

XIONG STYLE TAIJI IN TAIWAN: HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT & A PHOTOGRAPHIC EXPOSÉ FEATURING MASTER LIN JIANHONG

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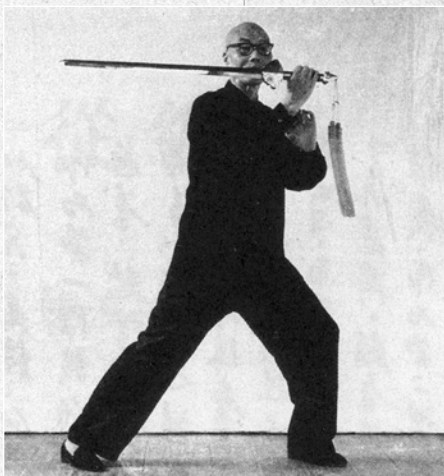
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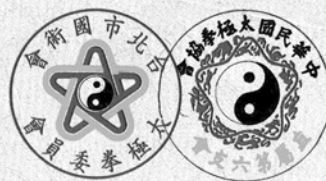
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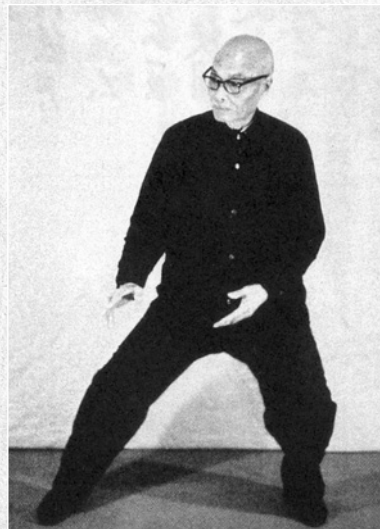
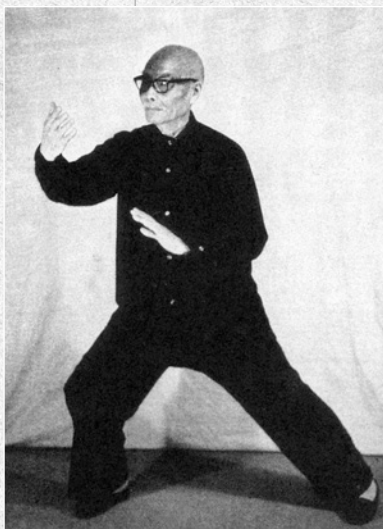
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先師



民國七十六年十一月二十日

PHOTOGRAPHS OF
XIONG YANGHE
SUPERIMPOSED ON
THE COVER OF A SPECIAL
COMMEMORATIVE EDITION
PUBLISHED FOR HIS 100TH
BIRTHDAY ANNIVERSARY
("COMMEMORATIVE," 1987).

From the author's collection.

Abstract

This article presents a branch of Yang Family Taijiquan that is little-known outside of Taiwan. It is called Xiong Style after Xiong Yanghe (1888 ~1981). However, what little that has been published in English about Master Xiong is confusing and sometimes contradictory. By utilizing Chinese published sources (including Xiong's own published writings), unpublished documents by his leading disciples, related websites in Taiwan, personal observations, and photographic documentation, information assembled here should provide a comprehensive overview of Xiong Style Taiji. English language sources are utilized to provide the socio-political setting that had a profound impact on the early Yang Family Taiji development. The main conclusions concern Xiong's lineage, his preservation of the art, and its significance for the understanding of all taijiquan branches as a martial art and exercise for health.

Xiong Style Taiji in Taiwan

Historical Development & A Photographic Exposé Featuring Master Lin Jianhong

BY MICHAEL A. DEMARCO, M.A.



Introduction

In the thickly branched tree representing taijiquan's growth over the centuries, some branches are stronger than others, and some hold higher positions than others. This article introduces a relatively rare branch in the Yang Family tradition that is associated with Xiong Yanghe (1888~1981). Before delving into aspects of what is now called the Xiong Style, we must first ask ourselves what we can learn from studying the lives of main lineage representatives. How can their theories and practices of taiji influence our overall understanding of the art? Hopefully such research can offer a better historical perspective while enriching both our understanding and practice of the art.

The following text presents aspects of lineage that play a role in formulating a definition of taijiquan. Following a general overview of the early Yang Family lineage, we will look closely at the two main branches that stem directly from the Yang Style founder, Yang Luchan (1799~1872), his sons and grandsons, who were so influential in the initial growth of taiji in China. Since the focus of this article is on Xiong Style, it is necessary to look at Xiong's teachers and these main predecessors who formed the main trunk of the taiji evolutionary tree.

China's socio-political setting during the lives of Yang Luchan and Xiong Yanghe was rife with foreign invasions and civil strife. This difficult period—marred by the decaying decades of the last dynasty (Qing, 1644~1911) and the following decades up to the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949—presents an overwhelming wealth of information that played into the thoughts and actions of each taiji master mentioned above. Each master has his own story to tell. This article is a brief synopsis of Xiong Yanghe's story, supplemented with information and photographic illustrations provided by Mr. Lin Jianhong, a leading Xiong Style instructor teaching today in Taipei, Taiwan.

The Question of Taiji Lineage

Many newcomers are thrilled to begin learning taiji. If they have a decent teacher and a growing interest in the art, they eventually delve deeper into its history, theory, and practice. However, they soon find themselves entangled in a mesh of lineage lines. Who taught whom? What are the differences between the original Chen Family Style and evolving branches? What did the main instructors actually teach versus the curricula taught by their students in following generations? In the end, what do we really learn from the academic grasp of lineages, names, dates, and a stock of stories which may be true or false?

