The First Encounter of Shaolin with 'Internal Boxing'

Marnix Wells 2009

Acknowledgements. Here I would like to express thanks to Mike Demarco for his encouragement, and to Stan Henning for valuable criticism.

Contents

The First Encounter of Shaolin with 'Internal Boxing' 1
1. Míng Martial Arts 1
2. War with Japan 2
3. Home-town Heroes 3
4. The Martial Arts Emperor and Shàolín 4
5. The Five Word Secret 5
6. Fighter Zhang Songqi (c.1490 - c.1570) 7
7. Conclusion: A Maritime Martial Silk-Road 11
Illustrations 12
Bibliography 12

1. Míng Martial Arts

Chinese boxing and mixed martial arts experienced a great renaissance from the middle of the sixteenth century. This was triggered by the need to train new troops in response to a concerted outbreak of maritime raids by Japanese and local freebooters on the unprepared south China coast, where ships from Europe were also starting to arrive with traders and missionaries.

European contact was mostly peaceful but their firearms began to have an impact, particularly in Japan where their musket was enthusiastically copied and deployed en masse by Japanese armies towards the latter half of the century. In China the long spear continued to dominate the battlefield.

Yet the rapacious Míng court faced growing unrest. In 1644 Peking fell to rebels led by Lî Zìchéng and the Chôngzhen emperor hanged himself on Coal Hill. Rather than surrender to peasants, the commander of the Great Wall garrisons signed a pact with the Manchus and let them in to found the new Qing dynasty. Míng 'Bright' gave way to Qing 'Pure'.

With Manchus now in control, Hàn Chinese troops became either their auxiliaries or their foes. After crushing lingering opposition in the south, Manchu control tightened. Free practice of martial arts by the Chinese people was no longer allowed. Finally in 1728 Manchu Emperor Yongzheng issued a decree outlawing all public practice of boxing and martial arts. Boxing went underground. No books on martial arts were published in China for two hundred years until after the end of the dynasty in 1911.

The short biography of Zhang Songqi (below) provides the earliest historical evidence for

what came to be called the 'internal school' of Chinese boxing. It was written by Shên Yiguàn 'One Strand' (1531-1615) who served as Grand Secretary from 1594 to 1606 under Emperor Wànlì of Míng. Shên's works were suppressed by Qing Emperor Qiánlóng in his great literary inquisition from 1770 against writers past or present considered subversive or anti-Manchu. Somehow this remarkable epitaph on boxer Zhang Songqi survived, buried in a vast compendium of local literature from Níngbo, the great seaport of east China below Shanghai. In 1988 Zhang Rû'an published it in a Chinese journal.[1]

2. War with Japan

Níngbo, this great city of Zhèjiang province, was the only port, under a strictly controlled 'tribute' system, licensed for trade with Japan. Nonetheless smuggling of goods with Japan and South-east Asia persisted along China's southern coast under the connivance of local gentry and merchants. In 1547 the government commissioned Zhu Wán (1494-1550) to fight piracy in coastal Zhèjiang and Fújiàn provinces. Fearless Zhu ordered anyone who went to sea beheaded. He destroyed a major smugglers' haven off Níngbo, executing some prisoners, among whom were Portuguese traders.

Then in 1549, following disputes at the port, all Japanese trade licenses were suspended.[2] The result was an almost immediate outbreak of savage piratical raids. An ad hoc alliance of katana-wielding Japanese with local Chinese pirates plundered the south China coast and adjoining waterways over the next decade.

This prolonged sea-borne assault required the recruitment and training of amphibious militias to combat it. This need precipitated an unprecedented flowering of Chinese martial arts in a great melting pot of cultures. The skills and weaponry of aboriginal tribesmen, mountain miners, Shàolín monks and captured Japanese free-booters were all commandeered.

In 1561 General Qi Jìguang encapsulated his front line experiences in the first ever illustrated compendium of their arts, which he published, appending his famous boxing manual of thirty-two moves. This was to form the basis of the later tàijíquán form. The pirate menace was crushed and Qi's training methods became the standard for China's imperial forces.

Then, in 1592, 'kanpaku' Hideyoshi Toyotomi, the great unifier and dictator of Japan, invaded Korea as a prelude to his dreamed conquest of China and the world. Emperor Wànlì despatched troops and heavy artillery to Korea's aid but Hideyoshi's Christian general Konishi Yukinaga had already captured Pyongyang, chief city of north Korea.

Early the following year, in 1593 Zhèjiang troops, trained by the 'Qi style army' method, reached north Korea. Led by Lî Rúsong they distinguished themselves in the one spectacular Chinese land victory of the war by the recapture of Pyongyang in a headlong winter assault.[3] Reported divine intercession in that battle on the Sino-Korean side by General Guan Yû (d. 219) caused the Wànlì Emperor (r. 1573-1620) to canonise his spirit as 'Supporter of Heaven, Protector of the Nation, Loyal and Righteous Great God' and

erect temples in Korea to his worship.[4] (*Plate*)

Yet, Japanese general Konishi, having withdrawn southward, inflicted a retaliatory defeat on an over-confident Lî outside the occupied royal capital of Seoul. Peace negotiations dragged on. Peking offered to acknowledge Hideyoshi as 'king of Japan' if he evacuated the rest of Korea. Meanwhile, China's trade with Japan had continued. As a native of Níngbo, Shên evidently had personal knowledge of it and, on taking office as Grand Secretary in 1594, ordered its immediate suspension.[5] Still the Japanese fought on in a stubborn rearguard action and the war only ended four years later with a great Sino-Korean naval victory at Noryang bay in the extreme south and the natural death of Hideyoshi in Japan. The effort had drained the Míng treasury and devastated Korea.

