weapon feel light or heavy? Does it feel cut off from the rest of your body or are you feeling connected? Then, as you make these and other observations, you will slowly be forming that ancient system of biofeedback mentioned earlier. The weapon's qualities will be "tuned" into and digested, so to speak. Do not be afraid to experiment with other ways of moving the weapon either. Although there are certain tried and tested patterns for using various weapons, let experience be your guide. In general, if you draw your movements from the basic principles of Ba Gua Zhang, you can hardly go wrong.

As you become more familiarized with the basic moves and the weapon begins to feel more natural in your hands, you will need to be more specific and disciplined in your training. A regimen of regular practice should include, but not be limited to, basic form, two person drills, parrying and counter attack concepts, striking vulnerable areas of the body, two man dueling, and power body mechanics training.

**Forms:** During the forms training one is perhaps enlightened as to the various kinds of blocks, parries, strikes, throws and movements that are possible. In addition to this the student is given an aesthetic sense or feeling for continuous flow with the weapon. Persistence in this practice can confer faster and smoother reactions later on and less choppy and/or rigid responses.

**Two Person Drills:** The two person drills I speak of consist of facing off with a partner and trading off prearranged singular attacks on each other. Students



**Carlos Casados applies a wrist lock on his partner, Don Quach, using the Ba Gua Pen**

train at this point to remain calm, unflinching and responsive to the attack, while maintaining eye contact and not letting their eyes get distracted by the weapon. Instead, peripheral vision training is incorporated in order that the whole picture may be seen at once. If you do not know any drills, they may be made up, provided that you keep them simple, direct and in-line with basic combat and Ba Gua principles. Fancifulness should be avoided and keeping to the basics emphasized.

Simultaneous to learning the drills, the student who has disciplined himself not to overreact and is more comfortable with the experience of weapons moving in on him will also need to learn the all important concept of "centerline" theory. This is the imaginary line which runs down the center of your body. As you face an opponent, imagine a line drawn down between the eyes, down the throat to the solar plexus region and then to the genitals. This is called the centerline. This line is not just on the front of the skin, but exists in the mid-line from nadir to zenith inside the body and is connected with the person's center of balance as well. It should be noted here that many vital striking areas exist in this center line. The seasoned martial artist has a keen, almost supernormal sense of it in the body, be it his or the opponent's, eyes closed or open. A student who has mastered this also holds his weapon in such a way that the centerline is always protected and parrying an incoming attack is made that much easier.

In contrast, this centerline technology can be applied quite effectively to "intrude" into the opponent's territory by holding the tip or edge of the weapon toward and into the opponent's centerline as you encircle and penetrate their weaknesses. An advanced method of this is to position yourself just inside or at the edge of their centerline while not setting off any of their alarms by being too obvious. The opponent, then thinking they have the upper hand, will extend themselves in full confidence while simultaneously impaling themselves on your weapon. At least that's how it works in theory. Experience tells me that one must always come up with new strategies because one rarely buys the same swamp land twice. You can see, however, that he who controls or is in harmony with his center has a natural advantage.

**Dueling:** At the point when one has graduated to dueling, the student will have been schooled in various counter attacks and disarming methods. He has also been shown and has memorized various striking areas of the body and is truly ready to encounter various levels of graded combat, from light to intense levels. Any advanced study of weapons should, of course, be guided by a competent teacher and except for very advanced practitioners, supervision is definitely necessary during combat practice. This must be insisted upon in order to avoid serious injury, death, or ego problems which

may be detrimental or even fatal to the students' development in the martial arts. The ego must be controlled to the extent that aggression is suppressed and only calm, focused power remains. Fear must also be controlled through letting go and directing attention to the practice itself. Student must be called when over aggressive behavior shows itself to the detriment of another student. In other words, they need to know their limits and a teacher may be required to show them how experience, superior focus and calmness is applied against flailing, blind, brute force. The overwhelming pain may again surface here as a valuable feedback method. This type of action is of course the last resort and must be dispensed with using the utmost integrity, honesty, and lack of egotism by the teacher. Hopefully the instructor has been sensitive enough to have anticipated the student's ego problem long before any serious mishap occurs. The instructor should deal with it through counseling, separation, expulsion, or other means.

