

Pa Kua Stepping and Single Palm Change

by Sun Pao-Kung

When Fu Chen-Sung was teaching martial arts to army soldiers stationed in Canton in the early 1930's, he began teaching a young 22 year old named Sun Pao-Kung. Sun, who was born in 1908 and came from Shanghai, was an army officer who had a university degree in physics. Because Sun gained rank as a senior army officer while he was in Canton, he was able to train with Fu Chen-Sung on a private basis and he was accepted as a formal student. It is said that although Fu Chen-Sung taught many people Pa Kua Chang, he accepted only a handful as formal disciples.

Sun passed away a few years ago, however, before he died he had written an article on Pa Kua Stepping and Single Palm Change which he gave to his student Johnny Kwong Ming Lee. Mr. Lee has graciously passed on this article for us to print in this issue.

How to Practice Pa Kua Stepping

During the practice of Pa Kua Single Palm Change, there is at least one round of Pa Kua stepping between each change. In the first section there are three different styles of Single Palm Change, each requiring two rounds of Pa Kua stepping between them. During the complete practice of Pa Kua Chang, about twenty rounds are required. In other words, if one cannot handle twenty rounds, one cannot complete the eight sections with continuity. Therefore, Pa Kua stepping should be practiced separately. One must be able to do twenty rounds in order to practice without difficulty. Of course, the more rounds the better, forty to eighty rounds is considered a good standard. Rounds can be practiced in conjunction with Single Palm Change, thus avoiding the monotony as well as adding to the flexibility of the body.

During practice, one must be calm, peaceful in mind, and maintain a straight upper body with the chest neither shrunk nor expanded. Both arms hang naturally. First, assume a "sitting" position, bending one knee, body lowered by the length of one head, entire body weight resting on one leg, the other leg stretched straight with foot relaxing flatly on the ground. At the start of the walk, thrust the bent knee, pushing the other leg forward (leg relaxing, not using strength). Since the hind leg is thrusting upward, the front foot will lift off the ground slightly as it slides forward. While the hind leg is in motion, the chest must also expand forward and breath in deeply. Such coordination of the hind leg thrusting forward, chest expanding and inhaling is of great importance. The waist must be straight, otherwise when force is applied at the leg, the chest would expand upward, thus causing the upper body to waver. This is a mistake. One must remember that the upper body remains relaxed.

The hind leg, which was originally bent, can thrust forward until it is straight, losing its potential for further forward motion. The front leg naturally would land on the ground. At this point, the body is still moving forward due to momentum. One should notice that the front leg,

which is bent before touching the ground, must not apply force, but remain relaxed. The chest must also remain at ease, exhaling. The hind leg moves forward without force, resting the foot flatly on the ground with the leg stretched straight. Now, the hind leg has become the front leg and the original front leg becomes the hind leg and is in the bent position.

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The forward thrusting motion of the newly assumed hind leg is repeated. The newly assumed front leg slides forward. Such repeated motions, in exchange, forms the Pa Kua stepping movement. The most important point is still combination with expansion and contraction of the chest and rhythm of the breathing. After perfecting such practice, one can do the Pa Kua stepping with the smallest effort. Since one leg is always resting while the other is applying force, the endurance of the two legs is great. Advancing with the hind leg and breathing deep do not lead to panting nor polluting the blood. People often pant after a short period of running, they even turn pale after a while due to irregularity in breathing, lack of oxygen and polluting the blood stream.

How to Practice Single Palm Change

Single Palm Change is an exclusive invention of the Pa Kua Family. I have often heard from people who practice our style that the "circle" can defend an enemy's thousand pound force with a mere two-ounce resistance. When I learned T'ai Chi Ch'uan as a youth, my master told me so. Yet when I asked him why is a circle so effective that it can encounter a thousand pounds with merely two ounces, the master failed to explain. Many other T'ai Chi experts did not have a satisfactory answer either. Later, I learned Pa Kua Ch'uan from Fu Chen-Sung. He taught me Single Palm Change with detailed explanation before we sparred together. He had powerful arms, twice as strong as mine. To encounter his punches directly would be impossible. Yet, using Single Palm Change, not only could I avoid his attack, but I managed to turn it from an active to a passive action. Turning his arm around, I could even counterattack at the suitable moment. Thus I believed the effectiveness of Single Palm Change. He also told me that in most styles of martial arts, the enemy's punch or strike is met with a hard counter blow. It would be a mistake to use a soft counter blow which would leave one's chest open for a second attack even if the first was