3. Home-town Heroes

Shên Yiguàn was no military man. Yet his experience in government during the war against Hideyoshi may have stimulated his patriotism to write a memorial for his hometown hero, Zhang Songqi of Níngbo. Shên's essay is the first known biography of a Chinese boxer. It predates by close to a century the celebrated epitaph for 'internal boxer' Wáng Zhengnán (1617-1669) of Fènghuà in Zhèjiang province, written by eminent historian Huáng Zongqi (1610-1695) of neighbouring Yúyáo.

Huáng was, like Shen, a Zhèjiang native, but his motives for promoting a local martial hero went deeper. Writing after the fall of Míng, under Manchu domination, Huáng was driven by an intensified sense of Hàn Chinese nationalism. Though a Confucian, Huáng now retailed the Daoist myth of its martial god, the 'Dark Emperor' of Mt. Wûdâng in the wilds of north-west Húbêi province, with its saint Zhang Sanfeng as founder of Wáng's internal boxing. Huáng seems sympathetic to the idea because Daoism was indigenous and thus a counter to Buddhism, the 'foreign religion' emblematic of the Manchu conquerors. Further the great Mt Wûdâng temple deity had been an icon of the Míng dynasty to which Huáng remained loyal.

Ironically, Shàolín and the legend of its burning by Manchus, was soon to become the symbol of secret society anti-Manchu resistance. On the other hand, little more was heard of Wûdâng and its 'internal boxing' until its co-option by proponents of tàijíquán mythology in the late nineteenth century.

Wáng Zhengnán, Huáng tells us, was an 'internal boxer', a knight-errant and covert anti-Manchu resistance fighter. Huáng briefly identifies Zhang Songqi as prior lineage holder of this 'internal school' of boxing, purportedly founded by Daoist saint Zhang Sanfeng of Mt Wûdâng centuries before. Thence it was supposedly transmitted to Wenzhou in coastal Zhèjiang. There Zhengnán, learned it from Dan Sinán, who was a veteran of the war in Korea against Hideyoshi (see above) and a second generation disciple of our hero Zhang Songqi.

The first brief biographical details of boxer Zhang Songqi were published by Cáo Bîngrén in his 1735 *Níngbo City Gazetteer*. Cáo draws on Huáng and possibly Shên. It is interesting to compare both records. Shên's account shows no awareness of any 'internal

school' nor any Daoist affiliation, but does highlight a marked difference between Songqi's method and that of the brash Shàolín volunteers, fresh in town to fight the pirates. Shên's narrative suggests a simple pro-Confucian, anti-Buddhist bias. In Shên's account, Bian Chéng's opponents are Shàolín monks as they are with Songqi. Interestingly Cáo asserts that Bian was himself a Shàolín monk, albeit of the free-ranging, hard-drinking type.[6]

Shên however gives a fuller picture of his protagonist. He idolises Zhang Songqi as a natural Confucian, a dignified gentleman by temperament if not by social class, since he was a tailor by profession. Yet gentleness was not a quality Zhang acquired from his teacher, Sun Thirteen senior, whom Shên describes as 'rough'.

4. The Martial Arts Emperor and Shàolín

The Zhèngdé Emperor (r. 1506-1521), canonised as 'Martial Ancestor', is unique in Chinese history as the emperor besotted with all things martial from displays to uniforms and expeditions. He built a Leopard House where summoned Tibetan lamas and Shàolín monks, and personally trained his own eunuch force in martial arts.[7] In addition to heavy drinking and womanising, the emperor patronised a large number of athletic young men. Among these a dashing Muslim officer, Jiang Bin, became his favourite. In 1520 Jiang arranged a great southern tour which culminated at Nanking, the southern capital. There they encountered Tomé Pires leader of the first embassy to China from Portugal.[8] This marked the start of regular European contacts.

It was during Zhèngdé's sojourn in Nanking, that we learn, from Cáo's *Níngbo Gazeteer*, of a martial tournament there. Qiao Yû (1457-1524), Minister of War at the 'Southern Capital', Nánjing, is incensed by imperial favourite Jiang Bin's boasts that southern troops are inferior to northerners. Accordingly a public contest is arranged. Bian Chéng, and Cotton Zhang (written as 'cotton ornament') of Jinhuá, Zhèjiang, are summoned to compete for the southern side.

Bian wins his match, using spear against double sabre, but we hear no more of Cotton Zhang. 'Cotton' (mián) is commonly used as a bynome for 'soft'. Despite a discrepancy of hometown, it has been suggested that 'Cotton Zhang', also written as 'Sleepy Zhang' (with the same sound), a boxer recorded c.1550 by Táng Shùnzhi as reknowned for 'short-range hitting' (duândâ), is no other than Zhang Songqi himself.

Earlier, we are told, a Japanese 'tribute' trade mission, possibly that which arrived at Níngbo in 1510, had issued a martial challenge to the locals. Prefect Zhang Jin accordingly gave permission for a spear contest in which this same Bian Chéng single-handedly defeated the overseas visitors.

