

## Interview with Li Jin-chuan 李進川

By Serge Dreyer

Translated by Stephanie Polatsik

- ◆ Born in 1923 at Miaoli, Taiwan
- ◆ Started TJQ sequences with Wang Yen nien (WYN) in 1948 on the mountain of Yuan Shan in Taipei, thanks to a friend. After 3 years, he started tui-shou (TS) that was taught by WYN at Lin Wen-xiong (see prior interview). Health reasons brought him to this practice; his condition clearly improving, he persevered.
- ◆ He didn't practice other martial arts.
- ◆ Before the arrival of the refugees from Continental China in 1949, there was no taijiquan teaching in Taiwan where White Crane boxing largely prevailed.
- ◆ He visited other schools of TJQ but since none was teaching the breathing of the dantian, he chose WYN.
- ◆ At the beginning, WYN insisted on the notions of fangsong/ziran (relaxed)/natural) respiration of the dantian called the "3 treasures".
- ◆ WYN was teaching TS only after the mastery of the sequences even though a lot of students wished to practice TS right away.
- ◆ Most WYN students at that time were rich people because their occupations brought them necessarily to look after their health.
- ◆ Most students of this generation are deceased.
- ◆ In the years 1950 and 1960, exchanges between TJQ teachers were held every Sunday in a hospital where the major names would meet [*NDT: it is probably because of those meetings that some*



*students of Zheng Man qing would say that WYN practiced with him.]* Those meetings were sponsored by Li Hua-yuan.

- ◆ There was a great respect between WYN and Zheng Man-qing.
- ◆ He never saw WYN in difficulty in TS.
- ◆ They didn't meet between different schools at that time.
- ◆ He didn't study the staff because he finds it requires too much force.
- ◆ WYN was teaching neigong only to the strong persons. It is an important discipline but for him it consisted essentially to breath with the dantian. That allows in TS to push with the qi and not with muscular force.
- ◆ He did the ceremony of baishi involving another level of learning neigong which he considers first like an association of sexual techniques.
- ◆ He left WYN because of actions of certain persons [*NDT: I didn't find appropriate to mention the names when the tone would become polemic.*]
- ◆ The second year of his learning, WYN asked him to become his assistant. He started to teach independently in 1976.
- ◆ His first foreign students were Toshiro (a Japanese), John Hoag (an American) and Serge Dreyer.
- ◆ To his knowledge, the first student who followed the complete cycle of learning with WYN is Serge Dreyer [*NDT: to my knowledge, Joseph Morris from Chicago preceded me.*]
- ◆ His main principles of teaching are relaxation and breathing (from the dantian). The progression goes from learning the breathing to the basic exercises then the sequences, some TS, sword and fan.
- ◆ If we don't know TS, we don't understand the profoundness of TJQ.
- ◆ WYN has never taught fighting since he considered that not hurting people was the highest level attainable in martial arts.

- ◆ There were in fact some changes in the practice of the sequences because of influences from other persons on WYN.
- ◆ He sees our style in decline because nobody is learning the true art.
- ◆ We don't see any competitors anymore from our style in first places in the competitions because competitions have become a place of scavengers (*buffalo fight* in Chinese).
- ◆ To the question if he has met students from WYN who impressed him, he answers that true talent resides in the neigong that he doesn't show to everybody [*NDT: this being said, he gave me a demonstration of quality of his abdominal breathing.*]
- ◆ The practice of other martial arts can only harm the TJQ.
- ◆ The practice of meditation is very important but too many practitioners don't understand how the qi circulates in the body: for example, don't sit cross-legged (lotus position) because it prevents the qi from circulating in the legs.
- ◆ *In the YJMTJQ, the support is first on the back leg implying a small step. However, in the TS, almost all practitioners of this style take a big step making them "double-weighted"; we see the same problem in the book of applications of WYN. Its reflections ( ? ) : it's a problem of teaching on which he prefers not to elaborate.*
- ◆ It's not important to practice the form with small/big/slow/fast movements. What matters is the abdominal breathing.
- ◆ If the movement *peng* is never used in TS in our style it is because it is meant for absorbing a strike and deflecting and not for striking.
- ◆ There were very few women at the beginning because they were interested essentially by the aspect of health.
- ◆ There are few women teachers who focus also on the sequences.
- ◆ Advices for the foreign practitioners: use the qi and not the muscular force, practice seriously the abdominal breathing.
- ◆ The sequences of the 13 postures: Li Jin-chuan implemented it and then submitted it for the approval to WYN. This answered the need of teaching in schools and universities because the original form was too long for the students. He

