

MASTER DU YU-TSE

by Wang Jia-xiang

INTRODUCTION*

The following translation is an excerpt from Master Du Yu-tse's *Eighty-Second Birthday Commemorative Book*, originally written by Wang Jia-xiang. I have chosen to translate part of this booklet for a number of reasons. One reason was to commemorate the 94th birthday Master Du had in 1989.

Regardless of age, Master Du was certainly a unique figure in the world of martial arts. Boxing instructors of various styles acknowledge Du Yu-tse's unique mastery of the Chen system, believing it to be a national treasure. Instructor Adam Hsu, now teaching in the San Francisco area, compared many Chen styles while in China in 1986. Hsu, previously from Taiwan, wrote in a correspondence that "Du's Chen style is indeed a national treasure. Even in Chen Village, the birthplace of Taijiquan, you find almost no one teaching Chen style like this."

Along with Du Yu-tse's unique place in the lineage of Chen style masters, his personal history is likewise quite interesting. Master Du began his martial art training at an early age partly because of his father's high social standing as a government official. During the later years of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), when the political and social conditions were not stable, such a position necessitated the need for bodyguards. The Du family lived under constant guard and visitors to their home were limited to close friends, those who had business with Du's father, or hired instructors.

Because of the above conditions, young Du Yu-tse was able to study with two great teachers: Masters Chen Yen-xi and Chen Ming-biao. Under their guidance he learned both the Old Form (Lao Jia) and New Form (Xin Jia) sets of the Chen system. Oddly enough, because of the strict household formalities, Master Du never met Chen Fa-ke, the son of Chen Yen-xi. Incidentally, Chen Fa-ke did not practice the New Form, but concentrated solely on the two routines of Lao Jia (the second known as Cannon First, or Paochui).

A word regarding Wang Jia-xiang will help explain his interest and insights in writing the *Commemorative Book*. Mr. Wang, along with Mr. Tu Tzung-ren, Mr. Lee Hou-chen and Mr. Ts'ao De-lin represent the four formal students who have performed the traditional ceremony of kowtowing to Master Du. As a result, they were accepted as "sons" within the Chen Taijiquan Family and are numbered as "sons" in that order. This continues the lineage of Chen Yen-xi, since Du Yu-tse was one of his accepted "sons." Mr. Wang Jia-xiang is now nearly seventy years old and continues to teach in the southern Taiwan city of Tainan.

The following translation of his "Brief Description of Master Du Yu-tse" I hope will provide interesting details in the tradition of a boxing master. Hopefully it will also indicate the deep feeling and dedication necessary to transform the movements into a perfected art form. Those who have been fortunate enough to fall under the tutelage and inspiration of respected Master Du have also accepted the responsibility to pass on the learning in like manner.

Except where noted, the accompanying photographs were taken at Master Du's home on June 8, 1989, while the "sons" of Mr. Tu Tzung-ren were there to receive some additional instruction. Master Du, carefully watching every movement of the students, spoke in a strong clear voice (in Chinese, English or German!) to make critical remarks. When words were of no use, he stood to demonstrate. His kung-fu was certainly impressive as was his kind personality which radiated the wisdom of his years. This combination of gentleman and master made Du Yu-tse an indubitably rare form of dragon.

Du Yu-Tse
 11 (some 93)
 Tu Yi Che

* Introduction and Translation
 by Michael A. DeMarco

17th Generation

Chen Style Taijiquan Master



Classic Posture
Lan Ts'a I

Du Yu-tse. Photograph, provided by Tu Tsung-ren, taken in Du's Taipei livingroom during the mid-1970's.

Top: Du Yu-tse (age 94). Photo taken June 5, 1989, at is home in Taipei.



Bottom: Master Du's adopted sons, "tudi," standing behind him for a photograph taken on his 80th birthday. Although he instructed other students, only these four were selected to be "sons," thus inheriting the most significant details of his teachings.

Standing, left to right:
Wang Jia-xiang
Lee Hao-chen
Tsao De-lin
Tu Tsung-ren

Photo provided by Tu Tsung-ren.



DU YU-TSE

17TH GENERATION (1886-1990)

FROM BOAI, HENAN; APPROXIMATELY 17 MILES FROM CHEN VILLAGE
DISCIPLE OF CHEN YEN-XI & CHEN MING-BIAO

18TH GENERATION DISCIPLES ACCORDING TO SENIORITY FROM LEFT TO RIGHT

WANG JIA-XIANG

BORN NOVEMBER, 1925, IN
HEILONGJIANG PROVINCE;
LIVES IN TAINAN.