Cáo explains that Bian Chéng ('Border Clear') as a youth had prayed at the shrine to 'Wáng Jinggong', the political reformer Wáng Anshí (1021-1086) from Fújiàn celebrated for constructing a great flood barrier in Níngbo.[9] Bian's prayer is answered in a dream, whereupon he receives from demons both strength and combat instruction. Bian goes on to work in the Shàolín monastery kitchens for three years where he is taught further how

to fight by the head monk.[10]

The Shàolín kitchens episode resonates of Shàolín monastery's legends of the martial Kinnara King god. It was indeed during Zhèngdé's, in 1517, that at a stele was erected by Zen abbot Wénzài at Shàolín in Hénán province, dedicated to Narayâna, the Hindu god Vishnu, as an emanation of the bodhisattva Guanyin. The abbot claimed as historical fact that this god's fiery pole-wielding intervention, as an avatar of Guanyin from on high had saved the monastery from bandits in 1350. Soon his martial cult was being propagated at Shàolín, as the patron saint of stick fighting, under the near sound-alike name of 'Kinnara', an emanation of Guanyin from the *Lotus Sûtra* xxv. The era of Shàolín martial arts was dawning.

It is close to this time that wandering monk 'Wicker Basket', Bian Tún, whose religious names were Wùxu Wúkong, was reportedly initiated by a Tibetan lama from whom he learnt the art of staff fighting at Shàolín monastery. Bian Tún became famous as a fund raiser for monastic projects, and counted among his followers powerful eunuchs at court. No doubt his work moving funds across country necessitated armed convoys.

After Bian's death at an advanced age in 1563, travelling by a river in Sìchuan province, his disciple Pûmíng and others brought his body back and erected an impressive Tibetan-style pagoda for him at Shàolin. Its superscription "Ganmó Nâtâ" is interpreted to mean Karma Natha or 'living Buddha' of the Tibetan 'Black Hat' Karmapa sect'.[11] Its epitaph composed in 1568 by the imperial prince, King Hòuzun of Xichang tells of his alms raising and devotion to the *Amitâba Sûtra* but says nothing of martial prowess. Yet Biântún's disciple Pûmíng was one of two monks, selected in 1560 by General Yú Dàyóu for further staff training on the front-line against Japanese pirates.

Chéng Chongdôu in his 1616 *Shàolín Staff* lists Biân Tún, revered for action against the Miáo tribes of Yúnnán province, as founder, after the Karma ('Háma') lama, of Shàolín's divine Kinnara staff tradition.The gazetteer of holy Chicken-foot (Jizú) mountain, in northwest Yúnnán, further relates how Biântún by his invocations of Kinnara twice saved its monastery from bandits.[12]

Apart from shared expertise in stick fighting, and allegiance to divine martial avatars, [13] the figure of Bian Tún has remarkable affinities with Bian Chéng. Bian Chéng, like Biân Tún, is a spear and cudgel man not a boxer. Both were martial monks who emerged at approximately the same time and both had the most unusual secular name of Bian, though written differently. The peripatetic Bian Chéng's name is written as 'Border Sincere or Clear', while the itinerant Biân Tún, 'Woven Basket'.

Yet Bian Chéng, according to Cáo, was born in Zhèjiang's Cíxi, while Biântún was a northerner, born, according to his Shàolín pagoda, into the Chén family of (Hénán) Yûzhou. Yet can their affinities be pure coincidences?

5. The Five Word Secret

Jiangsu and Zhèjiang provinces approximate to the ancient kingdoms of Wú and Yuè.

Here, great strategist Sun Zî is reputed to have trained troops in 512 BC for Hélyú King of Wú, who wished to avenge himself on the great state of Chû, and conquer Yuè.[14] Later in 473 BC King Goujiàn of Yuè recovered his kingdom from Wú, and became Hegemon, with the aid of martial training and precepts from 'South Forest Virgin' (Nánlín Chùnyû).

Her school is recorded as still current in the late Hàn. Two of the lady's maxims are cited by Shên: "Start like a virgin, afterwards like a started hare." Cháng Nâizhou (1724-1783) pairs these maxims with: "If he does not move, I do not move. When he is about to move, I move first" which re-appears in the *Tàijíquán Classics*, compiled by Lî Yìyú (1881). Shên's 'cat catching rat' metaphor likewise recurs in both texts.[15]

Shên extols the themes of scholarly modesty, reclusiveness, directness (jìng) overcoming strength, and reluctance to fight, yet defeating Shàolín martial monks. Directness, expressed as 'straight' (zhí), a term also used by Songqi, is the prime quality extolled by Míng general Yú Dàyóu in fencing, and later taken up in Cháng Nâizhou's boxing.[16] Notably absent from Shên's biography, as from the Huángs' accounts, is any allusion to yin-yáng metaphysics, or mention of hard and soft.

Shên is the first to list the Five Word maxims of Zhang Songqi, offering frankly his own interpretations. He reports that the system of Zhang's teacher, Sun Thirteen, had only three words: Diligence (Qín), Intensity (Jîn) and Directness (Jìng). These link training and function in a simple but effective practicality. The additional two words, Respect (Jìng) and 'Accuracy' (Qiè) or 'Earnestness' as interpreted by Shên, have a greater moral sense. Here we have strong evidence for an evolutionary growth of the art, from a practical skill to a way of life, rather a simple transmission from a mythical founder.

