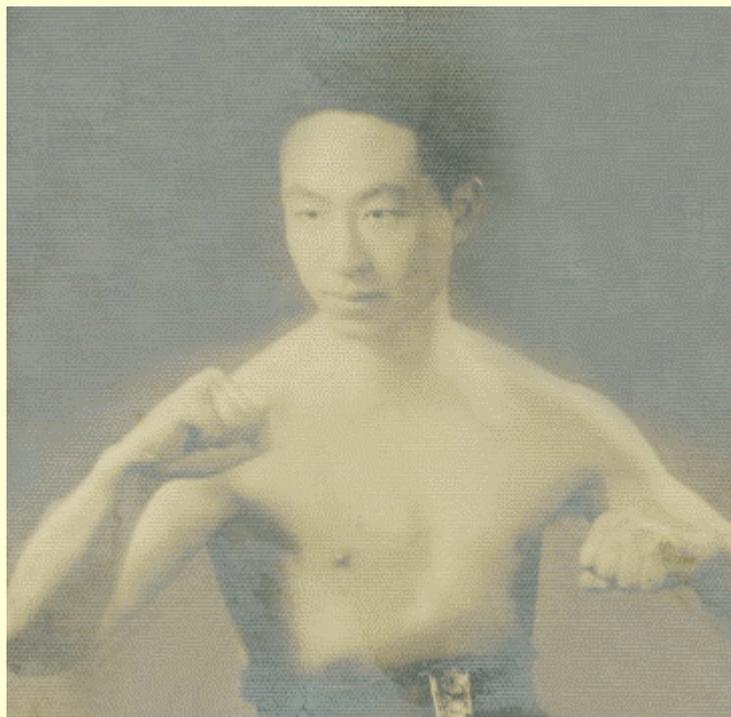


YIQUAN

KUNG FU REVOLUTION



Andrzej Kalisz – Yiquan Academy

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INTRODUCTION

In years 1997-1999 I wrote a short article about yiquan history and collected anecdotes about its founder – Wang Xiangzhai. Those texts were posted on my web site and translated into many languages. In 2006 most of the information posted at **Yiquan Academy** site was collected in **free e-books**, which can be downloaded from www.yiquan.pl

The materials about yiquan history and its founder became basis for this new free e-book. You will find a lot of new information, especially about yiquan's situation in second half of 20th century. Described here is development of the main line of yiquan. I concentrate on the founder **Wang Xiangzhai**, his successor **Yao Zongxun** and his twin sons, especially my Teacher – **Yao Chengguang**.

This e-book will provide you with information about facts and people, and should also help you to understand the process of yiquan development better. But please remember that descriptions of events, especially fights and challenges, are based on orally passed subjective relations, and written down by someone else at much later time.

Because my research was based on Chinese sources, where names of foreigners written in Chinese, are then pronounced very different than originally, I was not able to reconstruct original form of names of Europeans in some cases.

Andrzej Kalisz
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CLASSICAL XINGYIQUAN

Yiquan, which is becoming more and more popular all over the world was developed on basis of **xingyiquan** – a classical system classified as internal.

One of legends says that xingyiquan was created by **Bodhidharma** (Puti Damo), who was founder of **chan** (zen) school of **Buddhism** and spent some time at **Shaolin** temple during **Liang** dynasty (502-557). It is said that Bodhidharma was founder of Shaolin martial arts, but there is no evidence. Stories connecting Bodhidharma with martial arts appear many centuries later.

Another person often mentioned as founder of xingyiquan is general **Yue Fei** of southern **Song** dynasty (1127-1279). According to xingyiquan historians, in 1750 **Dai Longbang** in preface to “*Liuhequan*” (Six harmonies boxing) wrote, that Yue Fei was master of spear fighting and created a barehanded fighting system based on characteristics of using spear. It was called... **yiquan**. Then Dai says than not many knew this art until times of **Ji Longfeng**. And according to “*Ji family records*” it was Ji Longfeng, who being proficient at the art of spear, used this skill to create new martial art. Many Chinese sources see Ji Longfeng as founder of xingyiquan.

But the earliest written accounts which can be seen as authentic are from XVIII century. **Dai Longbang** and **Ma Xueli** were teaching at that time. Most sources say that Ma Xueli was student of Ji Longfeng. But the Ma family story is that Ma Xueli learned from some wandering master, not known by name. According to the above mentioned Dai Longbang’s preface he himself learned from **Cao Jiwu**, who was student of Ji Longfeng. Other sources say that Dai Longbang learned from **Li Zheng** or **Ni Xiuxian**.

Ma Xueli started the development of branch of **Henan** province. This system is known as **xinyi liuhequan**. For long time it was practiced in muslim community of Henan province only. In 20th century it was brought to Shanghai and taught to non-muslims.

Dai Longban started the branch of **Shanxi** province. But presently, when people talk about Shanxi branch, it means various **xinyiquan/xingyiquan** styles practiced there, many of them coming from **Henan** and **Hebei** branches. **Dai shi xinyiquan** - Dai family xinyiquan, is only one of those styles.

Xinyiquan (*xin* - heart, *yi* – mind, together meaning: mind, conciousness) and **xinyi liuhequan** are original names, most often used in **Shanxi** and **Henan** provinces. It is said that the name **yiquan** was also used, as a short variant of whole name.

In 19th century **Li Luoneng** (aka Li Nengran) learned the system of Dai family. He started the branch of **Hebei** province (the province encircling Beijing). The name **xingyiquan** (**xing** – form, **yi** – mind) appeared in this branch. Some students of Li Luoneng were: **Liu Qilan, Che Yizhai, Song Shirong** and **Guo Yunshen**.



Sitting from left: Che Yizhai, Guo Yunshen

Guo Yunshen was probably most famous. One of legends says about 3 days fight between him and **Dong Haichuan**, who is known as founder of **baguazhang**. Some people say that it was just a 3 days meeting, during which they compared skill and discussed martial arts. Others say that Guo and Dong never met, and contact and exchange appeared later, between their students. One of students of Guo Yunshen was **Wang Xiangzhai** – founder of modern **yiquan**, about which is this e-book.

Classical **Hebei** province **xingyiquan** is based on practice of **santishi** stance, **five basic fist methods and twelve short animal forms**. Stress is put on intention – **yi**. In fighting, xingyiquan adepts aims at immediate defeating opponent, by generating big dynamic power, supported by whole body movement, “moving into opponent”, at the same time maintaining some elasticity, avoiding inefficient effort by using right body structure and right angle of force. Attack and defense are simultaneous, kicks at legs level.

TRAINING, TESTING AND COMPARING

Wang Xiangzhai (1886-1963), also known as Nibao, Zhenghe or Yuseng was one of the best students of **Guo Yunshen** (Kuo Yun Shen), famous master of **xingyiquan** (hsing-i ch'uan).

The story of Wang Xiangzhai starts as those of many other masters of martial arts. In childhood he was weak and of poor health. That's why his parents decided that he should practice martial art to strengthen his body and improve health. Because Wang and Guo families were related, Wang Xiangzhai's father asked Guo Yunshen, a famous master of xingyiquan (hsing-i ch'uan), if he could teach the boy. Initially Guo refused, saying that he was too old to teach a new student. But later a friend of both families persuaded Guo, and 8 years old Wang started learning xingyi.

One of many accounts says that once when Guo got cold and despite of this went out without putting his coat on, Wang being concerned about his master's health, took the coat and also went out to look for Guo. At last he found him in a quiet place, doing some strange exercises, very different from those that Guo usually taught. Wang, astounded, stared at Guo, while Guo stood motionless in a strange posture, which Wang never saw before. At some moment Guo heard something and looked around. He saw his young pupil, who brought his coat. Guo was very moved and since that time started treating the boy quite differently, like his own son (he lost his son and at that time only had daughter **Guo Caige**), teaching him some stuff which was usually kept secret. The boy started making fast progress.

In 1898, one of Guo's students, who was head of a guild of merchant convoys guards in Baoding asked Guo to take part in one of convoys. Because lately one of convoys was attacked and all the merchandise robbed, the reputation of this guild declined. Guo Yunshen's presence would keep potential robbers away, and would help to persuade merchants to use service of this guild. But because Guo was very old, he sent little Wang with a letter, in which he explained refusal, and suggested that the boy could go with convoy. When head of guild read the letter, Wang waited in hall, looking at weapons placed on racks. Then he took a wooden staff from one of the racks. One of guild's members, who saw this, immediately went to the head to tell him about it. Usually when someone who was not member of guild touched one of guild's weapons, it was understood as a challenge. The head ran out of his room, and being aware that it was not boy's intention, grabbed his wrist, shouting: *"What are you doing, boy!"* Wang did just a little jerking movement, and the man was thrown down. When he stood up, he praised the boy: *"Excellent! I see that our master passed true kung-fu to you. You*

should stay with us and teach us this technique". When Wang returned to Guo, he made detailed account of what happened. Guo, smiling, said: *"They didn't practice zhan zhuang, how could they be able to develop this kind of force?"*

Although Wang Xiangzhai learned from Guo Yunshen for only a few years, being still a young boy, it gave him very good basis for further development. Although some students of Guo didn't think of young Wang as a true student of their master, later his skill and understanding made them recognizing the true successor, who really mastered the essence of the teachings of Guo. In "*Guoshu mingren lu*" (Records of famous guoshu people) published in 1930s, martial arts historian **Jin Enzhong** (Jin Jinzhong) says that only Wang Xiangzhai possessed Guo's teachings in their depth.

In 1907 Wang under influence of one of relatives became gambling addict. After one of quarrels with parents, who were very disturbed by sons fondness of gambling, Wang left home and together with the mentioned relative headed for Beijing. On the way, hungry and thirsty, they begged for food. A man selling baozi (steamed dumplings) helped them, and also gave them a letter of introduction to a friend who was a soldier in Beijing. In army Wang at beginning became a helper in kitchen, fetching water, chopping woods etc.

Once, when he was carrying buckets with water, some soldier tried to trip him up. Wang just made a quicker step and went on, without spilling water. And the soldier fell over, not meeting the resistance he expected. One of officers saw it and suspecting that Wang had some combat skill, asked Wang about it. Wang told him about his study under Guo Yunshen. Some time later Wang married **Wu Suzhen** - that officer's daughter. It was Wang's wife who taught him reading and writing. Wang in turn taught his wife xingyiquan. Wang's first daughter **Yuzhen** and second daughter **Yufang** were born in this marriage. With second wife Wang had sons **Daozhuang** and **Daonan** and daughter **Yubai**.

In 1913 Wang was already quite famous in **Beijing** martial arts circles. A high level officer **Xu Shuzheng**, asked by **Yuan Shikai**, who became **China Republic's** president after **Sun Yatsen** (Sun Zhongshan), organized a banquet during which there was planned a fight between **Wang Xiangzhai** and **Li Ruidong** for the title of greatest martial arts master in Beijing. Li Ruidong was instructor of combat of president's guards, a founder of **Li style taijiquan**, who learned taijiquan from **Wang Lanting** (**Yang Luchan's** student), **wuxingchui** (five star blows) from a monk **Longchan**. He also learned some styles of **Wudang** group, **shuai-jiao** wrestling and other systems. Both Wang and Li didn't really want to fight, but because they were depended from higher officers, they were afraid to refuse. Wang came first

and waited for Li at entrance. When Li came, Wang welcomed him and asked him to go first. And Li also made a gesture, letting Wang go first. At some moment they touched each others arms. Li's knees bent and he was about to fall down, but Wang supported him. Nobody, but Wang and Li were aware that it was a kind of tui shou contest. Result of it was obvious for both of them. They both went inside, but Li said that he wasn't feeling well and had to went out for a moment. He didn't come back. Soon he left Beijing. Wang all his life regreted that it happened. He was always saying that Li Ruidong and his students were very good.

In the same year Wang became chief of **Department of Unarmed Combat of Land Forces**. As instructors he appointed such famous masters from **xingyi/bagua** circles as: **Sun Lutang** (master of **xingyiquan** and **baguazhang**, founder of **Sun style taijiquan**), **Shang Yunxiang** (student of **Li Cunyi**, founder of **Shang style xingyiquan**), **Liu Wenhua** (son of **Liu Qilan**, who together with **Guo Yunshen** was student of **Li Luoneng**).