TU TZUNG-REN

BORN DECEMBER, 1944;
LIVES IN TAIPEI.

LEE HAO-CHEN

BORN 1936; DIED 1984
IN TAIPEI.

TSAO DE-LIN

BORN JUNE, 1925;
LIVES IN CHIAYI.

19TH GENERATION DISCIPLES ACCORDING TO SENIORITY FROM TOP TO BOTTOM

LEE CHENG-CHONG
BORN DECEMBER, 1946;
LIVES IN CHONGLI.

TSAI YING-CHIEN
BORN APRIL, 1947;
LIVES IN KAOHSIUNG.

HO HONG-TSAI
BORN SEPTEMBER, 1952;
LIVES IN PINGTONG.

LIN CHONG-POR
BORN IN 1954;
LIVES IN TAIPEI.

CHANG CHOUR-JINN
BORN AUGUST, 1954;
LIVES IN CHIA-YI.

CHONG KHEN-SIONG
BORN MAY, 1956;
LIVES IN TAINAN.

CHOU MING-FA
BORN 1958;
LIVES IN TAINAN.

CHIANG DING-FUNG
BORN IN 1961;
LIVES IN TAINAN.

HWANG SHIANG
BORN IN 1963;
LIVES IN TAINAN.

MICHAEL A. DeMARCO
(ZHOU MU-DE)
BORN JULY, 1953;
LIVES IN ERIE, PA., USA.

HUANG SHIR-CH'UAN
BORN JANUARY, 1952;
LIVES IN TAIPEI.

DIETMAR STUBENBAUM
BORN SEPTEMBER, 1962;
LIVES IN FRIEDRICHSHAFEN,
W. GERMANY.

LIN SHIR-CH'IEH
BORN MARCH, 1951;
LIVES IN TAIPEI.

YOU JIN-DI
BORN APRIL, 1952;
LIVES IN TAIPEI.

LEE YIN-TS'UN
BORN 1972 IN TAIPEI; LEE
HAO-CHEN'S SON.

SUAN SHU-FENG
BORN APRIL, 1953; FEMALE
DISCIPLE LIVING IN CHIAYI.

