




# White Crane's

## FIGHTING PRINCIPLES

BY LORNE BERNARD

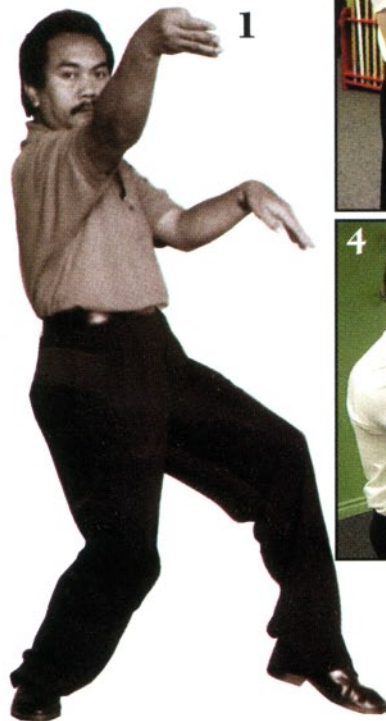
There are four principle styles of Fukien (Fujian) white crane kung-fu: flying crane (fei he), eating crane (shi he), screaming crane (ming he) and sleeping crane (jan he or su he). Over the past three centuries, however, variations and combinations with other systems have led to the creation of even more types of Fukienese white crane.

A close-up photograph of a man with short brown hair and a light beard, looking off to the side with a serious expression. He is wearing a white martial arts gi with black trim and a black sash. The background is a textured, light-colored wall.

Faced with  
unavoidable  
conflict, a  
white crane  
fighter's  
response  
is quick,  
powerful  
and decisive.

# White Crane's

## FIGHTING PRINCIPLES



### HE DJE GOU: FORM AND APPLICATION

Master Lee Joo-Chian demonstrates he dje gou (1). This movement is one of white crane's basics and appears in bai he tui jan and swan loong chou hai. The opponent attacks with a finger strike to the throat (2). The defender steps to the side and responds with jo bu da (3). He attempts to block the defender's counterattack by sinking down and using jen jie. But before he completes his movement, the defender sticks to his retreating right arm and strikes him with he dje gou (4). At the same time, his left arm circles the defender's left hand to control it with go sa (5).

The flying crane style of Fukienese white crane was passed down through the Lee family. Until the early 1950s, the system was considered a closed-door style taught only to people from the village of the inheritor. After seeing the ravages caused by World War II, however, third-generation grandmaster Lee Kiang-Ke decided to openly teach his art. He realized that the times were rapidly changing. After all, modern warfare had evolved in such a way that skill in hand-to-hand combat was no longer relevant. Consequently, he reconsidered the issue and decided that it would be appropriate to teach his family's deadly art form.

### "Nine Dots Monk"

Grandmaster Lee Kiang-Ke began his study of kung-fu at the age of seven under his father's tutelage. After ten years of arduous training, his father sent him to live at a temple called "White Crane Temple" (Bai He An), where he furthered his martial knowledge under the instruction of a temple monk known as "nine dots monk." This temple specialized in the instruction of Fang Chi-Niang's white crane techniques.

After four years of intensive study,

the young master returned home to assist his father in teaching white crane and practicing herbal medicine. In time, he became the chief instructor and medical practitioner in his community. Later on, the Kuomintang (Chinese Nationalist government) invited him to join the 49th Army Division as a medic. He also taught soldiers the long-handled broadsword (da dao). He eventually returned home and continued teaching martial arts and practicing medicine. Thereafter, Lee Kiang-Ke moved to Singapore where he stayed for six years. To escape the Japanese invasion forces, he then moved to Kuching, East Malaysia. Unfortunately, the Japanese soon invaded Malaysia. Following the war, fellow martial artists invited him to open a club. His new organization, the "Martial Heroes Association" (Woo Ing Tong™), pros-

pered for many years. During this period, Malaysian society was quite rough-and-tumble and polite tests of skill were fairly common. Less-friendly challenges and outright life and death self-defense situations also occurred. Lee became famous among his peers for never losing a challenge. In 1963, he moved to the city of Sibu (in the East Malaysian state of Sarawak), where he continued to teach until 1978 when he officially retired and left the school in his son's (master Lee Joo-Chian) care.

Lee Joo-Chian continues to teach a few select students in his country as well at several flying crane schools in Canada. He often relates that students may soon be traveling from Asia to study traditional flying crane in Canada, because interest appears to be growing in North America and waning in the style's birthplace.

