

Unraveling the Mystery Surrounding the Origins of Taijiquan by New Historical Materials in Tang Village, China

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Abstract—In this paper the recently recovered records of the Li family are discussed. These records answer many questions surrounding the start of taijiquan. This corrects many prior assumptions, and the documents reveal new insights into how various certain martial arts originally developed.

1. Introduction

For many years, there have been disputes over the origins of taijiquan; and there remained no consensus. The problem was, despite all the hard work and all the prior research by previous historians, it was very difficult to prove the source of taijiquan. This was due to the lack of credible historical records. As a result, all published conclusions seemed vague and the papers often lacked supporting evidence.

However, the situation has now changed. Recently, the Li family in Tang Village, which is in Boai County, Henan Province, China, uncovered some valuable historical documents, while they were updating their family's genealogy. Amongst these documents were the Li Family Genealogy, a Taiji Martial Arts Manual, and a Thirteen-Momentum Martial Arts Manual, which has previously not been published before. In this article, the authors, as both stakeholders and researchers, have carefully read through these three new historical materials and combined their contents with previously known local historical facts. Based on this new evidence, it is now believed that: (1) the Thirteen-Momentum techniques of taijiquan

originates from the Wuji Health-Preserving Martial Arts of the Thousand-Year Temple in Tang Village; thus, the birthplace of taijiquan is the Thousand-Year Temple; (2) Li Chunmao (the eighth generation of the Li family in Tang Village) was the first to standardize the inherited Wuji Health-Preserving Martial Arts in 1590, and he also created various documents (such as the Wuji Health-Preserving Boxing Treatise, Thirteen-Momentum Treatise, and the Song of Practicing Thirteen Momentums); (3) Li Zhong and Li Yan (the ninth generation of the Li family), and their cousin Chen Wangting (who was from the neighboring Chen Village), combined the Wuji Health-Preserving Martial Arts and Thirteen Momentums with the essence of other martial arts they found at the Thousand-Year Temple, to create the Taiji Health-Preserving Martial Arts; (4) Li Zhong created the document of Expositions of Insights into the Practice of Thirteen Momentums and Li Helin (from the 12th generation of the Li family) created various documents such as Taijiquan Treatise, Song of Push Hands, and the Essentials of Push Hands; (5) most of today's important Taijiquan Classics came from the Taiji Martial Arts Manual and Thirteen-Momentum Martial Arts Manual of the Tang Village; and (6) the two different sets of 58-posture routines of Wuji Health-Preserving Martial Arts and Taiji Health-Preserving Martial Arts significantly influenced the various postures found in subsequent traditional taijiquan styles.

Taijiquan is a martial art originating from China, and it is known for its unique

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combination of fitness, self-defense, and spiritual cultivation. Therefore, taijiquan is increasingly gaining attention and popularity. Its core philosophy is based on the ancient Taoist philosophical concepts of Wuji (無極) and Taiji (太極), and it is now widely accepted that through training in the concept of Wuji, one can achieve inner peace and tranquility; and nurture an endless flow of internal momentum in stillness. By practicing the concept of Taiji, one can also improve the body's flexibility and agility, and possess internal strength that maintains body balance and mind-body coordination.

It is often argued that understanding the origin and development of taijiquan is essential for comprehending this ancient martial art and also its underlying philosophical and cultural background. However, due to the lack of historical documentation, the origins of taijiquan has long been controversial and there are many different theories, most of which rely on anecdotes or indirect evidence. Thus, over the past century, scholars have concentrated on researching and examining historical figures such as Zhang Sanfeng (張三丰), Cheng Lingxi (程靈洗), Xu Xuanping (許宣平), Li Daozi (李道子), Wang Zongyue (王宗岳), and Chen Wangting (陳王庭), but no consensus had previously been reached.¹⁻³

When studying the history of objects and when seeking the truth surrounding history, surviving physical evidence is the most trustworthy source, while new sources of information should be used with caution. In this line of thought, in the early years of the 21st century, valuable collections of historical materials were unearthed at Tang Village (唐村), in Boai County (博愛縣), Henan Province, China. These documents included the Li Family Genealogy (李氏家譜) which was compiled in 1716, the Taiji Martial Arts Manual (太極拳譜) collected by Li Lichao (李立潮), and the Thirteen-Momentum Martial Arts Manual (十三勢拳譜) collected by Li Qunfeng (李群峰), which together provide three authoritative pieces of physical evidence to unravel the mysterious origins of taijiquan. This article examines and interprets these historical materials, to overcome the long-standing confusion that

has surrounded the history of taijiquan, and to help pave the way for new areas for future exploration. However, despite this being an extended article on these documents, due to the substantial amount of information that has been recovered, this article can only begin to introduce the most important contents of the Tang Village materials and to present a few representative photocopied images (see Fig. 1 to 20).

2. Interpretation of the Li Family Genealogy

2-1. Discovery and Contents of the Li Family Genealogy

China has long had the custom of compiling genealogies during prosperous times. In 2002, the leader of the Li family in Tang Village decided to update its genealogy, which had, after many years of turmoil, become scattered and misplaced. It was during the search through their belongings that various historical genealogy records, contracts, inscriptions, martial arts manuscripts, and other historical artifacts were uncovered.

Specifically, during the Qingming Festival in 2003, Li Libing (who is a co-author of this article, and was responsible for updating the Li Family Genealogy) learned by chance that Li Taicun had moved to Xian (西安) in 1947, and that he had a copy of the existing family genealogy. Li Libing immediately organized a team to investigate this by traveling to Xian. There the team met the current guardian of the genealogy, an old lady named Wang Guiying. This genealogy is a version that was transcribed by someone entrusted by Li Taicun, before he had moved to Xian, but he disappeared in 1953. His wife Wang Guiying, who was illiterate, would place the family genealogy on the table for worship during every festival to express grief, and thus the genealogy survived. When the search team explained their purpose, the old lady only agreed to let them take photos, or to copy the genealogy, but declined to hand it over for preservation, in the ancestral hall.⁴

The facts surrounding this matter is that the owner of the Li Family Genealogy was an
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illiterate elderly person, with no ability and apparently no motivation to modify or fabricate information. The surviving copy of the Li Family Genealogy that we see today was written on a pale-yellow ledger paper with a rough edge. According to local elders, this type of ledger paper was widely used by merchants in the Huaqing area of Henan Province during the late Qing Dynasty (清朝) and early Republic of China periods. In fact, it was common amongst some families to transcribe martial arts manuals and similar materials onto cheaper and more easily accessible ledger papers. This is why ancient manual materials copied onto ledger papers continue to be discovered in some local areas.⁴

The Li Family Genealogy consists of nine parts: (1) Preface of the Li Family Genealogy; (2) Family Precepts and Poems; (3) Generational Names; (4) Old and New Gravesites and the Direction They Face; (5) Migration Records of the Ancestor; (6) Genealogy of the First to 12th Generations; (7) Wuji Health-Preserving Boxing Treatise (无极养生拳论), Song of Practicing Thirteen Momentums (十三势行功歌), and Taiji Health-Preserving Martial Arts Manual (太极养生功谱); (8) Biographies of Successful Exam Candidates and Scholars; and (9) Epilogue. The length of the genealogy, as it currently exists, is 25 pages. Fortunately, the Wuji Health-Preserving Boxing Treatise and the preceding contents are well-preserved. However, only half a page of the essay: Song of Practicing Thirteen Momentums remains. The five or six pages of the Taiji Health-Preserving Martial Arts (HPMA) Manual, the Biographies of Successful Candidates in the Imperial Examination, and the Epilogue were either damaged or lost.⁵

It appears that this genealogy and collection of martial arts notes was compiled in the 55th year of the Kangxi (康熙) Emperor's reign (1716). The compiler, Li Yuanshan (李元善), introduced the genealogy in the preface, stating that it was first compiled by his fifth-generation ancestor, whose name was Mingdao, and then later by his seventh-generation ancestor, whose name was Mingde.

He then stated that he, Li Yuanshan, was now compiling it again as the elder of the tenth generation. Li Yuanshan also introduced the origin of the Li family in Tang Village, stating that the founding ancestor, named Qingjiang, came from Fenghuang Village (凤凰村) in Hongdong County (洪洞县), Shanxi Province in the fourth year of the Hongwu (洪武) Emperor's reign (1371). Li Qingjiang then settled in Tang Village, Huaqing Prefecture in Henan Province, and it has been over 340 years since then, with 12 generations of descendants recorded. Li Yuanshan then gave a brief account of the accomplishments and virtues of the Li family throughout the preceding generations and ended with a personal commitment to the family: "By compiling this genealogy and respecting the ancestral virtues, I hope to perpetuate the Li family's achievements and virtues, and to elevate our family's status". The preface then ends with Li Yuanshan's signature: "Tenth generation Yuanshan respectfully compiled this genealogy".^{6,7} Overall, the genealogy records a family history of 345 years, from 1371 to 1716.

2-2. A Successful Family Excelled in Both Literature and Martial Arts Pursuits

The Li Family Genealogy records a total of 123 male members from the first generation to the 12th generation. Amongst them 74 individuals practiced a dual education in literature and martial arts, and 26 were professional martial artists. Starting from the fifth generation Li Mingdao, 66 individuals traveled to various provinces and cities (such as Shandong, Shanxi, Zhejiang, Hubei, Beijing, and Henan) to teach martial arts. It is recorded that the martial arts they taught and propagated in these regions included Wuji Health-Preserving Martial Arts (HPMA) (无极养生功), Wuji boxing, Thirteen-Momentum martial arts, Taiji HPMA, Tongbei (通背) martial arts, Xinyi (心意) boxing, Liuhe (六合) spear, sword, spear, arrow, and other martial arts. For instance, the eighth-generation martial artist Li Ziqi (李自奇) was recorded in the family genealogy to have taught boxing in Shanxi and Shaanxi Provinces during the Chongzhen (崇祯) era. The discovery of Li

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Fig. 1. Image of the cover of the Li Family Genealogy.