*Photographs courtesy
of Robert Lin-I Yu,
except where noted.*

When we approach taijiquan's history, we are usually given our initial glimpse through our first teacher. This provides an introduction to taiji. Depending on the teacher, the art may be totally focused on its health nurturing aspects suitable for aged retirees in their quest to keep fit. Some teachers focus on it as a fighting art, suitable for bodyguards, military, and police. Others can teach both aspects of the art in varied proportions.

There are other layers to consider in our desire to understand taiji. All teachers have unique qualities in their form and function: movements, stances, fighting techniques, and applied skills. It is easy to see great differences among beginning students in their awkward execution of taiji forms, but even teachers of the same lineage and generation exhibit their own individual flavors, although it may be in the most subtle ways. Of course it is important to discern the dissimilarity in movements as either a variant application performed according to taiji principles, or an incorrect movement based on faulty understanding of application and performed contrary to the taiji principles.

Often the more we learn about taiji the more confusing it gets! There is an old tale that originated in India that may offer some help in our view of taiji lineages and practice. It is the story of six blind men who were asked to describe the nature of an elephant, with each person feeling the elephant's various body parts, such as its tusk, tail, trunk, leg, ear, or side. Of course, all their conclusions vary because of their different perspectives. The "elephant" they envisioned appeared like a spear, wall, snake, tree, fan or rope. They may endlessly argue over their viewpoints, or use them to better understand what an elephant really is in its completeness.

If we really seek to know taiji thoroughly, we need to go beyond relative half-truths to get a broader perspective. A study of the leading standard-bearers of each main lineage is certainly helpful for the broad view. On a more detailed level, we can look closely at the main teachers within one specific lineage. The learning process takes many years, and we eventually see how our concept of taiji continually evolves.

Blind Monks Examining an Elephant

by Itcho Hanabusa

JAPANESE UKIYO-E
PRINT ILLUSTRATION
FROM BUDDHIST PARABLE
SHOWING BLIND MONKS
EXAMINING AN ELEPHANT.
DATED 1888.

*Library of Congress.
Call # Illus. in
H67 [Asian RR]*



Early Yang Style Lineage Representatives

Yang Luchan was born in 1799 in Yongnian County, Hebei Province. Although he was a man of humble origins and illiterate, he loved martial arts. He probably studied Shaolin boxing when very young but later was drawn to the Chen Village in Henan Province with the desire to study Chen Family Taijiquan. Although there are a number of stories regarding Luchan's study in Chen Village, the most probable themes are: 1) he worked as a servant and studied Chen Taiji under Chen Changxing (1771~1853) for most likely ten years or so, becoming extraordinarily proficient in the art, 2) he returned to his home village and taught the art to many there, and 3) moved to Beijing where he gained a reputation as "Invincible Yang" and taught the Manchu royal family and bodyguards. Of course, his unique flavor of taiji became known as the Yang Style.

Whether factual or fictional, stories regarding Yang Luchan leave no doubt that he possessed fighting skills of the highest order. What he taught and to whom is another matter. It certainly would be logical for him to follow ancient precedent and teach the higher aspects of the art only to those closest to him.

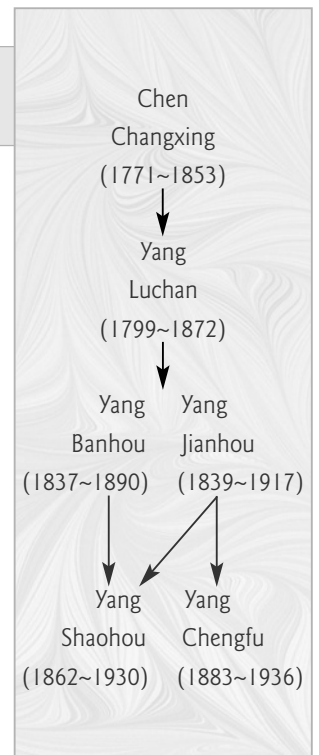
When Yang Luchan died in 1872, two of his sons carried on the family's taiji tradition. Both were naturally gifted, mentally and physically, to receive full transmission of their father's knowledge, and both practiced with dedication under a demanding training regimen. The brothers came to exhibit very different personalities. Yang Banhou (1837~1890), the elder son, had a character often described as hard and fierce, which manifested in his love of sparring. The younger son, Yang Jianhou (1839~1917), was friendly and gentle, a personality which attracted a large number of students.

Although Yang Shaohou (1862~1930) was the first son of Yang Jianhou, Shaohou studied primarily with his uncle, Yang Banhou. Shaohou followed his uncle in temperament and fighting style. Both were harsh teachers and only a relatively small number of students became dedicated disciples. It seems they used the combative elements of Yang Luchan's methods as the main guideline for their own practice, which included high speed execution of techniques, jumps, and varied kicks, as well as the psychological use of expressions and vocal sound. As Douglas Wile writes: "Writings tracing their origins to Yang [Banhou] are our closest link to Yang [Luchan] and to the richness of the art before it moved into the mainstream of Chinese culture in the twentieth century" (Wile, 1996: 93).

Yang Jianhou's second son was Yang Chengfu (1883~1936). He and his brother Shaohou taught taijiquan at the Beijing Physical Culture Research Institute from 1914 until 1928. They were pioneers in bringing instruction to the general public. Chengfu moved to Shanghai in 1928 and taught many. Over the years, Chengfu's particular style became the most widespread. He eliminated some of the more vigorous techniques from the long routine and taught others to practice at a slow, even tempo. Although he certainly retained the teachings of his father, uncle, and grandfather, Chengfu's public style became popular for its health nurturing benefits.

The five Yang family members discussed in the preceding paragraphs lived during a time of drastic change in China. Their lives cover 137 years, from the birth of Yang Luchan in 1799 to the death of Yang Chengfu in 1936. A brief overview of Chinese history during this period will be helpful for understanding the development of taijiquan, as well as other Chinese martial arts that have become popular in the modern era. The realities of those decades influenced the ways the early taiji masters viewed their art, how they taught, and to whom they would transmit their knowledge and skills.

