

Pangai Noon History

Bodhdharma

Bodhdharma (Tamo in Chinese), an Indian Buddhist priest, traveled the silk road to China to meet with the Emperor. During that time, the local Buddhist monks were translating texts from Sanskrit to Chinese, by order of the Emperor, with the intent to allow for the populace to practice the teachings of Buddhism.

Bodhdharma met with the Emperor and was shown all the text that Emperor had translated and all the temples the Emperor had built. When The Emperor asked how much Karma he had accrued for his actions, Bodhdharma replied “none”. This angered the Emperor, and with haste, Bodhdharma left from northern China and traveled to southern China. In southern China, Bodhdharma came across a temple in the remains of a forest that had been cleared or burned down. The Emperor’s gardeners planted all around the temple new trees. The temple was called Shaolin (in Mandarin, Sil Lum in Cantonese) and the name reflected the act of the Emperor, which meant “young forest”.

The Shaolin order dates back to 540 A.D., and they practiced Chuan Buddhism. Chuan Buddhism is the result of taking Buddhist philosophy and adding the native Chinese philosophy of Taoism. This order was more in tune with the teachings of Buddhist philosophy, but the monks were spending so much time meditating or hunched over tables translating texts that they were in poor physical condition. Most of the monk’s routine paralleled that of the Irish monks of the Middle Ages. This would often result in the monks not being able to maintain focus during the rigorous meditation. Bodhdharma decided that something needed to be done. So he went into a cave and meditated on the problem for eleven years. It is said that he meditated so hard he eventually bored a hole in the back of the wall of the cave. When Bodhdharma emerged he presented the monks with exercise modified from Indian yoga and based on the 18 main animals in Indo-Chinese iconography (i.e. snake, dragon, leopard, tiger, crane, etc.). By teaching them movement exercises designed to enhance chi flow and build strength, he succeeded in countering the atrophy brought about from constant meditation.

As time went on, the Buddhist sect became more distinct, due to the nature of the martial arts studied and practiced. Although martial arts had existed in China for centuries, it was within the confines of the temple that these arts were codified into new and different styles that would become distinctly Shaolin.

In 589 A.D., China would be fully united under the barbarian rule of Yang Chien, founder of the Sui Dynasty. In about 600 A.D. the Hunan Temple became the seat of Shaolin Buddhism in northern China. Then, in 618 A.D., the T’ang Dynasty was established after a yearlong political takeover from the Sui and in 624 A.D. The T’ang reunited all of China for over 200 years of relative peace. It is this peace that allowed the emergence of the Fukien temple in 650 A.D. Though both temples were previously Buddhist Monasteries, they took on a completely new character, as they became part of the Shaolin order.

The Shaolin were much more than Kung-Fu practitioners. The monks were first and foremost a religious order. The martial aspect of their daily training rituals was born of necessity. The original training routine introduced by Bodhdharma was codified into a system of self-defense over a period of time, although it is impossible to say just when it became a martial art. The Shaolin temples were often in secluded area where bandits would have traveled and wild animals were an occasional problem. At various times in the temples histories they even had to defend themselves from Dynastic Military persecution. Most predominately after the end of the Ming Dynasty (1368 – 1644), throughout the Ch’ing Dynasty (1644 – 1912), it became obvious that an advanced system of self-defense was necessary. Shaolin philosophy dictated that their art was purely defensive and never to be used offensively. Rather, the study and the practice of Kung-Fu within the Shaolin order led to a better understanding of violence and consequently

conflict avoidance. Shaolin would refuse to accept an offering of violence and merely return it to the aggressor. Initially a Shaolin monk may choose to parry an attack; however, if an assailant is both skilled and determined to cause harm, a more definitive and concluding solution may be required. This ranges from a joint-lock hold to a knockout, or even death. The more sophisticated and violent the assault is upon the monk, the more devastating the return to the aggressor. This philosophy was practiced by a single monk or the whole order, and was an important necessity.