continues to teach it [*NDT: it's the first sequence I learned, with him, and that I asked WYN to teach to the western students present in Taipei in 1982. I also asked him to demonstrate it when invited by Roland Habersetzer to Strasbourg in 1981. The first teachings in France were these 13 postures that my students from the Sarthe have learned since 1978. I have somewhere in my archives a complete series of pictures I took of WYN in 1981, demonstrating the 13 postures at my request: I will try to get a hand on those to publish them in this Journal.*]

- ◆ WYN was used to teach several martial applications at the time [*NDT: I confirm this from my own experience between 1976 and 1978 but with a nuance; if some movements had several explanations in term of fighting, it is especially fighting applications combined with TS applications that I received. It probably comes from the fact of the intense preparation of the first TS championships of Taiwan.*]
- ◆ Li Jin chuan helped WYN to produce his two books. There should be an original version of the book of martial applications featuring WYN and Li Jin chuan [*NDT: he promised me he would find it.*]
- ◆ He can be contacted for classes between 8am and 12pm at (02) 23055881 and at (02) 23913389 for the afternoon and evening (if you're in Taipei, without the 02). He doesn't speak English.
- ◆ Thanks to his generosity, following is a selection of photos, some of which are very rare.
- ◆ All of the above topics have been reproduced integrally with the most exactness possible; the author's comments in italics.



*Li Jin Chuan teaching*

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*Rare photo of Wang Yen-nien and Zheng Man-qing*

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*Rare photo of Sunday Meetings*



*Group Photo 6/8/1984*

老師李進川

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*Hong Kong: 1st visit of WYN to foreign country*



*LJC with two African pupils*



*Briefing in Yuan Shan, probably in '90s. Lin Wen-xiong next to Li Jin-chuan.*



*Feast*



*Feast LJC facing extreme right*



*All on one leg*



*Tuishou competition, Yuan Shan, April 1976*



*WYN in his Wuguan*



*Morning Practice, Yuan Shan, probably late 1976*



*Many on one leg*



*WYN in 1966*



*Form Practice*



*Tuishou Practice*



*Demonstration, 1979*



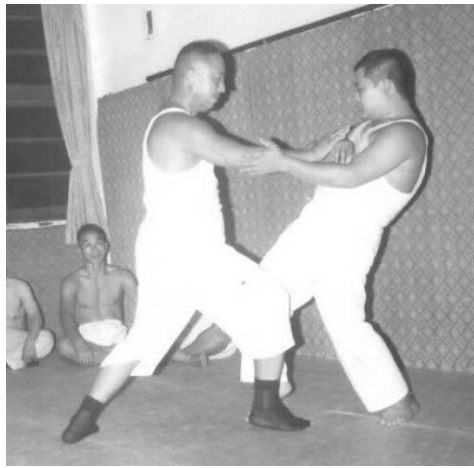
*Lu*



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*Classic technique of tuishou and sweeping, probably at the end of a dan tong bei*



*Applications—  
which suggests  
that the 2<sup>nd</sup>  
book was in the  
desk a long time  
—but with  
Taiwanese  
Partners,  
1975/1976*



*Efficiency in reality*



*Dan tong bei*

*Early attempts at Volume I*

