

## Kung Fu Hand Salutation

Hand salutation has been part of Chinese social and cultural etiquette for thousands of years it is how individuals greet each other it is a gesture of goodwill to show or present a form of respect, trust, friendship and to convey a sense of none violence a no hostility, no bad intention or an agreement especially between strangers it is the equivalent of hand shaking normally the hand shaking with both hands will come after both parties have reciprocated to each other's hand salute. The salutation is done within a certain distance or safe distance as an announcement and respect of space before advancing any closer that is followed with extending of both hands to shake not with one hand but with two hands extended outwards. The greeting expressions can vary from "qing" 請 meaning please, or welcome 歡迎 "huan ying".



The social hand salutation is done with the right hand in closed fist with the left hand resting or wrap on top of the clench right fist like holding it or restraining the fist. The fist symbolises hostility or fight while the open palm represents control and peace by wrapping the fist with your left hand it means no fighting or submission of mutual surrender. There is also interpretation based upon ancient religious symbolism that is related to Taoism, Confucianism, Buddhism and ancient Chinese mythological ancestral religion wherein the right fist symbolises the moon or the earth and the left open palm symbolises heaven, spirit or the stars making it about the union of Heaven (gods), spirit (human soul) and earth. Other interpretation for this form of salutation are:

1. The left hand wrapped on top of the right clench fist symbolises none aggression, no fight, or peace.
2. The second reason is by holding one's two hands together is a sign that you do not want to past any dirt or to keep your own dirty hands to yourself or better yet not to transfer any germs or diseases.

3. The third reason is to show that you have nothing to hide no weapons especially in greeting with a foreign leader or during a treaty agreement or visitation to show that you are not an assassin or have hostile intention also a good sign of humility and submission to peace.
4. A gesture of honesty and trustworthiness especially in final agreement between parties on contracts or treaties.
5. The hand shaking with both hands is to show that both your hands are free of any weapons or hidden agenda.

This salutation will also be adapted by the kung fu martial arts community with some changes added on it to represents the lineage or kung fu clan of individual sects. The main concept of clenched fist and open palm remain the same with the general custom salutation which represents peace, no fight, none violence, no hidden weapons, respect, trust etc.

The most common kung fu salutation first used is both arms the elbows are in horizontal level, the right fist horizontally level with the left palm straight open all fingers like in a knife hand it is not wrapping the right fist it is touching each other like a gate holding off a battering ram the gate being the left open palm and the battering ram being the right fist unlike the social salutation which has the left open hand wrap on top of the right fist. (See photo) It is also said that to do the opposite which is to use the left hand in closed fist and right hand in open palm translate to distrust, arrogance or be cautious.



During the fall of the Ming dynasty in 1674 AD replaced by the Qing dynasty several underground groups mainly in the south started to introduce none traditional salutation that are related mostly as coded hand signals in their rebellion against the Qing government this hand signals serve as a means of communication between rebel groups against the Qing or Manchu dynasty under the disguised that it is part of their local tradition to do the hand salutation differently. The most prominent kung fu salutation that propped up during the 1700's are:

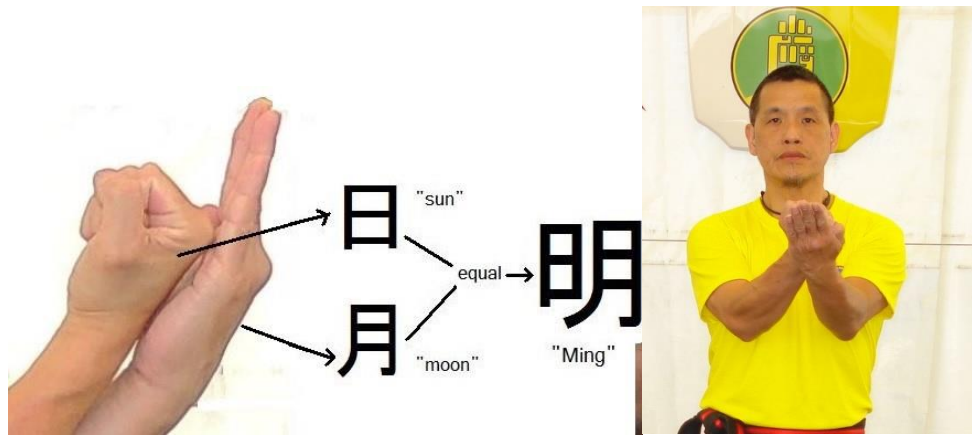
1. The right hand closed fist in back hand position like an upper cut with the left hand in open palm resting on top of the right fist. The right upper cut closed fist almost seems to represent the mountain or mountains while the left open palm the clouds. (See photo) this hand salutation is found mostly by practitioners of the Grand Ancestors Fist "Tai Cho Kun 太祖拳" martial arts group mainly in Zhangzhou Fujian province.