## Behind Flying Crane

Flying crane emphasizes speed, footwork, body shifting and accuracy. Practitioners attack opponents with fast and powerful pressure point strikes. Strongly emphasized is the concept of one strike/one kill. Lee Joo-Chian explains that hand action should be as quick as a crane catching its prey. If you've ever seen a hunting crane or stork, you know that when a crane strikes, it either misses or instantly kills its prey. Now, don't think that follow-up strikes are discouraged. Rather, it means that a seasoned martial artist faced with an unavoidable conflict should choose his targets with extreme care and deliver blows mercilessly with great speed and power. In most cases, this makes follow-up techniques unnecessary. It is essential to avoid any wasted time or effort.

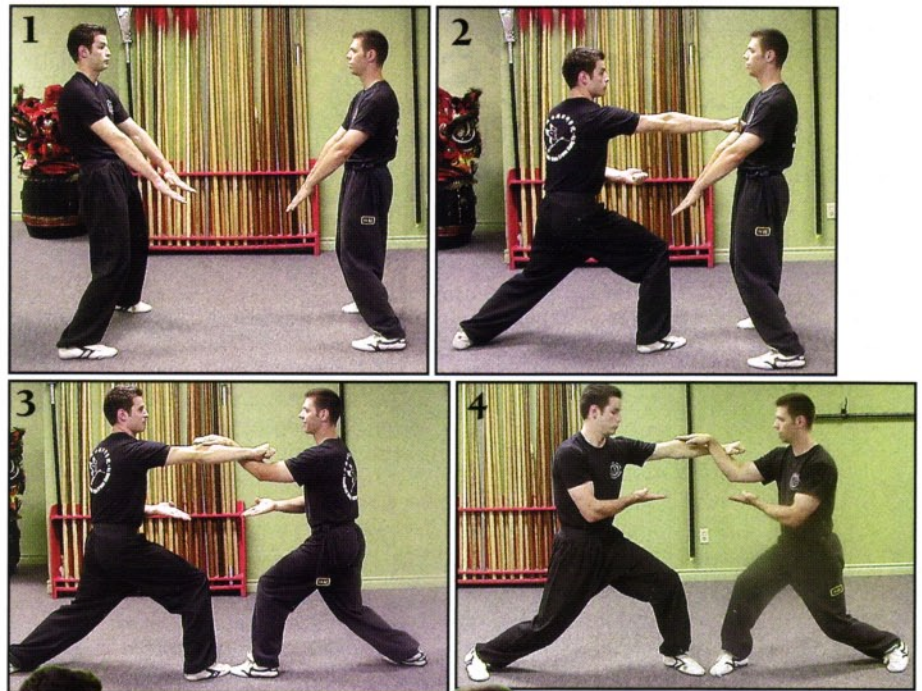
Although most martial artists know that wasting even the minutest amount of time is imprudent, the application of this knowledge occasionally leaves something to be desired. Short- and mid-range hand systems, such as white crane and wing chun, tend to specialize in directness of movement. To do otherwise would be especially foolhardy since the fighting range is close and contact has already been established. An attack must be direct and powerful, whether it's long or short. This emphasis upon directness lies at the heart of white crane's effectiveness.

Students in any system must be familiar with the theories behind their art. The essence of the white crane style is absorbed through understanding its particular theories. The fundamental theories of a given wushu system are often called "chuan li" or fist rules. In the white crane system, there are three principal sets of rules: The eight fighting principles (bat tse); the five ways to issue power (wu tse li); and the five elements theory (wu sing). This article examines the eight fighting principles and their roles in white crane mastery.