Lineage Chart Early Yang Family



The Effect of Time and Place for Early Yang Style Taiji

What inspired Yang Luchan to study martial arts? Was Chen Family boxing very different from other family styles developed in other villages? Actually, to have a group of villagers with a common surname practicing boxing within their courtyards was not a rare phenomenon in the latter half of the Qing Dynasty (1644~1911). Philip Kuhn (1970) details the growth of local militia, rebels, bandit groups, and secret societies in his excellent work, *Rebellion and Its Enemies in Late Imperial China: Militarization and Social Structure, 1796~1864*. Chen Village is only one example of a village that built up their walls and fighting tradition for protection from attack and theft from outsiders, such as local bandits.

There are "... two basic types of militia institutions in Chinese society—those born of state prescription and those born of the needs of natural social units..." (Kuhn, 1970: 35). The rise of local defense groups became more and more important as the Qing government and its military and police structures fragmented under internal and external pressures. Their rise was in direct response to the unstable socio-political climate.

In the 18th century there was a growing domestic discontent throughout China as the population increased to a point where food production could not keep pace. "Population growth inevitably surpassed increased food production, and the standard of living began to decline. Spreading corruption and indolence in government made conditions worse" (Hucker, 1975: 302). Besides an anti-foreign sentiment for the Manchu rulers who conquered China and ruled from 1644 to 1911, the general population felt the government had lost the Mandate of Heaven and were unfit to rule. Popular uprisings became endemic, erupting into major social upheavals such as the rebellion by the White Lotus Society (1793~1804). Even more devastating was the Taiping Rebellion (1851~1864) in which nearly thirty million lost their lives bringing destruction to fifteen provinces (Wakeman, 1977: 156). By the mid-19th century, in some provinces "two-thirds of the population was reported dead or missing" (Wakeman, 1977: 155).

For centuries, China had thought itself to be the most civilized state in the world. However, rebellions, famine, and floods took a great toll on the government and society during the 19th century. China's image of itself gradually changed. It was no longer a country of strength and wealth, and foreign countries took advantage of this frailty. With the intrusion of European traders and missionaries, China soon felt its weakness in regard to modern ways of warfare and international business. Over the decades, the Portuguese, Dutch, British, French, Americans, Russians, and Japanese applied more pressure on China as they tried to profit through unequal trade agreements, acquisition of port cities, opium trafficking, and a siphoning off of the dwindling reserves of silver. Foreign powers took advantage of a China that had already been weakened from within.

In parallel with a long list of internal rebellions is a list of wars with foreign countries, such as the Opium War (1839~1842), the Anglo-Chinese War (1856~1860), and the Sino-French War (1884~1885). The foreign encroachments were destructive, but their real significance lies in the resulting treaties, which were unequal in that they gave great advantage to the foreign powers at a high cost to the Chinese. The Sino-Japanese War (1884~1895) provided a "profound psychological shock," since it "did more than any other crisis to force the Chinese to evaluate their own strengths and weaknesses" (Wakeman, 1977: 192). Above all, each treaty humiliated the Chinese, and many started to seek solutions to resolve the problems caused by the decades of internal strife and foreign influence.

During the later half of the 19th century, many political and intellectual leaders were engaged in discussing ways to restore the Qing Imperial system or a new political system through “self-strengthening.” It seems most of the attempts either failed or made matters worse. For example, one idea was to use the resentment against imperialist expansion to encourage the Boxer Uprising (1900~1901) against foreign embassies. This was doomed to failure. “Thousands of young men began to practice the stylized exercises of Shaolin and [Bagua] boxing—exercises that were supposed to release their [qi] (pneuma) and invest them with strength so awesome that it repelled foreign bullets” (Wakeman, 1977: 217). Even a Chinese military general “simply scoffed at their claims of invulnerability to firearms,” and “put 50 Boxers of the Golden Belt Society to the test by lining them up against a wall and shooting them” (Wakeman, 1977: 218). The Boxers’ leader was caught and decapitated. Their defeat brought new demands upon the Chinese and resulted in even greater loss of power.

As the Beijing government was losing control of the provinces, there was a corresponding growth of power in local areas, often associated with the provinces themselves. Frederic Wakeman notes that “the provincial governors of the early 1900s, took on more and more of the military and fiscal functions that had once belonged to the central government” (Wakeman, 1977: 232). In nearly half of China’s provinces “military men became governors immediately after the [Wuhan Revolution (1911)], or within the following two or three months. Moreover, the troops in the various provinces... were largely recruited from within the provinces in which they served; their loyalties were strongly provincial and personal, so that provincial military leaders had, in effect, personal armies at their disposal...” (Sheridan, 1977: 147).

As private armies developed—some small and some large—warfare increased. “Between 1916 and 1928, the struggle among independent militarists—warlords—tore China into fragments, and the formal political machinery of the republic that had succeeded the monarchy—the parliament, ministries, and so forth—became largely irrelevant to the realities of Chinese political life. At the head of their personal armies, the warlords dominated districts, provinces, and regions, and warred with neighboring generals for additional territory and revenues” (Sheridan, 1977: 20).

War was endemic during this Warlord Period (1916~1928). One writer has “counted more than 400 large and small civil wars in the province of Szechwan alone” (Sheridan, 1977: 88). With such chaos in the land, how would it be possible to reintegrate China under a modern, unified national government? Each warlord faction operated according to his own interests and political ends. One interesting aspect of note is how soldiers were trained. Decorum varied greatly according to group. Some warlords demanded that troops be highly trained while acting with utmost compassion toward the general population. Their honorable code of discipline stressed good treatment toward all and maintaining personal restraint from vices associated with soldiers of poor character. General Feng Yuxiang (1882~1948), for example, “demanded extraordinary physical fitness, and subjected his officers and men to constant and rigorous training to achieve it. ... He prohibited drinking, gambling, visiting prostitutes, even swearing” (Sheridan, 1977: 74). At the other end of the spectrum were other warlords and their troops who drank alcohol, raped, and robbed at will.