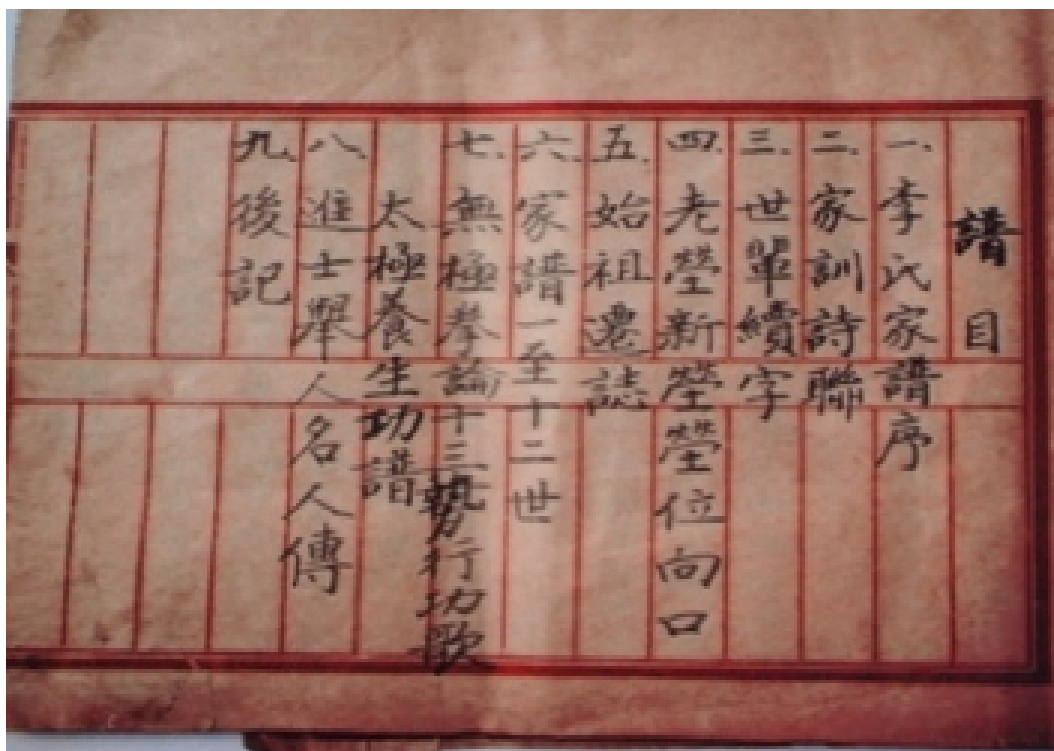


Fig. 2. The Catalogue of Li Family Genealogy.

Ziqi's tombstone inscription further confirms the authenticity of the family genealogy, which recorded him as a master of Xinyi boxing and Liuhe spear who had traveled and taught in Shanxi and Shaanxi Provinces.^{8,9}

In the Li family Genealogy, in the year 1640 there were ten individuals appointed as generals by the peasant uprising leader Li Zicheng (李自成) due to their exceptional martial arts skills. Among them were five brothers, Li Mou, Li Zhong (李仲), Li Xin (李信) (also known as Li Yan (李岩)), Li You, and Li Dong of the ninth generation. They made remarkable achievements, and Li Dong sacrificed his life on the battlefield. However, Li Mou and Li Yan were executed by Li Zicheng due to internal conflict within the rebel army. The surviving two brothers were Li You and Li Zhong. Li You hid in Xunzhang Village, Jiyuan City, Henan Province, and wrote a book called Divine-Fist Martial Arts Manual (神拳拳谱); and, to avoid being pursued by the Qing government, Li Zhong fled to his younger brother Li Jun's bookstore in Zhejiang Province and taught martial arts for a living. He then trained his five sons, all of whom became famous martial arts masters, amongst these was his fourth son, Li Yuanshan, who was involved in compiling the family genealogy.

Due to this historical context, Li Yuanshan specifically reminded his relatives during the genealogy compilation process to uphold the family's honor and reputation, to recognize the importance of current affairs and to abide the right path. He also recorded the important instructions of the family patriarch, who warned that during the late Ming Dynasty (明朝), several ninth-generation family members were lured into the service of the rebel leader and were sacrificed. Thus, he urged caution in discussing and circulating the genealogy.

Li Yuanshan, the son of Li Zhong, was a scholar and the nephew of Li Yan. Therefore, it can easily be imagined that recording the names and the deeds of these two elders in a genealogy compilation carried a significant risk, as it could potentially draw unwanted attention and great danger to both the

compiler and to the family members who owned the genealogy.

As a result, it would appear neither the compiler nor the family members who held the genealogy had any motive to fabricate or alter its contents for personal gain.^{10,11}

2-3. Three Young Men Who Created Taijiquan

The Li Family Genealogy also clearly records that taijiquan was created, jointly, by Li Zhong, Li Yan, and Chen Wangting. At that time, the founding ancestors of the Li family (two brothers of Li Qingjiang and Li Qinghe), along with the founding ancestor of the Chen family from Chen Village (Chen Bu), the founding ancestor of the Haozhuang village (Chen Hou), and the founding ancestor of the Liu village (Jiang Peili); all migrants from Hongdong, gathered at the Thousand-Year Temple in Boai County to worship and made a solemn oath. There they also planted trees to commemorate the occasion.

From then on, the various families maintained close ties with each other through intermarriage. Chen Wangting's mother was the aunt of Li Zhong and Li Yan. The three cousins shared a love of literature and martial arts; had a deep sense of loyalty; and went to the Thousand-Year Temple to learn martial arts from the same masters, and together they created the Taiji HPMA (太极养生功), which is the earliest known version of taijiquan.^{5,12,13}

Within the Li Family Genealogy records there are three instances where it is mentioned that the three cousins created taijiquan: the first instance is recorded in the Preface of the genealogy, which states: "The ninth-generation ancestors, named Zhong and Xin, joined with their cousin Chen Wangting (also known as Chen Zouting (陈奏庭)) of the Chen Village to become sworn brothers at the Taiji Gate. They established a legacy of martial and literary excellence and created the Taiji HPMA. They also practiced the inherited Wuji martial arts, Thirteen-Momentum martial arts, and Tongbei martial arts".^{5,14}

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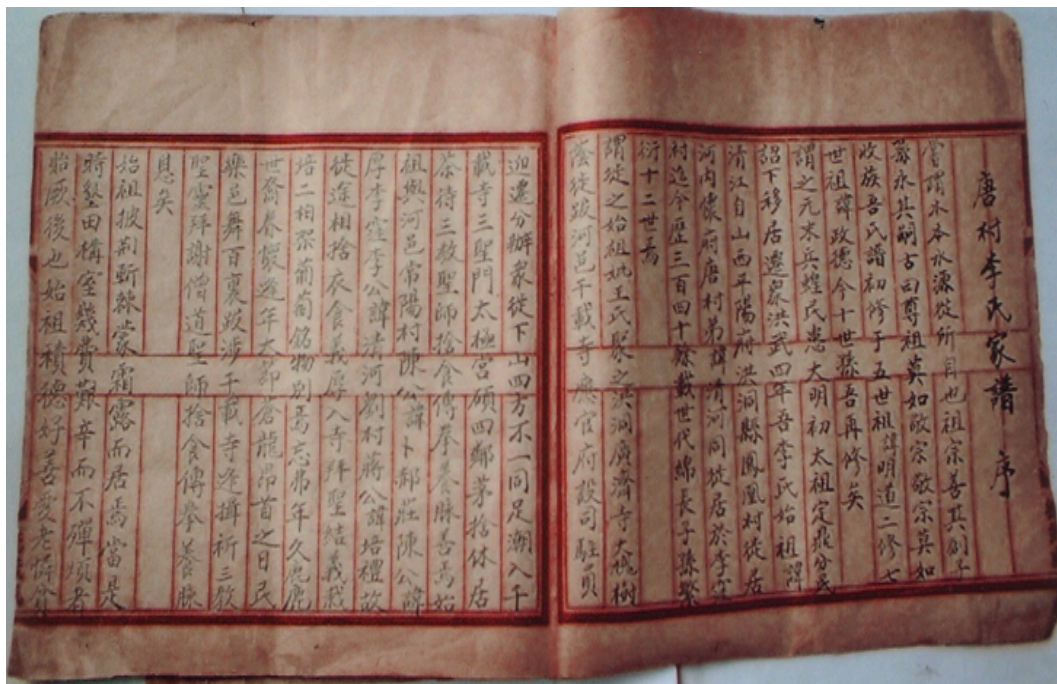


Fig. 3. The preface of Lee Family Genealogy.

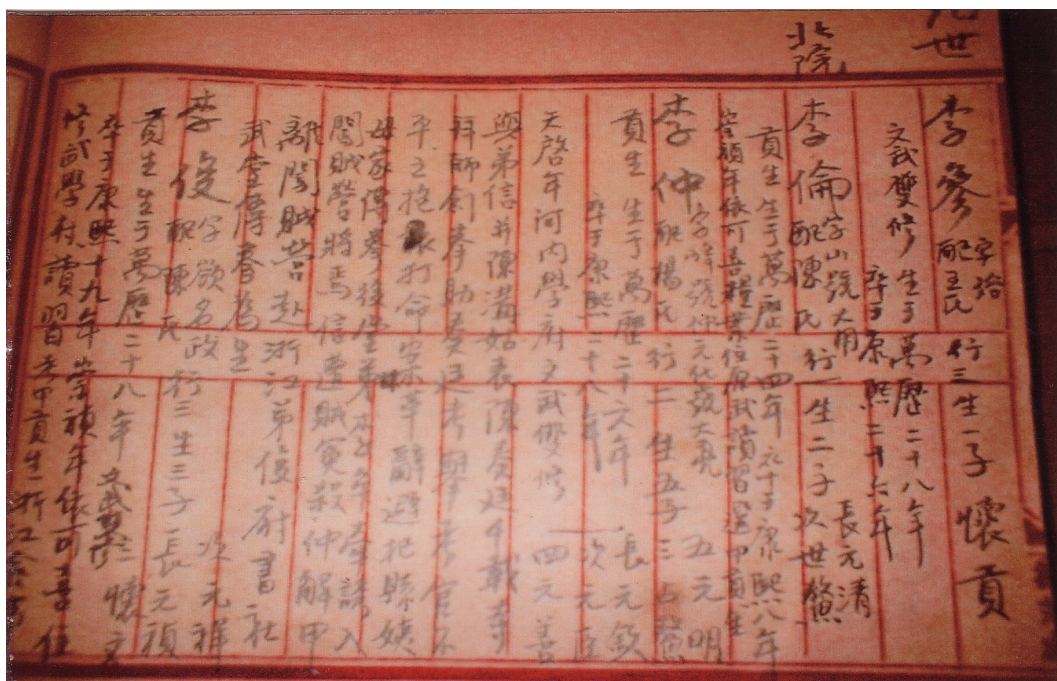


Fig. 4. A section of Li Zhong in Li Family Genealogy.

