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By Liang Keming with Gigi Oh and Gene Ching

FU TAIJIQUAN

Among the numerous Taijiquan schools, or Tai Chi Chuan as it's more commonly known in the West, is a school born in the modern period of the Republic of China (1912–1949). It spread widely in the Guangdong, Guangxi, and Fujian Provinces in southern China and is now emerging in the United States, Europe, and the rest of the world. This faction is descended from Grandmaster Fu Zhensong (1872–1953 傅振嵩) and is known as Fu Family Taijiquan (傅式太極拳). Grandmaster Fu Zhensong, also known as Fu Qiankun (傅乾坤) and by the honorable title of respectful name Jiannan (Southern Sword 号剑南), was born in Mapo

The 1934 Welcoming of Grandmaster Yang Chengfu to the Guangxi-Guangzhou National Art Institute. Master Liang's family had all their possessions confiscated during the Cultural Revolution, but they saved this photo by hiding it in a pot.

Village, Xiyang County, Huaiqingfu, Henan Province (河南省怀庆府沁阳县马坡村人). Since childhood, he was talented and liked martial arts. At that time, Mapo Village suffered from rampant banditry. A wealthy villager invested in establishing a *wuxueshe* (武学社), a martial arts school, to teach young people in the village to learn Chinese martial arts so they could strengthen and defend themselves. Fu Zhensong enrolled in this *wuxueshe*. Since Mapo Village is only about 13 miles away from Chen Village (*Chenjiagou* 陈家沟), it was easy to hire famous masters from there, so the *wuxueshe's* Taijiquan class was taught by Grandmaster Chen Yanxi (1848–1929 陈延禧), grandson of the influential Taiji Grandmaster Chen Changxing (1771–1853 陈长兴). The *Baguazhang* class was taught by Grandmaster Jia Qishan (1867–1938 贾岐山) from Beijing, who was an outstanding student of Grandmaster Dong Haichuan (1797 or 1813–1882 董海川), the founder of *Baguazhang*. Grandmaster Jia Qishan was originally a bodyguard of Beijing Mingsheng Escort Co (明胜镖局的镖师). When he passed through Huaiqingfu, the villagers took the opportunity to

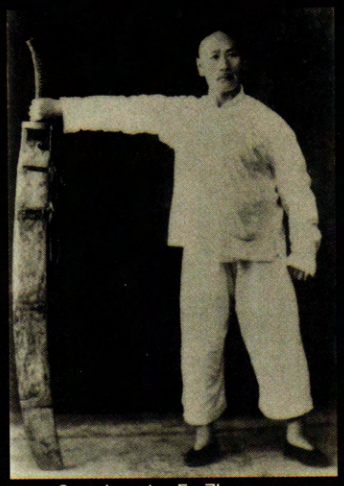
A Fusion of Internal Arts

retain him with a large amount of money. He was employed by the local *wuxueshe* as the *Baguazhang* teacher. Under the meticulous guidance of these two grandmasters, Fu Zhensong worked diligently and became very skilled in the craft, especially in the area of *Baguazhang*. Eight years later, Fu Zhensong left the *wuxueshe* to go in search of higher martial arts skills. According to Grandmaster Liang Qiangya (1913–2013 梁强亚), a leading proponent of Fu Tai Chi (and my father), Grandmaster Fu Zhensong witnessed and studied with many of the world's greatest elder Kung Fu masters during his travels. Through this study tour, he exchanged ideas with various masters of different schools. This helped Fu Zhensong to improve his martial knowledge and benefitted his skills.

In the ninth year of the Republic of China (1920), Fu Zhensong joined the Northeast Army as a National Guoshu instructor under Grandmaster Li Jinglin (李景林). Li Jinglin was a general of the Northeast Army who was also a renowned swordsman. General Li taught Fu his famous Wudang sword techniques, but Fu did not want to get involved with the warlord scuffles, so he left the army to continue his own search for the martial path.

