

Four Generations from Chan Heung to Fu Hang Ng

Story and Photos by Wayne Carisi

Choylee Fut is one of the most popular and effective kung fu styles in existence. It owes much of its genesis to the Siu Lam kung fu system and has a colorful history that spans over one hundred and sixty years. It is through the exploits of its creator that one can get a better understanding and appreciation for this highly regarded fighting system.

Chan Heung, the founding father of Choy Lee Fut kung fu, was born on July 10, 1806 in King Mui Village in the Sun Wui district of Kwang Tung province. As a young child, he would often accompany Chan Yuen Wu, an elder clansman, on his travels from village to village performing feats of kung fu for a living. Chan Yuen Wu was a practitioner of Fut Gar (Buddhist) kung fu. By the age of fifteen, under Chan Yuen Wu's tutelage, Chan Heung was able to defeat any challengers from nearby villages. Two years later, Chan Yuen Wu became seriously ill and could no longer teach his still eager student.

Determined to learn more kung fu, Chan Heung set out to find another teacher. The diligent student soon found Master Lee Yau Shan who was a brilliant doctor of Chinese medicine and a former monk. After four years of teaching Chan Heung, Lee Yau Shan broke the news to him that he had to go away and visit a friend. The truth was that he was a survivor of a destroyed monastery and was afraid his identity was going to be revealed. Seeing how diligent Chan Heung was as a student, and how still hungry he was to learn more, Lee suggested that he continue his studies with Lee's elder brother, a monk by the name of Choy Fook who was living in a Sui Lam Monastery on Mount Lau Fou in Lou Fou Shan.

Chan Heung, armed with a letter of recommendation from Lee Yau Shan, journeyed to the mountaintop. Upon finding Monk Choy Fook, Chan handed him the letter. Choy Fook liked what he read so much he decided to accept Chan as his disciple, but only if Chan would commit to ten years of training and learning. Of course, Chan did not have to think twice about the offer and promptly kneeled before his new Master.

The long hard ten years molded Chan Heung into a complete martial artist. He had absorbed completely everything that Monk Choy Fook knew and passed on to



Choy Lee Fut's

him. He soon bid his master farewell and left the Siu Lam Monastery for his home village. Once Chan Heung settled back home in King Mui Village, he began to immediately teach his fellow clansmen all that he had learned. It wasn't too long before he decided to create a style unique to his own vision and abilities.

After twenty years of refining his skills and combining what he had learned from all three of his teachers, Chan Heung had now put together a superior fighting system. To honor his mentors, Choy Fook, Lee Yau Shan and Chan Yuen Wu, Chan Heung used their sir names to bless his new fighting style. Instead of using Chan Yuen Wu's name, he substituted Fut (Meaning Buddha) in honor of the Fut Gar system Chan Yuen Wu passed on to him. Hence the name Choy Lee Fut was born.