The second record is an entry for Li Zhong in the genealogy: “Li Zhong, also known as Feng and Zhongyuan, was nicknamed Daliang. He was born in the 26th year of the Wanli (万历) reign (1598) and died in the 28th year of the Kangxi reign (1689). During the Tianqi (天启) reign, he studied both literature and martial arts at the Hanoi Academy (河内学府). Along with his younger brother Li Xin and his cousin Chen Wangting, they went to the Thousand-Year Temple to study martial arts and created taijiquan. He also assisted Chen Wangting in beating up an unfair examiner; and as a result, they were banned and punished. This incident led them to flee to their aunt's home in Qi County, where they continued to practice and teach martial arts. However, they were lured into the rebel army by brother Li Mou to become generals. Later, brother Li Xin was unjustly killed while Li Zhong managed to escape from the rebel camp. Afterwards, Li Zhong went to Zhejiang Province and taught martial arts at his younger brother Li Jun's bookstore”.^{5,15}

The third record in the Li Family Genealogy states: “Li Xin, with the courtesy name Yan and given name Wei. He was born in the 34th year of the Wanli reign (1606) and died in the 17th year of the Chongzhen reign (1644). In his youth, he studied under his father in Jiyuan, and later became sworn brothers with his elder brother Li Zhong and his cousin Chen Wangting after studying at Three Sages Gate (三圣门), Taiji Palace (太极宫), and Thousand-Year Temple (千载寺). He excelled in both literature and martial arts and achieved fame through his skills. He co-founded the Taiji HPMA, practiced the Thirteen-Momentum martial arts, swordplay, and archery, and his reputation spread throughout several provinces. He assisted Chen Wangting in beating up an unfair examiner but was forced to flee to his aunt's home in Qi County, Kaifeng City to avoid retribution. He continued to practice martial arts, and later worked for his uncle Chunyu, who was a grain merchant, and helped to provide relief during a famine. During a crisis, the grain business failed, and he returned to the Thousand-Year Temple to resume practicing martial arts. In the 13th year of the Chongzhen reign (1640), his

cousin Li Mou lured him into the camp of the rebel army, where he was killed in the 17th year of the Chongzhen reign (1644)”.^{5,16}

The records in the Li Family Genealogy also provide historical evidence for the creation of taijiquan by the three cousins. “Taiji HPMA” was the initial name of taijiquan at the time when it was created. Although the genealogy does not provide a year for the creation of taijiquan, it is, from these records, certain that it was created before the three cousins separated. The genealogy describes Chen Wangting's participation in the martial arts exam in Huaqing Prefecture, Henan Province, and how the three cousins killed an official in anger because the chief examiner was unfair. After that incident, they went their separate ways and never met again. According to the Huaqing Prefecture Annals (怀庆府志), the civil unrest during the Chongzhen years of the imperial examination occurred during the Bingzi (丙子) year, so it can be inferred that the three cousins created taijiquan before the year 1636, which is approximately 400 years ago. The Li Family Genealogy records that Li Zhong, Li Yan, and Chen Wangting jointly created taijiquan. There are also tangible materials such as cultural relics and martial arts manuscripts from the Tang Village Martial Arts Academy that can also serve as evidence. More detailed description is provided in later sections regarding the Taiji HPMA.^{5,17}

2-4. Three Important Literatures on Taijiquan

The seventh volume of the Li Family Genealogy catalogues three important treatises on taijiquan - “Wuji Health-Preserving Boxing Treatise, Song of Practicing Thirteen Momentums, and Taiji HPMA Manual”.^{5,18}

Wuji Health-Preserving Boxing Treatise is a martial arts treatise that is full of dialectical reasoning on health preservation. Its main point is to “grasp the Yin and Yang, seize the transformation of creation, turn the universe, twist the energy mechanism, return to the prenatal in the postnatal, and return to the source to achieve Taiji integration, which is

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Fig. 5. Section of Li Xin (a.k.a. Li Yan) in Li Family Genealogy.

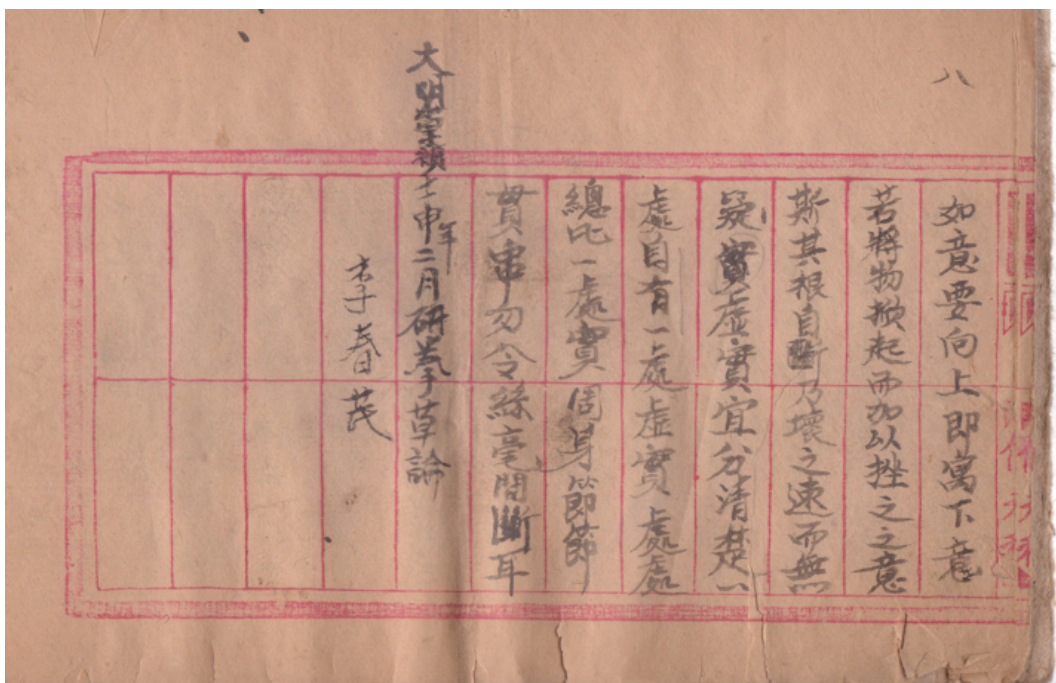


Fig. 6. Li Chunmao's Thirteen-Momentum Treatise, inscribed in the Ming Dynasty, Feb 1632.

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essentially to reach the goal of eternal life”. It is indicated at the end of the manuscript that the author, Li Yezhen (李叶蓁) (also known as Li Chunmao (李春茂)) who is the eighth-generation ancestor of the Li family, presented the treatise at the Taishi Shrine (太室祠) in the year of Gengyin (1590) during the Wanli period of the Ming Dynasty. This text appeared in the book: “A Study of Xingyi Boxing (形意拳学)” by Sun Lutang (孙禄堂), the founder of Sun-style taijiquan, but its original source was not indicated.^{5,19}

The document: “Song of Practicing Thirteen Momentums” is also attributed to Li Chunmao, which was written in the spring of the year of Gengyin (庚寅) (1590) during the Wanli period of the Ming Dynasty. This text appeared in the Taijiquan Classics copied by Wu Yuxiang (武禹襄) and was subsequently included in the Taijiquan Classics of the Wu-Hao (武), Yang (杨), and Wu (吴) families. However, it was generally believed, within the academic society, that this text was written by Wang Zongyue during the Qianlong (乾隆) period of the Qing Dynasty.^{5,20}

Li Chunmao, the author of the two aforementioned treatises, was an important figure in the martial arts inheritance of the Li family. “The preface to Li Family Genealogy records: “The eighth-generation ancestor Li Chunmao, who used the nickname Li Yezhen, passed the imperial examination and then studied under the Abbot Bogong (博公道长) in the Thousand-Year Temple, Three Sages Gate, and Taiji Palace. He learned martial arts and swordsmanship, observed astrology, studied military strategies, promoted the unity of the three religions, and discussed the Wujia HPMA and Thirteen-Momentum martial arts. He also created the arts of spear and was renowned for his divine skills. He traveled to teach and spread martial arts in several provinces including Shanxi, Shandong, Shaanxi, Zhejiang, Hunan, and Guangdong, and was well-known”.^{5,21}

Therefore, it can be affirmed that Li Chunmao was not only the guide for the three young cousins who studied at Thousand-Year Temple, but also in a way the

beacon light that inspired the creation of taijiquan through his publications of Wujia Health Preserving Boxing Treatise and Song of Practicing Thirteen Momentums.

It should be noted that the existing Li Family Genealogy is damaged and the sections after the phrase “prolong life and delay aging” in the essay “Song of Practicing Thirteen Momentums” are missing. It is regrettable that the remaining few pages are missing, as this results in the loss of the conclusion of this document and the entire text of Taiji HPMA Manual. More fortunately, the missing “Song of Practicing Thirteen Momentums and Taiji HPMA Manual” have been rediscovered in the Thirteen-Momentum Martial Arts Manual, which was found in 2020. To recover the three martial arts documents in the genealogy is truly fortunate, amidst all the other misfortune.

The Taiji HPMA Manual is an important document, and it includes ten chapters: “Preface, Sacred Origins, Martial Arts Principles, Martial Arts Naming, Martial Arts Execution, Body Positions, Martial Arts Foundation, Internal Cultivation, External Defense, and Martial Arts Treatises”. Every chapter consists of an eight-line pentameter verse. The following are sample excerpts from seven of the chapters.²²

Preface -- In the spring of the year Jiaxu (甲戌) (1634) during the Chongzhen reign, three cousins worshiped the three religions of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism at a religious event held at the Thousand-Year Temple. At the Taiji Palace there, the two brothers, Li Zhong and Li Xin (a.k.a. Li Yan), and their cousin Chen Zouting (a.k.a. Chen Wangting) learned martial arts under Abbot Bogong.

Martial Arts Naming -- Taiji HPMA named after the Wujia Martial Arts; Thirteen Momentums of Long Boxing; Eight Methods and Five Steps; Cardinal directions of Kan (坎), Li (离), Zhen (震), and Dui (兑); Ordinal directions of Qian (乾), Kun (坤), Gen (艮), and Xun (巽); Five Elements of Metal, Water, Wood, Fire, and Earth; Eight Trigrams corresponding to the Five Elements.

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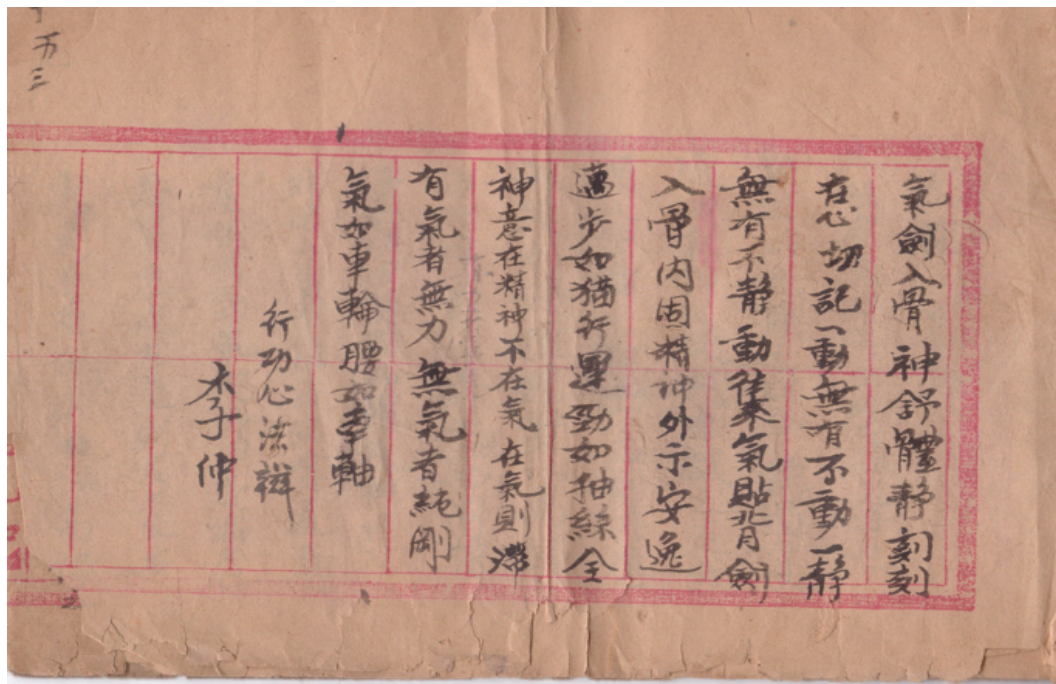


Fig. 7. Li Zhong's "Expositions of Insights into the Practice of the Thirteen Momentums", inscribed before 1636.