In the summer of the fourteenth year of the Republic of China (1925), Fu Zhensong met with Grandmaster Sun Fuquan (1860–1933 孙福全 a.k.a. Sun Lutang 孙禄堂), the founder of Sun Style Taijiquan (孙式太極拳), at the martial gathering in Tianjin called the *Wushihui* (天津武士会). Sun Lutang heard that the swordsmanship of Fu Zhensong was transmitted from Li Jinglin, and he specifically approached Fu for swordsmanship. Fu lost no time in asking Sun Lutang for advice on *Xingyiquan* and Sun Style Tai Chi.

In the sixteenth year of the Republic of China (1927), Fu Zhensong traveled to Beijing. There he visited famous grandmasters such as Yang Chengfu (杨澄甫), Sun Lutang, Li Shuwen (李书文), Huo Diange (霍殿阁) and other renowned martial artists in the metropolis at that time, and jointly studied martial arts techniques with them. In



Grandmaster Fu Zhensong

Grandmaster Liang Qiangya

the seventeenth year of the Republic of China (1928), prominent martial artist Zhang Zhijiang (张之江) set up the Central National Martial Arts Institute (*Zhongyang Guoshu Guan* 中央国术馆) in Nanjing, and Fu Zhensong was appointed its chief instructor.

One of the Five Southbound Tigers

In the nineteenth year of the Republic of China (1929), Guangdong Provincial Governor Li Jishen (李济深) hired Fu Zhensong as the Chief Instructor of the Guangxi-Guangzhou National Art Institute (*Liang Guang Guoshu Guan* 两广国术馆总教师) to teach *Baguazhang* and Tai Chi in Guangzhou. Fu Zhensong and four other famous martial arts masters jointly promoted the martial crafts in Guangzhou and the south after that. Known as the "Five Southbound Tigers" (五虎下江南 – literally "Five Tigers Under the Yangzi River"), they were Gu Ruzhang (1894–1952 aka Ku Yu-Cheung 顾汝章), Wan Laishen (1903–1992 万籁声), Wang Shaozhao (1892–1984 王少周) and Geng Dehai (耿德海) [Publisher's note: other sources cite Li Xiangwu (1906–? 李先五) instead of Geng Dehai as the fifth member].

Fu Zhensong was appointed as Deputy Curator of the Guangxi-Guangzhou National Art Institute upon his arrival. In the twenty-third year of the Republic of China (1934), Fu Zhensong invited Yang Chengfu to teach Yang Style Taijiquan. When Yang Chengfu arrived in Guangzhou, Fu held a grand welcoming ceremony. Fu gathered the Guangzhou officials and the martial arts celebrities and took a group photo in front of the Guangzhou City government building.

Fu Zhensong and Yang Chengfu learned from each other and shared their experiences. Yang taught a set of Yang Style Tai Chi to Fu, and learned from Fu an old *Baguazhang* from Dong Haichuan. Through these exchanges and discussions, Fu Zhensong laid a solid foundation for the future creation of Fu Taijiquan, his own unique style.

Grandmaster Fu absorbed his favorite qualities of *Baguazhang* and three styles of Taiji – Chen, Sun and Yang – and combined them into Fu Taijiquan. While he was developing his style and promoting Chinese martial arts through the Institute, the 2nd Sino-Japanese War (1931–1945) broke out. In 1938, the Japanese attacked Guangdong's provincial capital, Guangzhou. Fu had to take his family and flee from the flames of war. He moved with the Guangdong Provincial Government to the Shaoguan City in the northern part of Guangdong Province. All the accumulation of martial arts knowledge, skills, and research completely stopped.

Grandmaster Fu Zhensong

A Grandmaster Refugee

In 1945, after victory in the 2nd Sino-Japanese War, Fu Zhensong returned to Guangzhou with his family. But his house and family belongings had been destroyed in the war and they had no place to stay. Fortunately, at this time, within Guangzhou's National Government Army, General Sun Baogang (孙宝刚) was Fu's elder disciple. Fu came to my home under the leadership of General Sun Baogang. At that time, my family had a large household, so there were still available rooms for use. Fu Zhensong stayed in my family until he passed away in 1953. When my father Liang Qiangya was 14 years old, he obtained the consent of my grandmother and of Grandmaster Fu Zhensong to study his martial arts. Eventually, he became one of the very few closed-door disciples of Fu Zhensong in his later years. By then, my father had been following Fu Zhensong for eight years. In addition to learning *Baguazhang*, he also studied Taiji, *Xingyi*, boxing and other techniques until Fu's death.