The differences in meaning with the sound-alike later versions suggests oral transmission. Shên admits the interpretation are his own, while Huáng Bâijia offers none. He lists almost the same core Five Words, but has '**Power**' (Jìng) for Shên's 'Diligence' (Qín). Curiously the Korean version, citing *Níngbo Gazeteer* (which otherwise follows Huáng), agrees with Shên here.[17] Huáng lists the five as follows, without comment, beginning with Respect:

1. Respect (Jìng),
2. Directness (Jìng),
3. Intensity (Jîn),
4. **Power** (Jìng) [Shên, Korean: Diligence (Qín)],
5. Accuracy (Qiè).

Here I translate qiè in a practical martial sense as accuracy. Interestingly, three words: Respect, Directness and Power all have identical pronunciation in Mandarin, though their graphs are unrelated. Cáo Bîngrén in 1735 evidently takes all five words in a moral sense, remarking that they seem not to produce function but rather to sanctify function (shén –qí yòng), like the five martial virtues humanity, good-faith, wisdom, courage and severity (rén, xìn, zhì, yông, yán). The latter were formulated by Marshal Yuè Fei (1104-1142), national hero of Southern Sòng resistance to Jurchen invasion.[18]

Huáng Bâijia relates how Wáng Zhengnán encapsulated Seventy-Two Throws (dié) into Twenty-Five Holds (ná)… and ultimately Five Words. By contrast, Lú Wêichang in his inscrutable 1915 *Shàolín Boxing Secret Techniques* attributes the Five Words to "a great knight" (dàxiá), Wáng Yipiáo, 'One Gourd', of Huáibêi (Anhui), who reduced One Hundred and Eight moves of 'point striking' (diân'àn) to Twenty-five Grapples (qínná), and finally to Five Words. 'Wáng Yipiáo' may be a distant echo of Wáng Zhengnán. These Five Words, with attached explanations, all relate to combat, the first three explicitlt to hand techniques:[19]

1. '**Print**' (yìn), open-palm slap or push.
2. '**Grab**' (qín), grappling hold.
3. '**Edge**' (cè), palm-edge cut.
4. 'Intensity' (jîn), of force in attack.
5. 'Accuracy' (qiè), here accuracy in striking acupuncture points.

Jin Yimíng in 1929 relates that, while in middle school, he was taught thirty-two moves which, as he recognises, exactly match those of Míng General Qi Jìguang. His teacher was Liú Xiâopú (Zuòlín, Dàquán) of Yángzhou, a scholar of powerful build who had studied in Japan. Jin's diagrams closely match those of Qi Jìguang, as if copied from Qi's book, adding alternative sequences, linking the moves scientifically with dotted curving lines to show the intervening flow. Jin too offers a version of the Five Words, which he attributes to Zhang Sanfeng, again slightly differ from others but focused on practical application: **Power** (Jìng), Intensity (Jîn), **Closeness** (Jìn), **Speed** (Jí), Accurate (Qiè)[20]

We now turn to the earliest biography of boxer Zhang Songqi, as given in the words of Míng minister, Shên Yiguàn. He contrasts the rough Bian Chéng unfavouably with the gentler Zhang Songqi. The terms 'external' and 'internal school' are not used, but the germ of these ideas are nonetheless present. Yet ultimately both fall boxers short of Shên's non-violent ideal.

After serving as Grand Secrertary for thirteen years to the secluded Wànlì Emperor, Shên was accused of holding onto power by flattery and of failing to petition the emperor for tax-relief or reforms. Yet in this essay, Shên reveals a love for home-town and respect for its humble hero. He has obviously given deep thought to the psychology of violence and how best to control it.

6. Fighter Zhang Songqi (c.1490 - c.1570)

by Shên Yiguàn, translated by Marnix Wells 2009

> In my hometown (Níngbo, Yínxiàn) during the Hóngzhì (1488-1505) to Zhèngdé (1506-1522) reigns, Bian Chéng as a good fighter (bó-zhê) was renowned. By the end of the Jiajìng reign (1522-1566), Zhang Songqi's fame surpassed that of Bian.
>
> Zhang was a tailor. His teacher was Sun Thirteen the elder of Great Bridge Street, a man by nature rough and brutal. Zhang by contrast was calm and resolute, of few words and courteous as a scholar. After the Minister of War retired and was living at home, he invited Zhang in and personally seated him at the top seat, saying:

“Master Bian’s students roll up their sleeves and hold their wrists, they scowl and have difficulty speaking, but Zhang wears gown and cap, never exposing his elbows.”

Master Bian delighted in instructing, and twice achieved renown in the world, but Zhang always hid himself. If men sought to see him, he invariably refused and went away. Master Bian deployed skills, advancing and retreating, opening and closing [with his staff], as if continuously weaving. Yet Zhang made a law of directly cutting (zhíjié). He once said: “It’s one staff stroke, one hit. I just laugh: what time have I for this foolish nonsense?”

Bian often travelled north. He once pulled a six horse carriage to test his strength. His shoulder failed and he fell under the wheel and was disabled. [note: Cáo locates this feat in Shandong, without the unhappy outcome, in Shandong.] Once Sháolin monks, numbering in tens, sought out Bian. Bian delayed until nightfall to fight with them. Holding a candle, he went in and extinguished it, leaping up to sit on a beam and watch the group of monks. He said: “As they struck each other in the dark, I took advantage of their slaughter and was at leisure to apply my skills.” [note: Cáo tells a similar story of Zhang in place of Bian.]