Power and Body Mechanics: Gradually, as combat is persisted in, the answers to many questions regarding power development and body mechanics will be clarified. Through the various drills and foundational exercises that are practiced, many hints regarding correct body alignment and transmission of force along the weapon may be gleaned as well.

In conclusion, a practitioner of Ba Gua weapons would do well to consider the inseparable link between mind and the weapon chosen to work with.

*Carlos Casados is a Los Angeles/San Fernando Valley based Ba Gua Zhang student and instructor. He is a sixth generation inner door student of the "coiling body, continuous palm" school (Cheng Ting Hua style).*



**Carlos Casados applies an arm lock on his partner, Don Quach, using the Ba Gua Pen**



# The Large Saber of Ba Gua Zhang

by Glen Gurman

The large saber is a beautiful and unique weapon to the Ba Gua system and is used and practiced in true Ba Gua fashion. The practice and development of this weapon conforms to the intrinsic nature of this system. We will explore the essence of this core, and its relationship to this elegant and effective saber.

The Ba Gua Zhang system in its original transmission is elegantly simple. It has a common thread of principles that are explored and developed in a systematic and clear manner. This is evident from the first level of basic movements through to the higher levels. One could say that the trade mark of the Ba Gua Zhang system exemplifies itself as a seamless overlay of continual flow and whole body dynamics. It is rich in the components of health, rootedness, light body, smoothness of energy, as well as practical martial content.

The system has a core essence of internal dynamics that overlaps continually and expresses the essence of flow, and interestingly the teaching method also follows this very same construct.

One of my teachers expressed this well: Shaolin's essence is like my two hands pointing at each other with the fingertips touching (flat on a table, palms down). Ba Gua's flavor is like the same hands touching, yet one hand overlapping the other, joining on top (each hand representing a motion sequence). Each movement begins yet has no definitive end, the motion is recycled into the next. The dynamic forces of the motions are mixed and expressed in the center of the body, without any apparent discharge or externalization. In the very same light the teaching progression also conforms to this principle.

This theme does not change during weapon training, each milestone overlaps the prior progression while introducing the subsequent technique, furthering the student along the way without any discontinuity. The essence and usage of the big saber does not depart from the inherent principles of this realistic and beautiful system.

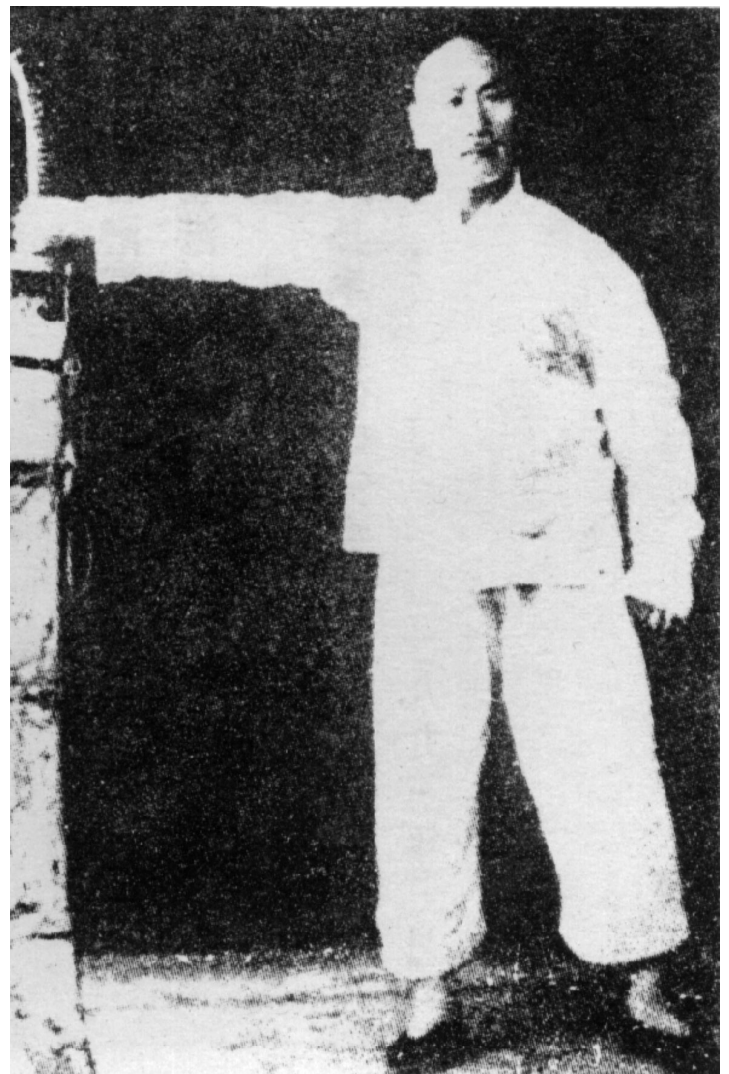
Just like the flavor of the system itself, each move seamlessly enhances and builds upon the previous one, as do the progressions which blend into each other; developing and deepening the essence. The paradox or conundrum that presents itself to the serious practitioner, is that while Ba Gua Zhang is inherently simple, the ability to embody the true flavor or essence is very challenging. It takes years to become the seamless quality of Ba Gua Zhang.