In the midst of the dynamic political and military flux of the warlord period, loyalties often shifted between warlords, as well as their officers and troops (Sheridan, 1977: 58). A few factions grew strong while many became weak and disintegrated or were absorbed. Eventually there were two main political parties contending for supremacy:



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“TO COMMEMORATE
UNIFICATION,” BEARING
THE PORTRAIT OF
GENERALISSIMO
CHIANG KAI-SHEK.

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the Nationalists (Guomintang) under the leadership of General Chiang Kai-shek (1887~1975), and the Chinese Communist Party, under Mao Zedong (1893~1976). Initially they worked together to end the warlord period and drive out the Japanese, but their differences in political ideology brought on an inevitable civil war (1927~1949).

Chiang Kai-shek, raised during the warlord period, had learned “to revolve all his politics about the concept of force... He had grown up in a time of treachery and violence. ... There were few standards of human decency his warlord contemporaries did not violate. They obeyed no law but power...” (Schurmann & Schell, 1967: 236). Mao also faced this hard reality, and his often quoted statement is: “Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun.” Chiang and Mao fought it out until the Communists emerged victorious in 1949.

A “protracted revolutionary transformation” lasted for more than a century, “but in many ways the critical period was the 37 years, 1912~1949, from the fall of the monarchy and founding of a republic to the establishment of the People’s Republic of China by the Communists. During this republican period, disintegration and disorder were at their maximum” (Sheridan, 1977: 4). All of the early Yang Style Taijiquan masters lived during this revolutionary transformation, and there are some common factors in their lives that influenced their teaching.

The greatest single factor in taijiquan’s development was its association with defense. There were centuries of banditry, small and large scale rebellions, and secret society activities throughout China. Particularly, rural areas lacked protection by the national army or police, so martial arts training was utilized for regional and local defense. The Chen Village is only one example of how a family style martial art developed within a walled village, although it is a famous example. It is the site of the original Chen Family Style Taijiquan, which was famed for its superior boxing system. Chen family representatives, such as Chen Changxing (1771~1853) and Chen Gengyun (1799~1872), were employed as elite bodyguards and for cargo transport security personnel; Chen Yenxi (1848~1929) trained the son of the first Republican president Yuan Shikai, and was also the family bodyguard for scholar-official Du Youmei in Boai, Henan. Du’s son, Du Yuzi (1886~1990) became a disciple of Chen Yenxi.

Fear is a great motivator. People had to protect their food stocks as well as their lives. Many trained hard and often. They also feared a shift in loyalties, so they were cautious about whom they taught. Usually the ties were personal (teaching family or village members) and, under circumstances involving a larger area, ties would be provincial, where common dialect and social customs reinforced some bonding.

The decades of great social change brought changes in relationships. Chen Style moved outside its home village, and others, such as Yang Luchan, came to learn Chen Taiji. Luchan and his son Banhou taught Manchu imperial guards and garrison troops. Some teaching was done privately and some publically. “When asked why the [Guangping] students of the Yang family showed both hard and soft techniques in their style, whereas the [Beijing] students showed only soft techniques, [Banhou] replied that the [Beijing] students were mainly wealthy aristocrats, and that, after all, there was a difference between Chinese and Manchus, implying a policy of passive resistance to the alien dynasty by imparting only half of taijiquan transmission” (Wile, 1983: ix).

When Yang Chengfu was born in 1883, his grandfather Luchan had already been dead eleven years, and his uncle Banhou died when Chengfu was nine. As a result, Chengfu’s training was somewhat different than that of his brother Yang Shaohou. Shaohou and Banhou were noted for their rough boxing. Internationally, Shaohou’s

style is not as well known as Yang Chengfu's. The difficulties surrounding his life led him to commit suicide in 1930 (Yun, 2006: 55).

The lives of the Chen Style and early Yang Style Taiji masters reflect their times. The leading figures were highly involved with defense on a local, provincial, and sometimes national level. The need for true, highly effective martial skills was ingrained in the consciousness of all facing life and death struggles in their daily lives. Famed martial art teachers, like Yang Luchan, were placed in a quandary between the desire to keep their highest knowledge from "outsiders" and the wish to help close family members and friends. They also had to make a living during difficult times.

There was another motivation for teaching that is often overlooked. It involves the many decades of humiliating treatment at the hands of foreign countries which forced China to give concessions away while losing their own land, wealth, and dignity. The Chinese became known as the "sick man of Asia." That phrase features in the Bruce Lee film *Fist of Fury* (1971), and the Jet Li film *Fearless* (2006). The idea of teaching martial arts for health fit in well with the "self-strengthening" movement in the early 20th century. The country needed to become strong, as did its people.

Xiong Yanghe and His Unique Contributions to Taijiquan

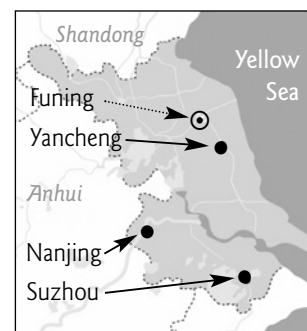
Early on, Yang Luchan and his sons were exhibiting different modes of instruction. They had an array of students: family members, military officials, Manchu guards, other martial art instructors, the affluent and the peasant. Each held the Yang Family tradition and could tailor their instruction according to the student-teacher relationship.