At the time of Japanese pirate troubles [1553], Sháolin monks, seventy or more, arrived at the sea coast to find Zhang. Zhang hid and did not reveal himself. Some playful youths enveigled him. The monks were lodging at Greeting Wind Bridge Inn. Zhang, with the youths, spied on their fighting and burst out laughing. The monks realised and intercepted them. Zhang said: “If we must have a contest, let us call the local magistrate to make a contract that in case of death there shall be no inquest.”

Zhang was skinny and of ordinary build. The monks were all of big stature and strength. They readily agreed. Zhang, behaving as usual was, hands in sleeves, sitting down. One monk leapt up and kicked. Zhang slightly turned his body to the side, raising his hand after him. Like a flying bullet, the monk went through the window, fell from the second storey and was almost killed. This is surely why Zhang’s law states: “In fighting to lift the feet is the lowest technique and easiest to counter.”

Zhang was once pressed by the recruiting officer to enlist in a campaign and train soldiers. He finally declined, saying: “I made a covenant with my teacher strictly not to teach bad men.” Zhang once went for a stroll in the country, outside the city. Several youths invited him but he firmly refused. When he got back to the city gate, the youths told the gate keeper: “Don’t admit Zhang.” He was shut inside the crescent walled gate. [Major city gates had an enclosed, crescent-shaped entrance space in which to trap an invader.] They bowed to Zhang saying: Now you cannot go forward or back. We as humble spectators entreat you to perform for us.”

Zhang had no alternative but to consent. The gate had several roller stones of

several hundred catties. He told the youths to pile them up. They piled two up but could not balance them. Zhang with a hand steadied them, placed a piece of tile on top of them then added one more stone. He begged them, saying: “I am a seventy-year-old of no use. If I split them in two down to the bottom to give you all a good laugh, will that be alright?”. He raised his left hand obliquely and chopped. The three stones were each divided into two pieces.

Zhang never married and had no son. He served his mother with filialty until her death by her window. Those he taught were only one or two, and could not exhaust his laws. I once followed his disciple to question him. He said: “My teacher once met your teacher. Your teacher asked my teacher: ‘How do you do it?’ My teacher said: ‘I don’t know.’ I asked my teacher about it. He said: ‘Well, a thrust is a thrust! If you make a lot of mental deliberation, you will be off target. How can you centre?’”

When I heard this I was amazed. Then I remembered long ago I had asked Wáng Zhongbó about frontier troops: “What skills do they have that makes them good at war?” Zhongbó said: “Frontier troops have no skills. They wait for the barbarians to come within thirty paces before shooting. When short weapons clash, they go directly ahead to attack and thrust. They do not look left or right, so are victorious. He who blinks does not know; he who looks to the side is dead!” Nowadays, Zhang applies this law.

Again, I realised it is (the ancient bravo) Bêigong Yòu’s cultivation of courage. His flesh did not flinch, his eyes did not blink. (*Mèng Zî ii: Gongsun Chôu*) This does not mean men did not thrust at him. As for flinching and blinking, it was just like flies settling on his body. He forgot flinching and blinking. He drummed up his essence and exerted his spirits, concentrating solidly without ambiguity.

Léi Wànchun’s face was pierced by seven arrows yet he did not move. [Léi died heroically for Táng Emperor Mínghuáng, on the city wall at the siege of Suiyáng, in Hénán province, holding the way to the south, against An Lùshan’s rebellion of 755-756.] This was it!

Zhang had a *Five Word Code* (wû-zì jué): namely: **1. Diligence** (Qín). **2. Intensity (**Jîn). **3.** ‘**Directness** (Jìng). **4. Respect** (Jìng). **5. Earnestness** (Qiè). His disciples keep it secret. I, from what I heard, have presumed to contrive the following interpretation:-

> **1. Diligence:** Morning and night work train hands and feet’s strength. Cut down on sleep. Collect firewood and water, and prepare meals in person. Extend your efforts over the Central Plain (the nation). Be ever fearful of taking things easy, and give one hundred per cent.
>
> **2. Intensity.** Both hands must protect the centre of the chest. When moving you must on left and right protect your ribs. When striking or thrusting do not

exhaust your dynamic, so you may draw back. The feet should squeeze tight as if on a railing. Don't raise your feet high or step wide. The feet should stand in a shape '**like T, but not T; like V, but not V**' (dîng -bùdîng, ba -bùba). You may rapidly advance, rapidly retreat. Let your mind be constantly apprehensive and alert, don't let your intelligence be dulled.

Your stance should be steady, don't let your rear be empty. All the senses join in concert, a hundred joints concentrate together. Roll up like a hedgehog, crouch like a tiger. This is what arms laws (bingfâ,) call '**Begin like a virgin**.' (see: *South Forest Virgin*) When the enemy opens the door, it is advantageous to approach him.

3. Directness. This is what is called '**Afterwards be like a startled hare**.' (see: *South Forest Virgin*) Too far, and not far enough, miss. Don't re-plan,, don't look back. Don't lose the moment. You must hit the centre of the joint. Once you have set your will on a place, then exhaust every pore of your body's force, so that you altogether advance without the slightest disjointedness, like a 'cat catching a rat'.