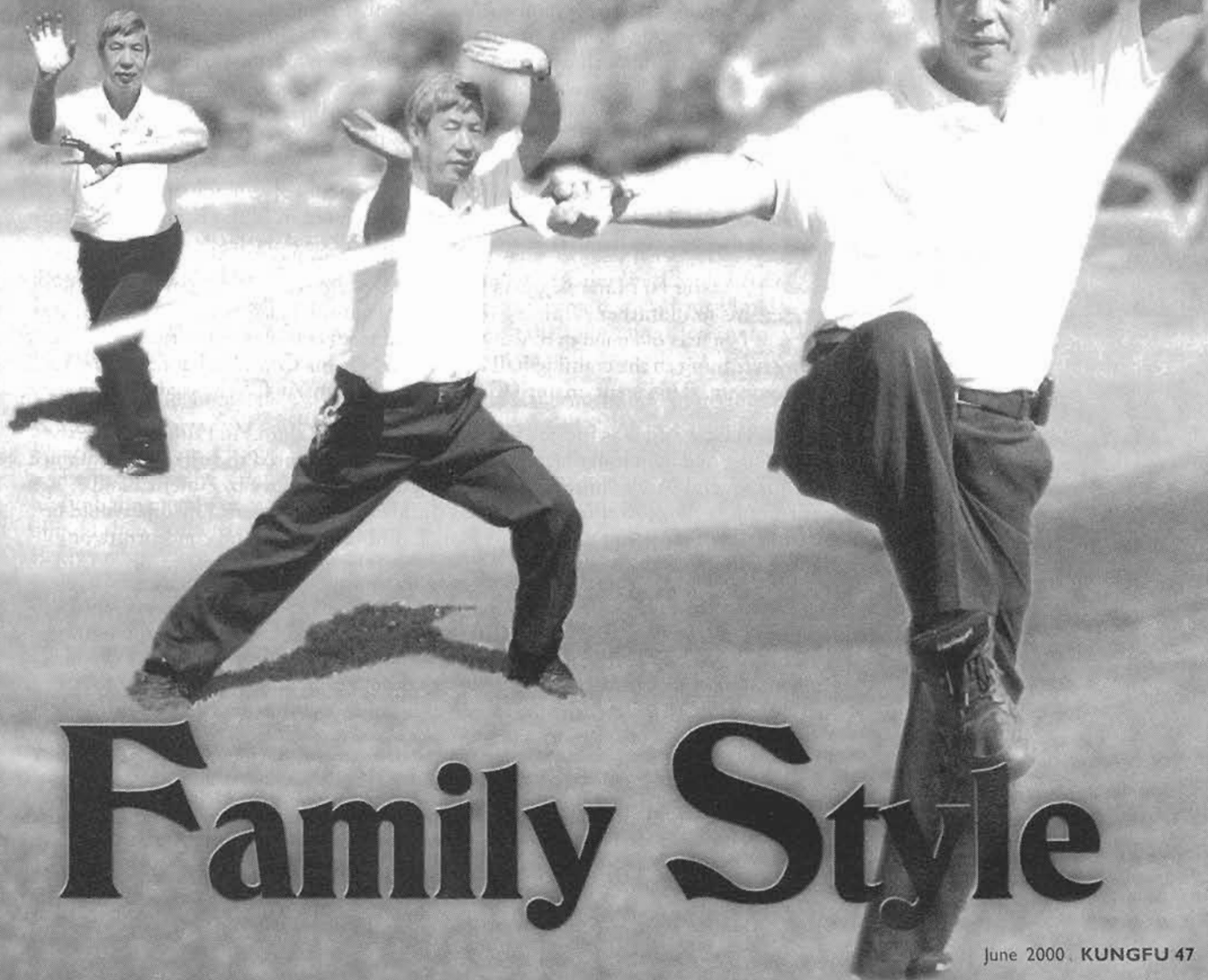
Chan Family Style

There are several different sects of Choy Lee Fut which is why sometimes the name is mispronounced or spelled differently. Another way that it is spelled is Choy Li Fut or Choy Lay Fut. The mandarin pronunciation and spelling is Tsai Li Fo. Two other names are the Hung-Sing and Bok-Sing, which are known as the first schools started outside the Chan Family. Another name used is the Family Style Choy Lee Fut. This style of course was handed down from

father to son, grandfather to grandson and sometimes daughter or granddaughter. One hundred and thirty-eight forms are recorded in the Chan Family Archives. There are 48 Fist Forms alone ranging from the basic Ng Lun Ma to the advanced techniques of the Choy Lee Fut Wooden Dummy. Not all these forms were taught outside the Chan Family. For example, the four 18 Lohan Chi Kung sets and the eight Pa Kwa forms were never taught to outsiders, until recent years.

On the outskirts of Chinatown in Los Angeles lives a master of the Chan Family style Choy Lee Fut. His name is Fu Hang Ng and he is the fourth generation direct family descendant to the founder Chan Heung. His name is different because his relation to Chan Heung is through his mother, Mrs. Chan Kit Fong, who is also a fourth generation descendant under her father, Grandmaster Chan Yui Chi. Chan Yui Chi was Chan Heung's grandson and became the third generation grandmaster of Choy Lee Fut. Chan Yui Chi's father was Chan Koon Pak, Chan Heung's son and the second grandmaster of Choy Lee Fut.

Grandmaster Chan Koon Pak mastered his father's style at a



Family Style



very young age. In his older years he became a stern disciplinarian. That same approach to learning was also instilled into his son, Chan Yui Chi. Grandmaster Chan Yui Chi seldom turned his thoughts away from kung fu. Even when sitting idle his feet could be seen practicing. This kind of incessant work made Chan Yui Chi an outstanding exponent of the speed, power and agility that characterize his fighting system.

According to Master Fu Hang Ng, Grandmaster Chan Yui Chi was responsible for organizing the entire system of Choy Lee Fut. He recorded every form by carefully writing down each movement and its application. These records are still safely guarded by the Chan family to this day. Grandmaster Chan Yui Chi was also a doctor of medicine just as his father and grandfather before him. Students that showed potential were also taught medicine. Extremely caring and generous as a doctor, he never refused to diagnose or treat patients even if they had little or no money.

Grandmaster Chan Yui Chi died in 1965 but his deeds are still fondly remembered.

Secret Training Made Public

In 1972, on the founding and official establishment of the Association in memory of Chan Heung, Mrs. Chan Kit Fong, his great-granddaughter, made public the monumental work of Chan Heung which included the secret training that made Choy Lee Fut such a devastating system. The world was introduced to the large repertoire of boxing forms, weaponry and dummy techniques. There are several different dummies within the system such as the sandbag dummy, the balance dummy and dummies for practicing weapons and nerve attacking techniques. Mrs. Chan Kit Fong is a highly regarded and respected practitioner of Choy Lee Fut and has been published in several publications printed in Hong Kong. She is still alive and well and is currently residing in Los Angeles.