The Two Temples

There were five main temples at the height of the Shaolin order: Hunan, Fukien, Kwangtung, Wutang and O mei shan. The five temples were rarely active at the same time, and the first two are the most significant.

Hunan: During most of its history, the Hunan temple was the seat of the most senior monks in the Shaolin order. This temple is “the” Shaolin temple seen in most Chinese Kung-Fu movies. The physical premise, located in Loyang near a small mountain town southwest of Beijing, was destroyed in response to the Boxer Rebellion in 1901. The temple was probably not entirely out of use until the 1920’s. The Temple was restored by the Chinese government in the mid 1970s. It has become a tourist attraction much like Colonial Williamsburg. Most of the resident “monks” seen at this temple today are actors.

Fukien: Probably built around the same time as the Hunan temple, and originally a mainstream Buddhist temple, it was integrated into the Shaolin order around 650 A.D. Larger than the Hunan temple, Fukien served as the “headquarters” during times when the Hunan temple was under threat or destroyed. The southern styles of Praying Mantis as well as Snake, Dragon and Wing Chung systems were developed in the Fukien temple. The Temple was destroyed in response to the Tia Ping and Boxer Rebellions of the early 1900’s, and was not rediscovered until the 1980’s.

The Ming Dynasty

In 1368, after almost 100 years of Mongol occupation in China, a Buddhist priest named Chu Yuan-Chang (A.K.A. Hung-Wu) overthrew the Mongol Empire and established the Ming Dynasty (1368 – 1644), the longest lasting and most stable dynasty in China. Chu Gar, the Chu family style probably a derivative of Northern Shaolin Practice, was established as the official martial art of the Ming Dynasty. Chu Gar was originally taught only to members of Chinas royal family.

The first concern of China’s new emperor in 1370 was rebuilding military strength and preventing Mongol resurgence. Chu Yuan-Chang established garrisons at strategic points and created a hereditary military caste of soldiers who would sustain themselves by farming and be ever ready for war. Chu Yuan-Chang made his commanders into military nobility. Troops were forbidden to abuse civilians. Chu Yuan-Chang’s regime executed many who violated the laws or were suspected of treason. Chu Yuan-Chang put much effort towards economic recovery. Farms had been devastated, so he settled a huge number of peasants on what had been considered wasteland and gave them tax exemptions. Between 1371 and 1379 the land under cultivation tripled, as did revenues. The government sponsored tree planting and reforestation programs. Neglected dikes and canals were repaired and thousands of reservoirs were rebuilt. Chu Yuan-Chang died in 1398 at the age of seventy. Chu Yuan-Chang’s death was followed by four years

of civil war and the disappearance of his son and heir, Jianwen. Jianwen had been indecisive and scholarly and no match for his uncle, Yongle, who became Emperor in 1403. Yongle ruled until 1424. He often used eunuchs as spies and appointed them to high positions in the government. By the mid 1400's the Mongols were again making border raids and appeared to the Chinese as the greatest threat since the rise of the Ming Dynasty.

With the independence from Mongol rule, Confucian influence had increased in the court. Confucian scholars were filling the ranks of senior officialdom and remained hostile to commerce and foreign contact. The Confucianists had little or no interest in seeing China develop into a great maritime trading power. In the wake of the Mongol rule, China's leaders were eager to restore things Chinese, and that included shipping on China's canals, which had fallen into disrepair under the Mongols. By 1592, China was engaged in a costly war with Japan over Korea. This was the beginning of the end for the Ming Dynasty. Over the next 50 years, the Ming military experienced heavy decline due to extensive defense programs in response to increased civil conflicts. In 1644 Li Tzu-Ch'eng, a domestic rebel, led a campaign that captured the capital. The Ming had no choice but to enlist the help of the Manchu forces to remove Li Tzu-Ch'eng. However, the Manchus captured the throne for themselves, ending the rule of the Ming Dynasty. In 1646, Dorgon became the first Ch'ing Emperor and declared the Ch'ing Dynasty.