LINEAGE CHART

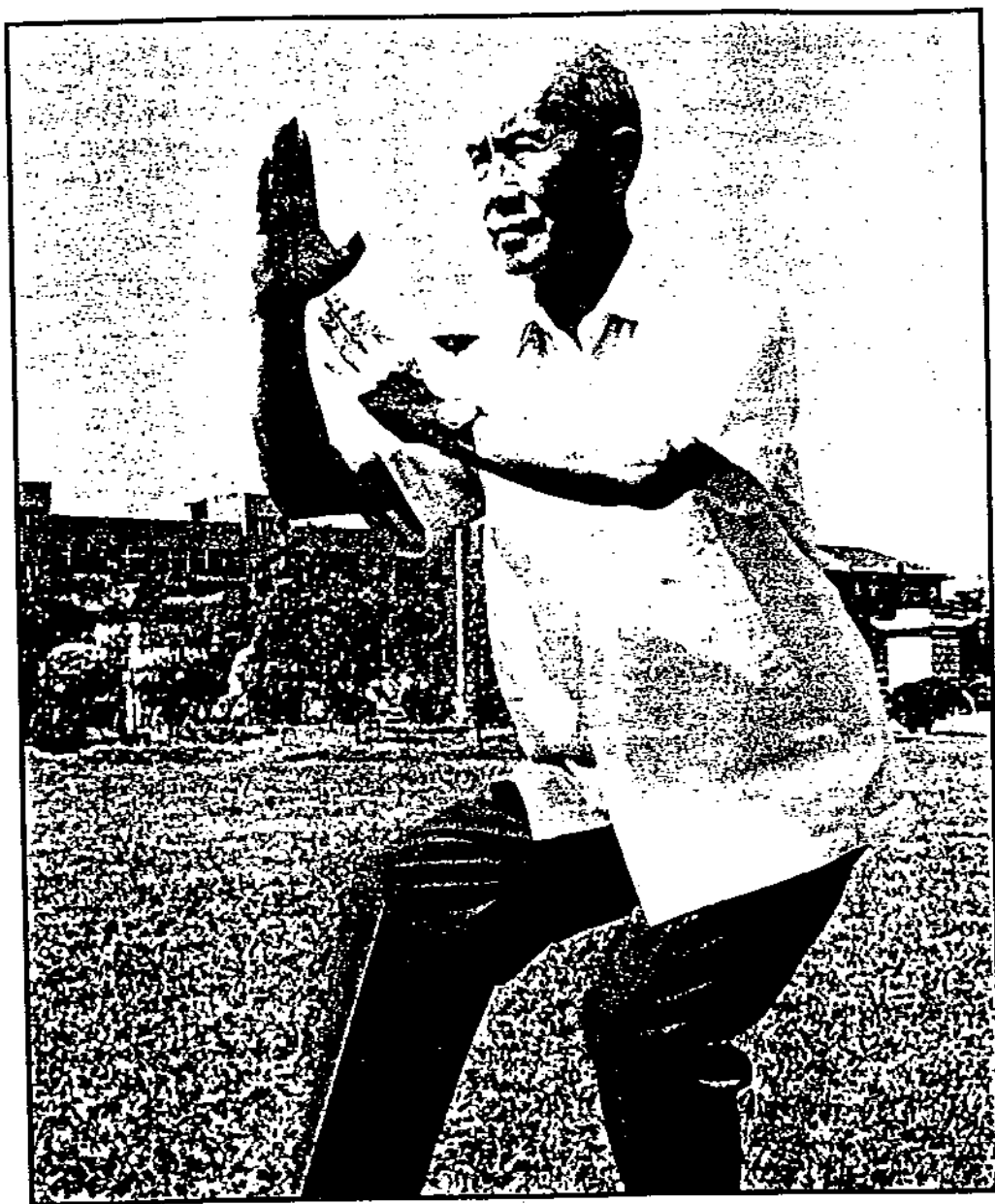
Taiji Sword

Photos, provided by
Wong Jia-xiang, show
Du Yu-tse in the years prior
to his move to Taiwan.