Ba Gua Zhang is called a graduate art and one of the more difficult systems to embody, for a true practitioner becomes their art, and becoming Ba Gua is not easy. The old masters ensured that the weapons' training deepened the characteristics and flavor of the Ba Gua system, Yet simultaneously taught the

practical martial usage of the specific weapon. Thus the milestones (the major forms taught progressively) teach Ba Gua's unique flavor throughout the developmental process.

In the system handed down by Liu Yun Chiao to his two top disciples: Leung Kay Chi in Boston and Adam Hsu in California, a great deal of emphasis is placed upon the foundation and structure. This is done prior to the learning of the palm changes (see past *Pa Kua Chang Journal* Vol. 1 # 4 May /June for insight to this system).

Liu Yun Chiao (劉雲樵), who was a student of Gong Bao Tian(宮寶田), who in turn was a student of Yin Fu (尹福), passed down a learning sequence with very progressive motion characteristics. This system was designed to lead the student up to and through the use of weapons.



**Ba Gua Zhang instructor Fu Zhen Song's Large Ba Gua Saber was as long as he was tall**

The relationship of the foundation to the weapons is much the same as that a river bed to its river. The weapon system relies upon the foundation or milestones of Ba Gua, and the weapons due to their weight and dynamics deepen the foundation. This in turn causes the Ba Gua system to become deeper and stronger as well as more energy laden. To give an example, the Deer horn knives, also known as the Crescent Moon Swords follow the content and quality of the “*Ying Shu*” form. This form is taught before the famous Palm Changes and prior to the Deerhorn Knives, thus in the same light, the large saber follows the flavor and application of the Palm Changes.

The large saber relies both upon the stepping patterns that are developed in the early training such as *Kou bu* (扣步), *Bai bu* (擺步), and the coil and release of that dynamic “tension without tension.” It also follows the general motion characteristics of the Palm Changes. Synergistically in the development of the Ba Gua Saber, the weight and size inherently forces the practitioner to redefine and strengthen the root and function of the very basics it is rooted in. The martial advantages of length and weight are not the only benefits that are obtained from this interactive relationship. Like a river and the rivers channel they both shape each other.

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***Thus the river cuts the stone, but the stone shapes the course of the river....***

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Many a practitioner abandons the qualities of lightness and “*Chan Si Jing*” (纏絲勁) or seamless flow when confronted with the weight and balance of the large saber. Resisting brute strength and wielding the saber with the same balance and flow of the rest of the system is only the first challenge. The saber like all weapons have a center of weight and mass, discovering the place of balance or equilibrium and relating that center point or “still point” to the Ba Gua form without discontinuity is the next challenge. The saber must remain very “light” in the hand, almost as if holding a bird with the thumb and index finger. Thirdly the quality of root and centered energy must be explored by the practitioner. By the time a practitioner has reached the level of weapon training, the coalescing of *qi* should not be a new skill. This was introduced all the way back in the *Zhan Zhuang* (站樁) or standing meditations (the first milestone of the system and developed concurrently).