The Ch'ing Dynasty

The Manchurians captured China's seat of power and installed the Ch'ing (A.K.A. Qing) dynasty (1644 – 1912). With the ascension of the Ch'ing dynasty, the Ming Emperor and his family fled to the northern Shaolin Hunan temple to seek asylum and escape certain death at the hands of the Manchurians. The military forces of the Ch'ing dynasty hunted the royal family, knowing that a revolutionary spirit was being nurtured. Following them to the Temple, the Ch'ing army was ordered to burn it to the ground. The royal family escaped to the southern Shaolin temple in the Fukien Province. Knowing that the army would hunt and kill any person that practiced Chu Gar, the name was changed to Praying Mantis. This was done in the hope that the name would trick the Ch'ing pursuers into thinking it was the same as the popular Northern Praying Mantis style. Still the Ch'ing army found the exiled royal family and burnt the southern Shaolin temple down. Many of the royal family escaped and went deeper into hiding. They became known as the Hakka or the Northern Guest. From that point on, the art of Chu Gar was only taught in secret to Hakka people out of fear of being betrayed and hunted down by the government. In Hong Kong, Chu Gar was only taught to Hakka descendants, but later the rules expanded to trust members of Chinese heritage.

Ryukyu Kingdom

In the 14th century, small domains scattered on the tiny island were unified into three principalities, Hokuzan (Northern Mountain), Chūzan (Central Mountain) and Nanzan (Southern Mountain). This was known as the Three Kingdoms or Sanzan (Three Mountains) period. These three principalities, or tribal federations led by major chieftains, fought for control. Chūzan emerged victorious, receiving Chinese investiture in the early 15th century. That is to say, the leaders of Chūzan were officially recognized by China as the rightful kings over those of Nanzan and Hokuzan, thus lending great legitimacy to their claims. The ruler of Chūzan passed his throne to king Hashi. The king received the surname "Shō" from the Ming emperor in 1421, and became known as Shō Hashi, and founding the first Shō Dynasty. Shō Hashi adopted the

Chinese hierarchical court system, built Shuri Castle and the town as his capital, and constructed Naha harbor.

In 1469, King Shō Toku died without a male heir; a servant declared he was Toku's adopted son and gained Chinese investiture. Becoming known as Shō En, he began the Second Shō Dynasty. The second king of that dynasty, Shō Shin, who ruled from 1478-1526, ushered in Ryukyu Kingdom's golden age.

Diplomatically, the kingdom established tributary relations with China during its Ming Dynasty. It also developed trade relations with Japan, Korea and many Southeast Asian countries. Altogether, 150 voyages between the kingdom and Southeast Asia on Ryukyuan ships were recorded, with 61 of them bound for Siam, 10 for Malacca, 10 for Pattani and 8 for Java, among others.

Between the 15th and 16th centuries, the Ryukyu Kingdom emerged as the main trading intermediary in Eastern Asia. Japanese products such as silver, fans, lacquer-ware, folding screens, and Chinese products such as medicinal herbs, minted coins, glazed ceramics, brocades, and textiles were traded within the kingdom for Southeast Asian goods such as tin, sugar, iron, ambergris, Indian ivory and Arabian frankincense.

Around 1590, Japanese feudal leader Toyotomi Hideyoshi asked the Ryukyu Kingdom to aid in his campaign to conquer Korea. If successful, Hideyoshi intended to then move against China. As the Ryukyu kingdom was a tributary state of the Ming Dynasty, the request was refused, not wishing to risk the loss of their Chinese trade. The Japanese proceeded with their attack on the Korean peninsula without the aid of the Ryukyu kingdom.

The Tokugawa shogunate that emerged following Hideyoshi's fall authorized the Shimazu family, feudal lords of the Satsuma domain (present-day Kagoshima prefecture), to send an expeditionary force to conquer the Ryukyu Kingdom. The Ryukyu kingdom had not paid respects to the new regime; therefore, permission to invade the kingdom was granted by the rulers in Edo. The invasion of the Ryukyu Islands by Satsuma took place in 1609. Three thousand men and more than one hundred war junks sailed from Kagoshima at the southern tip of Kyushu. The Ryukyans did not put up a fight, due to the order of the king, who told them "*nuchidu takara*" (Life itself is a treasure).

