

Magic In A Bottle 鐵打酒

It looks dark and it smells terrible, but the secret inside a bottle of kung-fu's magic elixir has been healing students for centuries.

By Brian Gray

The therapist looked sympathetically at the severely swollen foot. Black and blue, the foot was obviously not healing, even though more than three months had passed since the surgery. Routinely, the foot should have healed in two weeks; instead, the condition had worsened to where the lady could not even move her toes. To add to her dilemma, her job required her to stand all day; and, to alleviate the pain in her swollen foot, she had been spending the entire work-day standing on one foot. This was quickly leading to back problems.

Though it was back pains that brought her to his office, the therapist knew any treatment of back pain had to begin with the foot. Fortunately, this therapist was also an iron palm practitioner and had some of my iron palm liniment on hand. He treated her foot twice in one week with applications of this liniment. According to the therapist's letter to me, "By one week after the first treatment, her foot was back to normal color, the swelling was gone, and she was able to move her toes and put normal weight upon her foot." The therapist's comments reinforced what many kung-fu masters take for granted; the positive benefits of ancient liniments forged in feudal China. They really do work; that is, if you have the real thing.

Magic Potion?

The year was 1971. A friend, whose father was an herb doctor in Hong Kong, had given me a mystifying, strange-smelling ball of hard, brown wax. He rattled off the directions for cooking it so swiftly that by the time I had returned home, there were more

questions than answers in my head. Was it bring the alcohol to a boil or just heat it until the ball melted? Did he say alcohol or water? I was too embarrassed to phone and ask him to repeat everything. What would he think? My head was spinning with "what ifs?"

Fearing that I would accidentally destroy this valuable ball of medicinal herbs and make it a useless mixture, I did not mix the preparation for several years, leaving it, instead, like some holy relic that sat on my shelf awaiting the day when I would know enough to feel comfortable preparing it. The medicine was T'ieh T'a Wan, good for sprains and bruises, and all I had to do was melt the ball of herbs in alcohol that was heated sufficiently enough to melt it without the mixture coming to a boil. That was nearly 30 years ago, yet when people meet me with their questions on making or buying liniments for martial arts training, I can still sympathize with their fears. When it comes to getting the right liniments, you cannot be too careful.

When martial artists trained in feudal China, the regimen was usually harsh and unrelenting. After all, their very lives depended on the efficacy of their skills and techniques. One did not train to look pretty — one trained to be deadly. Arms hitting arms, legs hitting legs, over and over, traumatizing the body to build stamina, strength, resistance and power. These were ingredients in the recipe that produced fighters who came back from battle. Mistakes died on the battlefield. And those who lived to fight again learned how to take care of their aches, pains and bruises, for often there was little time to heal before a person might have to return to

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battle. Herbal liniments were invented to remove bruises, reduce swelling, take away pain, strengthen bones and muscles, heal traumas, toughen the body, and enhance anything that had to do with training and fighting.

Even though the feudal reasons that led to these inventions have long since gone, the many benefits of using these liniments have actually grown. However, while feudal China produced many good formulas, sadly enough, many were lost because the recipes died with their creators.

Creating A Balance

What makes these formulas work?

If the liniment is genuine, it contains a balanced mixture of herbs that increase blood circulation, reduce swelling, break up blood clots, inhibit pain, and a host of other properties that can do wonders. However, the herbs must be balanced, something only a qualified herbalist will know how to do. Some herbs will cancel each other out if combined in the same solution, while other herbs will tonify, or strengthen, the solution when mixed.

One cannot simply say, "Ah, this herb is good for reducing swelling, this herb is good for increasing blood circu-

lation, and this herb is good for blood circulation, too, so I will put them all in this recipe together to make it stronger." Such random efforts can absolutely backfire and produce a worthless liniment. You should no more randomly throw herbs together than you should randomly throw chemicals together. Many herbalists can properly concoct an herbal liniment for your needs by simply consulting Chinese texts on standardized formulas. There are also private formulas that are not published, because the masters who know them often inherited them

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Dit or tieh, means "iron". Da means "hit". Jow, or jiu, means "wine". Thus, dit da jow means "rice hit wine", a liniment based in wine that is used in the striking practice of the iron palm and other iron-incorporating practices. It is easier to simply go out and buy dit da jow already made, but some prefer making their own. Here's how to put together your recipe.