The difficult bridge to cross however is to wield the blade with the same silken flow of Ba Gua, and remain centered within, like the eye of the hurricane the practitioner's center and the center balance point of the saber must remain still. One must be careful not to be drawn out to the “swirling winds” by relinquishing the harmoniously balanced stance and center. Many practitioners by using brute strength, allow the weight of the blade to distort the harmony of the root or

stepping patterns. By using strength one relinquishes the exquisite balance of subtle control on the saber's center and unbalances the deep center of the practitioner. As one of my teachers reminded:

“The large saber is like the moon revolving around the earth, the perfect balance of forces allows each to exist in Harmony.” Thus the saber revolves with the center and the center deepens to accommodate the saber!”

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***A master utilizes inches to achieve great things, a beginner miles to achieve little.***

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This skill is accomplished through basic training only, and then enhanced with the meditation of quiet mind and centered silken flow. The student expresses a quality of light and rooted total body involvement. This is manifested seamlessly, particularly in the transitions between each move. In this manner the practitioner wields the saber as a natural extension of the total centering of the Ba Gua system, therefore the saber follows the center of the body, never violating this exquisite balance.

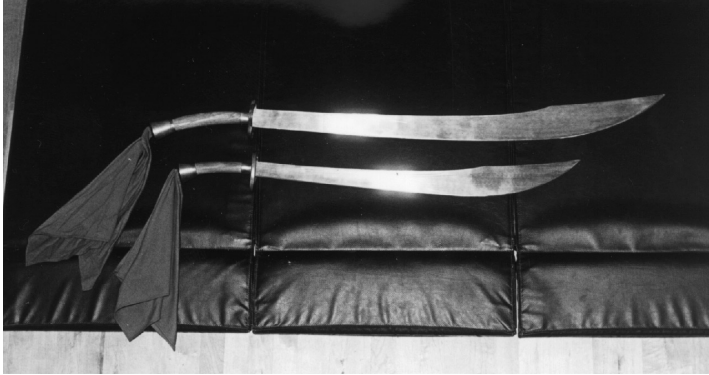
In a health and an energetic context, the added weight of the saber adds a new and unique stress to the body, building the total “Ba Gua body” in a stronger fashion yet retaining the same parameters as the foundation movements developed. Due to the weight of the saber, there is inevitable muscle development. The saber is wielded with the minimum of tension in a slow rhythmic and “light” fashion, there is not the same build up of lactic acid in the muscles as there is in weight lifting. One must also learn the saber on both sides to balance the musculature and to preserve appropriate spinal alignment. As the practitioner discovers the need to concentrate deeply on his or hers center and to remain still in motion, as well as move in a seamless manner, the ability to coalesce more energy comes as a natural by-product. If one combines this with a rhythmic flow that slowly revolves round the body, the meridians begin to store more energy as well as circulate in a gentle and constant manner. In Traditional Chinese Medicine as well as in Taoist philosophy, it is said that the body must be made strong both externally and internally. If the body is made strong, and energy is abundant and harmonious, then the pernicious elements (cold, wind, damp, infection to list a few) can not easily enter the body .

In a martial context, the deceptive length of the saber is indeed a core ingredient. There certainly are inherent advantages to length and size. The advantage of the length of the saber is very evident to anyone faced with a good practitioner. The capacity of attenuating distance is a fundamental skill of the Ba Gua master.