Thus, in these Three Words [**1. to 3.**], striking and thrusting techniques are exhausted.

4. Respect. Be reverent and restrain yourself. Do not reveal your strengths. He who loves to challenge will certainly find his match. Take care, take care! Be warm and good, modest and yielding. Don't be envious or seeking. Every function is in reserve.

5. Earnestness. One thousand times endure, a myriad times endure! Clasp your fingers, clench your teeth. Don't let in disaster, don't anticipate good fortune. Don't let your body lightly engage with men. Fortune and ill-fortune affect your body. Only when there is no alternative should you rise up. After one contest, if you may withdraw, then withdraw. You should not compete again. Even if all your life you never show your form and never make your name, there is nothing to regret. If you sow enmity, its evil karma will never dissipate. If you break the King's law or regulations, your sentence will be unending. Can you not be cautious?

I heard that Zhang [Songqi] received from Sun [Thirteen the elder] only the first Three Words. The final two [moralizing words] are Zhang's additions. His apprehensive mind (jièxin) was like this.

Gentlemen say: Scholiasts (rú, 'Confucians') from Loyalty and Faith (zhongxìn) contrive their helmets and armour, and from Propriety and Right (lîyì) contrive a thousand turrets. Are not these sufficient defenses? Rather than make men scared, and defend against them, isn't it better not to make men scared, and so not defend? Isn't this more secure? Now the study of skills is to defend against disaster. If your

treatment of trouble makes it grow all the bigger, then what use are skills? If you rely on skills, and do not deal with trouble, then trouble will reach you! Then skills are hard to justify. So gentlemen discard those, and abide in these.

7. Conclusion: A Maritime Martial Silk-Road

The art of hand to hand fighting is first detailed in Hàn dynasty accounts of the South Forest Virgin from Yuè, now Zhèjiang, about BC 500. The transmission of karate ('kong/tángshôudào') from Fújiàn to Okinawa in recent centuries is well documented.[21] Similarly there is ample evidence of Chinese importation of Japanese swords, in addition to studying their techniques from captive pirates. At the same time both China and Japan were absorbing sea-borne Portuguese firearm technology and it was the Japanese adaptation of the Portuguese musket that powered Hideyoshi's campaigns.

Boxing-wrestling (xiangpu, zhengjiao) was a popular competition sport in the Sòng dynasty (960-1260) as it was in ancient times, but surviving descriptions name neither techniques or training styles. Popular attributions of boxing styles many centuries later to Sòng dynasty heroes like founder Zhào Kuangyìn, the emperor Tàizû (r. 960-976), and Yuè Fei (1103-1141) who fought the Jurchen, to Daoist Zhang Sanfeng, or even earlier to Chán Buddhist Bodhidharma (d. 528) who came from South India by sea, remain unsubstantiated. Yet the earliest accounts we have of short-boxing, the documented development of the internal school after its legendary beginnings and transmission to Wenzhou, discussed above, and General Qi Jìguang's experience of boxing on Zhoushan island outside Níngbo, all centre on the Zhèjiang coast, an area of ancient unrivalled maritime prowess.

The seven voyages by the great fleets of 'treasure ships' which sailed from the east China coast across the Indian ocean under Admiral Zhèng Hò from 1405 to 1436 opened the way and martial exchanges along with trade. Affinities of traditional martial traditions of weapons and free-hand fighting of China, with those of the kalari-payat of Kerala and the pentak-silat of Malaysia and Indonesia, are apparent. These are areas linked by millennia of maritime trading contacts that constitute a 'Southern Silk-Road.' I therefore propose that the south China coast should be considered a cross-cultural melting pot of martial arts, and not merely as a coincidental or subsidiary appendage to that of the central plains.

There is overwhelming evidence that a martial arts school flourished at the Shàolín monastery in Hénán at least from the early sixteenth century but boxing seems to have developed there somewhat later. There is no evidence from the Míng period that Mt. Wûdâng or Zhang Sanfeng developed any particular school of martial arts, nor that any 'internal school' or 'external school' was recognised. The main categories were those of long and short range boxing. Zhang Songqi best fits the profile of a short range and his Shàolín challengers with their aggressive leaps that of a long range fighter.

Zhang, in Shên's portrait of him, further elevates martial arts from a moral standpoint. He demostrates by example the virtues of modesty and self-control, the very model of a perfect knight and gentleman.

Illustrations

i. Fighting Japanese pirates (Míng hand-scroll); Shàolín warrior monks of the Míng (depicted by Déqián, modern Shàolín monk)
ii. Dark God of Wûdâng; Mountain God of Shàolín; Guan Yû, as god at Dongmyo, Seoul
iii. Qi Jìguang's 32 dynamic boxing 1562; Korean 1790; Lù Shôuxian 1918, Jin Yimíng 1929 versions

Bibliography

A'Dé 2006: "Míngdài Lámajiào –yû Shàolínsì", see: Yôngxìn ed. 2006: 102-107.

Chén Gongzhé 1960 postscript; 1973: *Wûshù Fazhânshî, Jingwûhuì Wûshínián*, Huálián chubânshè, Táibêi.

Chéng Chongdôu (Zongyóu) 1616: *Shàolín Gùnfâ Chánzong*.

Chéng Dàlì 2006: *Shàolín Wûshù Tongkâo*, Shàolín Shujú.