Shang Yunxiang was one of Wang's closest friends. When Shang lived on premises of **Fire God temple**, Wang often visited him, and they practiced together. Once, during tui shou, Shang was lifted high above ground, almost hitting ceiling with his head. When he fell down, he looked astounded at Wang, who was astounded himself too. Shang asked Wang to repeat it. Wang said: *"If I try it by intention, I won't be able to do it. As Guo used to say, when there is form and intention it's still not true skill. When the technique achieves the level of no-intention, miracles happen"*. Wang respected Shang Yunxiang's skill. He used to say to his students that Shang's strength was ten thousand times bigger than theirs. *"When he uses big strength, it is like a big barrel, when he uses little strength, it is like small finger. Your strength can only be compared to rice bowl."*

In 1915 Wang three times defeated **Zhou Ziyang (Zhou Songshan)**, master of **praying mantis** style from **Shandong** province, who then became Wang's long time student. Zhou said later: *"I came to become his teacher, and instead I became his student"*.

In 1918, because of political changes, **Department of Unarmed Combat of Land Army** suspended working. Wang started several years long journey in search after greatest masters of martial arts. First he went to **Shaolin Temple**, where he learned **xinyiba** (a system related to **xingyiquan**) from monk **Henglin** (also known as **Changlin** or **Xianglin** - later **Doshin So**, founder of **Shorinji Kempo**, learned from the same monk).

In **Hubei** province Wang met excentric master **Xie Tiefu**, known as **Xie the Madman**. They fought ten times and Wang was defeated each time. Then Wang suggested using weapons. Jie said: *"Weapon is only extention of body. You couldn't defeat me without*

weapon, with weapon result will be the same". They used wooden poles and Wang was defeated again. Wang, ashamed, intended to go off, but Xie said: "And what? You will practice three years, and then come back to fight with me again? Better stay with me. We can teach each other. I met many good fighters, but you are best of them." Wang learned from Xie for over a year, and it was very important for further development of Wang's martial art. When Wang was leaving, Xie said that he was not sure about south, because he didn't travel there, but in north of river **Yangtze** there was nobody who could equal Wang.

Unfortunately we don't know more about Xie and his martial art. Later, in 1940s a middle aged man came to Beijing, saying that he was Xie Tiefu's nephew. He said that in his testimony Xie let him check if Xie's teachings were continued. Wang Xiangzhai asked one of his students - **Yao Zongxun** (later Wang's successor) to demonstrate some skills. Xie Tiefu's nephew said then that his uncle would be proud.

In 1923 Wang Xiangzhai went to Fujian province and became instructor of martial art in this province's army. He met there **Fang Qiazhuang**, a master of southern **white crane** style. Of ten fights Wang lost six. But Fang said that he didn't regard himself as winner, because there was very little difference between their skill level. In the same year Wang met another master of **white crane** style - **Jin Shaofeng**, with whom he practiced and disputed a lot.

Coming back north he met famous master of xinyi - **Huang Muqiao**, from whom he learned **health dance**. He learned also **baguazhang** from **Liu Fengchun**. **Taijiquan** masters **Yang Shaohou** and **Yang Chengfu** Wang described later as his friends.

Thanks to learning from **Guo Yunshen** who treated young Wang as his own son, he got good basis for further training. Meeting **Xie Tiefu** opened new perspectives for him. Contacts with masters of other styles, especially **baguazhang**, **taijiquan** and **baihequan** helped him to broaden knowledge, get more experience and perfect skill.

A NEW STAGE - YIQUAN

In 1925, forty years old **Wang Xiangzhai** came back to **Beijing** and was teaching **xingyiquan** there. He saw that too many practitioners put attention to outside form only, want to learn fixed techniques and beautiful movement patterns only, not being able to understand the essence of martial art and neglecting mental aspect. In reaction to this Wang started putting more stress on using intention – **yi** in training, not teaching forms, but the most important basic methods, especially **zhan zhuang**. He also started using the name **yiquan** instead of xingyiquan, to make students think more about intention – **yi**, and not being obsessed with form – **xing**. Wang didn't think that he created new system, but rather that he was going back to the roots, giving **xingyiquan** the original meaning back.

According to some sources, **yiquan** was one of the early names of the **xinyi/xingyi** system. It is said that **xinyi liuhequan** is full name, and **yiquan** is short variant. Also **Li Cunyi** used the name **yiquan** for system which he taught. Even presently some divide **xingyiquan** into two parts: **yiquan** (embracing five basic methods) and **xingquan** (twelve animal forms). You should know this to understand that when the name **yiquan** is used, it not always means the system developed by Wang Xiangzhai.

Many say that **Qi Zhidu** was first student of **Wang Xiangzhai's yiquan** in **Beijing**. Later Qi regarded Wang's teachings in „**Yiquan xin pian**” („New chapters on yiquan”).



Sitting from left: **Zhang Zhanhua**, **Shang Yunxiang**, **Zhang Zhankui**, **Wang Xiangzhai**.
Standing third from left - **Zhao Enqing (Zhao Daoxin)**

Soon **Wang Xiangzhai** received letter from **Zhang Zhankui** (aka **Zhang Zhaodong**, student of **Liu Qilan**) from **Tianjin**. Zhang was in financial difficulties. A new martial arts institute was established in Tianjin, and in result less students were coming to Zhang. Wang

learned that **Xue Dian** (student of **Li Zhengbang**, who was grandson of **Li Luoneng**) was teaching there. He immediately went to Tianjin to meet Xue Dian. Wang and Xue heard about each other, but they never met before. When Wang arrived, Xue thought that this was someone intending to start learning martial arts. He asked the comer about what he wanted to learn. Wang said that he heard that Xue was famous in Tianjin for his **dragon method** of **xingyi**, and he would like to see his skill. Xue attacked immediately. Soon he was thrown back and fell on the floor. Seeing such skill and at the same time complete calmness of the guest, he realized that it was Wang. He addressed him **Wang shishu** (shishu – teacher-uncle) and said to his students: *“This is Wang Xiangzhai shiye about whom I talked to you, bow to him immediately”* (shiye – teacher-grandfather). Wang stayed in Tianjin for some time, teaching. Xue started helping Zhang Zhankui, paying him half of salary of the institute instructors.

In Tianjin **Zhao Enqing**, **Gu Xiaochi**, **Ma Qichang**, **Deng Zhisong**, **Miao Chunyu**, **Zhang Zonghui**, **Zhang Entong**, **Qiu Zhihe**, **Zhao Fengyao**, **Zhao Zuoyao** all became Wang Xiangzhai’s students.



Zhao Daoxin

Zhao Enqing, later known as **Zhao Daoxin** (he received honorary name **Daoxin** from **Wang Xiangzhai**) became one of best students of Wang. Zhao became a winner of free fighting tournament at **Third All China Sports Competition**. He was famous for defeating Norway boxer **Andersen**, fighting with uncomfortable wooden slippers on his feet. Later Zhao created his own system - **xinhuizhang**.

Later, in 1950s, **Zhang Entong** defeated Chinese heavy weight **shuai-jiao** wrestling champion **Zhang Kuiyuan**, who after this started studying **yiquan**.

Qiu Zhihe later created his own system **luoxuanquan** (spiral boxing).

In 1928, together with his student **Zhao Enqing** and **xingyiquan** master from **Tianjin** - **Zhang Zhankui** Wang went to **Hangzhou**, where he was referee at free fighting tournament at **Third All China Sports Competition** and also demonstrated training methods of **yiquan**. Zhao Enqing won the tournament. At this occasion Wang met **Liu Peiqian** – master of **meihuaquan**.

Then, being invited by **Qian Yantang** (**Guo Yunshen's** student), Wang went to **Shanghai**. Qian organized a banquet to receive Wang, and during this banquet asked Wang to have a friendly sparring. Wang tried to refuse, because he didn't want to make Qian ashamed, when other people were present. But Qian insisted, so Wang finally agreed, saying: *"If elder brother (it means eldership inside Guo Yunshen's lineage) wants to see my skill, I will ask him to sit on this sofa."* It meant that Wang would be able to throw Qian on that sofa, no matter what Qian would do. Qian attacked Wang with **beng quan**. Wang made quick, short movement, putting palm of his hand above Qian's fist, and with short movement throwing Qian, making him landing on the sofa. After a while Qian stood up, very moved, with tears in his eyes, and said: *"After so many years I feel as if I met our teacher again. I'm really glad that he has a true successor."*

Wang lived at Qian's house. Soon Qian organized another banquet and invited many famous masters. One of them was **Sun Lutang**. Wang and Sun knew each other and represented the same line of xingyiquan. Officially Sun was student of **Li Kuiyuan**, who was student of **Guo Yunshen**, but he learned directly from Guo too. Although Sun was much elder than Wang, he was regarded as belonging to younger generation in the system transmission. Others asked Sun and Wang to demonstrate their skills together. Wang smiled only. **Zhao Daoxin** stood up and said: *"I will accompany Sun shixiong in play"* (Shixiong – teacher-elder brother). When their arms met, it turned out that Sun was no match for Zhao.

Some maintain that this situation was reason for animosity between Sun and Wang. Of course you should realize that **Sun Lutang** and **Wang Xiangzhai** represented quite different ideas about martial art, and that could be more important reason. While Sun tried to develop theory with use of old concepts, Wang started realizing that traditional theories were outdated and needed to be verified and corrected.

At the same occasion Wang met **Wu Yihui**, a master of **liuhebafa** (liu ho pa fa), whom later he described as one of the three greatest martial arts masters he ever met (other two were **Xie Tiefu** and **Fang Qiazhuang**, mentioned already above). Wang students additionally learned from Wu at that time and Wu's students studied with Wang. Hence

similarity of yiquan and liuhebafa concepts and extensive use of zhan zhuang in some schools of liuhebafa.

Also **Zhang Changxin** was present there (later he won boxing tournament in Shanghai). He asked Qian Yantang to introduce him to Wang and became his student. Other students of **Shanghai** period were: **You Pengxi, Gao Zhendong, Zhu Guolu, Zhu Guozhen, Bu Enfu, Zhang Changyi**, brothers **Han Xingqiao** i **Han Xingyuan, Wang Shuhe, Ma Jianzhao, Ning Dachun**.

Dermatologist **You Pengxi** later studied some **qigong** and created **kong jin** method. In his last years he moved to **US**, where he taught in **California** and died in 1983.

Bu Enfu was a champion of China in western **boxing** and in **shuai-jiao** wrestling. In 1934 he defeated two **Russian** boxers and **American** champion of professional boxing. In 1935 he defeated famous **shuai-jiao** wrestler **Bao Shanlin**. Later he used to teach **yiquan, boxing** and **shuai-jiao**. He was one of those, thanks to whom boxing inspirations were reflected in **yiquan**.

Gao Zhendong was appointed as instructor in **Central Guoshu Instytute**. He was highly praised by famous muslim master **Wang Ziping** and chief of Institute - **Zhang Zhijiang**.

Han Xingqiao, Zhao Daoxin, Zhang Changxin and **Gao Zhendong** became famous in Shanghai as **four diamond warriors**.

In 1928 Wang wrote his first treatise: "*Correct path of yiquan*". At that time Wang Xiangzhai's **yiquan** was already quite different from what was taught by other **xingyiquan** masters. Wang in his work criticizes some concepts popular in xingyiquan circles, but many of his ideas were still based on traditional concepts, which he gave up in later years. Presently we don't see this work as theoretical basis for our training, but only as a evidence of some stage of evolution between classical **xingyiquan** and modern **yiquan**.

EXCERPT FROM „THE RIGHT PATH OF YIQUAN”

It is said that five elements are mother of creating, destroying and changing. It is source of all things. When people talk about five elements, they say that metal gives birth to water, water gives birth to tree, tree gives birth to fire, fire gives birth to earth, earth gives birth to metal. This is the cycle of bearing. Metal destroys tree, tree destroys earth, earth destroys water, water destroys fire, fire destroys metal. This is the cycle of destroying.

This corrupt concept is far cry away from the theory of martial art. Those who use it have no idea about martial art...

...direction and way of using force by opponent is changing constantly. So how could you defeat opponent in such difficult and complex situations, if you stick to the theory of five elements. Such theory can only serve deceiving people. This is utter rubbish!