The occupation of the Ryukyu Islands occurred fairly quickly, with a minimum of armed resistance. King Shō Nei was taken as a prisoner to the Satsuma domain and later to Edo. When he was released two years later, the Ryukyu Kingdom regained a degree of autonomy. However, the Satsuma domain did seize control over some territory, notably the Amami-Ōshima island group, which was incorporated into the Satsuma domain.

The Ryukyu Kingdom found itself in a period of "dual subordination" to Japan and China, wherein Ryukyuan tributary relations were maintained with both the Tokugawa shogunate and the Ming Chinese court. Because China would not have a formal trade agreement unless a country was a tribute state, the kingdom was a convenient loophole for Japanese trade with China. When Japan officially closed off trade with European nations (except the Dutch) Nagasaki and Ryukyu became the only Japanese trading ports offering connections with the outside world.

It was during this time that the Shimazu introduced the policy of banning sword ownership by commoners, which was already well established on the mainland. This furthered the development of the indigenous martial art karate as a means of self-defense against the sometimes overly aggressive samurai that controlled the kingdom. The native martial art, named Te had long since blended with the imported Chinese Kung Fu. From this the term Karate was created from the two words: Kara, meaning originally "China" then later "empty", and Te, which means "fist" or "hand".

Hostility against mainland Japan increased in the Ryukyus immediately after its annexation to Japan. Japan introduced modern institutions including public education using standard Japanese. This increased the number of Japanese language speakers on the islands, creating a link with the mainland. When Japan became the dominant power of the Far East, many

Ryukyuan were proud of being citizens of the Empire. However, there was always an undercurrent of dissatisfaction for being treated as second-class citizens. For example, during an earlier part of Meiji era, Japan offered the Ryukyu Islands to the Ch'ing Dynasty in exchange for treaty concessions though the negotiation eventually failed.

When Commodore Matthew Perry's official envoys from the United States sailed to Japan to force trade relations in 1853, they first stopped in the Ryukyu Island and tried to force a signing of an Unequal Treaties, opening up the island to American trade. From there, he continued on to Japan.

Following the Meiji Restoration, the Japanese government abolished the Ryukyu Kingdom, formally annexing the islands to Japan as Okinawa Prefecture in 1879. King Shō Tai, the last king, was moved to Tokyo, as were many other Japanese aristocrats, and died there in 1901. Ch'ing China made some diplomatic protests to the Japanese government, but these proved to have little effect.

Secret Societies

According to legends, the Hungmun (Hung League) was founded to reestablish the Ming Dynasty, which was ended by the Ch'ing Dynasty. The Manchurian conquest of China was very quick, though revolts did arise.

Stories on the matter are conflicting at best. Some tell of the monks having been in the service of the new Emperor only to have been betrayed. Others tell of the monastery harboring Ming Dynasty refugees and the center of the rebellion to reinstate them. Either way, the Emperor saw the fighting Shaolin monks as a danger and had the Northern Shaolin temple closed in 1674.

Many monks escaped the attack and destruction of the temple. Five monks played a very important role in history. They became known as the Five Ancestors: Choi Dakjung, Fong Daaihung, Mah Chiu-hing, Wu Dakdai and Lei Sikhoi. They founded the Hungmun under the motto "Fan Ch'ing Fu Ming", or "Down with the Ch'ing, Restore the Ming". The name was chosen to remember the first Ming Dynasty Emperor Chu Yuan-Chang (A.K.A. Hung-Wu). Among the monks that managed to escape the Northern Shaolin temple were Wanjung and Jihong (A.K.A. Zhi Kong). Together with the rest, they set up new monasteries in southern China or joined others that were already established. Even if the monks and Ming Royal family joined other temples or went elsewhere, most remained in contact with one another and helped recruit supporters for their cause.