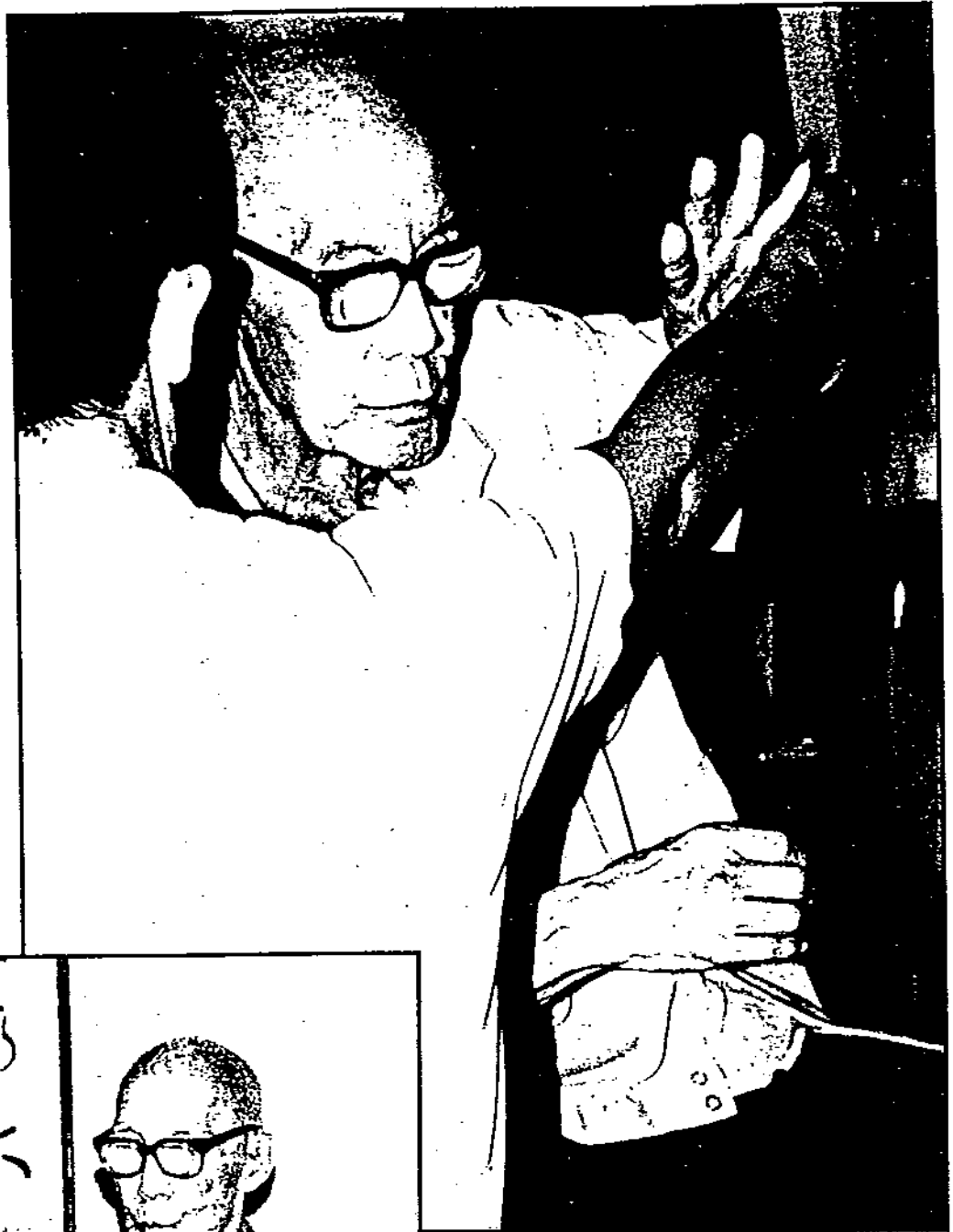


Du Yu-tse demonstrating applications.



On the grounds of Sun Yat-Sen Memorial Hall, near his home, Du Yu-tse posed for photos. He was nearly 80 years old at the time.

Photo provided by Chong Jien-siong.



Below: Master Du demonstrating variations of the "Concealed-hand Strike," a standard movement in the Chen system. Tu Tsung-ren watching closely.



Above: Master Du removes his shirt to more freely demonstrate movements. Here he shows some defensive blocks, grabs and counter strikes while stressing the application of each according to the *yin/yang* principles of Taiji. Even at 94 years of age, Master Du did not hesitate to stand in order to perform movements when talk alone was insufficient. Many of the profound aspects of Taijiquan are beyond words.

TRANSLATION*

Master Du Yu-tse, whose secondary given name is Du Qi-min, was from Henan Province, Boai prefecture. He was born in the twenty-third year of the Qing Dynasty's Emperor Kuang Hsu; in other words, fifteen years before the 1911 founding of the Chinese Republic, between 5:00 and 7:00 p.m.

Now he is more than eighty-two years old and still practices Taijiquan regularly. This practice includes Golden Buddha Pounds Pestle, 1,000 Pounds Fall, Shake Foundation and Kick Twice, Concealed-hand Strike, Strike Towards Groin, Stop Opponent with One Heel (left and right), Swing Foot to Double Target, steps, vertical movements, jumps, leaps... He practices every kind of movement, clearly and crisply, placing all in good order. The result is a boxing borne on the wind. At the same time, he has achieved great strength and the briskness of sound health. Because Master Du does not give up this practice, he has remained at his prime. Ah! If one can do all of Taiji's profound functions, it is possible to make great progress!

In the eighth year of the Chinese Republican period, when the country was finally stabilized (following great political unrest), Du Yu-tse attended college to study mechanical engineering. Following his studies, he performed engineering duties in the region of northern China. Afterwards, he came to Taiwan and was employed as an engineering specialist and worked secondarily as a factory manager. Passing through these years in this way was a rewarding experience.

Master Du was originally from Henan, Boai prefecture. Chenjiagou, located in Wen prefecture, is less than seventeen miles away. In the late Qing Dynasty, these same areas formed part of what was then the district of Hwai Qing prefecture. This rural area had a close-knit society where everybody knew everyone else who lived there.

When he was eighteen years old, Du Yu-tse kowtowed to Master Chen Yen-xi as part of his formal acceptance as a student. Chen Yen-xi was the famed sixteenth-generation master of the Chen style and grandson of Chen Chang-xing. Chen Yen-xi taught Du Yu-tse the Lao Jia (Old Form) Chen Family system.

The father of Du Yu-tse was named Du Yo-mei. Thirty years before the Qing Emperor Kuang Du (reign lasted from 1875 to 1908), Du Yo-mei had the rare fortune of passing the Jin-shi Examination (national civil service examination held at the capital) and was awarded the eleventh degree, the second most outstanding rank that could be received from the Hanlin Academy (government examination office). Du Yo-mei went abroad to study in Japan during the early Republican years (1912-1949). While in government service, he also traveled to the provinces of Guandong and Guanxi.

Du Yo-mei asked Chen Yen-xi's nephew, Chen Ming-biao, to be his bodyguard, plus his family's personal boxing teacher. He did so because Chen Ming-biao was an expert in archery, the spear and other aspects of the martial arts, including the Lao Jia (New Form) Chen Family Taiji and Paochui (Cannon Fist). Consequently, Du Yu-tse was able to study the Xin Jia and Paochui styles under his tutelage.

The movements of the Chen Village style of Taijiquan are organized in a series, bound together as by a strong silk thread. To elaborate further, the movements are alternating manifestations of fast and slow; varying degrees of hard and soft as well as varying degrees of empty and substantial.