Déqián (Shàolín '31st generation') 1988: *Shàolín Wûseng Zhì*, Bêijing Tîyùxuéyuàn .

Goodrich, L. Carrington; and Chaoying Fang; 1976: *Dictionary of Ming Biography 1368-1644*, Columbia University.

-- 1935, 1966: *Ch'ien Lung's The Literary Inquisition of Ch'ien Lung*, Waverly, Baltimore; Paragon Books Reprint Corp., New York.

Gù Liúxing 1982, 1985: *Tàijí Quánshù*, Zhongguó Túshu kanxíngshè, China Books Press, Hong Kong.

Henning, Stanley E. 1994: "Ignorance, Legend and Taijiquan", *Journal of the Chen Style Taijiquan Research Association of Hawaii*, Vol. 2, No. 3, pp. 1-7.

~~: 1999 ""Martial Arts Myths of Shaolin Monastery, part 1: The Giant with the Flaming Staff" *Chenstyle Journal* 5, no. 1.

~ ~ 2004: "Ma Mingda: *Shuojian Cónggâo*" review, *China Review International* Vol 11, No. 1 Spring: 141.

~~ 2009: review of Shahar 2008 in *China Review International* xv-3, 424.

(Qing) Huáng Zongxi (Lízhou): *Wáng Zhengnán mùzhìmíng*; Huáng Bâijia: *Nèijia Quánfâ, Zhengnán Shèfâ*; see: Táng Háo 1935, 1971: 53-55.

Jin Yimíng 1929, 1969: *Wûdang Sanshí'èr-shì Chángquán,* Liánhuá chubânshè, Táibêi.

Kwan Wai-so 1976: "Chu Hou-chao" in Goodrich q.v.

Lù Shôuxian 1918 preface, 1929; Rèn Tînggé 1985: *Quánjing*, Dàsheng Shujú, Shànghâi; Zhongyi Gûjí chubânshè, Bêijing.

Lú Wêichang, 'Honour Me Studio Master' (Zunwôzhai zhûrén) ed. 1915, Chén Tiêsheng 1971: *Shàolín Quánshù Mìjué*, unillustrated, Zhonghuá Shujú, Shànghâi; with Táng Háo, Xú Zhèn 1936 critiques, Zhonghuá Wûshù chubânshè, Táibêi. (cf: *Shàolín Zongfâ Túshuo*)

~~ ~~ ed. 1922, *Shàolín Zongfâ Túshuo (gûbên)*, illustrated, Zhènmín Bianjíshè, Shànghâi; Lî Ying'áng 1963 with Táng Háo and Xú Zhèn 1936 critiques, Unicorn Press, Hong Kong.

Mâ Míngdá 2004: *Shuojiàn Cónggâo* (Discourses on the Sword, Collected Manuscripts),

Lanzhou, Lanzhou University Press, ISBN 7-311-01632-0.
Matsuda Ryûchi 1979: *(Zusetsu) Chugoku Bujitsu Shi*, Nippon Shin Jinbutsu Kôraisha, Tôkyô; Korean tr. Jo Eunhun 1979: *(doseol) Jongguk Musulsa*, Seorim Munhwasa, Seoul; Chinese tr. 1986: *Zhongguó Wûshù* Shîlyuè, Wûzhou chubânshè, Táibêi.
Muye Dobo Tongji, issued by Korean King Jeongjo, 1790. It includes a version of Qi Jìguang's 32-figure boxing, partially reproduced in Hwang Kee 1977: *Tang Soo Do*, Sung Moon Sa, Seoul.
(Qing) *Níngbo Fûzhì*, ed. Cáo Bîngrén 1735: "Zhang Songqi zhuàn", see: Táng Háo 1935, 1971: 53-55.
Qi Jìguang 1560: *Jìxiào Xînshu*, (Nánjing, Bingbù Shàngshu) Zhou Shìxuân 1595 edition, and Sikù Quánshu c. 1780, is missing eight of the thirty-two boxing figures (15-18, 21-24). Wáng Chè: *San-cái Túhuì* 1609 edition is complete.
Rèn Yigué ed. 1985; (Qingpú) Lù Shôxian, Shì Èfû 1908 preface: *Quánjing*, .Zhongyi Gûjí chubânshè, Bêijing
Sawyer, Ralph D. tr. 1993: *The Seven Military Classics of Ancient China, including the Art of War*, Westview Press, Boulder.
Shahar, Meir 2008: *The Shaolin Monastery, history, religion and the martial arts*, University of Hawai'i Press, Honolulu.
Shen Shou 1984: *Taiji Boxing Research*, Fujian People's Press, Fuzhou.
Shàolín Zongfâ Túshuo (gûbên), see: Lú Wêichang 1922.
Shàolín Quánshù Mìjué, see: Lú Wêichang 1915.
Shên Yiguàn: "Bó-zhê Zhang Songqi zhuàn,*"* see: *Sìmíng Cóngshu*.
Sìmíng Cóngshu: Sìmíng Wénzheng: xvi: 55-58 Shên Yiguàn: "Bó-zhê Zhang Songqi zhuàn,*"* Zheng Tûjun, Táo Xuan 1796; Yueyuân edition, (Ziqi) Féng Zhenqún 1935, 1979, Bêijing Ancient Archive Library.
Smith, Robert 1964: *Secrets of Shaolin Temple Boxing,* Tuttle, Vermont.
Sòng Shî, '*Sòng History*', compiled in the Yuán dynasty.
Sun Lùtáng 1923, 1972: *Quányì, Sùzhen, 'Boxing's Meaning (idea), Telling the Truth',* Huálián chubânshè, Táibêi.
Táng Háo (Fànsheng, 1897-1959) 1930 preface, 1969: *Shàolín Wûdang Kâo*, Huálián chubânshè, Táibêi.
~ ~ 1935, 1980 *Tàijíquán genyuán*, Dongyâ túshu, Hong Kong.
~ ~ 1935, 1971: *Nèijiaquán d' yànjiu*, Huálián chubânshè, Táibêi.
~ ~ Gù Liúxing preface, 1986: *Shénzhou Wûyì (shàngcè)*, Jílín Wénshî chubânshè.
(Míng) Táng Shùnzhi: *Jingchuan Wénjí*, see: Táng Háo 1935, 1980.
(Míng) Wáng Chè 1609: *San-cái Túhuì*, encyclopaedia, gives complete version of Qi Jìguang's 32-figure boxing.
Wells, Marnix 2005: *Scholar Boxer*, North Atlantic Books, Berkeley.
Wile, Douglas 1996: *Lost T'ai-chi Classics from the Late Ch'ing Dynasty*, State University of New York Press.
~ ~ 1999: *T'ai Chi's Ancestors,* Sweet Ch'i Press, New York.
Xí Yúntài 1985: *Zhongguó Wûshù Shî*, Rénmín Tîyù chubânshè, Bêijing.
[Shì] Yôngxìn ed. 2006.08: *Shàolín Xué Lùnwénxuân*, Shàolín Shujú.
(Qing) Yuán Jun comp. 1797; printed Féng Zhenqún 1938: *Sìmíng Cóngshu*: *Sìmíng Wénzheng* xvi 55-58 Shên Yiguàn: "Bó-zhê Zhang Songxi zhuàn."

