



IP MAN MOVIE: FACT OR FICTION?

I was fortunate enough to get hold of the Ip Man movie (purchased online) as it has not yet been released outside of Asia. As a martial arts movie it is excellent. The movie is directed by Wilson Yip and the fight scenes are choreographed by Sammo Hung. Donnie Yen does an awesome job of playing Ip Man, especially given that he had no previous Wing Chun training.

From a technical point-of-view; the fight scenes reflect the broader application of Wing Chun and I thought them well done and technically accurate. That said, Hong Kong Wing Chun forms are demonstrated and since the movie is set in Foshan, one would have hoped to have seen the Wing Chun Ip Man taught in Foshan (where the forms are quite different from those Ip Man taught once he moved to Hong Kong).

From a historical point-of-view; the Wilson Yip takes a fair amount of poetic license. Yip Man did indeed teach Wing Chun during the Japanese occupation, and he taught behind the Luen Cheong Embroidery Factory. Whether he was caught up in duels with thugs and whether he took on occupying Japanese soldiers is up for debate. That said, it makes for excellent fight scenes. We do know that he lost his wealth and property with the coming into power of the communist regime, and we know that, as a policeman, he left China because he feared reprisal from the communist government (and not because the Japanese forces took over his home as their headquarters or because he had to leave Foshan after defeating Japanese soldiers in combat).

One might leave the movie thinking that the Wing Chun taught in Foshan was the same as that taught in Hong Kong, and while it is clear that while in Foshan Ip Man taught Wing Chun at the Luen Cheong Embroidery Factory, it is not clear that he had just six formal students at that time. It did occur to me, though, that given that the movie was produced and aired in China, the communist government might object to a more accurate rendering of the truth.

So I would say the Ip Man movie is Faction; a combination of fact and fiction. I visited the official webpage (www.ipman-movie.com) and one annoying feature is the use of images from Bruce Lee's Tao of Jeet Kun Do when waiting for images to load, but that is another post.