Though Shaolin temples were the center for this underground loyalist movement, membership into the secret societies was not limited to monks. Many people were recruited for their military experience or expertise in non-Shaolin martial arts. Many people brought martial arts knowledge into the rebel organizations that were eventually blended with the Shaolin styles. These styles were called Hungkyun (Style of the Hungmun) or Hunggakyun (Style of the Hung family). The members of the Hungmun referred to themselves as the Hung family. The Hungmun divided itself into "cells" that operated independently of one another but with the common goal of restoring the Ming Dynasty.

One of the earliest and biggest of the rebel cells was the Tin Dei Wui (Heaven and Earth Society). It's suspected that this society is the original Hungmun and that several other cells using different names actually belonged to the Tin Dei Wui. The Tin Dei Wui was founded solely, at least in the beginning, as a rebellion movement and focused on spreading Kung-Fu among the rebels. A basic skills exercise used was to maintain a single posture for long periods of time and was an established part of Shaolin training. It was popular with the southern Shaolin and adopted by the Tin Dei Wui in southern China.

After 1860 many other big societies came into existence. The Taiping, Old Brothers Society, Ching Pang, and Hung Pang are just a few of these other secret societies. All of these societies were originally offshoots of the original Tin Dei Wui.

Eventually many of these societies began to rob the rich, considered enemies of the common people, to finance their activities. Over time, they became more criminal and less anti-Ch'ing.

Continual wars led to the eventual downfall of the Ch'ing Dynasty and the evolution of the secret societies. First the Opium War (1839 – 1842) with Britain weakened the Ch'ing Dynasty's hold. In 1890, Japan declared war on China and in 1895 China capitulated. Japan and Europe took over and exploited the Chinese. As a result, secret societies were forbidden and were given the name "Triads" by the British who controlled southern China. Because of this exploitation, many more people joined the rebel movement and specifically the Hungmun. The European and Japanese exploitation led to the Boxer Rebellion (1898 – 1900) and forced the rebels and the Chinese army to unite against the "foreign menace". Although the Ch'ing Dynasty's power was broken, it was not until 1911 that the last Manchurian Emperor, a young boy named Pu Yi, was dethroned.

The end of the Ch'ing dynasty did not see the end of the secret societies. They became mostly criminal organizations under new names. When the People's Republic of China seized complete power in 1949, many members of the Triads moved to Hong Kong and founded new organizations. These Triads form the "Chinese mafia" which is present in almost every Chinatown throughout the world.

Chow Gar

A young monk named Chow Ah Naam is credited with the development of Chow Gar. His story is probably a mixture of fact and myth. The traditional story is as follows:

Chow Ah Naam was born into a wealthy Cantonese family. When he was about ten years old, he developed a stomach illness and doctors were unable to find a cure for him. While traveling to find a climate that was better suited to his health, he found himself at an Inn that was a part of the Fukien temple. The proprietor of the Inn knew of Chow Ah Naam's illness, and advised him to go into the temple and seek the aid of a monk named Sim Yan. This particular monk was a medicine man and did not normally treat outsiders, but he got along well with Chow Ah Naam. After a few months of treatment, Chow Ah Naam fully recovered from his illness. However, during this time, Chow Ah Naam had very limited access to his family's wealth and became very concerned about the cost of staying at the Inn. The proprietor of the Inn asked if he would like to be a servant in the kitchen. Because the Inn was part of the Shaolin temple, the rules were that after being accepted, there must be at least two hours a day set aside for Kung-Fu studies. Chow Ah Naam decided to stay at the temple and agreed to study Kung-Fu.

One day Chow Ah Naam accidentally bumped into a monk carrying two buckets of water. The monk thought of himself as the strongest boxer in the temple and was in the habit of bullying others. So when Chow Ah Naam bumped into the monk, the monk became angry. Although Chow Ah Naam tried using what he had been taught to defend himself, the bully monk was able to knock him down one punch. From that point on Chow Ah Naam tried to avoid the monk as much as possible.