Wang Xiangzhai

Thanks to brilliant mind and perfect knowledge of martial art, Wang Xiangzhai was able to notice many insufficiencies in traditional concepts and realized problems which were caused by this. The criticism toward traditional concepts and methods was enhanced by influence of science and culture of the West, which was strong in China at that time. Meeting of different points of view creates a strong impulse for new development. Unfortunately exactly like in second half of 20th century in the West many people became too much fascinated by Eastern culture, idealizing it without any criticism, half century earlier in China some people completely rejected value of their tradition, and similarly idealized the West. There were also some who kept sticking to old patterns only, not being able to learn anything new. But Wang Xiangzhai was one of those exceptional people who can view subject from various points of view, which makes their criticism very creative. He did not deny value of tradition. But he postulated critical verifying it, taking and keeping what was really valuable.

Light weight boxing world champion, Hungarian **Yingge** (name in Chinese pinyin transcription; it might be **Imre**, who a few years later became Olympic champion) was teaching boxing in **Shanghai Youth Union**. He had some fights with Chinese and won every time. So he kept telling his students that Chinese martial arts had no practical use. Wang challenged him. When their arms met, Yingge was thrown away and fell down. Later Yingge's account of this fight was published in London "*Times*". Wang's and his students fights with boxers had important influence on further development of yiquan.

At beginning of 1930s one of Shanghai bankers proposed that Wang could organize a team which would go for a world tournee to demonstrate power of Chinese martial art, and offered sponsoring. **Han Xingqiao**, **Zhang Entong** i **Zhang Changxin** became members of the team. In 1932 they started intensive training. Zhang Changxin resigned soon. In 1935 **Wang Xiangzhai**, together with **Zhang Entong** and **Han Xingqiao** moved to Wang's home prefecture **Shen. Bu Enfu** joined them soon. According to some sources also **Zhang Changxin** came there. They concentrated on training and studies on martial art theory. Most training methods used presently in **yiquan** were developed and perfected at that time. Unfortunately the plan of demonstrating power of yiquan to whole world was prevented by Japanese invasion in 1937. Otherwise yiquan could became third of eastern martial arts (after jiu-jitsu and judo) popular in the West.

AGE OF FULL BLOOM

Although the war made international popularization of **yiquan** impossible, it became famous in **Beijing**, where **Wang Xiangzhai** settled down in 1937. Soon **Han Xingqiao** joined him and helped him as assistant.

Wang Xiangzhai liked **kunqu** opera very much. Other lover of kunqu opera was **Jin Qiliang**, master of **tan tui** (spring legs style). Wang and Jin often went together to theatre and discussed plays. But Jin didn't know that Wang was a master of martial art. Once Jin visited Wang. They talked about painting, poetry and kunqu opera. Then Jin said that Wang looked very weak, so maybe he would begin to learn martial art in order to strengthen body and improve health. Wang said that he would like to learn, but so far he couldn't find a teacher. Jin replied that he could teach him. Wang said that he would like to learn combat, not forms, and asked if Jin can fight. Jin laughed and said that he would make a demonstration. He fetched a brick, and holding it in left palm, splitted it with edge of right hand. Then Jin asked Wang's opinion. Wang said that such a hit, although splitting brick, wouldn't make much harm to human body. He said that once he learned a technique of receiving blows and suggested that Jin hit him. Remaining seated, Wang turned around, exposing his back to Jin. Jin said that he was afraid that he could harm Wang, but Wang insisted that Jin hit his back. Jin made a punch, but not using his full force. Of course it couldn't affect Wang. So Jin asked if he could try once again. Wang agreed. This time Jin used all his power. Wang's back moved a little and Jin was thrown away as if by a spring. Now Jin realized that Wang was greater master than himself. Then came Wang's friend, famous painter **Li Kuchan**. Jin also knew Li, so very excited he told him what just happened. Li of course knew how great master Wang was. He said to Jin: *"I heard that you are famous for your kicking techniques. Maybe you'll try once again, but now using your legs?"* Wang, who was drinking tea, just looked at the smiling Li. Jin made a powerfull kick and again was thrown away as by a spring. But the tea from a cup which Wang kept in hand wasn't spilt.

Hong Lianshun, a master of **tantui** and **xingyiquan** of **Zhang Zhankui's** lineage was quite famous in **Beijing**. When Hong heard about Wang's incredible skill he came to challenge him. But when he saw this slim, seemingly weak man, he decided that there was no use to fight, cause he could kill him with one punch. But when he was going to leave, Wang said that maybe they would compare their skill after all. Hong decided then, that he would make some demonstration. He beautifully demonstrated a form and than pushed wall with his palm,

lightly as it seemed, but making whole house shaking, subsequently kicking wall with toes and making a little cavity in it. Very self-contented Hong asked Wang what he thought about his skill. He didn't expect the reply which followed. Wang said that Hong's skill was only good for demonstration and not for combat. In this situation there was not other possibility but fight. Hong attacked, but Wang intercepted attack and threw Hong, "seating him" on a sofa, the same way like Qian Guantang in Shanghai. Wang suggested another try, saying that he would make Hong seat on the sofa again. Hong, as he related it later, tried to keep away from sofa, but it ended just like the first time. Hong became Wang's student and passed all his students to Wang. Among them was **Yao Zongxun**.

Yao Zongxun was born in 1917 in **Hangzhou**, but he lived in **Beijing** from childhood. He graduated from department of literature of **China University**. But he was also interested in other sciences which he studied by himself. He was fascinated by both traditional chinese martial arts and western sports. At age of 16 he started learning **tan tui** and **xingyiquan** from **Hong Lianshun**. When 20 years old, he started learning from **Wang Xiangzhai**. When Wang saw Yao's learning ability, he assigned **Han Xingqiao** to give young Yao special training. **Yao Zongxun** made fast progress and soon became one of best of Wang's students.

In 1939 Wang published in "*Shibao*" newspaper a text in which he invited all masters of martial arts to exchange experiences and ideas. The comers usually wanted to compare their skills with Wang. Wang had chosen four students who fought instead of him: **Han Xingqiao**, **Hong Lianshun**, **Yao Zongxun** and **Zhou Ziyan**. Only after defeating one of them the comer would fight with Wang, but no-one succeeded.



Wang Xiangzhai in 1940

In 1940, **Wu Peiqing** - a **xingyiquan** master from **Shanxi** province came to **Beijing**, pronouncing himself a true successor of **xingyiquan**. Wu learned xingyiquan from **Li Fuzhen**, who learned from **Che Yizhai**. Che Yizhai and Guo Yunshen both learned from **Li Luoneng** (Li Nengran). Because **Wang Xiangzhai** was most famous representative of **Guo Yunshen's** lineage, Wu challenged him. But Wang decided that his student **Yao Zongxun** would fight for him. Wu agreed and preparations for the fight at premises of **Fire God Temple** (near **Chongwenmen** gate) started. Wu invited many famous masters of martial arts to see his victory. After bowing to each other, Wu attacked with **zuanquan**. Yao intercepted the attack with his left hand and with right palm attacked Wu's chin, stopping the movement at last moment. Wu was surprised by Yao's speed, but mistakingly concluded that Yao had only speed, but no power in his techniques. When Wu attacked with **piquan**, Yao dodged and at the same time attacked Wu's arm, using so called elastic force (*tan jin*) threw him away, so that landed in middle of spectators. Wu realized that his opponent was much better than himself, but he couldn't accept being defeated in front of all the masters he invited. So he attacked again. Yao neutralized his move and attacked Wu's ribs, but stopping the punch, in order not to injure opponent. Wu used this moment to attack Yao's throat with his fingers. Yao dodged with lightning speed, neutralized attack, and hit Wu's face with his fist. Before the spectators were able to notice what happened, Wu was laying on ground, uncouncious, bleeding from mouth. Four teeth were on ground beside him. Yao came over, with intention of helping Wu to get up. At this moment he was attacked from behind by one of Wu's friends. Yao felt the attack and turned to face the opponent. At the same time **Han Xingqiao**, seeing what was happening, was able to run up the attacker and throw him to the wall. A total brawling was prevented by famous masters present.

In 1940 in **Tokio** took place a big festival of martial arts in which also Chinese team participated. Some Chinese masters collaborating with Japanese went there. The chief of the team tried to persuade **Wang Xiangzhai**, whom he regarded as greatest master of China, to participate. Wang refused. But because during the festival the Chinese talked a lot about Wang Xiangzhai, soon many Japanese started coming to **Beijing** to visit Wang. Many of them challenged Wang, and all were defeated. Many of them wanted become Wang's students, but only one was accepted - it was **Kenichi Sawai**. Though Sawai was Wang's student, usually he was taught by **Yao Zongxun**. It is said that Wang told Yao not to teach Sawai everything, but because Sawai was martial arts expert, he should not try to teach him wrong. After the war ended Sawai went back to **Japan**. Later he created his own version of **yiquan**, known in Japan as **taiki-ken**.

When **Kenichi Sawai** (at that time 5 dan **judo**, 4 dan **kendo**, 4 dan **iaido**; he learned **iai-jitsu** from **Seicho Aoyagi**, **kendo** from **Takaharu Naito**, **jiu-jitsu** from **Isagai** in **Butokuden** in **Kioto**, **judo** from **Mifune** and **Sanpo Toku** in **Tokio**) first time came to Wang, who lived at Zhongnanhai, Wang was sweeping courtyard. Sawai asked if Wang Xiangzhai was in. Wang said that he was out. Sawai said that he would wait for Wang. After some time Sawai asked Wang, whom he took for a servant, if he practiced martial art. Wang said that he practiced a little. Sawai suggested that they compared their skill. Wang agreed. Sawai gripped Wang's hands, trying to execute a throw. Wang with a light movement made Sawai fall down to a kneeling position. Then Sawai asked if the man was not Wang Xiangzhai himself. Wang smiled and nodded. Sawai asked if they could have another contest. Of course he was defeated again. After several more tryings, with the same result, Sawai suggested using swords. Sawai had bamboo sword, and Wang a short wooden staff. Wang won again, and said to Sawai what he once heard from **Xie Tiefu**: *"Weapon is only an extension of body."*

In 1941, when **Wang Xiangzhai** at **Yao Zongxun's** house talked about painting and poetry with famous painter **Qi Baishi**, Sawai came with some other Japanese. It was a big man and looked very important. What astounded everybody was that the man was embracing a cock. Sawai introduced him as a martial art instructor in Japanese army, famous **judo** master **Hino**. Hino said, that he heard from Sawai about Wang's skill, but couldn't believe it, so he came himself to have a fight. Wang agreed and asked what the cock was for? Hino said: *"When I heard from Sawai about your skill, I concluded that it was black magic. This cock is to protect me against magic"* - Then he cut cock's neck and made a circle on ground with cock's blood - *"We will fight in this circle. Your magic will have no power here"*. Wang laughed: *"I know only martial art, I don't know any magic. O.K., we can fight in this circle"*. Then he went into the circle and stood calmly, with closed eyes. Hino, seeing it, said that he was going to attack Wang. Wang smiled. Then, when he opened eyes, his look was terrifying. Hino attacked with right hand. Wang slapped Hino's wrist, who cried with fear and was thrown away, with his back hitting trunk of a tree, on which branches Yao Zongxun hung punching bags. Hino fell down, uncouncious. Sawai, terrified, didn't know what to do. Wang told his student **Dou Shiming**, to pour the man with water. And indeed Hino regained counciousness. Sawai wanted to help him stand up, but Hino told him not to touch him, because his heart was beating as if it wanted to get out. After some minutes he started repeating: *"Witchcraft, witchcraft"*. Later, when Sawai helped him to stand up, he said that he really admired Wang, and then he went off, together with Sawai.