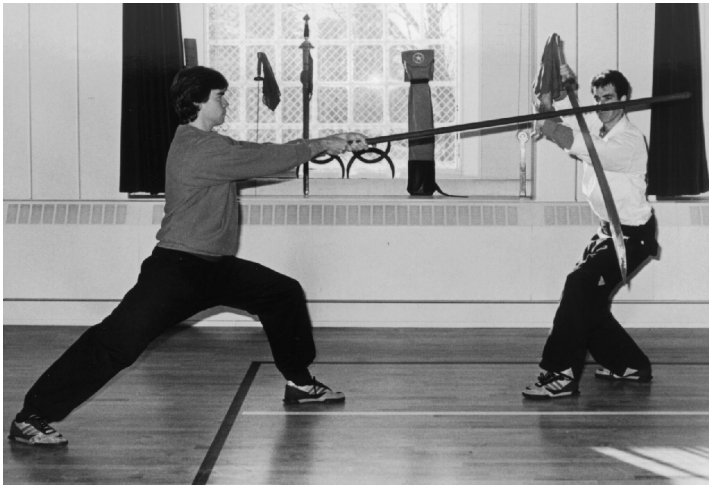


Even at the intermediate level the stepping patterns become the blocking system, where it become facile for the practitioner to use the “side door.” The ability to seem open or closed, or to be perceived as being in reach or beyond reach, are all in the repertoire of a good practitioner. The ability to use a sense of energy to manipulate this or to actualize a small amount of distance becomes the bane of an unwary opponent.

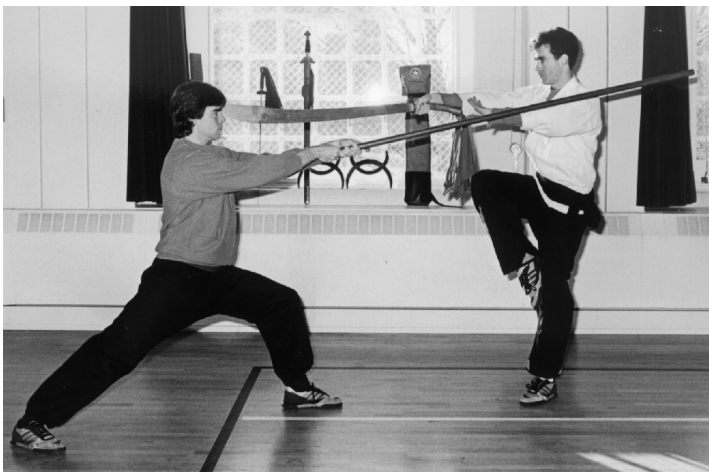
In the following pictures we can see a comparison of the actual saber placed next to a Shaolin saber. In application one can see that from a simple deflection, the distance becomes closed rapidly, even against a long staff.



**Ba Gua Large Saber (top) compared to the Standard Size Saber**



**Application 1 Photo 1**



**Application 1 Photo 2**

Conforming to the principles of development, with the understanding that the Palm changes are the frame work for the Saber form, one can see the overlap of similarity between the Single Palm Change and the first change of the Large saber in the photos shown on the next few pages.

In this sequence the first Palm Change is exhibited directly on top of the application for each move, one can see that the application follows the form closely. Look carefully at the sequence of the saber and one can see that the saber follows very closely the framework of the palm changes. The application of the saber also adheres to form.

Thus as the practitioner develops, each sequence builds, enhances and deepens the form before and develops the one after. This essence is indeed the most common theme of the Ba Gua system whether it is found in application, development, or expression.

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***For in truth there are no “transitions.”  
In Ba Gua, the whole system is the  
embodiment of transition.***

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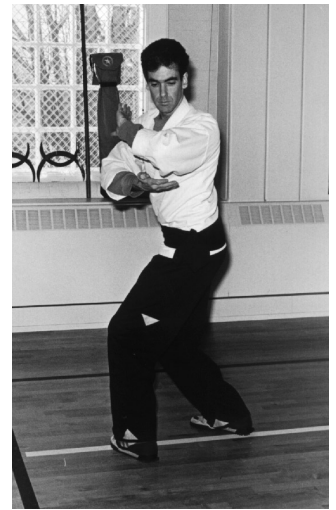
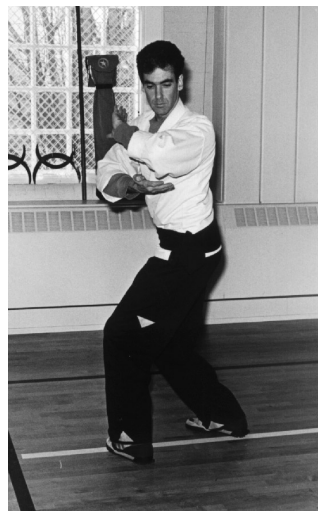
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The seamless continuity of Ba Gua both in application and progression lead the student to a deeper understanding of the nature of change, whispering a deeper realization that Ba Gua is never a rigid or fragmentary art. The forms are only sentences passed down from one master to the next. It is the obligation of the practitioner to become proficient enough to be able to make his or her own poetry. This is achieved by breaking down and understanding the individual components or motion characteristics of the fundamental forms, and then syncretizing them eventually embodying the art. When the student can do this, he or she becomes one with change, and has passed through the presented “doorway.”