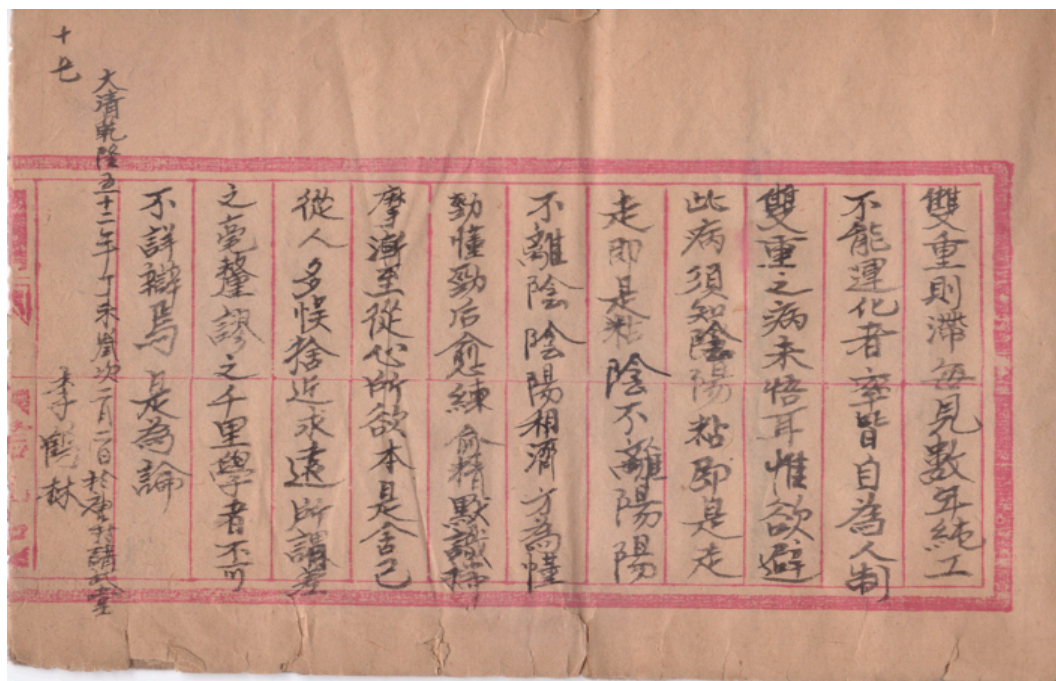


Fig. 8. Li Helin's "Taijiquan Treatise", inscribed in Qing Dynasty, Feb 1787.

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Martial Arts Execution -- Acting in Ward-off, Roll-back, Press, and Push; Proceeding through Push; Pluck, Split, Elbow Strike, and Shoulder Strike; Central Equilibrium during Forward, Backward, Look-left, and Look-right; All actions executed through these Thirteen Momentums; Momentums implemented as rolling a ball; Strength motivated as reeling the silk; Momentums progressing like a river; Actions still as a mountain.

Body Positions -- Standing upright and centered; Momentums supported in all eight directions; Waist and spine act as a wheel axle; Four limbs moved like wheel spokes; Spirit like a cat catching a mouse; Posture like a swan catching a rabbit; Walking like a cat; Upper and lower body integrated together.

Martial Arts Foundation -- The foundation of martial arts lies in the mind and intention, while the abilities are enhanced through the circulation of energy. The essence of performances lies in refining one's practice, while the spirituality lies in the skillful use of energy. The root of supremacy lies in the legs and feet, while the strength is expressed through the elbows. The flow of energy is expressed through the fingertips, while the cultivation of energy settles deep in the Dantian (丹田).

Internal Cultivation -- Attaining the utmost subtlety of the innate, the body is the foundation of harmony. Circulating energy through the mind and intention, and using energy and blood to nourish the body. Relaxing the abdomen and gathering the energy into the bones, and always keep in mind to retain a comfortable spirit and tranquil body. Expanding and stretching to seek compactness, and being lively and rounded in the sense of enjoyment.

External Defense -- Using softness to overcome rigidity, and yielding oneself to follow others. When the opponent is hard, I am soft and yielding; when the opponent retreats, I follow and stick. Not to initiate action, but rather responding to the opponent's move. Not to advance, but to retreat. Leading the opponent into emptiness,

and making them lose balance with minimum effort.

At the end of the Taiji HPMA Manual, it is noted that Li Zhong, Li Xin (a.k.a. Li Yan), and Chen Zouting (a.k.a. Chen Wangting) studied martial arts at the Taiji Palace and compiled this manual at a religious event held at the Taiji Palace, Three Sages Shrine, and Thousand-Year Temple on the second day of the second lunar month in the seventh year of Chongzhen reign (in the year 1634) of the Ming dynasty.

These historical materials thus credibly prove that the emergence of Taiji HPMA marked the birth of taijiquan. It was created by three young martial artists, Li Zhong, Li Yan, and Chen Wangting, based on the Wuji HPMA along with other martial arts passed down in Thousand-Year Temple. They inherited, developed, maintained, and innovated these martial arts, and created the new martial art, which we now call taijiquan; and it occurred in 1634 at the Thousand-Year Temple.

3. A Short Introduction to The Thousand-Year Temple

3-1. Historical Evolution of The Thousand-Year Temple

The Thousand-Year Temple is in the north of Tang Village, Boai County, Henan Province. It was first built in the tenth year of the Yongping period (67 AD) of the Eastern Han Dynasty and was originally named Wuji Temple. The Northern Wei Zenghui Statue Carving Stele (北魏僧惠造像碑) remained at the present site of the temple, refers to it as the "Hometown of Wuji". Thousand-Year Temple is a place where Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism are integrated, and is divided into three temples: Thousand-Year Temple, Three Sages Gate, and Taiji Palace. The Buddha, King Wen (文王) of Zhou Dynasty, Confucius, Yin Shouzhi (尹寿子), and Laozi were all enshrined here, reflecting the characteristic inclusiveness of Chinese culture.²³

The decline of the Thousand-Year Temple began in the early Qing Dynasty when

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Fig. 9. Cover of Thirteen-Momentum Martial Arts Manual.

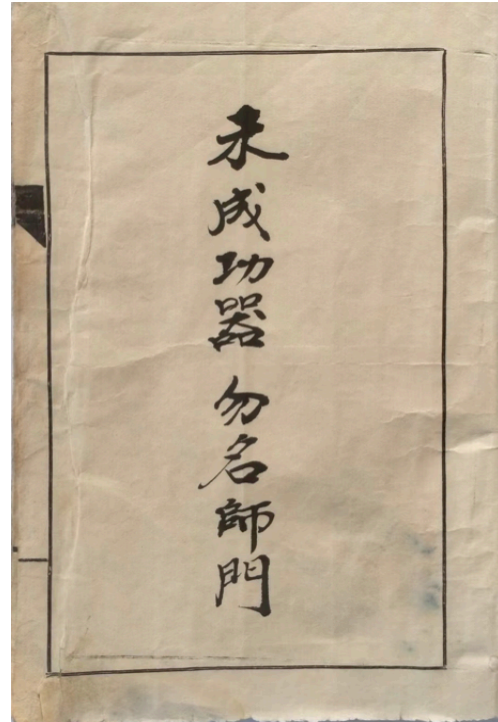


Fig. 10. "Don't Claim to Be a Disciple until You Have Achieved Success", Inscribed inside cover of Thirteen-Momentum Martial Arts Manual.

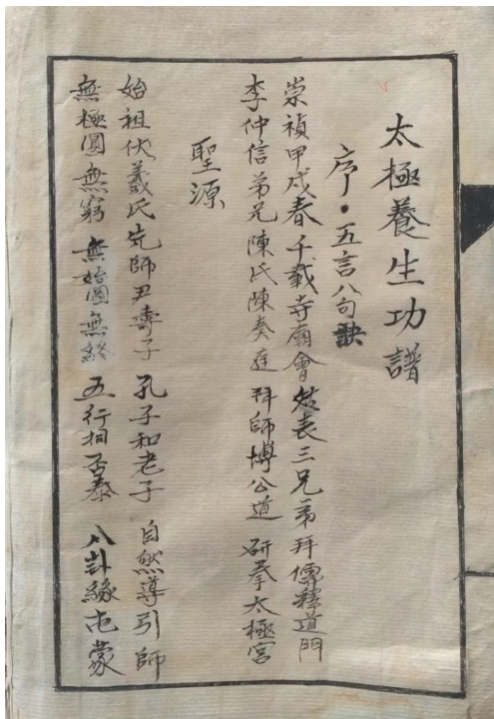


Fig. 11. Taiji HPMA Manual Created by Li Zhong, Li Xin, and Chen Wangting in 1634 (First Page).

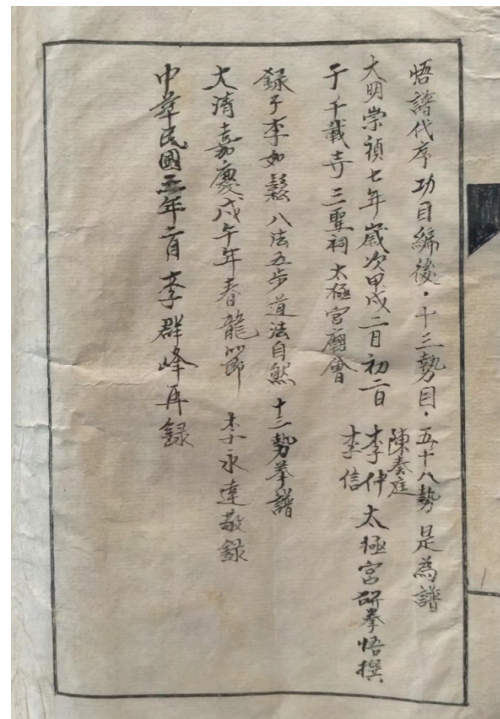


Fig. 12. Taiji HPMA Manual Created by Li Zhong, Li Xin, and Chen Wangting in 1634 (Last Page).

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officials and soldiers set fire to the temple, claiming that it harbored rebels. The fire caused significant damage; and in 1958, during the construction of a water conservancy project, most of the temple was demolished.

3-2. The Cradle of Health-Preserving Culture

Since its founding, the Thousand-Year Temple has been known for its Taoist health preservation practice, called Guiding and Nourishing Art (导引养生术). This was created and passed down by Li Ziran (李自然) of Longevity Temple (万寿观) on Jinshan Mountain (金伞山) in the Former Han Dynasty (前汉朝) (before 25 AD).