### The 8 Fighting Principles

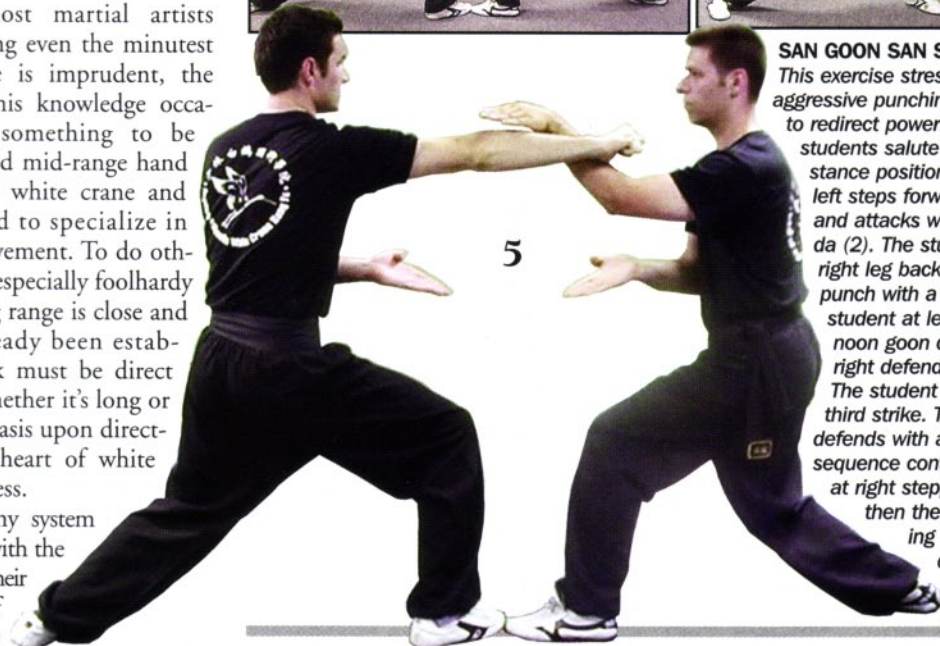
#### 1. Swallowing (Tuen)

*Tuen* is probably best translated as the act of absorbing an incoming force. A famous wushu proverb related to the concept of swallowing states,



#### SAN GOON SAN SO LIAN HUAN DA

This exercise stresses continuous and aggressive punching and forces students to redirect powerful linear blows. The students salute and assume a horse stance position (1). The student at left steps forward with his right leg and attacks with a right noon goon da (2). The student at right steps his right leg back and intercepts the punch with a left dai jao (3). The student at left strikes with a left noon goon da (4). The student at right defends with a right tuo tse. The student at left follows with a third strike. The student at right defends with a left tuo tse (5). The sequence continues with the student at right stepping twice more and then the student at left attacking three times. The students conclude with a traditional salute.



"Sze liang po chien jing." Loosely translated, it means to "use four ounces to topple 1,000 pounds." Many white crane forms and two-person sets train practitioners to absorb blows in combat.

#### 2. Spitting (Too)

*Too* is always used for attack. *Tuen* is always followed by *Too*. Once again, the hands, feet, body and chi can be used to move forward. To better illustrate the interconnection between these basic concepts, imagine an opponent attempting a reverse punch to the face. A seasoned white crane stylist will instantly lean his head back and intercept the blow with a rising wing block. He'll immediately follow with a

crane claw to his wrist. By jerking his hand down and slightly to the side, he has momentarily disturbed his attacker's rhythm and balance. Now reverse course and shoot your fingers to his throat.

#### 3. Floating (Foo)

*Foo* is the act of floating and is characterized by upward motions. Hands, feet, and body can float upward. *Foo* often implies raising the hands while maintaining the body's oneness with the earth. Another example of floating would be the defensive technique called "peun ri," in which the palm is raised to the sky to lift and control an opponent's blow. Many techniques use a slight amount of

# White Crane's

## FIGHTING PRINCIPLES

floating and then combine it with some other element, such as swallowing or sinking.

### 4. Sinking (Cheun)

The hands, body, legs and chi can all sink. Since your chi should always be sunk to the dan tien point, practitioners should spend long hours sinking their breath. Cheun and Too are often used in conjunction. In fact, the proper combination of forward and sinking power is one way to develop what is commonly called heavy power (heavy hands). Strikes using this type of power hit hard and are quite difficult to stop. Practitioners basically sink and lock their shoulders. Cheun also could be the sinking or dropping of the body. In my experience, opponents often react to my phoenix eye attack by raising their hands. Other times they might sink down on my hand or try to deviate it to the side. In all three scenarios, it was possible to quickly follow my initial attack by rapidly sinking (cheun) my body and simultaneously dropping my fist into their groin area. My response permitted me to sink down and strike one of the body's weakest points. I remind my students that a good fighter has spent much time reflecting upon the possible reactions to his advances. This helps him act upon this knowledge and dominate most encounters.