How to execute these principles in their highest degree is a precious secret not easily shown to others, particularly in an agricultural society whose people must work so much while they study. Therefore, the transmission of this knowledge has not been broad.

In Taiwan, those who have received training in Chen Style Taijiquan are as rare as the mythical phoenix or unicorn. In the past, anyone who could perform the Chen style learned it, like Master Du, during the Qing Dynasty. Because of Master Du's deep commitment to this particular boxing art, he feels a great obligation to preserve what he learned. He repeatedly made appeals to others in Taiwan to follow this path. Master Du, desiring not to neglect this duty to pass on his knowledge, teaches as much as possible by demonstration, so later generations can advance accordingly.

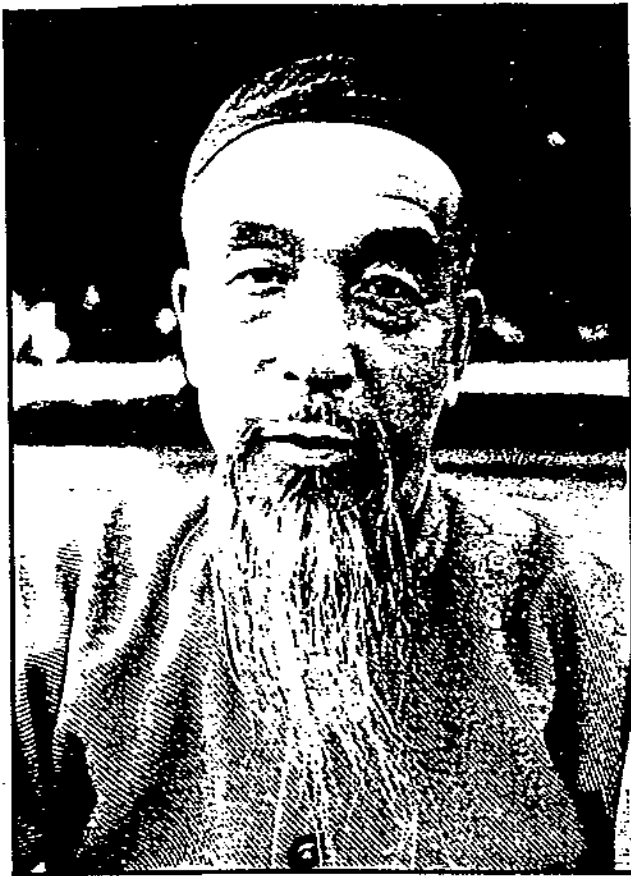
* For clarification, the translator has placed additional information within parentheses (). Any imperfections in this translation are solely due to the limited linguistic skills of the translator.

Mr. Wong practicing a movement from the first routine in which the performer "drops and branches," springing back up immediately into the next movement.

Photo provided by Wong Jia-xiang.



Dietmar Stubenbaum receives precious advice from Master Du. After students performed the Chen sets, Du would analyze each movement, usually mixing Daoist theory with varied martial applications. He lamented that many martial arts are losing aspects of their rich heritage. According to him, it was after the introduction of firearms that teachings became more limited in scope.



Wang Jia-xiang
Now a major representative of the
eighteenth generation Chen Taijiquan
Masters, Wang is one of the most
knowledgeable practitioners of the style
living today. Originally from the far
northeastern province of Heilongjiang,
he now resides in Tainan city, Taiwan.

At present, Taijiquan is flourishing as a fruit from its roots in Chenjiagou, the village in Wen prefecture of Henan province. And yet, just how to do the Chen Style Taijiquan remains a secret. In addition, the excessive secrecy that surrounds it has placed the art on the verge of extinction. The sixteenth generation Master Chen Pin-san, by giving his total attention for thirteen years, collected, structured, organized and eventually published what he could find regarding Taijiquan, including pictures, diagrams and stories.

In the preface at the beginning of this book is a remark that Master Du shares with the respected Taijiquan elders: "Indications show that efforts are being made to examine and cultivate the principles of yin and yang in equal fashion." This is being done in order to incorporate the theory of the epigram into the performance of Taijiquan and thus bring the art to its full realization. But to research, study and actually acquire this special skill requires guidance.

Together with our upcoming generations, we all have to share the responsibility of seeing that Chen Taijiquan can continue to flourish forever without interruption.

Taiwan
Sixty-Third Year of the Republic of China (1974)
Chrysanthemum Month (ninth lunar month)
Respectfully your student,



WANG JIA-XIANG

Editor's Note:

On March 16, 1990, Du Yu-tse peacefully passed away in Taipei Veteran's Hospital at 10:30 a.m.