

Xin Qi Shen

2021 Winter Feng Zhiqiang



I only had the chance to meet, and learn from, Feng during his short visit to Seattle. As a close student to Gao Fu I was able to be around him outside of the seminar for dinners and meetings. He reminded me a lot of Master Tchoung Ta Tchen. Though he was a seasoned martial artists, he was easy going and fun

to be around. He didn't seem to take himself, or his position, super seriously.

HISTORY

I was told once, those who escaped China during Mao, or chose to venture to other lands, had a certain creative, inquisitive, and innovative character. They were eager to reach beyond their cultural restrictions, to explore and learn from what was beyond their borders. They had a desire to learn more and explore what laid beyond what they were taught. These artists were able to take their art to the next level or in a new direction, not being hindered by their family/martial lineage or belief. They had an inner creativity that their country or structure didn't encourage them to pursue.

Grandmaster Feng Zhiqiang

was one of these individuals
<http://www.hunyuantaiji.com>

Before learning Chen Taiji Quan, Feng was top student of Xing Yi Liu He Ba Fa Master Hu

Yaozhen . This master was respected for his unique Qi Gong and Xing Yi methods. Hu and Fake were good friends. Hu presented Feng as a good, potential student thus Fake accepted Feng as a disciple. Gao Fu mentioned that Feng was told by Hu Yaozhen and Chen Fake that one day he'd be able to merge their teachings.

Feng became one of the top 5 disciples of the great Chen Taiji lineage holder Chen Fake (1887-1957, 9th generation inheritor of Chen Taiji Quan). Another, Tian Xiuchen, was considered the best of that generation to emulate Fake's

forms while Feng was considered best at Tuishou and applications. He was one of the few who practiced tirelessly with Chen Fake. Chen Fake was known 'not to hold back' and would injure students in Tuishou.

I was told that in the early days, as instructor's were teaching or practicing in the park, Feng would be a bouncer of sorts. When a group or instructor would try to interrupt or challenge a particular group, Feng would step in and take the challenge. *Not all instructors are fighters!*

Gao Fu and other sources reported that after Chen Fake died, Feng was asked to teach at the Chen Village and instruct the upcoming generation. Feng would visit once a month. Chen Xiao Wang was one of his primary students for 3 years.

Even though he wasn't a 'Chen' family heir, this made him a 10th generation Chen Taiji heir. It gave him a freedom to evolve and expand his teaching methods. Gao Fu mentioned the Chen village would have his picture in the training hall when he arrived and taught, once he left they'd remove it.

As his teaching continued he started incorporating Qi Gong and his new insights into the lessons. After a while he was told by the elders that they only wanted to learn what he had learned directly from Chen Fake. He responded with something like, "I'm the teacher!" It didn't go over well and they began not acknowledging him teaching them. Of course this infuriated Feng and he cut them off.



As Feng's group in Beijing continued, so did his creativity and insight. He developed the 48 Chen form, which was a short form of the Yi Lu, enabling those who didn't have the time to study deeply to learn. The 48 form just eliminated the repetitions of the Yi Lu. It emphasizes the Chan Su Jin,

silk reeling, as well as the softer/looseness of the movements. This seems similar to the approach of other progressive martial artists like Koichi Tohei. Feng's Creativity, understanding and insight eventually created a new system/style: Chen-style Xinyi Hunyuan Taijiquan, mostly know as Hunyuan Taijiquan.



MY STUDIES:

When I began my studies with Gao Fu, her form was primarily influenced by Tian Xiuchen, her first teacher, friend, and Feng's classmate. As she taught the 48 form it was very structured, precise, and clear. After Tian died she was asked by Feng to take over his sessions and invited her to be his student. She graciously accepted.

As Gao Fu studied with Feng, her forms gradually changed and softened. Initially, as she taught the 48 form, it was very clear and precise. As she taught the 24 form the movements became larger, more flowing, looser, and softer. After every visit to China, Gao Fu came back with a more rounded, looser, and fluid form. As Feng grew older his emphasis was more on energy and health than the martial aspect of the art, similar to Koichi Tohei's new Aikido. Both seemed to focus on our individual health and well-being instead of performance and combat. Tohei commented once, "Relaxation is most important".



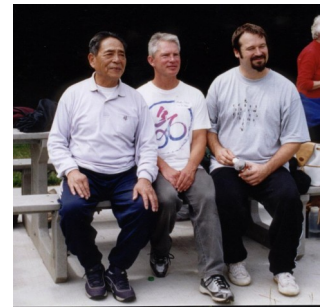
(On a personal note I find myself looking at the partner application and self-defense movements being more valuable for connecting to another and sharing a good time instead of a win/lose situation. I think that partner drills and interactive exercises are far more beneficial to our health and well-being than the solo forms.)

One day the seminar group took Feng on an Argosy tour of Lake Washington. As I was looking out at Bill Gates's mansion I got a tap on my shoulder. It was Feng, putting his arm out for Tuishou. *(Thank you Kim Ivy for snapping the photos.)* The 3-5

minutes I spend pushing hands with him changed my perspective of Taiji and Tuishou. I learned an incredible amount during this time. It was like I downloaded tons of information, insight, and feelings. It added a new depth and freedom to my practice.

Gao Fu had arranged for me and another to become his formal disciples during this trip. However, when I first began my study with Master Gao her form and influence was primarily from Master Tian. This is the way I practiced and taught. As her studies with Feng continued movements changed and the 'Fa' movements in the form were eliminated as was some of the rhythm. His new Chen Hunyuan Taiji was like a transition toward Yang Taiji Quan. Since I won't be able to represent his new Chen Taiji I didn't pursue the discipleship. I thanked him for his teaching and I would continue my study and search. Through a translator he responded with, "This was meant to be."

Doing Tuishou with him was amazing. In part, it was like being a magnet pushing against another magnet with the same polarity. His body had a force-field like a protective shield. At the same time he was soft and loose. His attitude was one of joy and casualness.



SIDE NOTE

As I've had the honor to learn and study with some remarkable artists, there seems to be a constant thread:

- ◆ A love of sharing, not just teaching.
- ◆ A generosity of sharing what they know.
- ◆ A joy of discovering and expanding on what was taught.
- ◆ A link and appreciation with students and other instructors along the same path, however different.
- ◆ A paternal feeling toward students.
- ◆ Proud of their history and lineage, but open and respectful to all others.
- ◆ Encouragement of students innovation and changes.