Once you have selected the herbs you are going to use for your recipe, crush

them into coarse powder. Do not grind them down to a fine powder; it should remain coarse to keep the powder from adhering to itself.

Place one ounce of each herb into a large, non-metallic cooking pot, and add one quart of vodka.

Simmer slowly over low fire for 3 1/2 hours. Remove from heat and pour contents into a two-gallon jar along with six quarts of vodka. Seal the mixture in an air-tight jar. Store in a cool, dark place for at least two months — preferably one year — since the longer it sits the more potent it becomes.

Some people vary on how many ounces of herb they use per gallon of dit da jow, with the average being between three-fifths of an ounce to two ounces per gallon. Also, some recipes will vary the ounces from herb to herb. You are free to experiment, but remember, there are three types of herbal properties that must be balanced in your recipe. These types reduce pain, stimulate blood circulation or break up blood clots arising from the skin.

The Ingredients:

Red Peony Root

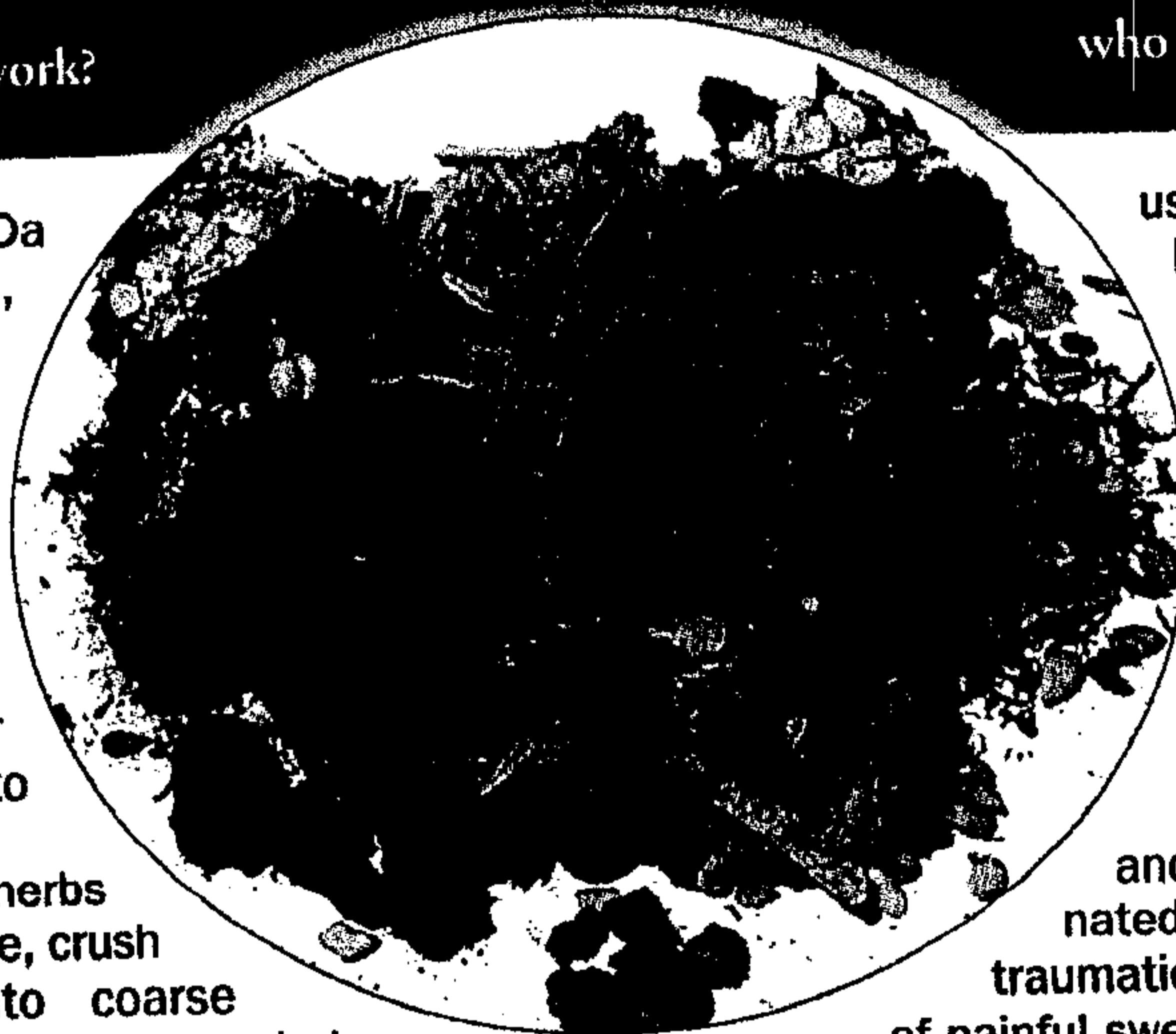
It is used to remove stagnated blood and eliminate evil heat from blood, for the treatment of pain because of blood stasis and acute inflammation.

