

# IN PRINT

BY LAFAYETTE HARRIS

Reading *Masters of Kung Fu: The Interviews* feels like walking down a long hallway lined with open doors. Each one leads to a different master, a different lineage and a different way of understanding what *Kung Fu* means once the movie gloss is stripped away.

Jon Braeley spent decades travelling through China and speaking with practitioners who rarely concern themselves with self-promotion. With a lifelong background in *Karate* and *Tai Chi Chuan*, he is also widely recognised as one of the foremost documentary filmmakers in martial arts. For more than 20 years, he documented *Shaolin Kung Fu*, *Wing Chun*, *Tai Chi*, *Bagua* and *Xingyi* across China, living in Beijing for many of those years. That long immersion shows throughout his work.

What makes these interviews stand out is Braeley's restraint. He does not over-frame the masters or force their words into a grand narrative. Instead, he lets them speak, and that gives the book its quiet power. You are invited to listen.

When a thirty-first-generation Shaolin monk or a *Baguazhang* inheritor speaks about training, lineage, or the state of modern martial arts, there is real weight behind the words. These are not

hobbyists. These are people who have shaped their lives around practice.

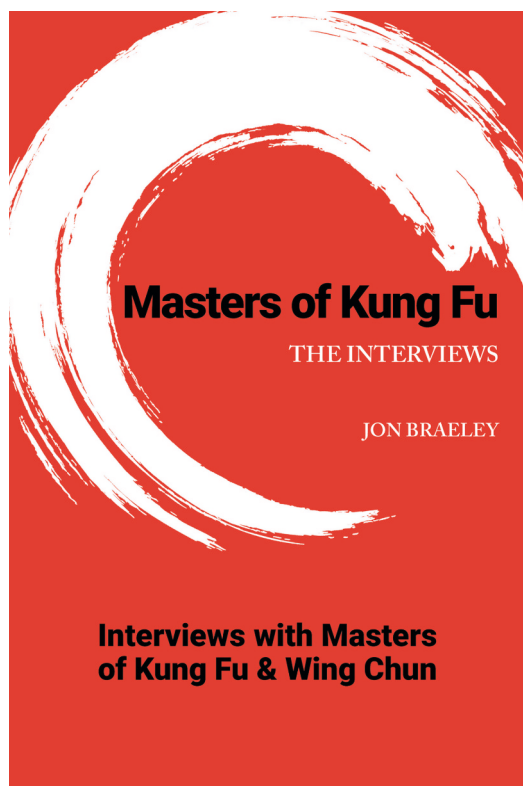
The interviews with thirty-first-generation monks Shi De Yan and Shi De Cheng offer a rare look into temple life – its discipline, teaching and the responsibility of passing on a tradition larger than any one

person. Shi De Yan, who rarely leaves the temple, discusses training the next generation of warrior monks with a seriousness that feels almost sacred. Shi De Cheng brings a broader perspective, having carried Shaolin knowledge around the world. Together, they show two sides of the same lineage: rootedness and outreach.

From there, the book moves naturally into the internal arts. The *Baguazhang* and *Xingyiquan* masters speak with the calm confidence that comes from decades of testing ideas most people barely understand. Ma Chuanxu's stories about working during China's reform give his *Baguazhang* a gritty, lived-in texture. He Jinbao, representing *Yin-style Bagua*, brings a level of technical clarity that makes you want to stand up and start circling the room just to feel what he is describing.

The *Wing Chun* section then gives the review its strongest connection to many readers. A full third of the volume is devoted to the art, included by popular demand. Braeley visits Hong Kong and Foshan, speaking with Ip Ching, Sam Lau and Donald Mak, while tracing *Wing Chun* from living rooms to rooftop schools to Ip Man's grave. These chapters feel like a pilgrimage, not as idol worship, but as a search for where the art still breathes.

*Masters of Kung Fu: The Interviews* is for practitioners who want more than techniques. They want context, lineage and the voices of those who lived the arts. It is a quiet, powerful reminder that behind every style is a human being with a story worth hearing.



## MASTERS OF KUNG FU: THE INTERVIEWS

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