### 5. Pouncing (Pou)

*Pou* means to pounce with the hands like a tiger jumping from the forest and onto its prey. The hands suddenly rush out and intercept, grasp or strike. Techniques that exemplify this principle would be "double dragons come out of the sea" and "young tiger stretches his back."

### 6. Lifting (Ti)

*Lifting* refers to abruptly raising the hands to intercept a blow or to strike the opponent. This principle relates exclusively to hand techniques. Movements that suddenly raise the hands, such as lifting double-handed cross-blocks or single-hand raising crane head blocks, utilize this principle.

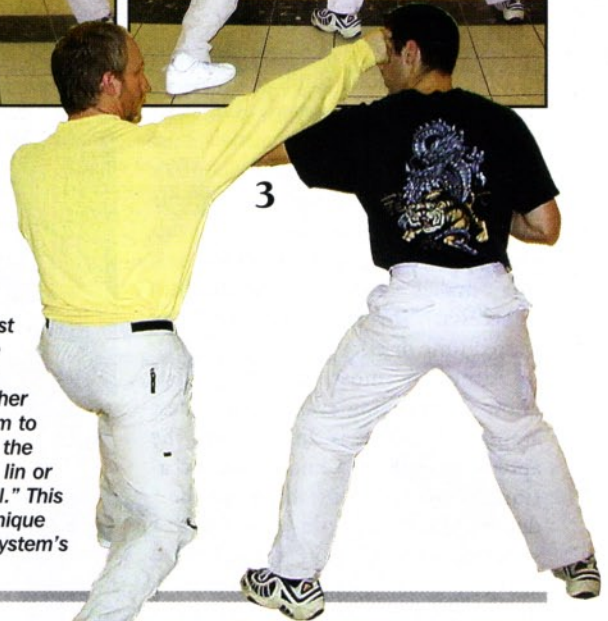
### 7. Throwing (Shuai)

This can also be translated as "tossing." In essence, hand techniques are used to send an opponent flying. Techniques such as "liu sing gan yue" demon-



### SIDE-STEPPING USING JO BU DA

*As the opponent strikes, the defender steps, raises his hand and moves to the side (1). Without delay, he turns and strikes (2) any of several sensitive points below the armpit with his phoenix eye fist (jo bu da). This is an example of simultaneous defense and attack at its most basic. Another option would have been to aim to the temple (3), in which case the strike would be called he guo lin or "the crane goes above the hill." This is a famous white crane technique and has become one of the system's trademark applications.*



strate this principle. This technique is a lifting forearm block combined with a straight punch with the other arm. In this scenario, both the defending and attacking arm issue explosive power. This sudden shooting of power through the defending arm throws the opponent's limb out of the way.

### 8. Springing (Tang)

*Springing* is used extensively in many martial arts systems. Hand and foot techniques can use a springing energy to block or strike. A good illustration of springing power is bouncing your hand off an enemy's forearm and striking him with a backhand whipping motion.

Accompanying this article are various classical Fukien white crane applications. These movements utilize one or several of the eight fighting principles. Although it's difficult to illustrate the eight fighting principles with still photographs, the arms, legs, body and chi can float and sink, swallow and spit. The power and intent utilized can also spring, pounce, lift or throw.

Effectively using your techniques in real self-defense situations determines whether you have "kung-fu." Traditional kung-fu is about ability,

rather than whether you've collected movements that can only be used for display purposes. Master Lee Joo-Chian taught, "Kung-fu shi yong fa, bu shi tao lou," meaning that skill in martial arts refers to your ability to use the movements effectively rather than your memorization of movements.

Although the flying crane system has over 70 hand forms and countless weapons sets, proficiency in the art does not require knowing all the sets. Real skill in any traditional martial art can only be attained once students understand the basics, develop considerable striking power, and effectively utilize their art's fighting theories in combat. This is what differentiates traditional wushu (chuantong wushu) from contemporary wushu (xiandai wushu). The true Fukien white crane student has mastered more than just a series of movements; he has taken the sets passed down from Lee Kiang-Ke and created a quick and effective Chinese martial arts self-defense system. 🐉

*Lorne Bernard is a white crane kung-fu instructor in Montreal, Canada. He is also president of the Eastern Canada Chinese Martial Arts Federation. His latest Book, White Crane Kung Fu: A Rare Art Revealed is available through his web site at: [www.shaolinwhitecranekungfu.com](http://www.shaolinwhitecranekungfu.com) or at [www.kontactsports.com](http://www.kontactsports.com)*