Dragon's Blood

It is used to remove blood stasis, to relieve pains and to promote the healing of traumatic wounds and bleeding. The drug consists of red resin secreted from the fruit of *Demonorops drac Blume*.

Cat-Tail Pollen

It is used to promote the circulation of blood and relieve pain by eliminating blood stasis. The carbonized blood is



used as hemostatic for all kinds of bleeding.

Myrrh

It is used to relieve pain and swelling because of blood stasis or trauma.

Root Of Pseudoginseng

It prevents blood stasis by breaking up blood clots and stopping internal bleeding.

Safflower

It is used to stimulate blood flow and relieve pain by removing stagnated blood. It also removes the pain of traumatic wounds, and is used for treatment of painful swellings because of blood stasis.

Frankincense

It is used to relieve pain swelling by invigorating blood circulation for the treatment of pains because of blood stasis and traumatic pains.

Chinese Angelica Root

It is used to nourish the blood and to invigorate the blood circulation.

Aucklandia Root

It is used as a pain reliever and an anti-spasmodic.

The herbs listed above may be used as a potent dit da jow, and they are non-poisonous, so no harm should come if ingested. But the herbs listed below, when added to the other nine, will produce an even more potent and poisonous formula. If you going to add the following herbs, remember to keep it away from cuts and out of your mouth.

Peach Kernal

Promotes circulation and dissolves clots.

Clove Tree

The oil of the cloves is an excellent local anaesthetic; the drug promotes circulation.

Rhubarb

Removes blood stagnation caused by traumatic injury. The powdered herb applied to burns relieves pain and swelling.

Borneo Camphor Tree

It is used as an aromatic for the treatment of loss of consciousness. Reduces and alleviates pain.

Horse Coin Or Horse Money

This herb will remain somewhat of a mystery since I lack a proper definition. It is the most poisonous of all the herbs I have listed, and I was taught that it makes the dit da jow much more potent by its presence.

in the age-old practice of only passing down knowledge from father to son. These are guarded formulas, and while one may be able to purchase the liniments from these masters, often there is no way of telling the ingredients. The liniment one buys in these cases may be anything from excellent to fraudulent, ancient wonder to modern hoax. Caveat emptor!

What should you look for? If the liniment is being made for you by a Chinese herbalist in one of America's famous Chinatowns, it is like buying a cake from a bakery — everyone has his favorite recipe. You are also at the mercy of that herbalist's education. If you doubt this, simply go to one herbalist and ask him to concoct a recipe for you and write it down. Then, go to another herbalist and ask him to do the same. Compare the results. Nine times out of ten, they will not be the same. This is not necessarily bad. There are many recipes for cake and there are just as many recipes for martial arts liniments. The ultimate proof is whether or not the liniment does its job.

Also, do not be deceived by those who claim their liniment is superior simply because their mixture has more herbs. This is a sure sign the person making the claim does not understand herbal liniments. He should be avoided at all costs. The liniment should be sold in glass bottles, not plastic, because herbal liniments can cause the plastic in some bottles to leech into the mixture. Metal containers are also not used, because they can affect the balance and tone of the herbs.

When shopping for a good liniment, the liquid will appear to be dark brown. I have usually found that the darker the color, the more potent the liniment. Also, the liniment should be aged before it is sold to you. While it is true that liniment that has just been made is effective, liniment that has been aged is stronger. Quite often, people who order my liniment will order extra bottles, because my bottles have the date the batch was made printed on the label, and they

want to let a few of them sit on a shelf and age like a fine wine. There is no harm in this. Some of my students actually have bottles that date back nearly a decade. Trust me, they are not parting with them.