Personalities also played a role in teaching methods as well as in the selection of students. There were polar yin-yang characteristics shown between Yang Banhou (*yang*) and Yang Jianhou (*yin*), and in the following generation between Yang Shaohou (*yang*) and Yang Chengfu (*yin*)! Shaohou's style was physically and mentally demanding, plus he would not pull punches with his students. Yang Chengfu's style became the most popular because of his more pleasing character and teaching methods. The slower tempo and modifications he made were suitable for a greater number of people, such as the elderly. His teaching had a great impact on national "self-strengthening" by bringing health to thousands.

What is Xiong Yanghe's place in this development? Within the Yang Taiji lineage, he took his teachings to Taiwan following the exodus of the Chinese Nationalists to Taiwan in 1949 and became a major influence in the spread of taiji throughout the island. When he passed away in 1981, he and his senior disciples had taught over ten thousand students. His style continues to spread via his disciples, and his unique system is now referred to as Xiong Style Taiji. Xiong's story proves interesting for his unique place in taiji as well as his personal life.

Xiong was born on September 29, 1888 in Jiangsu Province, in Funing County. His father, Xiong Weizhen, passed the provincial examination (*juren* military degree) during the late Qing Dynasty. Yanghe studied martial arts first with his father, then his father hired instructors for his young son: at age 12, a Shaolin master named Liu He and his disciple Liu Zhongfang came to teach; at age 15, Master Yin Wanbang for Jiangnan Eight Harmonies Boxing system. These had a martial influence from Gan Fengchi. When Xiong was 20, "Miraculous Hand" Tang Dianqing (1850~1926) was hired to teach. These teachers provided young Xiong with an excellent foundation in Shaolin boxing and may have given Xiong his first exposure to taijiquan.

JIANGSU PROVINCE
IS ON CHINA'S EAST COAST.
XIONG YANGHE WAS
BORN IN FUNING, WHICH IS
IN YANCHENG MUNICIPALITY.





AT HIS DESK,
HU PUAN (1878~1947)
WAS FAMED AS A
CHINA SCHOLAR AND
TAIJIQUAN MASTER.
www.taiji.net.cn

Xiong had hands-on fighting experience as he helped his father maintain township security. He found himself all too often fighting with gangsters. When he was 19 years old, he was the local boxing champion in the “no holds barred” competitions held on raised platforms (*leitai*), as seen in the movie *Fearless*. Because of his powerful kicks, Xiong earned the nickname of “Funing Legs.” Such experiences gave him boxing insights, but he was destined to enrich his martial arts by contacts made through his work.

When Xiong was 23 years old, he began a career in the military, which dealt with security and military operations. At 29, he was Adjunct Director of the Anhui Province government office, and at 35 he went on to a management position in the Funing County garrisons. During this period, Xiong met Old Frame Yang Style Taijiquan master Hu Puan (1878~1947), who became his most influential teacher. Hu’s nickname was “Hu Hu,” meaning “Tiger Hu.”

Hu was born in Anhui Province, Jing County. He served as the Department Chief of Jiangsu Province Civil Administration. As a sinologist well-known for his books and poetry, Hu taught at Shanghai University. While in Shanghai, he had an opportunity to meet and study with a number of high caliber taiji masters. He practiced daily starting at 6:00am for over 18 years, until he became disabled by a stroke and resulting paralysis.¹

Who was Hu’s primary taiji teacher? Sources differ, stating he studied with:

- 1) Chen Weiming (1881~1958) ²
- 2) Yang Jianhou (1839~1917) ³
- 3) Yang Chengfu (1883~1936) ⁴
- 4) Yang Shaohou (1862~1930) ⁵
- 5) Le Huanzhi (1899~1960) ⁶

Most statements regarding Hu Puan’s teachers simply say that he studied with this particular person or that one. Furthermore, there are questions about the length of time that Hu studied with his teachers. What could he have learned from them? One reference says “Yang Chengfu and disciple Mr. Hu Puan ... compared notes together, making a thorough study of taijiquan, gaining thorough and penetrating insights into taiji gongfu.”⁷ To state that Hu was Yang Chengfu’s “disciple” is a strong statement. Unfortunately, I have not found solid evidence to substantiate this pronouncement.

Hu Puan probably met all of these teachers and may have studied with each to different degrees. But it is interesting to note that he spoke so highly of Le Huanzhi (1899~1960), who was from Gushi County in Henan. Le was a medical doctor and also a senior disciple of Dong Yingjie (1898~1961). In his published memoir, Hu wrote that Le’s taijiquan is extremely fine. Hu wrote that—from his own push hands experience with Yang Chengfu, Sun Lutang, Wu Jianquan, and Le Huanzhi—Le proved superior, and his touch was highly effective yet had an undetectable source, “like passing clouds and flowing water,” “as not having matter.”⁸

Because the sources are obscure, it is difficult to know from whom Hu Puan received his taijiquan instruction. Also, the lineage for Xiong has not been evenly defined. There are a few sources that state that Xiong was a disciple of Yang Shaohou.⁹ This seems to be an assumption based primarily on what Xiong taught. However, both Xiong and Hu Puan probably had some contact with Yang Shaohou. What we do know for sure is that, in his autobiography (1962), Xiong himself only mentions Hu Puan in regards to the transmission of the Yang Style Old Frame. This does not negate

the possibility that Xiong met other Yang Style Taiji masters, or learned their methods via Hu Puan.

Xiong may have “studied thoroughly with Hu Puan,” but he no doubt did have good relations with other taijiquan masters.¹⁰ One source states that Xiong had the chance to meet Yang Jianhou while staying in Beijing for official business. It gave him the opportunity to seek advice about taijiquan, especially regarding the two-person routine call *sanshou* (“dispersing hands”). At this time, Xiong studied wholeheartedly and was able to grasp the deeper mysteries of the art.¹¹ Yet another source mentions that Yang Jianhou taught in Funing County, and Xiong sought his advice for the *sanshou* practice.¹² Liang Dongcai (aka, T. T. Liang) states that Yang Jianhou taught Xiong *sanshou*. Liang also maintains that nobody could have possibly learned it from Yang Chengfu, because his father Yang Jianhou died before he could teach it to him (Hayward, 2000: 61).