One day Chow Ah Nam was walking through a nearby forest collecting wood for the stove in the kitchen when he heard a bird making lots of noise. Upon inspection, he witnessed a bird using its beak against a praying mantis. Watching very closely, Chow Ah Naam saw the praying mantis block several advances made by the bird and suddenly cut across the bird's throat. The bird fell to the ground covered in its own blood and did not move. Chow Ah Naam was very surprised by this incident and, being an intelligent person, it occurred to him to copy

the praying mantis. He caught the praying mantis and many others after it, feeding them and using a twig to test their fighting reaction, thus developing the Southern Mantis style*.

Nobody knew about Chow Ah Naam's secret studies until one day a few years later. The bully monk was showing off in front of a crowd when Chow Ah Naam passed through. Seeing him, the monk decided to pick on him, and Chow Ah Naam realized that he could not always avoid the bully monk. So Chow Ah Naam made a challenge. The monk began to laugh and then attacked but Chow Ah Naam was cool and avoided his punches. This made the monk angry and he tried to use all his power to knock Chow Ah Naam down. All the on lookers were standing around shouting, jeering and creating so much noise that it awoke the high monk Sim Yan. Sim Yan went to investigate the cause of such an uproar, and discovered Chow Ah Naam fighting. Sim Yan knew that the fighting style that he was witnessing was different from the Shaolin Styles. Chow Ah Naam struck his aggressor and knocked him to the ground. Sim Yan stopped Chow Ah Naam and asked him where he had studied Kung-Fu from, so Chow Ah Naam told the high monk that he had observed the praying mantis' fighting habits. Sim Yan praised Chow Ah Naam because he felt that there were not many people like him. Sim Yan personally taught Chow Ah Naam the highest of the Shaolin styles to develop a strong and powerful bridge between the Southern Mantis style and Fukien Temple Boxing**. This eventually took on the name of Chow Gar. Everybody heard about this new method of training and its creator for miles around.

*This took place towards the final days of the Fukien temple (circa 1890 to 1920) when the Chu family was still in hiding. It is very possible that Chow Ah Naam developed a friendship with one of the Hakka (descendants of the Ming royal family) and studied Chu Gar. The Hakka would have made it very clear that Chow Ah Naam would have to keep the style secret because of its relationship to the Ming dynasty. The story was fabricated to hide the arts relationship to the Chu Gar Style. The idea of having observed the praying mantis in nature relates to the Hakka renaming their style Praying Mantis Kung-Fu.

**Some or all of the monks at the temple may have known knowledge of the Chu Gar system and its relationship to the Hakka. It would make sense that that Yim San recognized the "mantis" style as Chu Gar and took on Chow Ah Naam's training to further protect the Hakka. To keep the Chu Gar style from being recognized by others, a new style, Chow Gar, was created. This represents a bridge connecting Shaolin Temple Boxing and Chu Gar. And looking even further back at the origin of Chu Gar, it can be said that Chow Gar was a blending of Northern and Southern Shaolin Kung-Fu.

Migration

Pangai-Noon eventually traveled across the Pacific to the United States. The art made the journey through military service personnel stationed in Okinawa.

The United States established a presence, most notably the many military installations, on the island after the Second World War had ended. Eventually, the service men learned of the martial arts located there and wanted to become practitioners of the arts. All but a very small group of Dojos refused to teach the Americans. One of the few schools that did open their doors to outsiders was Uechi-Ryu taught by Kanei Uechi and Ryuko Tomoyose.

The few "lucky" individuals that did find a school to teach them found that it was not easy. The instruction was not explained in anything other than Japanese, and if the students did not do what the teacher wanted, they would be corrected by getting hit, kicked, knocked down or some other physical explanation of their failure to grasp what was being taught. This discouraged most, but the few that were able to stay with it were introduced to a culture and way of life that was, until then, off limits to outsiders.

As the Military rotated out the personnel on the island, many returned their homes in the United States with what they had learned. Some even begin to teach the arts that they had learned while stationed in Okinawa.