However lets not mistake the creative with the practical, this poetry must conform to the inherent principles and practical usage, otherwise it's not Ba Gua Zhang!

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Leung Kay Chi, Adam Hsu & Daniel Farber for their kindness.

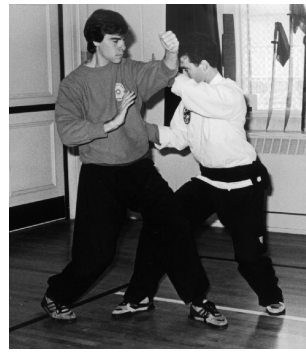
*Glen Gurman (also known by his Taoist name, Bai Guang Tao) started his martial arts at age 17, in the art of Isshinryu Karate. He was taught by a senior student of karate's living legend Don Nagle. After earning his black belt he was exposed to the fascinating art of Ba Gua by a senior student of Bo Sim Mark. Greatly inspired by this mysterious Kung Fu he began his study of this system. It was during this time that he met Leung Kay Chi, disciple of Ba Gua great Liu Yun Chiao. For many years he took weekly private lessons and was the only student to do so. During this time he was also required to learn Northern Shaolin, Chen and Yang family Tai chi. Specializing in Ba Gua he has spent a great deal of time in its practice and research. Desiring to learn as deeply as possible, he began another study with Daniel Farber senior Ba Gua student of Adam Hsu who is also a disciple of Liu. Gurman is a full time Physician of Traditional Chinese Medicine as well as an American herbalist. He is the advisor for Oriental Medicine in the state of Vermont and teaches at the Dartmouth medical school, on 27 Oriental Medicine. He is available for the occasional seminar.*



**The  
Single  
Palm  
Change**



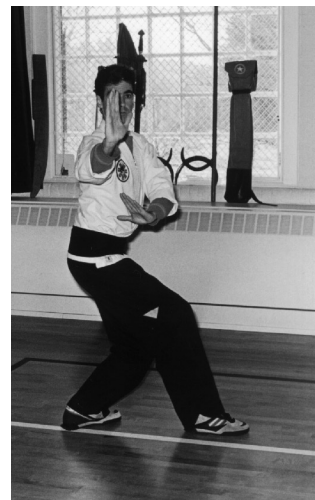
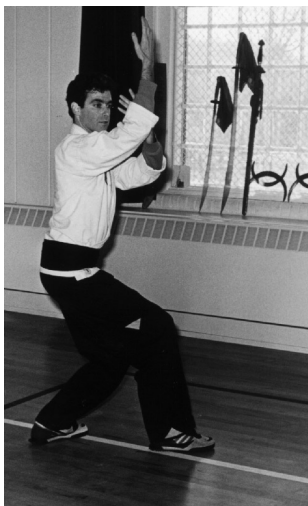
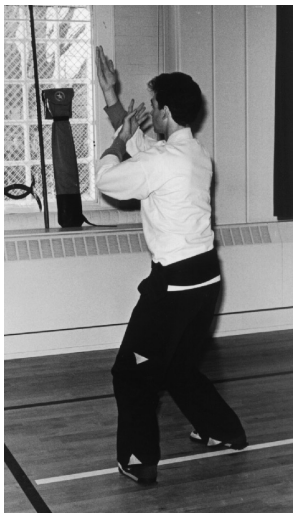
**Using Bai Bu to Trap,  
Opening the Side Door**