Since Xiong had to take part in policy discussions falling within the range of his official military duties, he had a great opportunity to meet many people who were highly skilled in a variety of martial traditions. They could compare their studies and benefit by observing the full scope of Chinese martial arts. Over the decades, Xiong received a solid grounding in Northern and Southern Shaolin and taijiquan from his personal teachers and from contact with others through his military career. Here are some highlights from his career:¹³

<u>Age</u>	<u>Position</u>
39 years	Regimental Commander, Revolutionary Army
40 years	Jiangsu Province Funing County Public Security Bureau Chief, and concurrent position as Production Brigade Chief
49 years	Jiangsu Province Funing County Magistrate
52 years	Security Major General Brigade Commander
53 years	Security Assistant Commandant
54 years	Security Major General Commander
58 years	Major General Group Commander
60 years	Deputy Commanding Officer, Military Headquarters

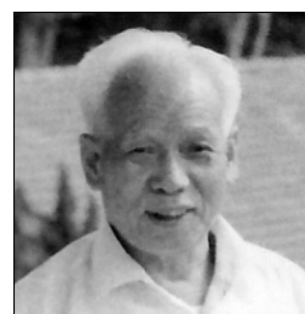
In 1949, the Nationalist Party under Chiang Kai-shek retreated to Taiwan, and the Communist Party established the People’s Republic of China (PRC) on the mainland. Xiong resigned and moved to Taiwan when “nearly 600,000 Nationalist troops and their dependents withdrew from the mainland to Taiwan.”¹⁴ It is commonly said that part of this migratory wave included four famed “Big Dogs” of taijiquan: Zheng Manqing (1901-1975), Guo Lianying, Shi Diaomei and Xiong Yanghe.

After settling in Yilan city in 1953, Xiong tirelessly taught taiji. Eventually, Xiong Style practitioners came to number over 10,000. Xiong’s most significant contribution to taiji’s legacy is the thorough preservation and transmission of Yang Taijiquan as a fighting art and exercise system, most notably being the two-person practice of *sanshou*. In addition, his books leave a detailed record of the system.

Even in his twilight years, Xiong was up daily at 4:30 am to start his day, which included his regular taiji classes. In addition to chanting Buddhist scriptures, practicing brush calligraphy, and reading military history, he wrote books, which leave a detailed record of the taiji system for following generations. He was a Buddhist who treated his disciples with a fatherly affection. He died on October 29, 1981 in Yilan Yuan Shan Rongmin Hospital at the age of 94.



MASTER GUO TINGXIAN (1923-2002) WAS ONE OF XIONG YANGHE’S TOP DISCIPLES, AND THE TEACHER OF LIN JIANHONG. Photograph courtesy of Lin Jianhong.



MASTER YANG QINGYU (1915-2002) WAS ONE OF XIONG YANGHE’S LONGTIME STUDENTS AND CLOSE CONFIDANT. BORN IN HENAN, HE SERVED IN THE MILITARY AND MOVED TO TAIWAN. Photograph by M. DeMarco.

Xiong Yanghe's Curriculum as Presented by Lin Jianhong

On the *Neijia Formosa* website, David Chesser writes this regarding Xiong's curriculum: "This amount of training makes it the most complete version of taiji practiced on the island. I simply haven't found anything that compares to it."¹⁵ In order to present some of Xiong Yanghe's system in this journal, photographs were provided by Robert Yu, who contacted Master Lin Jianhong during a visit to Taiwan in October of 2006.

Master Lin Jianhong studied under Guo Tingxian, a top Xiong Yanghe disciple. Through Guo, Lin also learned Hua Tuo's Five Animal Frolics. Lin teaches in the Taipei area, including Liberty Square (formerly called the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Square). Mr. Robert Yu visited Master Lin's class three times, saying that Lin and his students were refreshing to meet, "open, friendly and competent" people (R. Yu, personal communication, November 3, 2006). Yu provided over 100 photographs and reference materials for this article. Now in his mid-50s, Master Lin enjoys teaching, usually with the help of his assistant Ms. Ye Jinxiu, as shown on the following pages.

Courtesy of iStockphoto.com.



Xiong Style Curriculum

- | | |
|---|-----------|
| • Yang Family Old Frame Xiong Style Taijiquan (III style) | 楊家老架熊氏太極拳 |
| • Taiji Basic (standing) Post | 太極基本樁 |
| • Taiji Qigong | 太極氣功 |
| • Push Hands (tuishou) | 推手 |
| • Dispersing Hands (sanshou) | 散手 |
| • Taiji sword | 太極劍 |
| • knife | 刀 |
| • stick | 棍 |
| • staff | 桿 |
| • paired swords (two-person) | 對劍 |
| • paired knives (two-person) | 對刀 |
| • paired sticks (two-person) | 對桿 |
| • paired staves (two-person) | 對棍 |
| • Six Directions Flower Spear (<i>Liulu Huaqiang</i>) | 六路花槍 |
| • Spring and Autumn broadsword | 春秋大刀 |
| • double swords | 雙劍 |
| • Mizong Boxing | 秘宗拳〔迷蹤拳〕 |
| • Four Gates Hong Boxing | 四門洪拳 |
| • Young Hong Boxing | 小洪拳 |
| • Sunlight Palm (<i>Ziyang Zhang Deng</i>) | 曦陽掌等 |
| • and more | |



林建宏

Lin
Jianhong

Long Form Solo Routine

SELECTED POSTURES FROM
THE TRADITIONAL LONG
ROUTINE CONSISTING OF
111 POSTURES.