Look For Proof

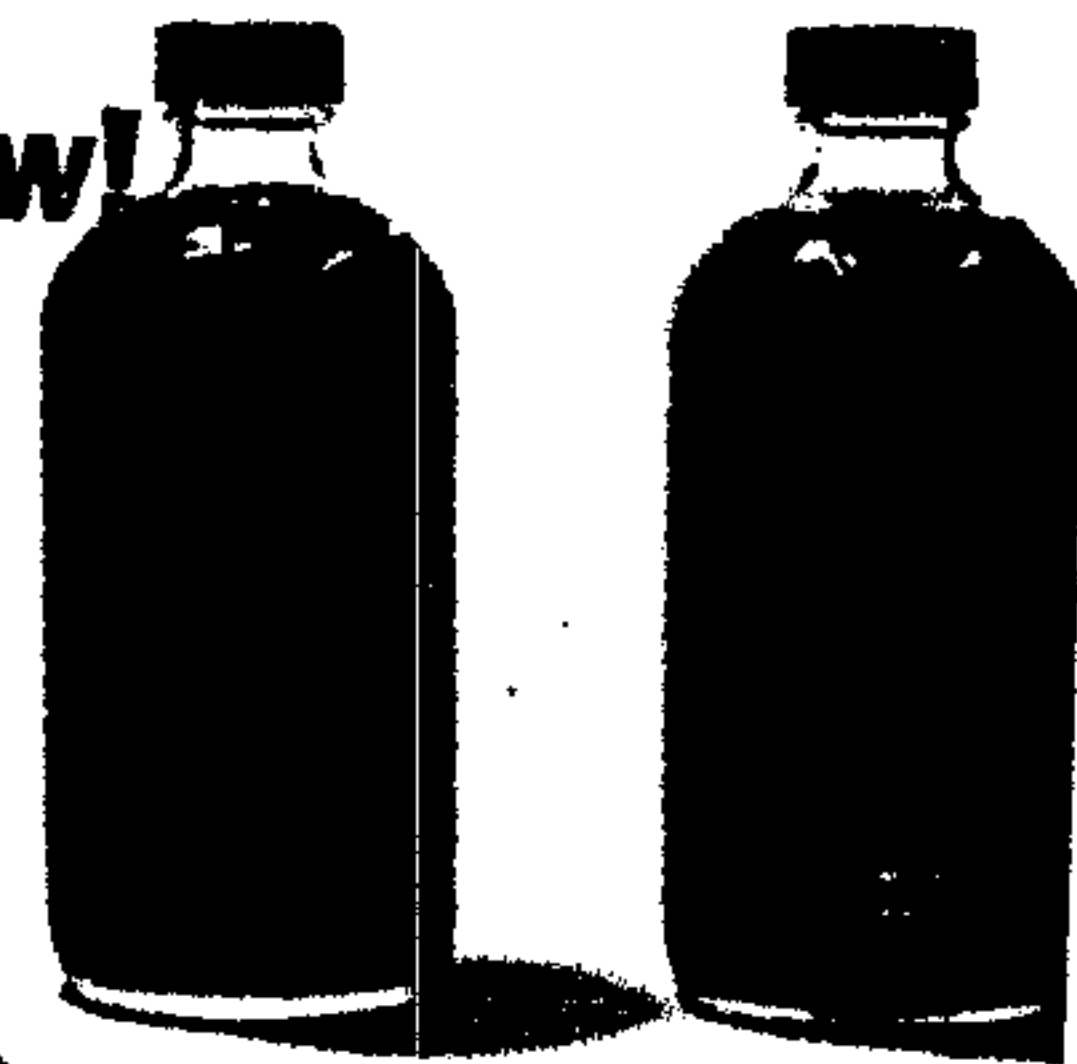
Look for herbal sediment in the bottom of the bottle. Herbal sediment indicates a potent bottle of liniment, because there is an herbal reaction still going on in the liquid. I have often been asked if this herbal sediment can still be used, and the answer is generally yes. If these herbs have been kept in the liniment, and you save them in solution, the resulting batch of herbs makes an excellent poultice, or herbal pack, that can be applied directly to stubborn bruises and sprains. Do not, however, leave this in contact with the skin for periods longer than 15 minutes because prolonged exposure to skin can cause burns.