In the early Tang Dynasty, the Wuji HPMA was created by Li Daozi, the abbot of the Thousand-Year Temple. According to the Ten Powers of Tang Monk Stele (千载寺唐僧十力传碑) at the Thousand-Year Temple during the Kangxi period of the Qing Dynasty, Li Shimin (李世民) (also known as Emperor Taizong of Tang) gave him the surname Li, the name Ru, the alias Shi Li, and the title of Ten Powers Monk. Li Daozi was from Henei (which is present-day Qinyang City, Boai County, Henan Province) and he was a diligent learner who read extensively from the classics of the three religions. The stele states that he was “clever from a young age, with a photographic memory, and he studied extensively; in literature, martial arts, medicine, and divination.” His creation of the Wuji HPMA was very famous in the martial arts community at that time.^{15,23}

Li Daozi traveled extensively throughout his life and returned to his hometown in his later years to teach his disciples. He demanded of his disciples that: “The teachings of the three religions must be righteous, and strict martial arts discipline must be observed. Do not be arrogant or corrupt; everything should be done for the benefit of the people. Use softness to overcome rigidity and give up the self for others. Do not call yourself a master until you have achieved great success”. It can be said that Li Daozi's creation of the Wuji HPMA laid the foundation for the

development of the Thirteen-Momentum Martial Arts and Taiji HPMA.²³

3-3. The Place Where Chinese Martial Arts Was Inherited

The Merit Stele of Hongdong Migrants Giving Alms (千载寺舍善洪洞移民功德碑) at the Thousand-Year Temple was erected in 1593 by the descendants of migrants who settled on both sides of the Yellow River in Hongdong County and they paid tribute to Thousand-Year Temple, thanking the Buddhist and Taoist masters who had provided them food and taught martial arts in the past. It bears witness to the continuous inheritance of martial arts at the Thousand-Year Temple.

In the cradle of the Thousand-Year Temple, many skilled Taoist martial artists emerged and they made many outstanding contributions to the inheritance of martial arts. Amongst them was Li Chunmao who studied under Abbot Bogong, at the Thousand-Year Temple. Dong Bingqian (董秉乾) was another martial artist at the Thousand-Year Temple during the same period. According to the Preface to the Spear Manual of Wangbao (王堡枪传流序), the Wangbao spear was first passed down to our Wang clan ancestor Duke Zhongjin. He learned the spear technique from the wise man Dong Bingqian, who was from the Taoist Taiji Palace of Thousand-Year Temple. The old man had mastered various martial arts, including boxing, spear, and cudgel techniques. His boxing was the soft-hand Thirteen Momentums, and his spear and cudgel were the Liuhe spear and cudgel. He was knowledgeable in Yin-Yang, military strategy, and medicine. He passed his extraordinary skills to Duke Zhongjin, who diligently practiced and became skillful, and passed them down through many generations”.^{24,25}

These documents prove the inheritance place of the culture of martial arts and health preservation in the central part of China was at the Thousand-Year Temple, and the Tang Village historical records now confirm that the Thousand-Year Temple is indeed the birthplace of Taijiquan.²⁶

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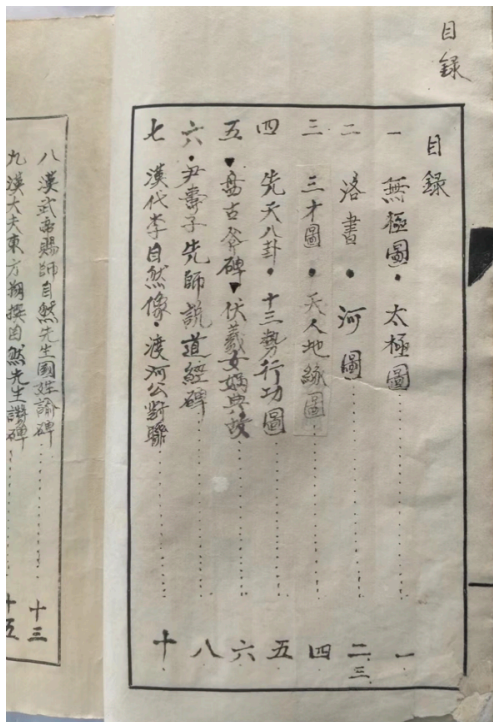


Fig. 13. Catalogue of Thirteen-Momentum Martial Arts Manual (First Page).

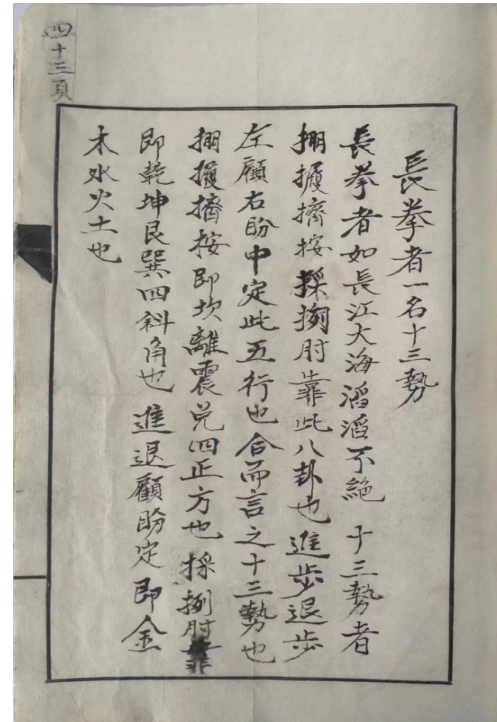


Fig. 14. Essay of Long Boxing. Also Known as Thirteen Momentums in Thirteen-Momentum Martial Arts Manual.

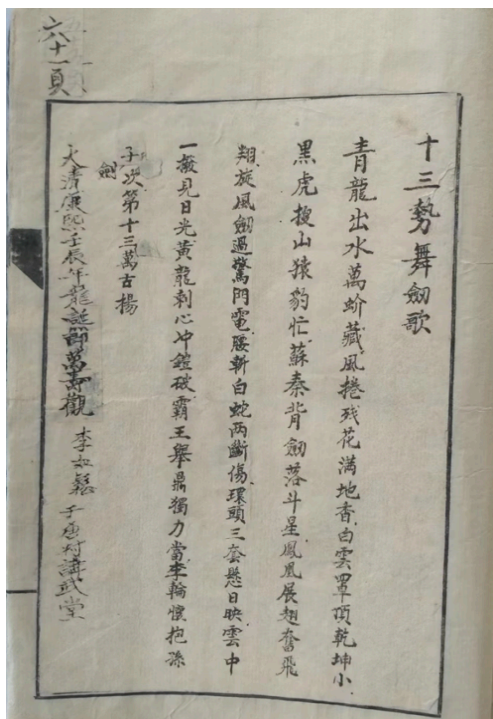


Fig. 15. Song of Practicing Thirteen-Momentum Sword. Created by Li Rusong at Lecture Hall of Tang Village in Feb. 1632.

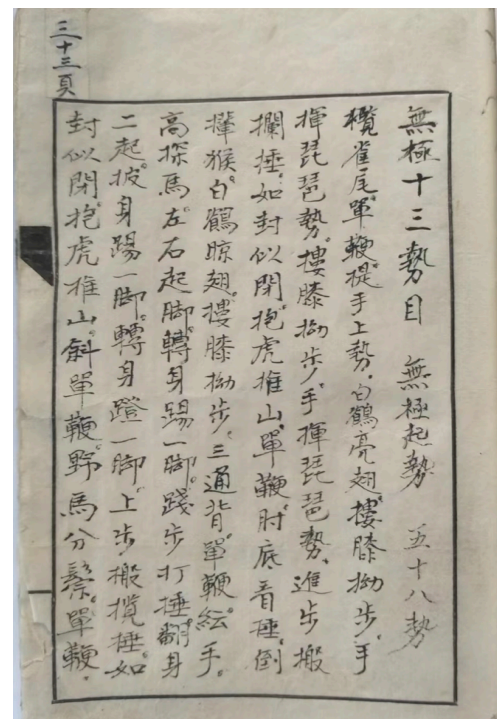


Fig. 16. 58-Posture Routine Created by Li Chunmao in 1590 for Thirteen Momentums of Wuji HPMA (First Page).

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4. Translation of Tang Village's Taiji Martial Arts Manual and Thirteen-Momentum Martial Arts Manual

4-1. Collection of Martial Arts Materials in Tang Village

To further update the family genealogy, the head of the Li family in Tang Village mobilized people of all ages to collect all surviving martial arts literature and historical materials related to the family's genealogy. The collected martial arts materials were classified into four categories. The first category included traditional martial arts manuals and spear manuals (including the Taiji Martial Arts Manual and Liuhe Spear Manual collected by Li Lichao, Thirteen-Momentum Martial Arts Manual collected by Li Qunfeng, and the Profound Techniques of Martial Arts (武经玄机) collected by Li Chenghu). The second category included surviving stone inscriptions from the Thousand-Year Temple. The third category included stone carvings on the tombstones of martial arts practitioners. The fourth category included stone inscriptions from Longevity Temple on Jinsan Mountain and the academic document: "Eight Methods, Five Steps, and the Natural Way of Taoism (八法五步、道法自然)" by the abbot of Longevity Temple, Li Rusong (李如松), who was from the 11th generation of the Li family. This academic document is a theoretical essay explaining the Taiji HPMA technique. Among the materials mentioned above, the most remarkable documents are the Taiji Martial Arts Manual collected by Li Lichao and the Thirteen-Momentum Martial Arts Manual collected by Li Qunfeng.^{15,22,27}

4-2. Discovery and Content of the Taiji Martial Arts Manual Collected by Li Lichao in Tang Village

The Taiji Martial Arts Manual of Tang Village was provided by Li Lichao who was from the 18th generation of the Li family. Li Lichao's great-grandfather and grandfather were both martial arts masters, and he possessed a scroll of written materials that had been passed down to him through many generations. Within this manual there are two volumes of Taiji Martial Arts, a large volume

and a small volume, both entitled with the words: "Martial Arts Manual" written on the upper left corner of the covers. In the middle two lines, there are eight characters of the martial arts code of conduct left by the monk Li Daozi from the Thousand-Year Temple: "Don't Claim to Be a Disciple until You Have Achieved Success (未成功器、勿名师门)". There is no significant difference between the two volumes in terms of contents, both are obviously from the same original manuscript.²⁷

The small booklet of Taiji Martial Arts Manual is 13.5 cm long and 20.5 cm wide. This volume contains 26 pages with 10 sections as follows: (1) Wuji HPMA Treatise: inscribed by Li Yezhen (Li Chunmao) and presented at the Taishi Shrine in Ming Dynasty, Spring of 1590; (2) Song of Practicing Thirteen Momentums: inscribed by Li Chunmao and presented at the Taishi Shrine in Ming Dynasty, Spring of 1590; (3) Thirteen-Momentum Treatise (十三势论): inscribed by Li Chunmao and presented in Ming Dynasty, February 1632; (4) Long Sparring also Known as Thirteen Momentums (长拳者一名十三势), anonymous; (5) Expositions of Insights into the Practice of the Thirteen Momentums (十三势行功心解): inscribed by Li Zhong; (6) Song of Push Hands (打手歌): inscribed by Li Helin (李鹤林) and presented at the Lecture Hall in Tang Village in Qing Dynasty, February 1787; (7) Essentials of Push Hands (打手要言): inscribed by Li Helin; (8) Taijiquan Treatise (太极拳论): inscribed by Li Helin and presented at the Lecture Hall in Tang Village in Qing Dynasty, February 1787; (9) Names of Thirteen Momentums (十三势目); and (10) "The Knack of Spring-Autumn Saber (春秋刀诀): inscribed from the stele of Warship Palace in Thousand-Year Temple.²⁷

Li Helin was from the 12th generation of the Li family. He was born in 1716 during the 55th year of the Kangxi Emperor's reign. When his grandfather Li Yuanshan compiled the Li Family Genealogy, he was a newborn boy.