Ichiro Hatta was a well known **judo** master. In 1929 he was member of the team which promoted judo in **US**. There he met **wrestlers** and started propagating western wrestling in **Japan**. In 1932 he represented Japan in **wrestling** at **Olympic Games in Los Angeles**. In 1935 he was coach of Japanese **wrestling team** at **Olympic Games in Berlin**. Later for long time he made important contribution to training exchange between **Japan** and **US**. He achieved high grades in Japanese arts: 8 dan in **judo**, 8 dan in **aikido** and 7 dan in **kendo**. Hatta heard a lot about **Wang Xiangzhai**, but didn't believe the relations. When he learned that in "*Shibao*" newspaper there was published a text in which Wang said that although western **boxing** and Japanese **judo** all had their good points, but lacked the unified force, Hatta decided to meet Wang and prove the value of judo. He wrote a letter to Wang in which he invited Wang to one of restaurants in western style. Wang accepted invitation, realizing that it was a challenge. When Wang came into the restaurant, he was met by a big man looking like a warrior. Wang has no doubt that it was Yichiro Hatta. Hatta, seeing small, slim Wang, thought that Wang's fame was not justified. He coldly greeted Wang, and they went into a small room reserved by Hatta. When horse-d'oeuvre was brought, Hatta said that he was very glad to meet Wang, and would like to have a drink with him and make friends, and also learn a lesson. Wang said that he was not used to alcohol, and if there is a talk about a lesson, they both can learn something from each other. And then Hatta just plainly asked when and where they could have a fight. Wang said that it can be done immediately, just where they were. Hatta tried to grip Wang in order to make a throw. But before he was able to do this, Wang was already behind him, pushing him from behind and making him fall over. Hatta got up and attacked once again. Wang dodged swiftly and attacked Hatta's ribs. Hatta tried to block, but when his arm came in contact with Wang's hand, he was thrown away, as if by a spring, flying backward and upward. He landed on a small table, which felt to pieces. But he immediately jumped up and tried to catch Wang's leg. Wang not only didn't dodge, but as if purposely raised his leg, to make catching it easier for Hatta. But when Hatta tried to pull Wang's leg and throw him down, Wang's feet was already at Hatta's belly, and Hatta was pushed away and thrown down. Then Hatta asked how Wang would do if he gripped Wang's both wrists. Wang let Hatta grip his both wrists, and then suddenly issued force of whole body, throwing Hatta away, so he hit wall, making it shake.

Masao Watanabe was one of Japanese who were introduced to **Yao Zongxun** by **Kenichi Sawai**. Watanabe practiced western **boxing** and that was one of sources of the boxing inspirations in **yiquan**.

At beginning of 1940s a famous Italian boxing champion **Jiemushi** (name in Chinese pinyin transcription) came to **Beijing**. When he heard about **Wang Xiangzhai**, he went to visit him and have a fight. The Italian, with typical boxing guard waited for a good moment to attack. Wang slightly moved one of his hands upward and slowly stepped towards the boxer, with “poisonous expression” in his eyes. It affected Italians psychique so deeply, that he was hardly able to continue fight. But he made left punch and right hook immediately afterwards. Wang dodged and attacked boxer's forearm with his palm. The boxer immediately lost balance and felt over. But he wasn't convinced. He thought that Wang had better technique, but wouldn't be able to stand against his force. So Wang let him punch his belly. Jiemushi, seing that his punches have no effect on Wang, suddenly attacked Wang's underbelly with extremely powerful punch. Wang received the punch like a spring, and the Italian was thrown away, landing with sprained wrist.

In 1941 Wang presented six of his best students with honorary names, in this way expressing his high opinion about their skills and abilities. **Zhao Enqing** received name **Daoxin**, **Han Xingqiao - Daokuan**, **Bu Enfu - Daokui**, **Zhang Entong - Daode**, **Zhao Fengyao - Daohong**. All those name were constructed in the same way as names of Wang's sons, containing element **Dao** (Tao). **Yao Zongxun**, though younger and learning yiquan for shorter time than others, showed incredible learning abilities and received name **Jixiang**, meaning that he was Wang Xiangzhai's successor (**ji** - to continue, **xiang** - part of Wang Xiangzhai's name). Wang also presented Yao a fan with calligraphy which was clear evidence that Yao was designed as Wang's successor.

TEXT WRITTEN BY WANG ON THE FAN

"I'm ashamed that my efforts are so clumsy and I'm not able to achieve acme. So I hope that next generations will succeed.

I present my student Yao with name Jixiang (successor of Xiang), meaning that the seed of martial science will not be lost.

He is living alone at such young age, so I'm acting as his parent.

His nature is being a scholar, but he is not like typical bookworm.

His mind is bold and open. Not many people could compete with him.

Having such a student as Zongxun, I know that my way will not be lost.

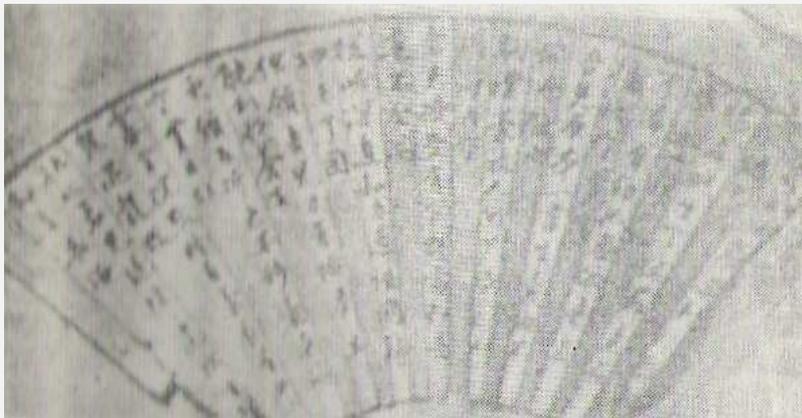
He will give all efforts, so our nation spirit will not decline.

I want him to do all he can, so people can benefit from martial art.

I wish that no hardships break his will, so his attitude and aspirations will reach rainbow on the sky.

I don't speak much, keeping silence, but secretly feeling proud of him. And I dislike those ox-ghosts which pretend to be dragons.

Someone of such strong heart can subdue a tiger, but for reason of modesty and peace he will yield even to a cat."



In 1940s **yiquan** was already seen as a system completely separate from **xingyiquan**. Wang's students, delighted with the effects of training, suggested a new name: **dachengquan** (boxing of great fullness). Wang opposed, because the name suggested that it was perfect system, and he maintained that there was no limit for perfecting martial art. But because his resistance wasn't strong enough, the name was used for a few years and by some is still used now. But most of Wang's students after some time started using the name of **yiquan** again.

In interviews for Beijing newspapers Wang expressed his views and critical opinion about the state of martial arts in China.

EXCERPT FROM INTERVIEW

Reporter

What is your view on preservation of guoshu?

Wang Xiangzhai

Martial art in China is in situation of chaos. People don't know which path they should follow. Generally we can say, that essence is neglected and only what is superficial is stressed. Japanese judo and European boxing, although they are not perfect, lacking the unified force, they have their advantages. If you compare typical martial artists of our country with them, you will see that we are far behind. It's such a shame! We must put old teachings in order, improve them and develop. If we don't do this, nobody will do it for us. Although I cannot do much myself, I'm calling everybody to work together. This is the goal of my criticism.

In 1944 Wang wrote second work about his system's theory: "*Central pivot of the way of fist*", which is also known as "*Theory of dachengquan*". Wang already completely gave up many of traditional ideas which were still present in his first book: "*Correct path of yiquan*".

Wang explains yiquan in chapters:

- **Demands of martial art,**
- **Formulas and rules,**
- **Single and double weight, not revealing form**
- **Abstractive, empty and solid, experiencing,**
- **General formulas,**
- **Demands put into verses,**
- **Forms of training,**
 - **Zhang Zhuang,**
 - **Shi Li,**
 - **Shi Sheng,**
 - **Self-defense,**
- **Combat zhan zhuang,**
- **Using mind,**
- **Using force.**

Then he is analysing some problems of martial arts in chapters:

- **Fighting and morality,**
- **Forms and techniques,**
- **Unarmed combat and using weapons,**
- **Attacking "deadly points",**
- **Inherited abilities and learning,**
- **Rejecting mystery and secrets,**
- **Knowledge and practice,**
- **Reasons of fall of martial art,**
- **Rejecting the trade mark of master-disciple system.**

„CENTRAL PIVOT OF THE WAY OF FIST” – SOME QUOTATIONS

...

Forms are something made up artificially. Is it any different with fixed techniques? This all has nothing to do with the science about principles of developing natural potential in martial art. Even if some people put a lot of effort and time into it, believing in persistence and they practice according to it, it will still be something which rejects the essence and concentrates on trifling matters. All greatest sciences and arts are simple in form, and rich in content. And what is complicated in form, usually hasn't got much essence. This is true not only in martial art. Think about it.

...

As for jumping over walls and roofs, it is all fantasies from novels, you can only smile when you hear about it. As for those stories about crushing big rocks and resisting cuts of a sabre, those are the worst absurd inventions. There is no point in discussing something like this.

...

There are people who don't possess abilities and their knowledge is shallow too. But they are quite sincere and honest. They master what teacher passes to them, they have some achievements, they develop some specific skills. Although those skills are partial, many people don't listen to explanation of their basis, they only watch the effects and because their knowledge is shallow, they see it as something magic. They don't understand that this is a mistake. This comes from lack of knowledge, lack of thinking, lack of experience in some field. Even if sometimes they understand some bits, they are not able to understand it thoroughly and to reject their usual views. Each time when they encounter something difficult to understand, they see it as something supernatural. And if someone is practicing long time and achieves real understanding, it will become something familiar, easy to understand, and there is no need to seek for using supernatural concepts. It's the same in any field. Why should it be any different in martial art?

...

...

There is no limit for development of science. There is some knowledge and some skills. What kind of level of skill could be regarded as true skill, true knowledge? I'm not able to tell. But if someone knows about something and can do it, if he can do something and he understands how he is doing this, it can be seen as a beginning of unity of knowledge and practice. If you don't understand something well, you will not be able to achieve the level of really deep skill. If you cannot do something in practice, it cannot be said that you have real knowledge about it. Knowledge and practice cannot be separated. It is the same in any science.

...

Martial art people of present time boast that they know so many forms and techniques. Even those who don't have much idea about martial art laugh at them. What a pitiful situation! Isn't it forms and artificial techniques which caused fall of martial art? Unfortunately after several hundreds years this way of practice has become habit. It is difficult to change this situation now. The wave is moving. And most absurd concepts, like theory of four manifestations and five elements, nine palaces and eight trigrams, mythical scriptures on turtle shell were absorbed. In result students don't understand the essence, stupefied by the rubbish which they hear, they follow illusions. How the true art would not be destroyed?

...

There are also such people who learned some number of forms with sabre, spear, sword and stick and they deceive people to earn money, and they are successful in this actually. And in result other people who seek for a method of earning living, see opportunity and are choosing this swindling way. There are more and more of them in society. This is not only against the right idea of martial art, but it is also reason for the attitude of righteous, brave warrior being lost now.

...

...

Lately there are many people who speak about Buddhism, talk about spirits and demons, tell lies about cultivating Tao and how to meet immortals. This is extremely absurd and harmful. How dare they presently, in the era of science flourishing, popularize such wild, false theories and publish them in magazines? How is it possible that those plain idiots can commit such shameful deeds? What Buddha, if he knows about it, can think about this category of people, who popularize false views? There are many ways of earning living. Why must they use the weak points of society, deceiving themselves and others? When I'm talking about it, I'm so sad, sighing over the world and people.

...

It can be said that the essence of martial art is as wonderful as principles of nature. It can be said that it is as deep as mysteries of heaven and earth. Practicing without understanding the principles, you will never reach the essence. Even if you practice according to the principles, you can learn for whole life and you will never use up the opportunity of further development. Why keeping secrets then?

...

I don't call myself a master. What is important is appreciating the spirit, the feelings, and not concentrating on names and titles. I'm teaching real stuff. Although I don't call myself a master, those who benefit from my teaching are treating me as a master. The empty title disappeared, but the essence remained. Has anything been lost?

And if someone is deceiving people teaching weird styles and stupid theories, and someone will go through ceremony, will bow to him and swear loyalty, calling him a master, and then will find about the absurdness of his teaching, and will start hating him, where will be the master? Only empty title will remain and the essence will disappear.

If student makes progress, he has master in fact. But if he bows three thousand times and says the word master eight hundred times, but is not making progress, where is the master? What is the meaning of titles then?

...

At beginning of 1940s **Yao Zongxun** became Wang's main assistant and usually it was him who taught those students who were seriously interested in combat. Many of elder students of Wang trained with Yao Zongxun at that time. This group was called combat class – **jiji ban**. Some members were: **Han Xingyuan, Yang Demao, Li Yongzong, Dou Shiming, Dou Shicheng, Zhang Zhong, Zhang Fu, Wang Binkui, Yang Shaogeng, Ao Shuopeng, Li Wentao**. The training place was in Yao's house – **Kua Che hutong No. 13** (famous painter **Qi Baishi** lived at No. 14). **Wang Xiangzhai** was coming occasionally to check student's progress and give them consultation. He allowed **Yao Zongxun** to experiment and make modifications.