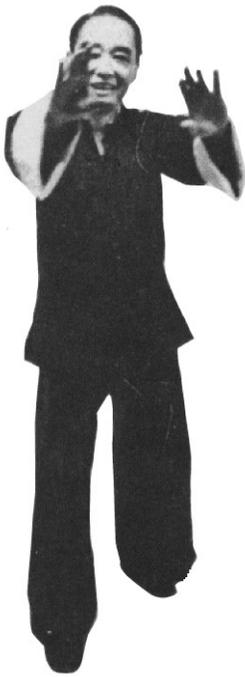


Photo # 1



Photo # 2



Photo # 3



Photo # 4

Sun Pao-Kung performing a simple Fu Style Single Palm Change

blocked. In Single Palm Change, either hard or soft does not leave the belly open for attack. In other words, the result is twice as great. Therefore, Single Palm Change in Pa Kua Chang is famous among the field of martial arts in China. However, it is no easy task to perfect the practice of Single Palm Change.

First one must be prepared mentally - to be calm and cool, not showing any excitement when facing an enemy. During practice, at first one assumes the bow position with the front leg bent, hind leg stretched straight, upper body erect, both hands level with the shoulders and extended in front (photo #1). Assuming one's right leg is in front, one blocks the attacker's hand with one's right arm. At the moment of contact one should avoid impact with the attacking arm, rather one must retreat according to the direction of attack. In fact, it is a withdrawal of the body, not the arm. The relationship between arm and body remains the same. At the same time, one must utilize the strength of the waist to move downward in a circular pattern. Thus the arm, though not moving by itself, is travelling downward and backward in the path of a half circle.

The arm which is resisting the attacker's hand requires a considerable amount of force to slow down its advance. The other arm does not move and remains relaxed until the resisting arm arrives at an advantageous position. At this point, the body is in a sitting position with the front leg out stretched and the hind leg bent, the weight of the body is resting on the left leg (photo #2). Now, the left arm turns its wrist, supporting below the right wrist, both wrists forcing the attacker's advance to halt. Meanwhile, the chest and waist are outstretched, the right leg is bent, or in a bow shape, forming a straight line from the crossing point of the wrists, the belly and knee all resisting pressure from the enemy (photo #3). While the enemy's pressure remains, one changes from expanded chest and belly to shrunk position and twists

the waist to the left. At the same time the right palm is replaced by the left for resisting the attacker, freeing the right arm for counterattack (photo #4). During practice, as soon as the right arm is freed, it becomes the beginning of Single Palm Change which is followed by Pa Kua stepping, advancing around the circle. This is the general practice of Single Palm Change.

The Combination of Pa Kua Stepping and Single Palm Change

We could practice three different kinds of combinations of Single Palm Change and Pa Kua stepping.

- 1) Enemy attacks from the front during Pa Kua stepping.
- 2) Enemy attacks from behind during Pa Kua stepping.
- 3) No contact with the enemy during Pa Kua stepping, but actively turning to the back of the enemy to seek an opportunity for attack.

1 - Enemy Attacks from the Front During Pa Kua Stepping.

Begin with the original start and complete two to three circles, then pause with the "Lion Pose." The left arm is curved with shoulders level. Thumbs point upward, right hand rests on left wrist, chest concave, belly shrunk, body assumes seated position, the waist turns 180 degrees towards the rear. The chest gradually expands during the turn. At 180 degree point, apply force in both hands and separate. The arms are to be held level with the shoulders, palms straight with the thumbs pointing upward. Now practice the single palm change as previously described.

After repeating this two or three times on both sides, change to the second kind of single palm change.

2 - Enemy Attacks from Behind During Pa Kua Stepping.

Assuming the enemy is following from behind and has advanced to a distance suitable for an attack from the back, at the moment the attacker intends to strike,

place the feet at 90 degree angles to each other, with the toes pointing inward, and turn. The right thumb rotates downward as the body turns forming the "seated" position in order to slow down the attacking hand or arm followed by the change of hands. Resisting the attacker with the right hand, the left hand is free for counter-attack. You can also perform the single palm change and advance with the Pa Kua stepping in circles. This type of movement can also be repeated on the right and left for practice.