2. The right hand in closed fist facing front like in a straight punch with the left hand in open palm leaning at the right closed fist by the thumb, it is like a wave of water which is symbolised by the left open palm redirecting or stopping rolling boulders of rocks. This kung fu salutation is common amongst the Choy Li Fut 蔡李佛 and in Fujian province of the Yong Chun Five Ancestors Fist 永春五祖拳. (see photo)



3. The right hand in closed fist in upper cut position resting on the palm of the left hand. This hand salutation seems to resemble the Chinese characters Ming 明. With the sun or character day 日 being the right fist and the left palm being the months or the moon 月 put it together and we have the word Ming 明. This kung fu salutation is most common with practitioners of Five Ancestors Fist or Goh Cho Kun 五祖拳 in Fujian province. (see photo) This salutation can also mean an offering to the emperor or to Heaven.



4. This is the only kung fu hand salutation so far that is known to have the left hand in closed fist in vertical or upper cut position with the right hand in open palm resting on top of the left fist. It looks almost like a flaming torch or a crown this salutation can be found with practitioners of the Bak Mei 白眉 or White Eyebrow martial art sect.



5. The right hand closed fist with the left hand open palm not touching each other but in a few distances from each other about five inches apart the right fist facing and the left palm in tiger claw position. This hand salutation looks almost having a river or pathway in between the gap of the right fist and left tiger palm that if both hands should meet it will closed the river and stop the flow. This kung fu hand salutation is found mostly with the Hung Gar 洪拳 martial arts group. (see photo)



How accurate are those interpretations can be? Subject to available information that are all based on research, deduction and conclusion on personal observation with whatever available resources that is very limited due to the absence of sufficient and concrete information's that has either been lost, fractured or kept hidden plus most of the practices originated without having written or preserved records but was passed down orally and physically in those early years to avoid revealing it to the ruling Qing authorities all these that will never be known for years to come the true meaning of those different kung fu hand salutations that was initiated by the secret societies such as the Tien De Hui will for now remain secret. Any information can only be based on its actual external resources from each individual kung fu lineages base according to their respective traditions. One common understanding of those different hand salutations is that the closed fist represents martial or combat and the open palm represents control put those two together would mean control the combat or restrain the combat other hidden interpretations as pointed out are based according to each kung fu lineages secret traditions.

The kung fu hand salutations of southern Tai Cho, Choy Li Fut, Hung Gar, Goh Cho Kun and Bak Mei are all from southern China and they all share the same history that has its roots with the anti-Qing movement that started with the Tien De Hui 天地会 or Heaven Earth Association. Several coded signals, hand gestures were created as a means of communication an early version of sign language and part of the coded sign language would be the distinctive hand salutation. This movement was a fraternal underground organization with its main goal was the overthrow of the Qing dynasty and the restoration of the Ming which later will morphed into the support of the birth of the Republic of modern China and the abolition of the monarchy. The anti-Qing movement is strongest in south China than in Northern China this explains why most of the distinctive kung fu hand salute such as Tai Cho, Goh Cho, Bak Mei, Hung Gar and Choy Li Fut has its origin in south China in Fujian 福建 and Guangdong 廣東 provinces.