After dozens of years of practice, everything seemed obvious for Wang, but it was completely different from point of view of beginning students. **Yao Zongxun** introduced method of gradual introducing student into the right practice, starting from simple, easy to understand elements, and then next stages of approximation to the advanced practice. He was putting stress on using boxing bag and sparrings with protective equipment. This way more time could be spent on practical, contact fighting, while earlier the sparring practice was only occasional, and rule of stopping attack before reaching target was used.



Yao Zongxun in 1943

Yao Zongxun and those who trained with him, in second half of 1940 had also chance to achieve a lot of experience in **street fighting**. When Japanese lost war and left China, situation was extremely unstable – nationalists and communists were fighting each other. In Beijing chaos ruled and **street gangs** became big problem. The citizens couldn't count on police. Yao Zongxun with friends often had to protect people, and soon the gangs started fearing them.

Yao Zongxun's father was a merchant. In late 1930s he decided to move back to his home **Zhejiang** province. He left house and big sum of money to his son. It became kind of grant fund. Yao Zongxun could spend all time training and teaching **yiquan**. But also many other of famous yiquan experts maybe would not be able to achieve high level if they were

not supported by Yao. Some would have to limit amount of training because of need to earn a living. Fortunately they could continue intensive practice, because Yao subsidized them.

In middle 1940s Wang himself concentrated on teaching another group, which was called health class – **yangsheng ban**. Some members were: **Chen Haiting, Qin Zhongsan, Yu Yongnian, Bu Yukun, Mi Jingke, Sun Wenqing, Zhang Yuheng, Qi Zhenlin, Hu Yaozhen** (famous **xinyiquan** expert) and Wang Xiangzhai's daughter - **Wang Yufang**. In 1947 the health group, which practiced in **Ancestors Temple** (which presently is Working People's Palace of Culture) had about 100 members. For people walking by, the **zhan zhuang** exercises, so characteristic for **yiquan**, were something new. Not understanding what was going on, they commented: *"Why are they standing like this? Probably their teacher hypnotized them!?"* But seeing that more and more people participated, many concluded that there must be something in it and also joined. Many of them were able to cure some illnesses that couldn't be cured in other way. The classes concentrated on basic methods, but **tui shou** was also practiced. However those students didn't engage more into combative aspect. Those more interested in fighting were sent by Wang to **Yao Zongxun's** group.

Once, in late 1940s, when Wang was teaching at some park in Beijing, there came an elder man with silver hair. He said to Wang that he would like to have a sparring with him, adding that he means learning from each other, it didn't matter who would win. Wang, hearing strange tone in that man's voice, looked at him. Although not young, the man looked strong and very self-confident. Although it was warm, the man had white sheep leather gloves on his hands. Wang asked his name, but the man only smiled, stroking his beard. Wang agreed to a sparring. The man came closer, and then made his steps quicker, attacking with eagle claws. But Wang dodged to the left, and with right arm moved the attacker from behind, so he lost balance and fell on a tree. But he immediately attacked again with a series of punches to Wang's face. Wang's forearm was below attacker's arms, and when the arms came into contact, Wang just made a shaking movement of whole body and the man was thrown far away, flying high above ground. When the man fell down, Wang immediately came over to help him stand up. The man started crying, saying that all what he learned in his life was useless. He took off his gloves and showed hands, with knuckles with big calluses. It turned out that the man was a famous expert of **eagle claws style**, named Wang, known as **Wang the Iron Claws**. At last the man said that although he lost the fight, he would demonstrate some of his skill. He came to a tree trunk, and with swift movement of fingers of both hands tore off big pieces of bark. Then he pushed his way through a crowd of spectators and went off.

DIFFICULT YEARS

After 1949 situation in China was not favorable for practicing **yiquan** as an efficient martial art. Although in 1950 Wang was appointed as vice-president of **wushu** section of **All-China Physical Culture Comittee**, he soon gave it up, witnessing strong tendency toward popularizing wushu forms and pushing real martial arts toward margin.

But once more Wang had chance to demonstrate his skill in public. It was sports meeting of socialist countries, with representatives of **Soviet Union, Bulgaria, Hungary** and **Poland**. There was **boxing** tournament and **wushu** demonstration. The boxers sneered at wushu, as something which resembles fighting but actually would be useless in a fight. Wang had a small try with Hungarian boxer **Nuoerwaci** (the name in Chinese pronunciation, written in pinyin transcription). When their arms met, Hungarian was suddenly thrown down.



Wang Xiangzhai. 1950s.

In 1953 **Yao Zongxun** became father of twin sons. He gave them names **Chengguang** and **Chengrong**. Presently they are known in China as **double star of yiquan**. Unfortunately because in 1940s Yao Zongxun became famous as true warrior, and because he came from merchant's family, in new political situation had problems, being under constant surveillance. This forced him to sent his sons to family in **Sichuan** province, where they spent several years.

Yiquan caused a big stir in martial arts circles of **Shanghai** in 1920s and 1930s. It could become world-wide sensation, if not the Japanese invasion in 1937. But it was famous in **Beijing** and this fame echoed in Japan. **Wang Xiangzhai, Yao Zongxun** and all yiquan practitioners hoped that when war ends, everything would change, and many years of training and efforts would finally bring effects. Unfortunately Yao used his funds up, lost his house, and the expected perspective of propagating yiquan in China and abroad was blocked.

The situation of martial arts became even worse after 1957. The official politics was that **wushu** should be limited only to forms, without any relation to fighting. Those who maintained that fighting was immanent element of martial arts were falsely accused of trying to limit wushu to brutal fighting only. The propaganda tried to make average people think that martial arts never had any relation to fighting! Situation became absurd. For **yiquan** it was especially difficult, just because a few years before it was so famous for combat efficiency.

Wang Xiangzhai almost entirely taught the "health" version. The "health" group moved to **Sun Yatsen's Park** and could practice freely. Only few students were taught something more in Wang's house. **Yu Yongnian** presented a report about therapeutical values of *zhan zhuang* exercises to authorities, which resulted in introducing this method in some hospitals. Also Wang Xiangzhai was asked to teach in hospitals. In 1958 he was appointed by **Beijing Chinese Medicine Research Institute**. In 1961 he moved to **Chinese Medicine Hospital** in **Baoding, Hebei** province. In 1962 Wang participated in **qigong** conference, where he performed some exercises, which were met with great interest.

Wang Xiangzhai – the founder of modern yiquan died on 12th July 1963 in Tianjin.

Yao Zongxun kept teaching, although it was difficult for him, and he didn't have many students. Controversial **Wang Xuanjie** became **Yao Zongxun's** student too. But he mainly learned from **Yang Demao** and **Li Yongzong**.



Yao Zongxun with students in 1961. Standing from the left: Wang Xuanjie, Bai Jinjia, Wang Tiecheng, Zhao Xuquan.

NEW HOPE

In 1962 the period of strict surveillance over **Yao Zongxun** was finished. He was allowed to make living by teaching some methods of **yiquan**. The classes were conducted in **Beihai** park and **Sun Yatsen's** park. Advanced student's were taught at Yao's house. But it wasn't the same kind of training – with a lot of full contact sparring, as in 1940s. The main students in this period were: **Bai Jinjia, Bo Jiacong, Zhao Xuquan, Ou Yangcheng**. Other Wang Xiangzhai's students: **Yang Shaogeng, Yu Yongnian, Wang Binkui, Li Jianyu** also were often coming to practice with Yao and benefit from his consultation.

8 years old **Yao Chengguang** and **Yao Chengrong** were brought back **Beijing**. It was a period of famine being result of exercising absurd political ideas. The state of boys' health was very bad. Yao Chengguang had anemy, enlarged liver and spleen. Father started teaching **zhan zhuang** to kids. At beginning it was something new for them, but soon they became bored. Father didn't let them stop practice though. After coming back from school they had to practice zhan zhuang first and then do their homework. Boys protested, but had to obey father. Also when they did something wrong, the penalty was additional session of zhan zhuang. Father was getting up early in the morning and practiced himself, and only after this he used to wake up sons and was training running with them, before they went to school.

After one year of training **Yao Chengguang's** health improved visibly. Brothers started liking the **zhan zhuang** practice. They observed other students of their father and listened to the explanations which he gave them. They were impressed by how much higher their father's skill was over all other in **tui shou** and **san shou**. Then they asked him to teach them not only zhan zhuang, but also other training methods of yiquan. Because their practiced basic zhan zhuang, which stresses relax, for one year already, now it was relatively easy for them to work on feeling force in so called combat postures. When brothers were 12 years old, father let them practice **tui shou**. Thanks to several years of basic training, they were able to develop practical skills quite fast, so soon they could cope in free pushing hands with some bigger and stronger students.

Father kept telling sons that yiquan practice should produce not only someone who could fight, but a true scientist of martial art, someone with deep knowledge, harmoniously linking theory with practice. He himself was such a person: scientist and warrior.

YAO ZONGXUN'S COMMENTS TO „THE RIGHT PATH OF YIQUAN”

Wang Xiangzhai wrote „The right path of yiquan” in his young years. There are not many copies of this work left until now. Lately friends from Hong Kong had sent a letter to Baoding with request to correct possible mistakes in the copy which they possessed. But Wang Xiangzhai didn't have time, so he had put it off.

In the copy there are some mistakes, some characters are written wrongly or there is lack of some characters. I don't think I'm at a level high enough to make corrections. Maybe later someone brighter will do this.

After reading the whole text, I noticed that comparing to “Dachengquan”, the work written by Wang in 1944, many things are described in different way, and there are still bigger differences between ideas of “The right path of yiquan” and what Wang taught in last years. I will say only about a few examples: origins of yiquan described in preface, theory of training qi, fighting, explanation of dragon methods, tiger methods and three old fists.

Some ideas, which we now would consider wrong, are related to Wang's level at the period when he wrote this text. He adopted his teachers' theories, collected essence of various systems, but he still was not able to reject some old concepts and start a completely new path. Later, for over 30 years he kept developing and improving this art, getting rid of what was useless, trying to keep what was valuable, until he developed present ideas.

This text has some comparative value, we should keep it, to know better how this art was developing. But we should realize that this text is still not illustration of mature knowledge of Wang Xiangzhai, accumulated through long period.

There is not really big difference between what was written in chapters „Changing force with zhan zhuang”, „Training tendons and bones”, „Using force” and what Wang used to teach in last 20 years.

The chapter about training qi was based on classical concepts of cultivating qi, also using Buddhist and Taoist perspective. Already 30 years ago Wang criticized those concepts, rejected them and never mentioned them again.

What he wrote in the chapter „Unity of five elements” is not different from what he taught later. As for the chapter “Six harmonies”, the concept of “harmony is when all body methods are in harmony, and not when some parts of body are in particular position in relation to each other” was preserved.

In chapter „Formulas in verses” I don’t see big difference comparing to later teachings. Only in the expression “form cannot be scattered” probably there should be xingtí [from translator: tí – body] and not xingju [ju – tool]. Later Wang used to say: “spirit and form should not be scattered”. This is not opposite to the original text.

The chapter „Fighting” generally describes traditional concepts, but this is coherent with later teachings. Only the expression “lower abdomen solid” was later changed to “lower abdomen round” and “exhaling qi and crying out” was transformed into shì shèng method.

During last 20 years Wang didn’t talk about dragon and tiger methods. The meaning of dragon methods is that body should be full of vigor, expressing power, the strength suddenly disappears and appears again, changes are unlimited and untraceable. Tiger method means that actions should be intimidating and terrifying opponent, strength must be unified and full in whole body, when one part reaches target, the rest supports it, you are like a brave, fierce tiger, feared by people. So in this text there is talk about qi of dragon and tiger and three fists. Later Wang used to say about three fists that jian means steps, zuan – hands, guo – body work. This contains meaning of all uncountable changes in a fight.

Being quite ignorant, I was brave enough to comment master’s work. If what I wrote is rubbish, please forgive me. Some brighter people may correct me.

Yao Zongxun, Beijing, 1st August 1963

HARD TIME AGAIN

In 1966 so called **cultural revolution** started (presently called in China **10 years of turmoil**). Whole tradition was to be destroyed, and completely new society built. Not only traditional martial arts, but even sports wushu was seen as something which should be rejected (sports wushu, limited to forms only, could continue developing again after 1969).