However, this young boy went on to become the innovator of Li family martial arts and he created many important documents such as

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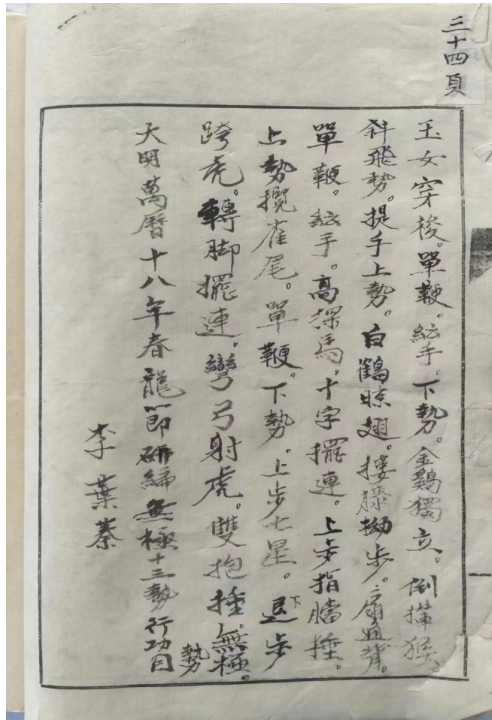


Fig. 17. 58-Posture Routine Created by Li Chunmao in 1590 for Thirteen Momentums of Wuji HPMA (Second Page).



Fig. 18. Action Diagram of 58-Posture Routine for Thirteen Momentums of Wuji HPMA.

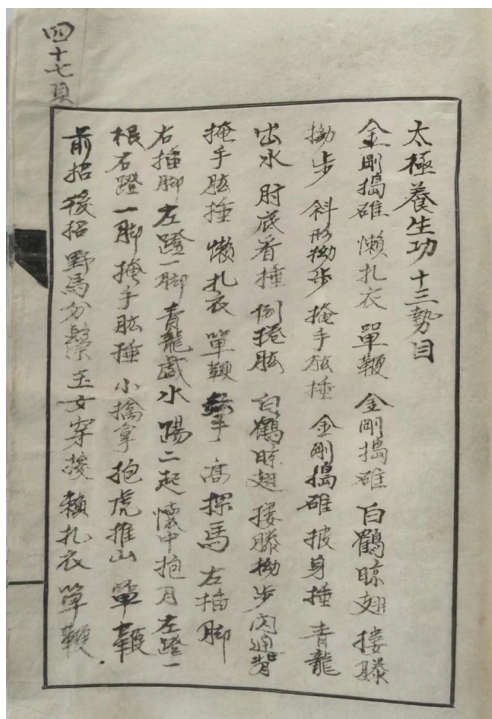


Fig. 19. 58-Posture Routine Created by Li Zhong, Li Xin, and Chen Wangting in 1634, for Thirteen Momentums of Taiji HPMA (First Page).

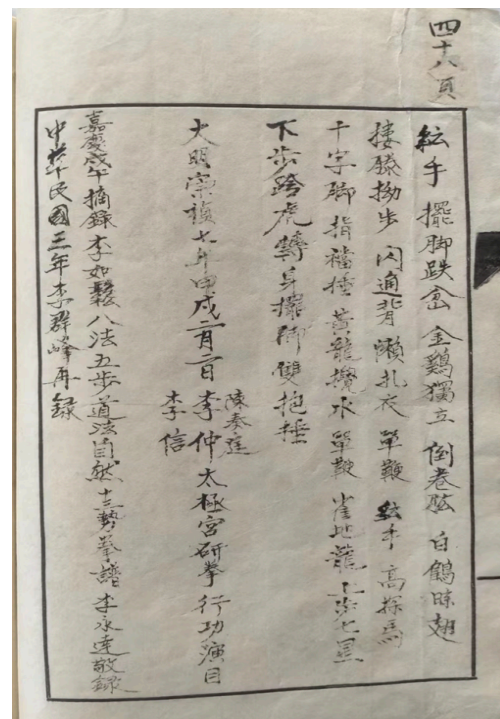


Fig. 20. 58-Posture Routine Created by Li Zhong, Li Xin, and Chen Wangting in 1634, for Thirteen Momentums of Taiji HPMA (Second Page).

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the Taijiquan Treatise, Song of Push Hands, and Essentials of Push Hands. The Taijiquan Treatise was a discourse given by Li Helin to students at the Tang Village's Martial Arts School in the 52nd year of the Qianlong reign (1787). The date was the second day of the second month in the lunar calendar, which coincided with the Spring Dragon Festival and the beginning of the spring season when all things were reborn. This discourse was widely collected and spread by later generations, and was widely regarded as the cornerstone of taijiquan and it facilitated taijiquan becoming a well-recognized name, amongst martial artists.

Li Helin had four important disciples, who were named Wang Anmin, Wang Lincang, Chang Naizhou, and Wang Zongyue. According to "The Origin and Development of Wangbao Spear (王堡枪源流)," which was written by Wang Anmin in 1787: "My elder brother Chang Naizhou and I, together with our juniors Lin Cang and Zhi Chengming, all studied under Li Helin in Tang Village. We were inspired to learn spear, cudgel, and boxing skills from him and worked hard to master them. Through years of dedicated training, we became extremely proficient in these martial arts and gained a reputation as invincible and peerless experts. We were known as the divine spear of Wangbao."

The three disciples all had impressive martial arts skills, and it is recorded that Wang Anmin revitalized the art of Wangbao spear, while Wang Lincang was awarded the sixth-rank feathered plume by the Qing government. Chang Naizhou used taijiquan principles to compile the Chang Family Martial Arts Book (苕氏武技书). The story of the fourth disciple, Wang Zongyue, is described later in this article.²⁸

The relatively large booklet of the Taiji Martial Arts Manual measures 17.5 cm in height and 20 cm in width, and there are 18 pages with 11 articles. The contents and inscriptions are basically the same as those of the prior booklet, except it has one additional article as "The Arts of Body Movement, Saber, Spear, and Discharging in Push Hands".²⁷

4-3. Discovery and Content of the Thirteen-Momentum Martial Arts Manual - Collected by Li Qunfeng in Tang Village

In May 2019, during the renovation of Li Yan's former residence in Tang Village, the Thirteen-Momentum Martial Arts Manual was discovered at the home of Li Qunfeng, the great-grandson of the former owner of the residence, Li Helin. This manual is a thread-bound 80-page Xuan-paper (宣纸) manuscript. It measures 25 cm in height and 16 cm in width, and the cover bears the title "Thirteen-Momentum Martial Arts Manual" in five Chinese characters. The content of the "Thirteen-Momentum Martial Arts Manual" is divided into two parts. The first part is the Taiji HPMa Manual, while the second part contains all the content of Li Lichao's Taiji Martial Arts Manual, with the addition of extremely important historical materials relating to martial arts.

The first page of the manual also features the eight-character martial arts precept: "Don't Claim to Be a Disciple until You Have Achieved Success". The next are five pages of the Taiji HPMa Manual, which is missing from the Li Family Genealogy. The Taiji HPMa Manual, created by Li Zhong, Li Xin, and Chen Wangting in 1634, contains 10 chapters: "Preface, Sacred Origins, Martial Arts Principles, Martial Arts Naming, Martial Arts Execution, Body Positions, Martial Arts Foundation, Internal Cultivation, External Defense, and Martial Arts Treatises", as well as the author's signature at the end. The next page is another preface, consisting of a 32 five-character motto, written by Li Yongda (李永达) in the Wuwu (戊午) Year of the Jiaqing (嘉庆) reign (1798) of the Qing Dynasty.²²

The subsequent 5 pages are the Table of Contents of the second part, which provide a detailed list of 34 sections of the Taiji HPMa Manual as follows: (1) Diagrams of Wuji and Taiji; (2) Book of Luo and Diagram of the Yellow River (洛书·河图); (3) Diagram of Three Powers and the Relationship of Heaven, Earth and Humanity; (4) Pre-Heaven Eight Trigrams and Thirteen-Momentum Routine; (5) Pan Gu Axe Stele
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and the Myth of Fuxi and Nüwa (盘古斧碑·伏羲女娲典故); (6) The Classic of the Tao Explained by Master Yin Shou Zi (尹寿子); (7) Han Dynasty Image of Li Ziran and Couplet Crossing the River; (8) Emperor Wu (汉武帝) of Han's Posthumous Decree of Family Name to Master Li Ziran; (9) Memorial Stele for Master Li Ziran by Eastern Han Dynasty Physician Dongfang Shuo (东方朔); (10) Memorial Stele for Master Li Ziran by General Zhang Guofan (张国藩); (11) Taoist Guiding Techniques of Li Ziran; (12) Diagram of Cultivation Routine of Wuji HPMA by Li Chunmao; (13) Diagram of Eight Trigrams of Thirteen-Momentums for Wuji Health Preserving by Li Chunmao; (14) Wuji Health Preserving Boxing Treatise by Li Yezhen; (15) Thirteen-Momentum Treatise by Li Chunmao; (16) Song of Practicing Thirteen Momentums by Li Chunmao; (17) Postures of Wuji Thirteen Momentums by Li Yezhen; (18) Diagram of Wuji Thirteen-Momentum Routine; (19) Illustration of Li Zhong's Martial Arts Practice; (20) Long Boxing Also Known as Thirteen Momentums; (21) Expositions of Insights into the Practice of the Thirteen Momentums by Li Zhong; (22) Postures of Thirteen Momentums of Taiji HPMA by Li Zhong, Li Xin, and Chen Zouting; (23) Illustration of Li Helin's Martial Arts Practice; (24) Taijiquan Treatise by Li Helin; (25) Song of Push Hands by Li Helin; (26) Essentials of Push Hands by Li Helin; (27) Spring and Autumn Knife Secrets Recorded by Li Ruchun; (28) Song of Divine Spear by Li Helin; (29) Song of Practicing Thirteen-Momentum Sword by Li Rusong (李如松); (30) Thirteen-Momentum Pole Techniques by Li Rusong; (31) Thirteen-Momentum Saber Techniques by Li Rusong; (32) Four Spear and Pole Techniques by Li Rusong; (33) Saber Techniques by Li Rusong; and (34) Martial Arts of Tang Village.²²

This Thirteen-Momentum Martial Arts Manual was recorded by Li Yongda, the eldest son of Li Helin, from the “Thirteen-Momentum Martial Arts Manual annotated with the Eight Methods, Five Steps, and the Natural Way of Taoism” written by Li Rusong, who was the 11th generation of the Li family and the abbot of the Longevity Temple. The recording date was February of

the Wuwu year of the Jiaqing reign (1798). Later, Li Qunfeng transcribed it again in February of the third year of the Republic of China (1914).²²

In 1914, although there were many martial artists gathered in Beijing, there were only few practitioners of Yang-style taijiquan. Other styles of taijiquan, such as Chen-style and Wu-Hao style, were still restricted within their original geographical boundaries for dissemination. At that time, all martial arts manuals were kept privately and never made public. Therefore, the 80-page Thirteen-Momentum Martial Arts Manual copied by Li Qunfeng in 1914 could not have come from anyone outside of the Li family in Tang Village.