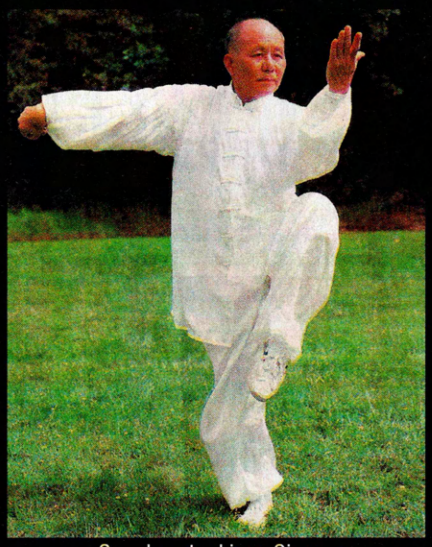
According to my father's recollection, Fu Zhensong devoted his later years to teaching his martial inheritors and compiling the accumulated years of his comprehension. Today, we respect Fu Zhensong as a first generation grandmaster of the martial arts because he constantly improved his martial arts system and did not stick to conventions. He created his own style on the basis of inherited traditions. Fu Zhensong highly integrated *Baguazhang*, Taijiquan, and *Xingyiquan* into one. The Fu Taijiquan now being introduced has actually been integrated into every set of Fu

Fu Taiji adopts similar hand positions as Sun Taiji, although not in the characteristic *Santishi* (三体式) stance of *Xingyiquan*.

Fu Taiji uses Sun Taiji's signature open and close movements.

Continued on page 30

Continued from page 28: Fu Taijiquan



Grandmaster Liang Qiangya

Zhensong's system in his later years instead of just referring to the name of a particular boxing title. In the broadest of terms, this encompasses Fu Style Tai Chi Chuan (傅式太极拳), *Lianyiquan* (duality principles 两仪拳), *Sixiangquan* (four phases 四象拳), *Bagua Zhengzong* (authority of Bagua 八卦正宗"), and the last compilation of Taiji *Shandian Zhang* (Tai Chi Lightning Palm 太极闪电掌). These are the integrations of *Baguazhang* and *Xingyi* into Taiji, and it is the essence of Fu Style Taijiquan.

7 Principles of Fu Taiji

All those who have seen Fu Style Taijiquan feel that both the Bagua and the Taiji co-exist. It has become a Bagua Taijiquan, or even called "Rotating Taijiquan (*xuan zhuan zhong de taijiquan* 旋转中的太极拳)." Fu Taijiquan has adopted all the advantages of various schools, and the idea of *Baguazhang* permeates Fu Taijiquan, gradually forming its own style. There are seven main features and actions of the exercises in accordance with general Taiji theory.

The first principle is *xu ling ding jing* (虚灵顶劲) or "an insubstantial energy leads the head upward." This helps Taijiquan practitioners to keep their heads upright and necks relaxed. Using intention, pull the *Baihui* (百會) on the top of your crown upwards and the *Huiyin* (會陰) point on the bottom of your perineum downwards, but don't use power. If you force it, your blood and qi won't flow smoothly. The *Baihui* is the meeting point for many meridians. It leads the qi for the whole body. This posture lifts the practitioner's spirit.