Yao Zongxun again could not teach **yiquan**, and lost source of income. Yao went to authorities to ask for job and was sent to cleaning streets. His salary was very low, and his family was starving. As schools were closed, **Yao Chengguang** and **Yao Chengrong** brothers, early in the morning went with father to clean streets, then they were looking for not completely burned coal brickets, so family could make meals and keep warmth at house.

In 1968 for winter period Yao Zongxun got new job – transporting coal. From morning till evening he was carrying coal using yoke. He was coming back home at night completely exhausted. But he still practiced yiquan together with sons. When spring came, he was again cleaning streets, selling vegetables, collecting bricks from disassembled city wall and selling them to farmers from villages around to Beijing. But family was still in trouble, sometimes having food, and sometimes starving. The old glory and hopes were only a vague memory.

In April 1969 Beijing municipality decided that citizens without constant job should move to the country and there “exercise themselves” in hard work. **Yao Zongxun** with family moved to **people’s commune** in **Cuicun** village in **Changping** prefecture. At age of over 50 he started learning farm work. He spent there 10 years.



Yao Zongxun working at farm. 1975.

Father and sons worked hard every day all year long. Each season was a challenge. Winter was hardest. They were starving and freezing in thin clothes. They were working hard, often much harder than the villagers, but because they didn't have experience in this kind of work, their efforts didn't bring expected effects, so they were often criticized and punished.

No matter how hard **Yao Zongxun** was working, next day he started training at 4 a.m. At 5 a.m. he was waking his sons up. From spring till autumn they did a lot of **zhan zhuang** and **shi li**. In winter it was cold, so big part of training was spend on punching, pushing hands and free fighting. "Boxing gloves" which boys used were made by their mother from old wool caps. At evenings they still did zhan zhuang and shi li at home. Yao Zongxun was very often so tired that he had to lean his back against wall when practicing zhan zhuang, but he never gave up training. Despite all hardships he still hoped that eventually **yiquan** would gain deserved appreciation, and then he and his sons would have something which could be offered to their country and whole world. In those hard times both brothers continued training and kept developing their general knowledge, taught by their well educated father.

In 1975 some young people could come back to Beijing. In September **Yao Chengguang** started working as ticket seller in trolleybus. After work he was going to houses of his father's elder students to practice with them. They were astounded by progress which he made in those years. It was hard to believe that he could continue training in the **people's commune**. Only he knew about all hardships behind it.

On sundays **Chengguang** was visiting parents. Thanks to his incomes in Beijing their life improved. Each time when he came, father immediately had him show some movements, so he could see if son was training seriously during week.



Yao Chengguang visiting parents. 1977.

After Japan's capitulation, **Kenichi Sawai** went back home and for many years was not able to keep contact with Wang and Yao. Using his experience and knowledge gained through **judo** and **kendo** training, he developed his own system, which he named **taikiken**. In challenges he defeated some **jiu jitsu**, **kobu jitsu**, **kendo** and **karate** experts. Many of them sneered at Sawai, seeing this short guy doing exercises which didn't look like martial art at all. They were saying that his kicking techniques were worse than those of beginning karateka. Only after a try they were able to see how great was skill of this "funny guy" and how dangerous were his kicks. But for long time he didn't have formal student, just training by himself everyday. It was partly because the training methods coming from Chinese **yiquan** were too unusual, partly because Sawai was not interested in having many students.

A lot changed after meeting with **Masutatsu Oyama** – founder of **kyokushin karate**. Sawai became Oyama's consultant. Oyama let some of his best students to train also with Sawai. Hence use of **taiki-ken** and **yiquan** (in Japanese: **iken**) training methods in many kyokushin dojo in Japan.

Apart from the development of **taiki-ken** in **Japan** and its bringing to **Europe** (**Jan Kallenbach** – 7 duan in **kyokushin karate** learned from Sawai), there was almost no yiquan outside China. **Guo Lianying** and **Wang Shujin** lived in **Taiwan**. Although they learned from **Wang Xiangzhai** for some time, **yiquan** wasn't their primary art. **Guo Lianying** moved later to **US**, but he was teaching there **Guangping style taijiquan**. **Wang Shujin** was teaching three classical internal systems: **taijiquan**, **xingyiquan** and **baguazhang** in **Taiwan** and in **Japan**.

Some development of **yiquan** was possible in **Hong Kong**, where **Han Xingyuan** lived. But Han's yiquan was closer to what Wang Xiangzhai taught in early period, than the system taught by Wang later, and further developed by Yao Zongxun. Han traveled to **US**, starting development of yiquan there, especially in **California**. American students of Han asked him to stay and teach there for longer time, but he wasn't interested, so they asked him to recommend some expert who could settle in **US**.

Although **Han Xingyuan** and **Hang Xingqiao** brothers learned from **Wang Xiangzhai**, formally **Xingyuan** was student of **You Pengxi** and **Xingqiao** of **Zhao Daoxin**. It was because they came to Wang together with their father. Wang Xiangzhai later criticized the traditional master-student system, but at that time still used it. When father of Han brothers became Wang's student, his sons couldn't be accepted in the same generation of students. Hence this formal relation to You and Zhao.

Formally being student of **You Pengxi**, **Han** was obliged to recommend him, when asked about other expert. The **kong jin** method, so much different from mainstream **yiquan**, became relatively popular in US.

Although so called **cultural revolution** ended in 1976 and martial arts were not so much criticized already in its later years, **Wang Xiangzhai's** successor – **Yao Zongxun** had to stay in **people's commune** until 1979. And at that time **Wang Xuanjie** (student of **Yao Zongxun**, **Yang Demao** and **Li Yongzong**) was very active in **Beijing**. He started talking about himself as a successor of **Wang Xiangzhai**. Soon his branch, which was using name **dachengquan**, became popular.

Exactly when it was time of cultural revolution in China, **Bruce Lee** from **Hong Kong** was making his career in movies. Actor and founder of **jeet kune do**, pronounced a revolutionary in martial arts. Some were fascinated by his concept of “formlessness”, other couldn't understand it. We should point to one of sources of his concepts, which is not well known.

When Bruce had been practicing **wing chun** for some time already, also learning **hung kuen**, **choy lee fut** and **judo**, his father, who was student of **Liang Zipeng** (Liang Tzu-peng) suggested that he should meet Liang. Liang was student of **Wu Yihui** – the master of **liuhebafa**, whom **Wang Xiangzhai** met in **Shanghai**. Wang's students learned liuhebafa at that time and Wu's students learned yiquan. Both systems influenced each other. **Liang Zipeng** trained mainly with **You Pengxi**.

Lee became quite interested in what **Liang** was teaching and wanted to learn from him. But when Liang demanded that Lee should give up and forget all what he learned so far, he didn't agree. So he could not learn from Liang, but was allowed to listen to some lectures. This is why in **jeet kune do** there is no trace of training methods of **liuhebafa** or **yiquan**, but theoretical inspirations are clear.

SPRING CAME FINALLY

In 1979 **Yao Zongxun** came back to **Beijing**. Although he never gave up training and teaching sons, he knew that in other environment he would do much more for development and popularization of **yiquan**, and the hopes expressed long time ago by his teacher **Wang Xiangzhai** could be fulfilled already. So much time was lost, and he became old man. Now, in changed situation he decided to give every effort, so that **yiquan** would finally gain recognition and fame in as short time as possible.



From left: Li Wentao, Zhao Daoxin, Yao Zongxun

Fortunately, after **cultural revolution**, the official view that **wushu** should be limited to forms only was abandoned. The discipline of **sanda** (san shou) started developing as part of **sports wushu**. The traditional, folk martial arts could be practiced openly again.

Yao Zongxun saw that the only way to convince people about value of **yiquan** would be educating a group of students who would be able to demonstrated high level of practical skill in as short time as possible. The intensive combative trainings, with lots of sparrings, developing true fighters, like in 1940s, started again. The students of earlier period were to old to practice like this though. So they have chosen some best of their own students and let them join Yao's team. Members of this group were: **Yao Chengguang, Yao Chengrong, Cui Rubin, Liu Pulei, Wu Xiaonan, Gao Changyou, Sun Jiafu, Peng Zhengdi**.

They trained up to 8 hours daily. In the mornings, from 8 to 12 they mainly did **zhan zhuang** and **shi li**, but also **tui shou**, hitting pads and bags. In afternoons, from 14 to 18, stress was put on intensive **tui shou** and **san shou** training. **Yao Zongxun** stressed the need that sparrings were as much close to real fighting as possible.

Yao Chengguang was working as ticket seller on trolleybus. Now he asked for change of job, so he could train everyday. He became night security guard in the trolleybus

company. He trained at day and worked at night. He could have some sleep early in the morning, between trainings and at evening, before going to work. At work it often happened that he felt asleep, half standing with his back leaning against wall.



**Sitting from left: second Bu Enfu, fourth Yao Zongxun.
Standing: third Liu Pulei, fourth Cui Ruibin, eight Yao Chengguang**

Already in 1940s **Yao Zongxun** exhibited great creativity and innovative spirit in **yiquan** training. Also in this later period he kept open minded attitude. He noticed that western **boxing**, which inspired him in early years, developed a lot in this time (boxing was forbidden in China since 1957). He really liked watching fights of American professional fighters. **Sanda**, which started developing at that time was greatly inspired by free fighting tournaments organized in south-east Asia on turn of 1970s and 1980s. The conclusion resulting from observing boxing challenges and contacts with people developing sanda affected further development of **yiquan**. But it doesn't mean that yiquan adept is fighting like a boxer. **Yiquan** has completely different strategy, still closer to classical **xingyiquan**. Hitting with all parts of body and principle of affecting opponent's balance (also by using opponent's guard against him), create very different situation.

Once, when the group practiced **tui shou** with steps, **Zhang Zhong** came. He was surprised that Yao's pushing hands training looked completely different than in **Wang Xiangzhai's** times. At that time they practiced in fixed position, as this was favourable for issuing power. Zhang asked: "*How can you seek strength and learn to issue power, when doing steps?*" **Yao Zongxun** smiled and explained, that it needs that practitioner should seek the right strength while making steps - it is so called building balance in movement, which is much closer to the demands of free fighting.



Yao Chengguang and Cui Ruibin



Yao Chengguang teaching in Xinye

Science is developing constantly. Seeking for better ways and their practical verification is necessary element of creative development. But if neglecting achievements of tradition, the new will be like river without spring, tree without root. The new should be built not by rejecting and destroying tradition, but by using its valuable elements and experiences.

In January 1982 official **sanda competition** rules of **sports wushu** were formulated. In April **all China tournament** was organized. **Yao Chengguang** participated in qualification tournament in **Chaoyang** district of **Beijing**. His opponent was a sanda trainer whose name was **Liu**. Liu became feeling uneasy, when he learned that he would fight with **Yao Zongxun's** son. He came over to Yao Chengguang and said, that he should realize that this is only competition, and that he should not hit hard. Chengguang had no competition experience and took this seriously – gave nod, confirming that he understood this. But when the fight started his opponent attacked with full power kick to head. Yao dodged and opponent immediately attacked with fist. Yao realized that what the man said was only to cheat him. For some time he hesitated, but seeing that opponent was all the time trying to attack with full power, Yao attacked himself, hitting opponent's head with two punches. The fight ended by knockout in 47th second.

This created a big stir. Many of the main wushu trainers, referees and officials were present. They were all surprised that one of their best athletes was defeated in such way by some slim guy, from outside of the institutionally supported teams. If it was somewhere else, **Yao Chengguang** would probably make a big career, and it could result in fast growing popularity of **yiquan**. Unfortunately everything went completely different way than expected.

After this spectacular victory, **Yao Chengguang** was training for the **all-China tournament**. But then he was... removed from Chaoyang district representation. The official reason was that Yao hit opponent's head with a series of more than 3 punches (the rules allowed maximum 3 such punches), so the results were cancelled, and because of this offence

he would never be accepted for participating sanda competitions. This was absurd. Everybody saw that it was only 2 punches, and referees confirmed his victory. The decision was changed after fact, with false reason.

As it later turned out, the true, behind scenes reason was completely different. After long time when any relation between **wushu** and fighting was denied, **sanda** just started developing. It wasn't easy to convince authorities to accept this contact sport. Organizers feared that if **Yao Chengguang** would participate in **all-China tournament**, knockout could happen again, and the opponents of the new discipline of sanda would have argument to block its development. This is why they didn't let Yao start. Also change of rules was made – hitting head with a series of punches was completely forbidden. Finally sanda could develop and gained official recognition in 1987 (earlier tournaments had status of experiment). Unfortunately **Yao Chengguang** and **yiquan** paid the price for this.