This newly discovered Thirteen-Momentum Martial Arts Manual has four important highlights: (1) it complements the missing document: Song of Practicing Thirteen Momentums and the lost manual: Taiji HPMA in the Li Family Genealogy; (2) it confirms and verifies the contents and authors of respective taijiquan scriptures, treatises, songs, and skills contained in the Taiji Martial Arts Manual, collected by Li Lichao. Moreover, the time these Taijiquan Classics were authored by the Li family members predates the relevant Taijiquan Classics, which were presumably written by Wang Zongyue or Wu Yuxiang; (3) it lists the contents, comparing between the 58 postures of Wuji HPMA, starting with Wuji Starting Stance (无极起势) and Grasping the Sparrow's Tail (揽雀尾) and the 58 postures of Taiji HPMA beginning with Vajra Pounding the Mortar (金刚捣碓) and Lazily Pulling up the Robe (懒扎衣), (4) it records the existence of martial arts schools such as Xinyi Hall (心意堂), Hengxin Hall (恒心堂), Qunying Hall (群英堂), and Longxing Hall (隆兴堂) in Tang Village.²²

4-4. Techniques of Thirteen Momentums and A Comparison of Two Sets of 58 Postures in Thirteen-Momentum Martial Arts Manual

The Wuji HPMA, Taiji HPMA, and the arts of sword, saber, spear, and staff of Tang Village all share the same Thirteen-

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Momentum techniques. The explanation of the Thirteen-Momentum techniques is recorded in the document: “Long Boxing Also Known as Thirteen Momentums (长拳者一名十三势)” in the Thirteen-Momentum Martial Arts Manual, which is detailed as follows: “Long Boxing is like the mighty Yangtze River and boundless ocean, ceaseless and unyielding. Thirteen Momentums consist of Peng (ward-off), Lu (roll-back), Ji (press), An (push), Cai (pluck), Lie (split), Zhou (elbow-strike), and Kao (shoulder-strike), which represent the Eight Trigrams. Moving forward, moving backward, looking left, looking right, and staying centered represent the Five Elements. In summary, the Thirteen Momentums consist of Peng, Lu, Ji, An, Cai, Lie, Zhou, and Kao, which represent the four cardinal directions of Kan (坎), Li (离), Zhen (震), and Dui (兑). Additionally, Cai, Lie, Zhou, and Kao represent the four diagonal directions of Qian (乾), Kun (坤), Gen (艮), and Xun (巽). Finally, moving forward, moving backward, looking left, looking right, and staying centered represent the five elements of water, fire, wood, metal, and earth.”

From the content of the Thirteen-Momentum Martial Arts Manual, it indicates that the eighth generation Li Chunmao, the ninth generation Li Zhong, and the 11th generation Li Rusong all have publications named after the Thirteen Momentums. Therefore, the inheritance of the Thirteen-Momentum techniques originated from the Wuji HPMA and continued to the Taiji HPMA. The arts of sword, saber, spear, and staff of Tang Village also contain the inherited Thirteen-Momentum techniques.

It should also be mentioned that the essay: “Explanation of Taijiquan (太极拳释名)” by Wang Zongyue, which is well-known among modern practitioners, has the same content as the document “Long Boxing Also Known as Thirteen Momentums” in the Thirteen-Momentum Martial Arts Manual of Tang Village. If one understands that the Thirteen Momentums originate from Wuji HPMA, and not from taijiquan; one would question if the Explanation of Taijiquan was truly written by Wang Zongyue.

Li Rusong explained the Thirteen Momentums of Taiji HPMA using the Eight Methods, Five Steps, and the Natural Way of Taoism. Both Confucianism and Taoism in China follow the theory of Yin and Yang of Taiji to guide their lives, believing in the principles of “Man follows the earth, the earth follows heaven, heaven follows the Tao, and the Tao follows nature”. It is believed that all things in the universe follow the law of the five elements and the rotation of the eight trigrams. The ever-changing taijiquan momentums are refined into eight-hand momentums (ward-off, roll-back, press, push, pull-down, split, elbow strike, shoulder strike) and five-foot momentums (advance, retreat, look left, look right, central equilibrium). The momentums of the upper and lower limbs are coordinated through the body kinetic chain to promote the body's motion in six degrees of freedom in three-dimensional space. This allows the Thirteen Momentums to embody the unity of nature and humanity through the principles of Eight Methods, Five Steps, and the Natural Way of Taoism.²⁹

For clarity, the term “Momentum (势)” in the Thirteen Momentums (十三势) refers to the power of the momentum that are expressed from the inside out; that is the overall energy of the body's momentums. Each momentum has an offensive and defensive power that operates according to the principles of Wuji and Taiji. Through proper practice of the correct postures, the Thirteen Momentums can cultivate coordinated internal momentums or internal strength that uses softness to overcome rigidity.

Regarding the Thirteen Momentums, two routines of 58 postures, with different individual names, are provided for Wuji HPMA and Taiji HPMA, respectively. This reflects the Chinese ancestors' belief in the numerical totems of 5, 8, and 13.

The term “Posture (式)” in the 58 Postures (58式) refers to the form of the movements; that is the special movements and techniques that comprise martial arts routines.

The forms or sequence of movements in a routine can this have many different styles.

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However, if the operation of the forms or sequential movements in the routine does not conform to the principles of Wuji and Taiji, it will be very difficult to cultivate the internal strength of the Thirteen Momentums that uses softness to overcome rigidity. Therefore, the relationship between “momentum” and “posture” can be expressed as: “having posture without momentum is an empty frame, and having momentum without posture is not martial arts (有式无势是空架,有势无式不成拳)”.

Due to individual operating emphases between Wuji HPMA and Taiji HPMA, the techniques and styles of the two sets of individual 58 postures are not entirely consistent with each other.

For example, the opening posture of Wuji Starting Stance in the 58 postures of Wuji HPMA is altered to the posture of Vajra Pounding Mortar in the 58 postures of Taiji HPMA. Similarly, the Grasp the Sparrow's Tail becomes Lazily Pulling up the Robe, and Repulse the Monkey (倒撵猴) becomes Backward Roll of Arms (倒卷肱).

Upon reviewing the content and style of the 58 postures of Wuji HPMA, it was noted that many of the postures were drawn from Li Ziran's Guiding and Pulling Exercises (导引术) in ancient Han Dynasty and from the Wuji HPMA by Monk Shili of Tang Dynasty (唐代十力和尚). Overall, the actions are gentle, smooth, and continuous, like Yang-style taijiquan. The content and style of the 58 postures of Taiji HPMA drew the postures from other techniques, including 32-posture Long Boxing of Qi Jiguang (戚继光), Tongbei boxing, Xinyi Liuhe boxing and spear, with coiling, folding, and varying speeds, clearly resembling Chen-style taijiquan.^{30,31}

In the past, some experts have speculated that Yang-style taijiquan originated from Chen-style taijiquan, with Yang following Chen, and that the names of some of the postures in Yang-style taijiquan, such as Grasp the Sparrow's Tail and Repulse the Monkey were the result of either a misunderstanding, or a miscommunication of the names Lazily Pulling up the Robe and

Backward Roll of Arms. It can now be said that this speculation is now clearly contrary to history. The Thirteen-Momentum Martial Arts Manual of Tang Village corrects these misconceptions, and restores the historical authenticity.

In fact, Li Chunmao's creation of the 58 postures of Wuji HPMA appeared earlier, while the inheritance of the 58 postures of Taiji HPMA came later. The 58 postures of Taiji HPMA were created and practiced by Li Zhong, Li Yan, and Chen Wangting, who referred to the 58-posture structure of Wuji HPMA and adopted additional postures from the 32-posture Long Boxing of Qi Jiguang, Eight-Style martial arts of Thousand-Year Temple, Tongbei boxing, Xinyi Liuhe boxing, and spear.

It is important to note that the two sets of 58 postures have their own characteristics and have been coexisting and developing, and directly influencing the subsequent formation of traditional taijiquan styles.

From the current technical characteristics of the major styles, Yang style and Wu style are light, soft, even, and coherent, inheriting the characteristics of the 58 postures of Wuji HPMA. Chen style is twisted and coiled with alternating speed, inheriting the characteristics of the 58 postures of Taiji HPMA. Zhaobao style, Wu-Hao style, and the Sun style adopt postures from both sets of 58 postures but with different emphasis. They have twisting and coiling postures like Vajra Pounding Mortar and Lazily Pull up the Robe, as well as soft and coherent postures like Wuji Starting Stance and Repulse the Monkey.

In the following is the naming comparison of the 58 postures of Thirteen Momentums between Wuji HPMA and Taiji HPMA.

4-4.1. Names of 58 Postures of Thirteen Momentums from Wuji HPMA

- (1) Wuji Starting Stance, (2) Grasp Sparrow's Tail, (3) Single Whip, (4) Lift Hands, (5) White Crane Spreads Wings, (6) Brush Knee and Twist Step, (7) Play the Lute, (8) Brush Knee and Twist Step, (9)
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Play the Lute, (10) Step Forward, Deflect, Parry and Punch, (11) Withdraw and Push, (12) Embrace Tiger and Push Mountain, (13) Single Whip, (14) Punch under Elbow, (15) Repulse the Monkey, (16) White Crane Spreads Wings, (17) Brush Knee and Twist Step, (18) Spreads Arms to Strike, (19) Single Whip, (20) Cloud Hands, (21) High Pat on Horse, (22) Kick with Left and Right Feet, (23) Turn Around and Kick, (24) Step Forward, Punch and Strike, (25) Turn Around and Double Kick, (26) Sweep Kick with a Turn, (27) Turn Around and Kick with Heel, (28) Step Forward, Deflect, Parry and Punch, (29) Withdraw and Push, (30) Embrace Tiger and Push Mountain, (31) Single Whip, (32) Wild Horse Parts Mane, (33) Single Whip, (34) Fair Lady Works at Shuttle, (35) Single Whip, (36) Cloud Hands, (37) Lower Stance, (38) Golden Rooster Stands on One Leg, (39) Repulse the Monkey, (40) Diagonal Flying, (41) Lift Hands, (42) White Crane Spreads Wings, (43) Brush Knee and Twist Step, (44) Fan Through the Back, (45) Single Whip, (46) Cloud Hands, (47) High Pat on Horse, (48) Cross Hands and Lotus Kick, (49) Step Forward and Strike to Groin with Fist, (50) Step Forward and Grasp Sparrow's Tail, (51) Single Whip, (52) Lower Stance, (53) Step Forward to Seven Stars, (54) Step Back and Ride Tiger, (55) Turn Around and Sweep the Lotus, (56) Bend Bow and Shoot Tiger, (57) Double Embrace Punch, and (58) Wuji Stance.