**As the Opponent Retreats,  
Controlling the Arm, Strik-  
ing the Kidney & Root**



**Beginning to Siese the  
Root & Trap the Legs**



**Trapping the Leg, Arms,  
& Discharging the Oppo-  
nent**

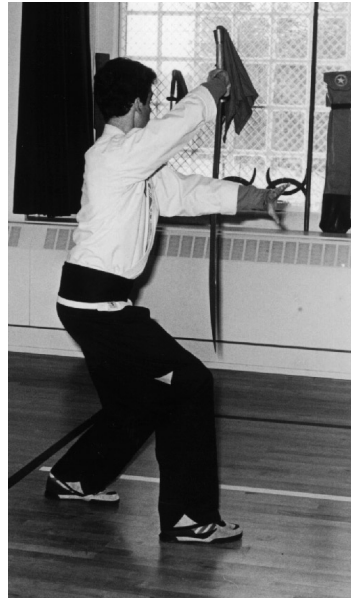




**Photo 1**



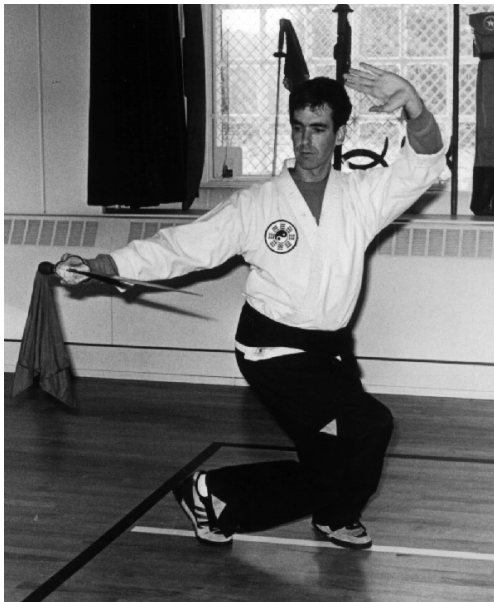
**Photo 2**



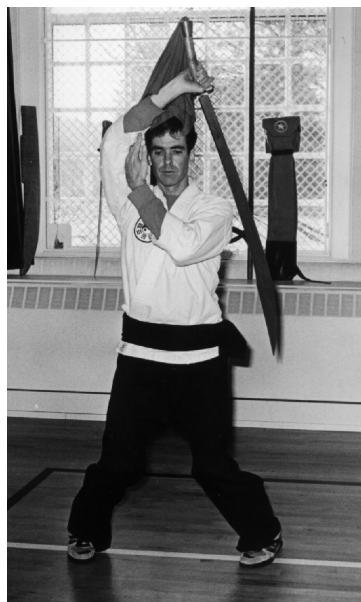
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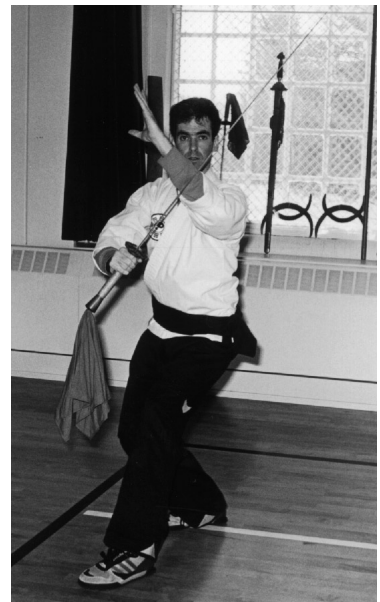
**Photo 4**