At that time **Yang Shaogeng** (**Wang Xiangzhai's** student) was teaching in **Luoyang, Henan** province. His student **Song Yanhai** qualified for **all-China tournament**. Yang brought Song to Beijing, so **Yao Zongxun** could prepare Song for tournament. **Yao Chengguang** was chosen for training partner for Song. Song all the time complained that Yao Chengguang was too strong and too fast for him, and that he was completely hopeless when sparring with Yao. But thanks to this 2 weeks intensive training he was better prepared for tournament. He got second place, being defeated only by an athlete who was student of sanda specialization at **Beijing Academy of Physical Culture**.

Huo Zhenhuan (Fok Chun Wan, Ian Fok) from **Hong Kong**, son of influential businessman **Huo Yingdong** (Fok Ying Tung, Henry Fok) started learning **yiquan** from **Han Xingyuan**. Presently he is president of **Hong Kong Yiquan Society** and vice-president of **Asian Wushu Federation**. He started coming to **Beijing** since 1978 because of working for development of **wushu** movement. Thanks to **Tang Rukun's** (**Wang Xiangzhai's** student) recommendation, he started learning from **Yao Zongxun**.

From 1981, apart from coaching group and developing methodology of teaching **yiquan**, **Yao Zongxun** also started cooperation with **Section of Scientific Research** of **Beijing Comitee of Physical Culture**. The sports authorities were interested in using psychology in sports. Psychology became important part of sports training in the West, but period of **cultural revolution** put China far behind. Because in **yiquan** there is a stress on psychological aspect, and **Yao Zongxun** represented very rational attitude, they decided to use his experience. Trainers of weight lifting, swimming, ping-pong, long jump and other

disciplines learned from Yao at that time. It was also important for Yao, because he could develop his scientific knowledge, especially related to sports and physical culture, thanks to those contacts. It stimulated development of his **yiquan**.

At this period **Yao Zongxun** often let his sons coach group. It was part of their **yiquan** education. Some students in fact trained under **Yao Chengguang**, e.g. **Zhang Wenxian**, **Ma Fuqiu** i **Zhang Kezhong**, from **Henan** province. Many people from various styles were coming to compare skills with Yao brothers and others students. It helped **yiquan** students to achieve rich experience.



From left: third Yao Chengguang, fourth Cui Ruibin. 1984

In 1984 **Yao Zongxun** was invited by **Zhang Wenxian** to teach in **Kaifeng**, **Henan** province. Because he was engaged in the work for **Section of Scientific Research** of **Comitee of Physical Culture**, he let his sons **Yao Chengguang** and **Yao Chengrong** go there and get some experience in teaching and propagating **yiquan**. They spent one month in **Kaifeng**, concentrating on improving **tui shou** and **san shou** skills of local students. Later they won many **sanda** tournaments in **Kaifeng** and **Henan** province.

In 1984 **Beijing Yiquan Research Association**, as a body within **Beijing Wushu Union** was established. **Yao Zongxun** became first president.

Yao Zongxun experienced many hardships. Although his health was affected by this, he didn't care. In situation when several dozens years were lost because of absurd political enviroment, Yao Zongxun didn't think about himself, but only about educating successors, so **yiquan** after a series of blows could finally get appreciation in China and abroad, even by cost of his life. He died in January 1985.

The mission of developing and popularizing **yiquan** was undertaken by **Yao Zongxun's** sons and other students. In summer 1985 they started training together close to

Dongzhimen. In autumn they started recruiting new students. **Zhang Zhong** temporarily took duty of president of **Beijing Yiquan Research Association**. Next chosen president became **Bo Jiacong** – Yao Zongxun’s student of elder generation. **Yao Chengguang** and **Yao Chengrong** brothers became vice-presidents.

Yao Zongxun’s yiquan was still rapidly developing in last years of his life. He started seeing new perspectives and possibilities. He started writing a book, but wanted to wait with finishing it, because he was sure that soon next break through will happen, and then he would make the book much better. But he finished the book in haste, when realizing that he didn’t have much time. The book “*Yiquan – Zhongguo shizhan quanfa*” (Yiquan – Chinese method of real fighting) was published in 1987 in **Hong Kong**. In 1994 it was published again in **Beijing** for internal use in schools of Yao brothers. **Yao Zongxun** also left some more material, which is being prepared for publication by **Yao Chengguang**.

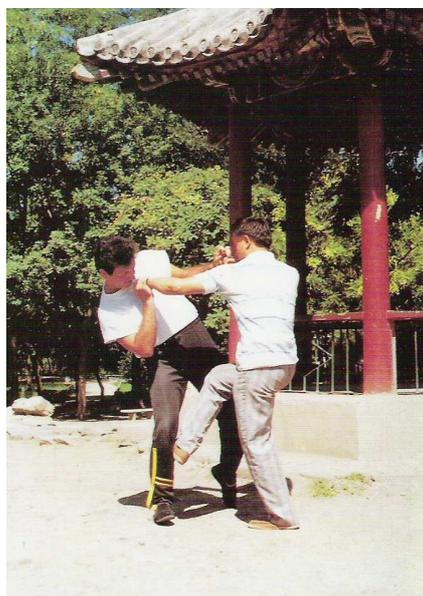


Yao Chengguang with Wang Yufang (Wang Xiangzhai’s daughter) and with Zhao Daoxin

Ilias Calimintzos from **France** was a well known competitor and trainer. As the only European he had chance to receive some tuition directly from **Yao Zongxun**. After his death Calimintzos was again traveling to China, learning from **Yao Chengguang**, **Yao Chengrong** and **Cui Ruibin**. Now he runs one of important **yiquan** schools outside China.

In September 1985 **Calimintzos** said to **Yao Chengguang**: “*So far I learned basic exercises of yiquan. But I would like to see how fighting in yiquan looks like. Before I already participated in fighting competitions. Could we try sparring?*” Yao replied: “*Of course, this will be great opportunity for you to see the difference between fighting in yiquan and kick-boxing*”. Calimintzos took a guard similar to boxing and started moving like a boxer. Yao suddenly moved to one side of opponent, and while he tried to turn, Yao changed direction and attacked Calimintzos from the other side, hitting his arms, to open space for next attack. Calimintzos tried to raise hands, to keep guard, but Yao used his guard against him and ap-

plied so called whirling method – **xuanfa**, which made Calimintzos’s body turn around vertical axis. Then Yao signaled hitting face with fist, but changed fist into palm, and pushed opponent’s chin. Calimintzos was thrown away and felt down.



Yao Chengguang and Ilias Calimintzos

Yao Chengguang said later, that Calimintzos didn’t expect such way of fighting. On kickboxing ring, during most of bout opponents keep some distance, when one is moving closer, the other is moving back and vice versa. Once and again one of fighters is closing distance and after one, two or three punches is moving out again - the attack continues longer only when the punches are effective. But yiquan stresses attacking with simultaneous defense, using both punching and unbalancing, often by using opponent’s guard against him, with constant change of position and angle of attack. Kickboxers are in difficult situation, not understanding what’s happening, because then don’t train such strategy and way of generating power which is needed for this.

Andrzej Kalisz – author of this book, learned some **judo**, **karate** and **aikido** in years 1980-1985. In 1985 he started learning **taijiquan** and studying **oriental languages** at **University of Warsaw**. In 1986 he started studying **Chinese language and culture**, with thought of going to **China** and learning **taijiquan** form greatest Chinese masters.

In 1985 a martial arts expert from **Singapore**, known as **Shi Wang – Lion King**, came to **Beijing**. He wanted to make contacts in **wushu** circles. He asked a man from travel agency which arranged his trip if he knew of some great experts. It happened that that man was student of **Yao Zongxun**. He called **Yao Chengguang**, asking if that would be interested in meeting **Lion King**. They met in **Huaqiao** hotel. They agreed that they could use any tech-

niques in fight, but will avoid hurting opponent, only trying to get some idea about opponent's skill. In first bout Yao demonstrated that he was able to control opponent's hands, being able to hit at any moment. In second bout Lion King attacked fiercely. Yao used his impetus to pull him, so he lost balance, leaning forward, and then Yao signaled hitting back of his head.

In march 1986 **Yao Chengguang** and **Cui Ruibin**, invited by **Wang Yingchi**, went to **Changzhi** in **Shanxi** province to teach **yiquan**. Local **xingyiquan** expert – **Ding Gailu** heard about **yiquan** being very efficient fighting art. He came to one of classes and asked if he could test Yao's and Cui's skill. They agreed to meet in hotel. First Ding had some **tui shou** trial with Yao. Ding, who practiced **xingyiquan** for some 30 years, had good skill and technical strength. He didn't expect that short and slim Yao could do much against him. He attacked fiercely, but Yao rapidly executed **xuanfa** (whirling method), making Ding's body turn around vertical axis and pushed him on a table. Next time Ding didn't attack directly, but tried to press Yao's arms in order to open space for attack. But Yao, maintaining stable position and strong structure, bounced Ding back, so he landed on a couch. Then Ding tried Cui's skill and again it turned out, that he was no match for Cui. So after this he started learning from Yao and Cui. Later he became one of main propagators of **yiquan** in **Changzhi**.

The same year in July **Yao Chengguang** was teaching in **Guiyang** in **Guizhou** province. In 1987 he went again to **Kaifeng** and then to **Xinye** in **Henan** province.

Huo Zhenhuan (Ian Fok) was coming back to **Beijing** many times, training with **Yao Chengguang** and **Yao Chengrong**. In 1988 he invited them to **Hong Kong**, to teach for 3 months. But it wasn't that simple. Brothers went to the right authorities to get passports, but it was like hitting a wall... The true chinese martial arts were still something not existing for the bureaucrats, not being a part of their system. When brothers said that the goal of their trip was popularizing **zhongguo wushu** – chinese martial art, the officer asked at which academy they graduated from **wushu** department, what results they achieved in competitions. When it turned out that one of brothers was working as security guard in trolleybus company and the other as a controller of fare meters in water supply company, the man just laughed at them and said that they should forget about going abroad. Finally they got passports thanks to **Huo Zhenhuan's** intervention with authorities of **wushu union**.

In June brothers arrived in **Hong Kong**. Representatives of various martial arts came to see their demonstration. Improvised pushing hands challenges impressed the audience. Many people attended classes. After 3 months there were still new people coming to learn, so

the stay was prolonged for next 3 months. At Hong Kong open **wushu championship** brothers did next demonstration, rewarded with loud applause. Articles about **yiquan** and Yao brothers were published in many Hong Kong magazines and newspapers.



Yao Chengguang and Huo Zhenhuan in Hongkong

In 1989 **Andrzej Kalisz** came to **China**, spending there 2 years, continuing **sinology** studies and **taijiquan** training in **Beijing**. In second year he started learning basics of **yiquan** additionally, but concentrated mainly on **Chen style taijiquan**. Also after coming back to **Poland** was still practicing **taijiquan**, but his main interest was gradually moving toward **yiquan**. He was spending more and more time on **zhan zhuang** and **shi li** practice.

At beginning of 1980s **Kenichi Sawai** was able to contact **Yao Zongxun** again. Sawai's student – **Sato Seiji** went to study in **Beijing**. Recommended by Sawai he learned from Yao Zongxun for 2 years. He made videos with Yao Zongxun demonstrating **yiquan** exercises. After Yao's death Sawai with students had opportunity to see this material. After viewing it, Sawai said to his students: *“Yao made a great progress during those 40 years. His yiquan is much more developed. I'm the best in Japan, but Yao Zongxun was the best in the world. He died already, but you should go to Beijing, to his sons. You must the best martial art in the world bring to Japan”*.

In 1988 **Kenichi Sawai** died. In winter 1989 three of Sawai's students: **Tano, Saito** and **Kubo Isato** came to **Yao Chengrong's** house. When they saw short and slim Chengrong, they couldn't believe that he could be as great warrior as they heard. Much taller and heavier Tano suggested pushing hands trial. They went outside. When Tano attacked, Yao immediately issued power, bouncing Tano back, making him hit wall behind him with his body, and fall on ground. In next try Tano grabbed Yao's had. Yao did so called diagonal pulling, and opponent ended on the ground again. Then Tano didn't try to attack anymore, but concentrated on defense. But when Yao felt Tano's stiffness, used it against him and pushed him on

a heap of bricks. Then Saito decided to have a try. The result was similar. At one of tries Saito was thrown through the gate out to the street, terrifying a man on bicycle. Then Kubo connected hands with Yao, but after first movements decided that he would not have chance if trying any action. Next they met with Yao Chengguang in **Beijing Minzu** hotel. The result of pushing hands was similar.