Zhang Rú'an 1988: *Tîyù Zhoukan 1988-4 (xxxiii)*: "Nèijiaquán Dàshi, Zhang Songqi shengpíng biànwù."
Zhang Yâfen, Zhou Chunying 1988: *Tîyù Zhoukan 1988-3 (xxxii)*: "Jiajìng Shàolín Sengbing 'yù Wô' d' lìshî zhenxiàng"

---

[1] Zhang Rú'an 1988: 27-30. Zhang cites a compendium of local materials from Sìmíng, Zhèjiang Province: *Sìmíng Cóngshu: Sìmíng Wénzheng*: "Shên Yi-guàn: *Bózhê Zhang Songqi zhuàn*."
[2] Goodrich: 1976: Bodo Wiethoff: "Chu Wan" 373-374.
[3] Goodrich: 1976: Min Dugi: "Li Ju-sung" (Lî Rúsong) 832.
[4] One such temple, Dongmyo 'East Shrine', may be seen at Seoul. The image of Guan bears the Chinese title 'Xiétian Hùguó, Zhongyì Dàdì'.
[5] Goodrich: 1976: Chou Tao-chi: "Shen I-kuan" (Shên Yiguàn) 1179-1182.
[6] *Níngbo Fûzhì,* see: Táng Háo 1935, 1971: 43.
[7] Chéng Dàlì 2006: 54-56. A'Dé 2006: 103. *Míng Shî: "*Yáng Tînghé [1459-1529] zhuàn.*"*
[8] Kwan-wai So 1976: 313.
[9] Goodrich: 1976: Hok-lam Chan: "Yáng Xuan" 1512.
[10] *Níngbo Fûzhì,* see: Táng Háo 1935, 1971: 43.
[11] A'Dé 2006: 104.
[12] Henning 1999; 2009 review.
[13] *Zújishan Zhì*. A'Dé 2006: 103. Henning 2009.
[14] Sawyer 1993: 151-153. (Hàn) Simâ Qian: *Shîjì lxv.* (Hàn) Zhào Yè (c. 150 AD): *Wúyùe Chunqiu ix*. (Hàn) Zhào Yè:*Wú-Yuè Chunqiu: ix*. Cf. (Hàn) Wáng Chong (27- c.100): *Lùnhéng: Biétong* praises sword fencing of South Forest Virgin's Quchéng school. Sun is claimed as native by both Wú, and Qí (Shandong).
[15] Wells 2005: 12, 15, 88, 114, 262 (43-44.) South Forest Virgin; 204:-26 cat catches rat.
[16] Wells 2005: 181ff 'Directly Tallied and Delivered Letter.'
[17] *Muye Dobo Tongji* 1790 *iv: Gweonbeop* 2. It is possible the Koreans had a better edition of Cáo's original, later 'corrected' to conform with Huáng.
[18] *Sòng Shî: Jîshì Bênmò.* Yuè Fei, in reply to Zhang Jùn, lists these five same virtues in different order, putting Wisdom first: Wisdom, Humanity, Good-faith, Courage, Severity. Xí Yúntài 1985: 229.
[19] Lú Wêichang 1915, xii: 111; 117-118 claims Zhang Songqi first learnt Shàolín, but was hurt by a monk and so transmitted a grudge against Shàolín.
[20] Jin 1929: 15-16.
[21] Mabuni Kenwa (1889-1952): *Empty Hand, The Essence of Budô Karate*.