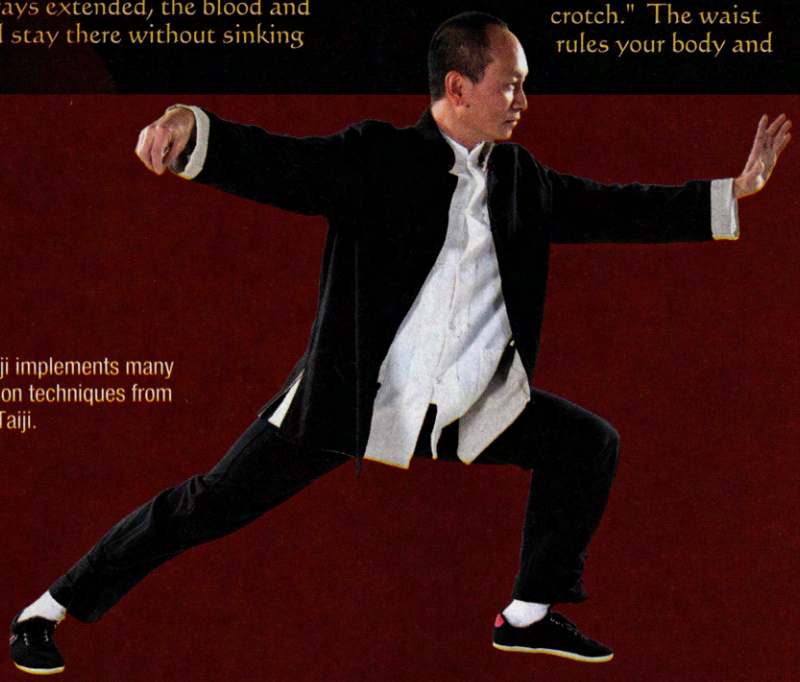
The second principle is *han xiong ba bei* (含胸拔背) or "contain the chest and arch the back." Practitioners keep the body shape of a bow. If the midsection of the bow, your chest, is always extended, the blood and qi will stay there without sinking

Baguazhang is used primarily for transition movements in Fu Taiji. These are active motions that elude representative still photography.

downward. But this does not mean to have a hunched back. The chest is only slightly retracted and the arms extend forward to pull against each other's energy. When arching the back, the waist doesn't lean to the abdomen. It's a slight arch outward. If you can achieve this, the energy can be issued from the *Mingmen* (命門) point in the lumbar vertebrae.

Thirdly, *chen jian zhui zhou* (沉肩坠肘) means "sink the shoulders and drop the elbows." If the shoulders are not relaxed the qi will well up. If the elbows are lifted, the shoulders will rise and the whole body will be weak.

The fourth principle is *song yao yuan dang* (松腰圆裆) or "relax the waist and round the crotch." The waist rules your body and



Fu Taiji implements many common techniques from Yang Taiji.

is the connection between your upper body and your legs and feet. When the waist and crotch are relaxed, qi naturally sinks to the feet. Rounding the crotch raises the *Huiyin* point slightly and makes the *kua* (inguinal crease 胯) into an arched bridge which stabilizes your lower body.

Fifth is *yin yang xu shi* (阴阳虚实) or "yin yang empty and full." Your feet support your entire body weight. Fu Taiji adopts the concept of *Baguazhang* which emphasizes the change of yin and yang of the feet. If your foot is not full, you will not be stable. If not empty, you won't be flexible. Being 100% full will make it difficult to move and 100% empty will be unsteady and not calm. This is essential to Fu Taiji. When one foot is full, the other is empty.

The sixth principle is *kuai man xiang jian* (快慢相间) or "reciprocate fast and slow." *Baguazhang* pursues flexible footwork and changes in force through rotation, combined with speed to create power. Fu Taijiquan incorporates this *Baguazhang* concept. It varies between slow and fast when executed, also changing from rigid to soft.

The final principle is *zuo you jun heng* (左右均衡) or "balance left and right." Fu Taijiquan postures usually have both left and right side movements so that both sides of the body are exercised.☯

Master Liang Keming (梁克明) grew up learning *Baguazhang* and Taijiquan from his father, Grandmaster Liang Qiangya, one of the few indoor disciples of Grandmaster Fu Zhensong. For a video demonstration of Fu Style Tai Chi Chuan's basic form *liangyiquan* (两仪拳), visit KungFuMagazine.com's YouTube channel in May. Liang also demonstrated *Taiji Shandian Zhang* (Tai Chi Lightning Palm) at the 2017 KUNG FU TAI CHI DAY. That video is already in our YouTube channel archive under "KFTC Day 2017: Liang Kaiming."

The Fu Taiji form *liangyiquan* opens with a technique characteristic of Chen Taiji.