Iron Hit Wine, T'ieh Ta Jiu in Mandarin, Dit Da Jow in Cantonese, was often sold by kung-fu masters who earned extra income giving street demonstrations of their martial arts prowess. In the process of giving their demonstrations, they would hit their arms with iron bars, produce a bruise, then rub it away with their magic liniment. Thus, the term "Iron Hit Wine", which later was duplicated by herbal doctors who were not willing to hit themselves with iron to prove the efficacy of their wares, but nonetheless wanted to cash in on the fame of these liniments. They made their own recipes and called them Fall Hit Wine which is pronounced the same way in Chinese as Iron Hit Wine, just written differently.

Playing on the similarity of the words, physicians got in on the kung-fu masters' liniment business, and more herbal recipes hit the market. In a country where older is always considered better than "new and improved," many false lineage charts and ancient histories have been invented to boost the prestige of certain brands. If the liniment you are using does not remove bruises when

"A genuine liniment contains a balanced mixture of herbs that increase blood circulation, reduce swelling, break up blood clots, and inhibit pain."

Dit Da Jow — What You Need To Know!



1. Check the mixture. A good dit da jow contains a balanced mixture of herbs. Some combinations can be counterproductive.
2. Let the buyer beware. Know what you're buying and from whom you are buying it before you plunk down your hard-earned money.
3. More herbs does not necessarily mean a better solution.
4. The older the solution, the better the liquid.
5. Look for herbal sediment in the bottom of the bottle.
6. The liniment should be sold in glass bottles. Plastic and metal containers should not be used.
7. If the liniment doesn't work on new bruises within 24 hours, stop using it.
8. When using sediment as part of a bruise pack, leave it on for no more than 15 minutes.
9. Check lineages. Some masters lie about their background to make their potions more legitimate.
10. Avoid taking liniments internally unless you are absolutely sure of their ingredients.

properly applied, stop using it. No matter what the history claims, no matter what the label claims, it is what it does that counts. Iron Hit Wines were used to remove the trauma of harsh training. Genuine liniments serve this purpose.

Read The Ingredients

While some liniments may actually be taken internally, I recommend avoiding that practice unless you are absolutely sure you have an internal liniment. Many liniments contain poisonous herbs. Also, all T'ieh Ta Jiu should be kept away from the eyes. The correct recipe produces a strong blood circulator. Remember this when applying it.

I had a student tell me once he could not sleep the previous night and wondered what might be wrong. After a lot of questions, I found the reason. Before going to bed, he had taken a hot shower. Then, thinking that my iron palm liniment was so good for

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one's health, he rubbed it all over his body. The heat of the hot water had increased his blood circulation and opened his pores, thus, he was extremely susceptible to the effects of the liniment. Long after the effects of the hot shower had worn off, the liniment was still keeping the blood circulation at a high level, which was making it impossible to sleep.

A good method for applying a liniment is to first shake the bottle. Then, rub enough on the affected area to thoroughly wet it. Gently massage that into the skin until the liniment has disappeared. Repeat this process five times. If a bruise is fresh, it should dissolve with a few applications. The older the bruise, the more applications it may take. It is common for old masters to make this liniment in large quantities for their students, and one may even see students dipping their hands in the "community" bucket filled with "jow," rubbing their hands and arms with the solution, then training and returning to that same bucket before finishing. But, once a person's dirty hands have been placed inside the liquid, it has

"You should no more randomly throw herbs together than you should randomly throw



been contaminated. I strongly advise against this practice, even if it is your personal solution and you are the only one using it. If you want the liniment to stay efficacious, pour what you need into your hands and work from there.

Today, people are finding all kinds of side uses for this ancient Chinese herbal medicine. What originally had been invented for war can help those who have no intention of ever fighting. A friend once cured the severe acne on his friend's back by massaging it with several applications of my iron palm liniment. I have received numerous letters from people who are using it for football and soccer injuries, from massage therapists who are using it for their patients, and even doctors who have come to me to find ways of using it to save the limbs of diabetic patients.