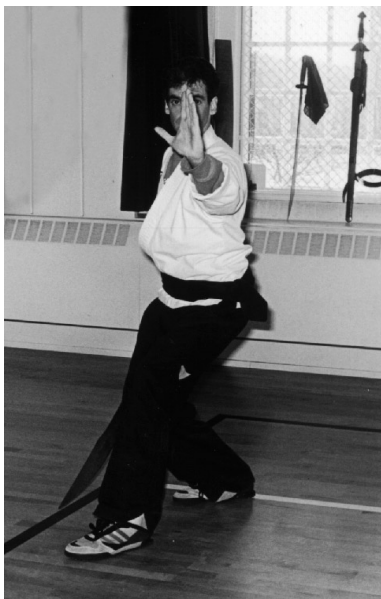
**Photo 5**



**Photo 6**



**Photo 7**



**Photo 8**

### **The First Change of the Large Saber Form**

**Photo 1 - Note that the Saber is hidden**

**Photo 2 - Wrapping the Body Toe-in to the Inside**

**Photo 3 - Pivoting Counter-clockwise continuing to Wrap Around the Body**

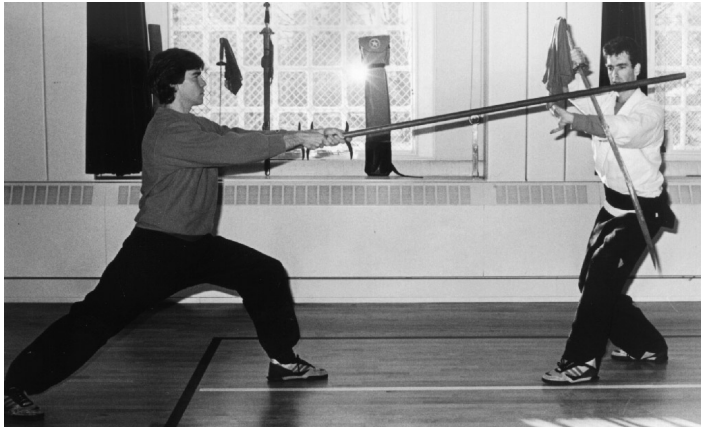
**Photo 4 - Facing Outside the Circle**

**Photo 5 - Turning Clockwise back to the Inside of the Circle**

**Photo 6 - Step Up to Cut**

**Photo 7 - Cutting**

**Photo 8 - Hiding the Saber**



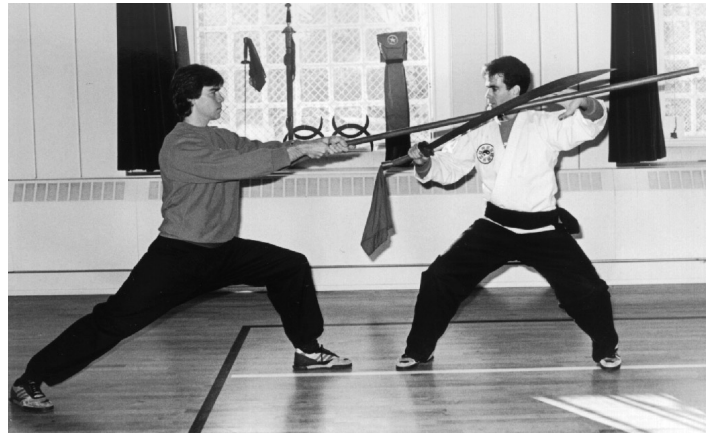
**Photo 1**



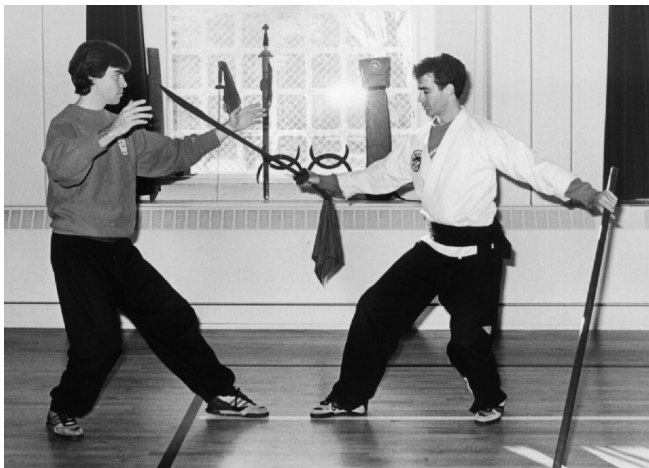
**Photo 2**



**Photo 3**



**Photo 4**



**Photo 5**



**Photo 6**

**Large Saber Application**



**Photo 7**



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