Tano, Saito and **Kubo** made calls to Japan, to ask for prolonging holiday. Tano stayed in Beijing 10 days, Saito 15 days, and Kubo whole month. After coming back to Japan they talked to other **taiki-ken** practitioners about meeting Yao brothers and learning with them. They decided to invite brothers to Japan.



Kenichi Sawai

In December 1992 Yao brothers arrived in **Japan**. Articles appeared in Japanese magazines and newspapers. A lot of material appeared in “**Bujutsu**” (“Wushu”) and “**Karate Do**”. Because the reporters were some retired competition fighters, they could personally test brothers’ skills.

Most of the classes were arranged in a park, close to the sea in **Yokohama**. The reporters were coming there. Once the group of journalists from “**Karate Do**” came. One of them said: “*We know quite a lot about Chinese wushu, we met many masters. But when they come to Japan they only talk about their great skill, but when we ask them for opportunity of testing it, they refuse. Although they are famous, we couldn’t see any practical skill. We heard about yiquan’s practical efficiency, so we hope that this time we would be able to see it*”.

Brothers started from demonstrating training methods of **yiquan**, from **zhan zhuang** to **san shou**. Reporter who earlier competed in **karate** and **kick-boxing**, winning medals at

Japan championships asked: *“What is characteristic for yiquan tui shou and san shou? I practiced karate and free fighting. Can I have a try with you?”* **Yao Chengguang** agreed immediately. The Japanese attacked with a kick. Yao managed to move out from line of attack, move toward opponent from different angle and push him, making him falling down. Reported was astounded by Yao’s speed. Next time he tried round kick and again was thrown down.

Then another reporter, who also had some competition career, asked to have a try with the other brother. He attacked with a kick. **Yao Chengrong’s** fist appeared just in front of his face. He leaned back in panic, and fell down. He tried again, but whatever he tried, Yao Chengrong was able to control him. Although Yao didn’t hit, he was able to demonstrate clearly that he would be able to hit at any time. Reporter could only move back in panic.

Visit of reporters of „**Bujutsu**” („Wushu”) magazine was longer and brothers were answering many questions. Some trials happened too. First opponent of **Yao Chengguang** was a former **kickboxing** fighter, with very swift footwork. Yao shortened distance, blocked opponent’s hands and thrown him down by using very short explosive movement of issuing power. Next was a **judo** trainer. Yao was able to control his action without any problem. One of the comers asked to feel power of Yao’s punch. He stood in front of Yao, holding thick pad. After Yao’s one punch, the guy was bent in half. Another wanted to check how it feels when being projected back by yiquan expert issuing power. Protecting abdomen and chest with thick pad, he stood in strong position. Yao’s fa li made him fly back and fall down on the grass.

This way Yao brothers changed the opinion of Japanese martial arts reporters that chinese martial arts are only good for demonstration. Of course such opinion was result of strange situation in China, where only “ballet” wushu was promoted, and real martial arts not only were not supported, but often suppressed. Now the Japanese realized that so far they saw only the artificially created surrogate, and not the true chinese bu-jitsu (wushu).

The stay in Japan lasted only two weeks but created big stir. Brothers tried to teach Japanese friends as much as possible. They didn’t have time for sightseeing. When Japanese proposed going to **Fuji** mountain on one day, brothers preferred to go to visit Sawai’s tomb.

Ma Shengli is a successor of famous **xinyi liuhequan** master from Shanghai – **Yu Hualong**. He started learning martial arts when six years old. He studied business management at university. After graduating he was assigned a job which was not interesting for him, so he quit and went to **Japan** to continue studies. He also learned Japanese martial arts for two

years. After coming back to China he trained security guards in **Henan** province. In **Shanghai** he continued studying various branches of **xinyiquan**.

In 1992 Ma came to **Beijing**. Editor of “*Wuhun*” magazine helped him to meet **Ao Shipeng** (Wang Xiangzhai’s student). And Ao introduced Ma to **Yao Chengguang**. When Ma demonstrated **xinyiquan** exercises, Yao commented that his issuing of power was too slow. It turned out that Ma realized this. **Yu Hualong** also was repeating this many times. But Ma was not able to resolve this problem. This is quite typical in martial arts training, that practitioner meets some barriers, which prevent progress for some time. The higher level, the more difficult can be overcoming such barriers. Many stop training, thinking that they exhausted possibility of development. But if they don’t give up, at some point there comes breakthrough, resolving problem, skill is getting to a higher level, new perspectives are discovered.

Ma asked Yao to demonstrate issuing power on him, and to explain the key principles of issuing power in **yiquan**. Then he noticed that it is actually the same as in xingyiquan, that the same is written in classical manuals, but he couldn’t understand this fully. Explaining the same from different point of view helped him a lot. Later, when coming to **Beijing** he visiting Yao and learning training methods of **yiquan**.

In 1992 **Beijing Yiquan Research Association** issued statement explaining that **Wang Xuanjie** was not student and successor of **Wang Xiangzhai**. It was signed by many **yiquan** people, including direct students of **Wang Xiangzhai** and his daughter **Wang Yufang**.

PRESENT TIME

From 1994 **Yao Chengguang** and **Yao Chengrong** brothers and **Cui Ruibin** could finally concentrate completely on teaching and developing **yiquan**. They were able to establish three so called folk schools – **minjian wuguan** in the structure of **Beijing Wushu Union: Zongxun Wuguan** (Yao Chengguang), **Zhongyi Wuguan** (Yao Chengrong) and **Yiquan Zhongxin** (Cui Ruibin).

When in autumn 1994 **Yao Chengguang** was teaching class in **Nanguan** park, a friend from a travel agency informed him, that a famous **taekwondo** coach from **South Korea** came to **Beijing**. During a trip to **Great Wall** they talked about martial arts and the Korean said that Chinese **kung-fu** is good only for demonstration, and not for fighting, while **taekwondo** is really efficient in combat. In the evening Yao went to **Beijing Wangfu Da Jiudian** hotel, where the coach stayed. The challenge started in hotel room. The Korean tried to kick, but only when his foot raised slightly, Yao was able to shorten distance and push him on bed. Second trial ended the same way. Korean said that there is not enough place in the room and suggested moving to the hall. He thought that there he would be able to keep distance more convenient for him. But when he tried kicking, Yao again was able to shorten distance and push him, so Korean fell down. Then, seeing that Yao was still able to counter in this way, Korean put some more attention to keeping guard in order of defend against Yao's hands. But he didn't know that using opponent's guard against him is one of basic **yiquan** skills. Yao attacked at angle, hitting the guard and using **xuanfa** – whirling method, turning opponent, so he fell more spectacularly than before. Later it turned out that this Korean was a coach of **taekwondo** representation for **Asian Games**.

In 1997 **Beijing Yiquan Research Association** in co-operation with **Hong Kong Yiquan Society** organized a big conference of people representing various branches of **yiquan**, from **China, Hong Kong** and **Japan**. Some discussed issues were: developing **yiquan tui shou** and **san shou** competition rules and introducing common grading system (however it turned out impossible because of big variety of **yiquan** branches). In 1998 first **experimental yiquan san shou tournament** was organized in **Beijing**. Unfortunately sports authorities didn't agree to organizing next such tournaments.

Andrzej Kalisz's interests shifted completely from **taijiqian** to **yiquan**. He was traveling back to **Beijing** to learn this system, in 1997 creating a group of practitioners in **Poland**. But he wasn't completely satisfied with what he learned so far, and kept looking for

In 2000 new board of **Beijing Yiquan Research Association** was chosen. **Yao Chengguang** became president. The same year a conference commemorating **Wang Xiangzhai** was organized in **Beijing**, with first **experimental yiquan tui shou** tournament.

THE BOARD OF BEIJING YIQUAN RESEARCH ASSOCIATION

President:	Yao Chengguang
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In spring 2001 two Italians from **Torino** came to Yao. Then they told **Stefano Agostini** About him. Agostini earlier learned **yiquan** from **Sun Li** – a Chinese living in Japan and teaching yiquan (he taught in the dojo of **Hatsuo Royama** – one of the best students of **Masutatsu Oyama** who learned also from **Kenichi Sawai**). Agostini came to Yao in July. Yao was invited to Italy and arrived there in November. He was teaching mainly in **Torino**, but also did seminars in **Florence** and **Rome**.



Yao Chengguang teaching in Italy

At a seminar in Florence, Agostini told Yao that some **boxing** and **thai boxing** practitioners came and would like to “feel” how **yiquan** works. He asked whether Yao would agree to have some try. Yao agreed immediately. First opponent took boxing guard and then attacked with straight punch. Yao dodged obliquely, and when opponents fist was coming back to guard, Yao used this moment to attack guard, throwing him back with explosive power. Second opponent attacked with a kick and in split of second landed on the floor. Others gave up trying.

Chen Jumin, who is propagating internal arts in **Austria**, **Germany** and **Switzerland** came to **Yao’s** seminar in **Rome**. He decided to create **European Yiquan Research Association** and co-operate with **Yao Chengguang**. Later he made contact with **Yao Chengrong** and named his school **European Yiquan Academy**. It has not any relation to **Andrzej Kalisz’s Yiquan Academy**, which was created earlier.



Yiquan pushing hands trial tournament. March 2002.

In 2002 conference commemorating **Yao Zongxun** was organized in **Beijing**, with second **experimental yiquan tui shou tournament**, with rules modified after the first trial. Next conference commemorating **Wang Xiangzhai** was organized in 2005. Such conferences are occasion for meeting of various schools and branches of **yiquan**.



Andrzej Kalisz with Yao Chengguang and his students – winners of tournament

Being outside the officially promoted stream of **sports wushu**, despite still existing barriers, basing only on activity of teachers and enthusiasm of students, **yiquan** is developing and gradually becoming more and more popular.

TRADITION AND INNOVATION

Like **Wang Xiangzhai's** and **Yao Zongxun's**, also **Yao Chengguang's** attitude is very creative and innovative. He stresses that student should work on developing his own understanding. Unlike in the classical linear method: from **zhan zhuang, shi li, fa li**, slowly toward **tui shou** and **san shou**, **Yao** uses method of giving student more complete view of **yiquan** as soon as possible. Introducing into sparring and competitive training also comes quite early. This way students are able to better understand relation between basic training and more advanced methods and also with actual combat, so they can consciously concentrate on what is important and giving effects, avoiding developing wrong ideas and blindly following them. After this first, fast introduction to the system, there comes second run – deepening knowledge and developing actual skills. Then third – perfecting skills and preparing for instructorship.

Wang Xiangzhai noticed that there is no limit to the development of science. Sometimes great effects and successes can lead to stagnation. But then others make new progress and this situation mobilizes to harder working and stimulates next stages of development.

Sometimes science or art which is brilliant in its simplicity, gradually becomes more and more complicated, so the core is lost and superficial matters attract students' attention. It happened to Chinese martial arts after long time of development. Many systems became so complicated that practitioners couldn't notice the essence and concentrated on complexness and beauty of outside form. Instead of developing skill, they were thinking only about number of learned forms, techniques and exercises, not understanding that they were only a tool to learn fighting and not fighting itself. At beginning of 20th century **Wang Xiangzhai** witnessed many problems in martial arts circles and felt urgent need for change.

Wang Xiangzhai on one side postulated going back to roots – concentrating on simple essence and not on forms, on the other side he was in favour of innovations - using new developments of science. Such was developed the idea of mixing the best elements of tradition with innovation and creativity.

Wang Xiangzhai initiated this dynamic process which we call **yiquan, dachengquan**, or **quanxue** (literally: fist science). **Yao Zongxun** and other **Wang Xiangzhai's** students also displayed creative attitude in studying and developing martial art. Their students do the same today. **Yiquan** is not a closed system. Learning is not about mimicking fixed patterns. Of course when you start learning, you need to follow teacher's method. This is necessary to be

introduced to the subject of martial art. But after getting the basics, student while still benefiting from teachers bigger knowledge and experience, should constantly test his own knowledge, understanding and skill, compare with others, seeking better solutions, creatively developing the science of fist - **quanxue**.

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