3 - *No Contact with the Enemy During Pa Kua Stepping, But Actively Turning to the Back of the Enemy to Seek an Opportunity for Attack.*

The third type assumes that the enemy is at the center and you are circling him with the Pa Kua stepping. The intension is to confuse the enemy without contact, then approach his back to attack from behind. Placing the feet at 90 degree angles, you can turn 180 degrees suddenly. If the enemy turns also, you can place your feet at 90 degree angles again and make another 180 degree turn.

Turning back and forth, it is easy to reach the back of the enemy and attack. However, during practice, one can proceed to circle with Pa Kua stepping after the 180 degree turn. Or, one can circle in opposite directions two or three times.

At this point, I wish to emphasize the importance and method of *k'uo pu*. *K'uo Pu* is the easiest method to change direction. When doing *k'ou pu* one must notice the angle between the placement of the two feet which determines whether one will make a turn of 180 degrees, 45 degrees, or 30 degrees. If one intends to make a 180 degree turn, one must place his feet at 90 degree angles to one another. If the enemy is at the left, you stretch your left leg, placing your foot squarely on the ground. The right knee touches the left knee, the right heel points outward. At this point the body is still moving forward due to momentum. As soon as the two knees touch, the right foot will automatically land on the ground, forming a 90 degree angle with the left foot, braking the forward momentum as well. Note that the right foot must not land on the ground until the knees are touching. Using the strength in the waist, turn to the left. The right arm is stretched out with the thumb pointing downward and the palm facing forward, forming the "seated" position.

With such a method of *k'ou pu*, not only can one turn 180 degrees, but one can also land the right foot lightly, stabilizing the body. One must remember this.

The above is about interchanging single palm change and Pa Kua stepping by means or *k'ou pu*. The more one perfects this technique, the more one can increase the number of circles. Twenty circles is a minimum! The more the better!

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Fu Style Pa Kua Chang Push Hands

The couplets of Pa Kua Pushing Hands:

The Dragon Shaped Pa Kua Pushing Hands come from Pa Kua.

One moves to the four corners and eight sides.

One thoroughly apprehends straight and slanted.

One clearly understands all the components - hand and eye coordination, body and stepping techniques.

One's raising, lowering, and liveliness resemble a swimming dragon.

There are twisting and crossing movements within all of the circular motions.

After practicing for a time, one can exert force coming from one's back in an unusual way.

Strengthening one's body and improving one's health, Wu Tang boxing is the acme.

If one asks, "How is it used?" One deflects and bends like a tree in the wind.

Important Points of Dragon Shaped Pa Kua Pushing Hands:

One's hands, eyes, body, and stepping should maintain the same height and move as one.

One should remain as lively as a frolic dragon and one's palms should be like the shuttle of a loom.

One's movements should be continuous and executed in a single breath.

In single and double palm change, it should be like a dragon flicking out its tongue.

In "Azure Dragon Extends its Claws", "Straight On Palm", and "Palm Pressing Against Chest" the movement should be like a clap of thunder.

In the "Waist Wrapping Palm" and the "Spinning Body Palm" the movement should be like a black dragon coiling its body.

One twists and spins, tumbles, and turns.

One's entire body is rounded, making a big circle.

One's hands and feet make small circles everywhere.

One advances circularly, one retreats circularly, undulating like a wave.

One's lively stepping is circular.

One uses one's waist as the axis. The waist impelling the four extremities.

The hands arrive with the feet.

The body moves with the palms.

One can strike from a stationery posture or one palm for each step, or one can take many steps with a single strike.

The whole body moves with a single breath.

There should be springiness suffusing its suppleness.

After considerable practice, one can increase the flow of ch'i and blood, strengthening the body, improving the health and making one live to a long life.

The Dragon Shape Pa Kua Pushing Hands makes use of: pushing, raising up, leading, directing, moving, intercepting, carrying, closing, twisting, overturning, walking, turning, wrapping, piercing, and entwining. These are all used interchangeably. These kinds of striking methods can be used individually and can also be mixed. In attacking, one defends oneself and in defending oneself, one attacks. One can deflect and exert force, one can parry a thousand pounds with four ounces. One can also use the entire body's force in a single palm. One can attack straight on and from the sides, however, adhering to the opponent's back is one of the strengths of Pa Kua pushing hands.