Master Fu Hang Ng was only six years old when he began training with his grandfather. Training began every morning at 6 A.M. When Master Ng was old enough to work, he would train in the morning then go to work

all day returning to the training hall at night to help his Grandfather teach and to practice more. This went on until Grandmaster Chan Yui Chi passed away in 1965.

In 1970, Master Ng was invited by his uncle, Master Chan Yui Wun, to move to Hong Kong and help him teach there. Master Ng accepted the offer and remained there for several years. In 1976, Master Ng decided to move to America and settled in Los Angeles. He immediately decided that in America his life would be different. He was going to leave his kung fu in Hong Kong and concentrate on making a living. For sixteen years Master Ng, the great, great grandson of Chan Heung, kept his hands closed.

In 1992, Ng's plans changed when his family convinced him to spread the family style of Choy Lee Fut in America. Master Ng began instructing a select group of students in his backyard and today runs a school in Arcadia, California. He continues to teach with the same integrity that his grandfather taught with.



A: THE CHAN FAMILY- Grandmaster Chan Yui Chi with wife seated. First on the left side is master Ng at age 14. Standing in the last row on the right end is Ms. Fong China, 1952
 B: Master Ng. Visiting a Buddhist temple in Hong Kong, 1970
 C: Miss Chan Kit Fong performing a Sun Kiu technique, Hong Kong 1974

Five Wheel Horse, Five Wheel Fist

Master Ng knows it is impossible for anyone to learn and remember all the forms Choy Lee Fut has to offer. Instead, he teaches his students to specialize and choose forms that are suitable for each student's body structure, age and temperament. Master Ng does however insist that all his students master the three basic forms: The first is Ng Lun Ma (Five Wheel Horse Set), the second is Ng Lung Chui (Five Wheel Fist Set) and the third is Siu Mui Fa Kuen (Small Plum Blossom Hand Form). Master Ng believes a student who does not master these three forms will not be able to properly perform the advanced boxing and weaponry sets of Choy Lee Fut. The beginner who shuns diligent practice and doesn't master the basic forms will find their footwork floundering and unsteady in the advanced sets of Choy Lee Fut.

The Ng Lun Ma (Five Wheel Horse) form is the first form a student learns in Choy Lee Fut, and is probably one of the hardest beginning forms to perform and complete. In fact, this form is so physically and mentally demanding when done correctly that it ends up being a test to see if the student has the right temperament to learn the vast system ahead of him.

The Ng Lun Ma form contains in it seven high and low stances. These stances are found in both Northern and Southern Styles. But the beginning student is encouraged to perform all the stances low and slow to develop power in the legs and proper structure of the stances. The Seven Stances are the Sei Ping Ma (Square Horse Stance), the right and left Ding Ji Ma (Wedge Stance), the right and left Diu Ma (Cat Stance), the right and left Tau Ma (Push Plucking Stance), the right and left Lok Quei Ma (Kneeling Horse Stance), the Nau Ma (Twist Horse) and the Quai Ma (Entrapping Stance). The stances are combined with agile footwork, body twisting and turning movements, and hand techniques.

Footwork, Breathing

The footwork contains Tai Chi Leung Yee (Two pattern internal/external, yin and yang concepts), Salm Choy (Three Genius Internal and External Sky, Earth, Man) Sze Cheung (Four Phenomenon) and Pa Kwa (eight diagram stepping).

The hand techniques of Ng Lun Ma are: Ding Yeut (Palms Pressing the Moon), Double Chum Kiu (Sword fingers pointed down), the Gum Jin (Golden Scissors) Poon Kiu (Arm clinging), the Fu Jao (Tiger Claw), Yeung Kiu (Mirror Hand), Cheun Jeung (Single Corkscrew Palm Strike) and the Don Lon (Horizontal Open Hand Strike).

Master Ng encourages his students to spend at least one half hour performing the Ng Lun Ma form. As a student progresses they should pay strict attention to their breathing. When a Choy Lee Fut student sinks down into a stance he should exhale and when rising he should inhale. Then exhaling before moving in the next stance and inhaling again once in the next stance. Once a student begins to advance he should then begin to practice the stances in this set higher, his footwork will become lively and quicker. This is known as the Lively Horse. It is at this time the student strives for continuity and smoothness moving from one stance to another. The combination of stances, footwork and hand techniques of Ng Lun Ma will not only enable a student to eventually perform sophisticated movements with great variations, but it is also a basic Chi Kung form for the Choy Lee Fut practitioner. ☺

Wayne Carisi is a writer and martial artist based in Monterey Park, California. Anyone wishing to contact Master Fu Hang Ng can reach him at Choy Lee Fut Martial Arts Federation of America (626) 574-1523 or visit him at 500 1/2 East Live Oak Ave, Arcadia, CA 91106

D: Grandmaster Chan Yui Chi with his wife and four students at the Choy Lee Fut gymnasium, Canton Ching-1943

E: Miss Chan Kit Fong seated front row. Next to her is seated is Master Ho Ngau, famous for his wooden dummy techniques. Chan Heung's birthday celebration.

F: Master Ng in Hong Kong 1972