- 1) Beginning posture.
- 2) Ward-off left
- 3) Ward-off right
- 4) Rollback
- 5) Press
- 6) Double Elbow
- 7) Single Whip
- 8) Raise Hands
- 9) Rooster Stands
on One Leg
- 10) Snake Creeps Down
- 11) Ride Tiger
- 12) Bend Bow
Shoot Tiger





Five Animal Frolics

A SUPERB WAY TO CULTIVATE TAIJIQUAN PRINCIPLES IS TO DEVOTE A FEW MINUTES A DAY TO THESE EXERCISES. MASTER LIN WAS FORTUNATE TO LEARN THIS SYSTEM FROM GUO TINGXIAN. MR. LIN'S STUDENT, MS. YE JINXIU, LEADS THE GROUP.



MASTER LIN TEACHES A VARIETY OF STUDENTS AT DIFFERENT LOCATIONS AND CLASS TIMES. MOST WANT TO LEARN TAIJI FOR HEALTH PURPOSES AND THE GOOD COMRADERY. OTHERS, USUALLY YOUNGER STUDENTS, DELVE INTO THE FIGHTING TRADITIONS. REGARDLESS, IF YOU STUDY XIONG STYLE, YOU WILL GET A MIXTURE OF BOTH DUE TO THE COMPLETENESS OF THIS TRADITIONAL SYSTEM.



**Long Form
Solo Routine
Group Practice**



Long Form Solo Routine

BELOW: MR. LIN CLOSELY
OBSERVES EACH STUDENT
DURING PRACTICE SESSIONS
AND LATER SUGGESTS WAYS TO
IMPROVE THEIR PRACTICE.





TOP, LEFT: PUSH-HANDS
PRACTICE IN THE BACKGROUND.

Staff



Broadsword





“DISPERSING HANDS” IS A TWO-PERSON ROUTINE DESIGNED TO GIVE ADVANCED STUDENTS A REALISTIC FEEL FOR TAIJI AS A COMBATIVE ART. IT CAN BE PRACTICED AT VARIOUS SPEEDS AND INCLUDES FUNCTIONS FROM THE SOLO FORM AS WELL AS OTHERS DERIVED FROM CHEN FAMILY STYLE. IT SEEMS GRANDMASTER XIONG LEARNED THIS FROM HU PUAN, BUT THERE IS PROBABLY A LINK TO YANG JIANHOU AS WELL. CONTACT IS NEVER BROKEN DURING SANSHOU PRACTICE.

LEFT: AFTER MASTER LIN ILLUSTRATES SUBTLETIES, MS. YE APPLIES IN GOOD FORM.

Sanshou



Concluding Remarks on Xiong Style Taijiquan

Like the story of the blind men examining an elephant, this article can only represent the author's personal findings limited by a relative lack of reference materials, the difficulty in translating Chinese texts accurately, and time available for research. I take responsibility for any shortcomings and welcome any helpful feedback. Hopefully, despite such limitations, the material presented here can broaden the perspective on taijiquan, considering the historical setting where the art was developed by the leading Yang Family lineage representatives.

We have found that there were two major factors influencing early Yang Style development. The first is the nearly incomprehensible violence from the downfall of the Qing Dynasty to the founding of the Peoples' Republic of China, especially during the Republican Period (1911~1949) that soaked the Chinese soil with blood when disorder was at a maximum. It was a time when many sought out superior fighting methods and practiced as if their lives depended upon it. It is no surprise that taijiquan was a desirable system to learn and that it migrated from a small village to be practiced by bodyguards in major cities where military and security personnel were found.

The other major factor influencing taiji's history stems from the exhaustion felt by the country and its population after centuries of rebellions and foreign interventions. Years of struggle, defeat, and humiliation inspired a growing sense of nationalism and an era of "self-strengthening" for the country. One way to cure the "sick man of Asia" was to spread taiji for health: it was found to be highly effective as a form of exercise, no special gear or facility was required, and it was inexpensive when practiced in groups. Millions are healthier because of it.

If we keep in mind the two influences mentioned above while looking at the early Yang Style lineage, a special interrelationship unfolds between taiji and Chinese social history. Between the birth of Yang Luchan and the death of Xiong Yanghe, factions of China's population fought for survival for 150 years before finally emerging as a nation at peace. No doubt Yang Luchan's taiji was a fighting art, but what did it look like? How did he practice? What was the depth of his knowledge?

Most taiji styles today have evolved away from their martial roots. This evolution paralleled the decline of violence in China and the growing social and political stability. At its highest levels, taiji as a fighting art has always been transmitted to a relatively small number of people. Teaching *en masse* for public health has reached millions. As a result, a vast majority of taiji practitioners know form, but little of function. The reasons one has for learning taiji affects how the form is practiced and looks. We cannot see how Yang Luchan practiced, but the system preserved by Xiong Yanghe seems to be a good indicator and is valued for preserving a great tradition on Taiwan that was nearly lost during the Communist Cultural Revolution (1966~1976), a social movement that included a crusade to rid China of "old ways of thinking," such as those exhibited in the traditional martial arts.

Xiong Style offers combative elements that were necessary during the extreme chaos found in China during the early Yang Family transmissions of the art. Yang Luchan studied Chen Style and aspects of this are reflected in Xiong Style too: stances are often low and wide, applications are effective, training methods in push-hands and sanshou are practical, and the inclusion of weaponry is encompassing. Even though Xiong's system retains the old Yang flavor, he lived forty years longer than Yang Chengfu, and into the post-1949 era. He was motivated to teach for two reasons. He taught close students taiji as a fighting art and as an exercise for health and longevity. Thousands of other students were taught basically for "self-strengthening."