Down through the centuries, what worked for ancient warriors is still finding a place in the modern medicine cabinet. So, shop wisely, but do not be afraid of these ancient liniments. They will become less mysterious the more you use them. And the more you use them, the more comfortable you'll feel about their potential effects. ☯

Brian Gray is the author of several Unique Publications books on the art of iron palm training and conditioning. For more information, contact the author at www.briangray.com

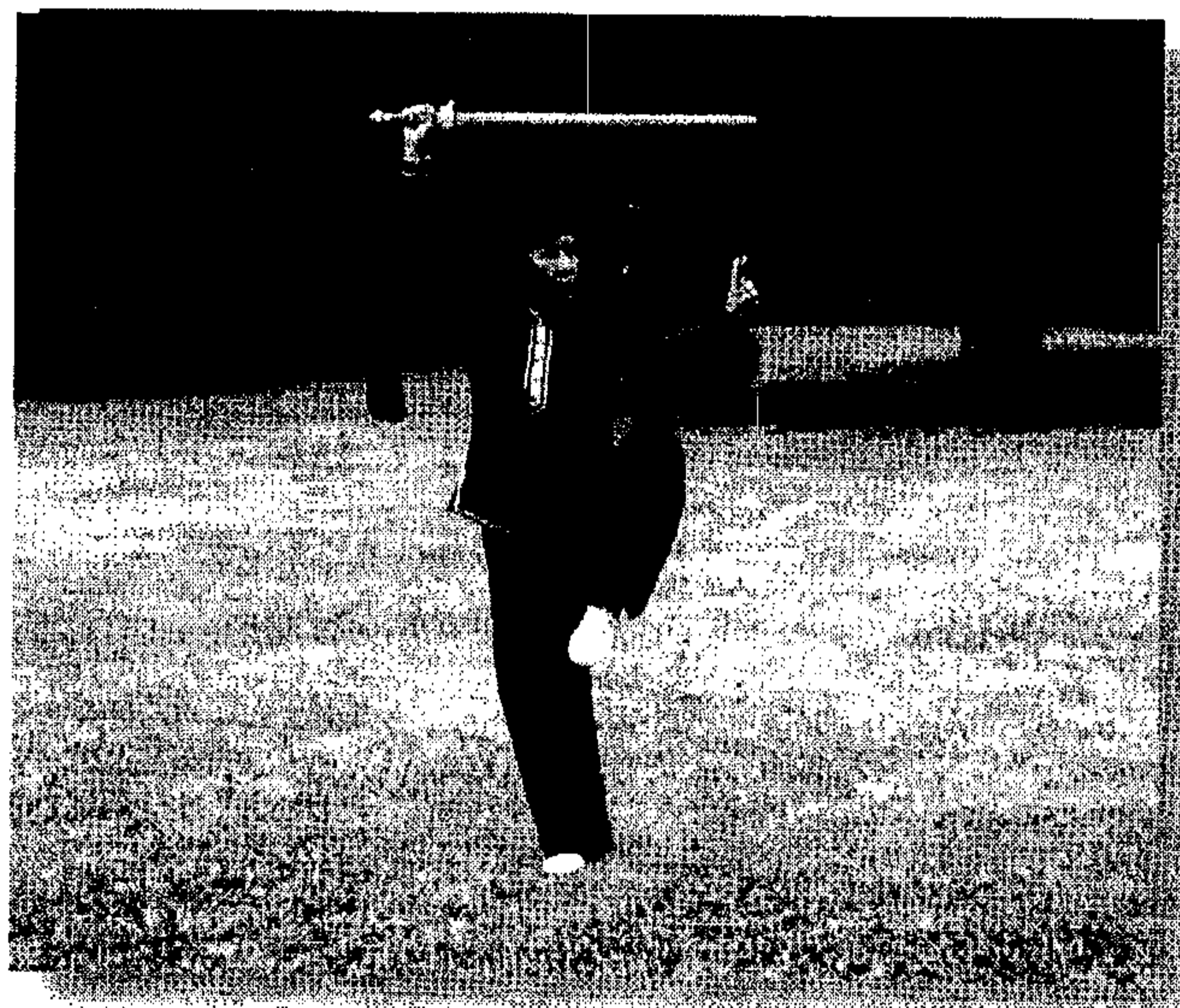
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