This brief overview of Xiong Style helps define and give meaning to the words “taijiquan.” Taiji is not just an exercise and not only a fighting art. It is both, and its dual nature is inherent in the teachings of true masters. One who has mastered Xiong’s system, or the early Yang Family systems, can impart the theory and knowledge applicable in both areas as a combative art and exercise system. The mix is largely determined by the teacher-student relationship and the motives involved. Yang Family Xiong Style Taijiquan gives us an unique opportunity to look back in time when the template of Yang Style was forged. As the system thrives in Taiwan under Xiong’s disciples and their own disciples—teachers such as Lin Jianhong and Lin Chaolai—we see that the old system has been preserved, while even spreading outside Taiwan to benefit others. It’s a taste of “old wine in a new bottle.”



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The impetus for this article came from Mr. Robert Lin-I Yu, a noted baguazhang and xingyi instructor (disciple of Hong Yixiang, Zhou Jincai, and others in Taiwan). From his home in Madison, Wisconsin, Yu called to say he would be returning to Taiwan in October (2006) to conduct martial arts research and visit relatives. “Would you like me to do anything for you while there?” My only response was that, if he wished, he could contact Mr. Lin Shengxuan (one of my Xiong Style Taiji classmates) and any other Xiong Style instructor he could find. He followed up and returned to the U.S. with a huge stack of photographs, notes, copies of hand written documents, books, and unpublished manuscripts from Xiong Style instructors. A special thanks to these two fine gentlemen for the friendship and support, and to Master Lin Jianhong, Ms. Ye Jinxiu, and fellow students for kindly participating.



ROBERT YU AND
LIN SHENGXUAN
IN 228 MEMORIAL PARK.

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- ² www.taiji.net.cn/liu/wlys/200712/6426.shtml; <http://yuehuanzhi.blog.sohu.com>
- ³ <http://blog.udn.com/article/trackback.jsp?uid=wang6196192001&aid=1077817>
- ⁴ <http://tw.myblog.yahoo.com/q3taichi/article?mid=23&sc=1>
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- ⁶ <http://yuehuanzhi.blog.sohu.com>; www.xici.net/u6819319/d19792891.htm
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- ¹⁰ http://blog.sina.com.tw/lkk_blog/article.php?pbgid=36074&entryid=320007
- ¹¹ [http://www.lin-gi.com.tw/discuss/View topic.asp? Subject ID=7135&Sign=150](http://www.lin-gi.com.tw/discuss/View%20topic.asp?SubjectID=7135&Sign=150)
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- ¹³ <http://blog.udn.com/wang6196192001/1067085>
- ¹⁴ <http://taiwanreview.nat.gov.tw/fp.asp?xItem=589&CtNode=128>
- ¹⁵ <http://chessman71.wordpress.com/2006/05/15/yang-shao-hous-taiji/>

XIONG YANGHE
PHOTOGRAPHS
As part of its goal
to maintain cultural
records, Taiwan's
National Digital
Archives Program
(see www.ndap.org.tw)
has digital photographs
of Xiong Yanghe in
the collection which
can be viewed in
thumbnail and large
format (view at [http://
digitalarchives.tw](http://digitalarchives.tw)).

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Short List of Xiong Students		People Mentioned in the Article	
Cao Zenghua	曹增華	Chen Changxing	陳長興
Chen Deyang	陳德洋	Chen Yanxi	陳延熙
Chen Huang	陳皇	Chen Weiming	陳微明
Chen Xiaoyin	陳曉寅	Dong Yingjie	董英杰
Chen Xingguai	陳興桂	Du Yuze	杜毓澤
Chen Zhenhe	陳珍和	Gan Fengchi	甘鳳池
Guo Tingxian	郭廷獻	Guo Lianying	郭連英
Huang Guozhi	黃國治	Hu Puan	胡朴安
Huang Qinglin	黃清麟	Le Huanzhi	乐奐之
Jan Tiangong	簡天拱	Lin Jianhong	林建宏
Li Guoguang	李國光	Lin Shengxuan	林聖軒
Li Rixin	李日新	Liu He	劉和
Lin Chaolai	林朝來	Liu Zhongfang	劉仲仿
Lin Lianfu	林連富	Shi Diaomei	施調梅
Lin Lianzhi	林連枝	Sun Lutang	孫祿堂
Lin Qingzhi	林清智	Tang Dianqing	唐殿卿
Lin Xianghua	林祥華	Wu Jianquan	吳鑑泉
Lu Yuxuan	陸雨軒	Yang Banhou	楊班侯
Lü Zhenzhong	呂振忠	Yang Chengfu	楊澄甫
Meng Shanfu	孟善夫	Yang Jianhou	楊健侯
Qiu Shuzhou	裘署舟	Yang Luchan	楊露禪
Rao Shunchen	饒舜臣	Yang Qingyu	楊清玉
Yang Qingyu	楊清玉	Yang Shaohou	楊少侯
Ye Shiyi	葉式意	Yin Wanbang	殷萬邦
Yu Xianquan	俞賢詮	Xiong Weizhen	熊渭珍
Wan Xiaoyan	萬小燕	Xiong Yanghe	熊養和
Wang Jingzhi	王靜之	Zheng Manqing	鄭曼青
Wang Juemin	王覺民		
Wei Guang	魏廣		
Zhang Nan	張楠		
Zhang Zhongping	張仲平		
Zou Xueyuan	鄒學元		
Other Xiong Students		Places	
Liang Dongcai (Liang Tsung Tsai)	梁棟材	Anhui Province	安徽省
Liu Chenhuan (Abraham Liu)		Chen Village	陳家溝
Tao Bingxiang (Tao Ping-Siang)	陶炳祥	Funing County	阜寧縣
Zhong Dazhen (Tchoung Ta-tchen)	鍾大振	Guangping County	廣平縣
		Gushi County	固始縣
		Hebei Province	河北省
		Henan Province	河南省
		Jiangsu Province	江蘇省
		Jing County	涇縣
		Yilan County	宜蘭縣
		Yongnian County	永年縣