4-4.2. Names of 58 Postures of Thirteen Momentums from Taiji HPMa

(1) Vajra Pounds Mortar, (2) Lazily Pull up the Robe, (3) Single Whip, (4) Vajra Pounds Mortar, (5) White Crane Spreads Wings, (6) Brush Knee and Twist Step, (7) Diagonal Form Twist Step, (8) Hidden Hand Elbow Strike, (9) Vajra Pounds Mortar, (10) Over the Shoulder Punch, (11) Blue Dragon Emerges from Water, (12) Punch under Elbow, (13) Backward Roll of Arms, (14) White Crane Spreads Wings, (15) Brush Knee and Twist Step, (16) Spreads Arms to Strike, (17) Hidden Hand with Elbow Strike, (18) Lazily Pull up the Robe, (19) Single Whip, (20) Cloud Hands, (21) High Pat on

Horse, (22) Left Foot Oblique Insert, (23) Right Foot Oblique Insert, (24) Left Heel Kick, (25) Blue Dragon Plays in Water, (26) Two Kicks in Succession, (27) Embrace the Moon, (28) Left Heel Kick, (29) Right Heel Kick, (30) Hidden Hand Elbow Strike, (31) Small joint lock, (32) Embrace Tiger and Push Mountain, (33) Single Whip, (34) Forward and Backward Pushing, (35) Wild Horse Parts Its Mane, (36) Fair Lady Works at Shuttles, (37) Lazily Pull up the Robe, (38) Single Whip, (39) Cloud Hands, (40) Swing Leg and Twist Step, (41) Golden Rooster Stands on One Leg, (42) Backward Roll of Arms, (43) White Crane Spreads Wings, (44) Brush Knee and Twist Step, (45) Spreads Arms to Strike, (46) Lazily Pull up the Robe, (47) Single Whip, (48) Cloud Hands, (49) High Pat on Horse, (50) Crossed Feet, (51) Strike to Groin with Fist, (52) Yellow Dragon Stirs Water, (53) Single Whip, (54) Sparrow on the Ground Turning into a Dragon, (55) Step Forward to Seven Stars, (56) Step Back and Ride Tiger, (57) Turn Around and Kick with Heel, and (58) Double Embrace Punch.

4-5 A Comparison of Martial Arts Manuals of Tang Village with Those of Wu Yuxiang and Wang Zongyue

It is widely known amongst Taijiquan enthusiasts that many taijiquan treatises, songs, and literatures, contained in Tang Village's Taiji Martial Arts Manual, which were collected by Li Lichao and the Thirteen-Momentum Martial Arts Manual collected by Li Qunfeng, were also collected by families that practiced traditional taijiquan styles, except for the Wuji Health Preserving Boxing Treatise and Taiji HPMa Manual. However, the authors of those Taijiquan Classics are considered as Wang Zongyue, Wu Yuxiang, or even Zhang Sanfeng. For example, the Taijiquan Treatise beginning with the sentence of "Taiji comes from Wuji and is the mother of Yin and Yang" has always been regarded as a theoretical classic of taijiquan and it is considered by the academic society to be an exemplary article of Wang Zongyue's explanation of taijiquan based on the principles of the Book of Changes (易经). Nevertheless, according to the two martial

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arts manuals of Tang Village, the Taijiquan Treatise was authored by Li Helin with an inscription as presented at the Lecture Hall in Tang Village on February 2, in the 52nd year of the Qianlong Emperor (1787) in the Qing Dynasty.^{32,33,34}

The important fact is that the original documents of Li Chunmao, Li Zhong, and Li Helin were all created earlier than those of Wang Zongyue and Wu Yuxiang. Wu Yuxiang lived from 1812 to 1880, and the life of Wang Zongyue has yet to be confirmed. The elders of Tang Village claim that Wang Zongyue was a disciple of Li Helin and came to Tang Village to teach in the 52nd year of Qianlong's reign (1787). On Li Helin's 78th birthday in the 58th year of Qianlong's reign (1793), Wang Zongyue personally wrote the plaque "House of Distinguished Martial Arts Leader (武元杰第)" to celebrate his teacher's birthday and hung it on the door of Li Helin's residence. This plaque was burned during the Cultural Revolution in 1966, and the elders of Tang Village still remember it vividly. Many people (including the person who burned the plaque) testified to this. According to Tang Hao's research over a hundred years ago, Wang Zongyue was the author of the Yin Fu Spear Manual (阴符枪谱) and taught in Kaifeng, Henan Province in the 59th year of Qianlong's reign (1794).^{32,33,34}

4-6 Verification of the Martial Arts Manuals of Tang Village and Those of Wu Yuxiang and Wang Zongyue

It is well known that the existing versions of Wang Zongyue's Taijiquan Manual came from a manual copied by Wu Yuxiang from his brother Wu Chengqing (武澄清), who was serving as the magistrate of Wuyang County in Henan Province. Wu Chengqing obtained the manual from the Li family's salt shop in Beiwudu Town (北舞渡镇), Wuyang County (舞阳县). Wu Yuxiang, who was visiting his elder brother in Wuyang at the behest of his mother, copied the manual and took it back to his hometown. Wu Yuxiang and his nephew Li Yiyu (李亦畬) then revised it, eventually turning it into a Wu family manual. Li Yiyu copied three versions, keeping one for himself, giving one

to his younger brother, and giving another to his friend Hao He (郝和). These three versions, collectively known as the Three Old Manuals (老三本), which is Wang Zongyue's Taijiquan Manual. There are many well-known reports of this, by later generations.³⁵

What is less known is that, through joint investigations by coauthor Li Libing, the Beiwudu Town Salt Shop was owned by Li Helin and his son Li Yongda (alias Li Zhende 李振德) from Tang Village. The original location still has a plaque of Zhende Salt Field. When Li Helin's grandson continued to operate the salt shop and salt field in Wuyang, Wu Chengqing often consulted with the Li brothers on the Thirteen Momentums of Taijiquan. From this, it can reasonably be inferred that someone (perhaps Wang Zongyue) copied the Martial Manual of Tang Village and transmitted it to Wuyang, where it was copied by Wu Chengqing and later by Wu Yuxiang.³⁶

People may still ask: since the Taiji Martial Arts Manual and the Thirteen-Momentum Martial Arts Manual from Tang Village have authors' signatures at the end of each document, why did it become Wang Zongyue's Taijiquan Manual under Wu Yuxiang's hands? We may find the answer in Li Yiyu's write-up. In Li Yiyu's writing on the Yin Fu Spear Manual, he indicated that "My maternal uncle Wu Yuxiang shared two documents of Wang Zongyue's Taijiquan Manual and the Yin Fu Spear Manual, which are rare treasures. The ancient manuals should not be shown to others, handling them with caution and care, and keeping in mind".

On the cover of Yin Fu Spear Manual, there is a seal of the author Wang Zongyue. However, the other document of Taijiquan Manual does not have the author's signature. From the postscript written by Wu Chengqing for the Taijiquan Manual, it says, "The author of this manual is unknown, but it is written in a very sophisticated way. Those who are not proficient in martial arts cannot write such a treatise". This proves that there is no author's signature on Wu Chengqing's copy of the Taijiquan Manual. In fact, all the documents in this copied
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manual have no author's signature. As a result, this led to the confusion by Wu Yuxiang.

Given the seal of Wang Zongyue found in the Yin Fu Spear Manual, it was mistakenly believed that the copied Taijiquan Manual was also written by Wang Zongyue. At this point, the truth can be made clear that the Taijiquan Manual copied by Wu Yuxiang was an unsigned version from Tang Village, which was obtained from a Li family member who ran a salt shop.³⁷

5. Authenticity of Tang Village's Historical Materials

5-1 Historical Materials of Tang Village Has Attracted Substantial Attention from Historians and Martial Arts Communities

In April 2004, the Li family members of the Tang Village went to Hongdong County, Shanxi Province to investigate their roots and coincidentally attended the National Hongdong Immigration Culture Symposium and were invited to speak. Li Libing presented photos of the Li Family Genealogy, the Hongdong Immigration Stele of Thousand-Year Temple, and other materials that aroused great interest among the attending delegates. Professor Wang Xingya (王兴亚), a Ming Dynasty specialist from the Department of History and Archaeology at Zhengzhou University, said: "If the genealogy and supporting materials are true, they can solve three historical mysteries: Li Yan's background, the origins of taijiquan, and the route of the Central Plains migration". After the meeting, Wang Xingya visited Tang Village many times and published several papers such as "Research on Li Yan's Hometown and Family Background". In 2005, Yuan Fuquan (原福全), director of the Wen County Sports Bureau, and Zhang Weizhen (张慰珍), village chief of Chen Village, visited Tang Village and the Thousand-Tear Temple and published papers such as "The Century-Long Debate over the Origin of Taijiquan Is Settled" and "Who Is the Author of the Taijiquan Treatise?" The Guangming Daily published an article entitled: "A Genealogy Reveals a Three-Hundred-Year Historical

Mystery". Wang Guangxi (王广西), a research fellow at the Henan Academy of Social Sciences, and an expert in literary history and folklore, visited Tang Village and concluded that the Thousand-Year Temple and Shaolin Temple, one in the north and one in the south, have become the source of China's two major martial arts systems. Rather than being a historical coincidence, it is more appropriate to consider it as an inevitable result of the nurturing and cultivation of Central Plains culture.

5-2. Verification of the Authenticity of Li Family Genealogy

In Chinese culture and customs, it has long been said that compiling genealogy is the record of the life, merits, and blood lineage of ancestors by descendants. It is considered to be a sacred activity for later generations to worship and inherit, and it cannot tolerate any falsehood or impurity. However, that said, multiple approaches were adopted in the research of the Li Family Genealogy, including interviews with family members and villagers, evidence was also taken from graves, tombstones, genealogical records, and contracts were reviewed, and multiple verification were made through local and county gazetteers, then comparison were made of genealogies with martial arts manuals, which were cross-referenced with historical records from the Ming and Qing dynasties, finally there was on-site investigations of descendants of immigrants to Hongdong, and confirmations by residents of Chen Village and the Chen Family Genealogy and Family Rituals.

In the investigation of the authenticity of the Li Family Genealogy, relevant personnel particularly highlighted the following background information. Li Yuanshan, who compiled the genealogy at the age of 73, recorded his father Li Zhong, uncle Li Xin, and grandfather Li Chunshao, all of whom were close relatives of his generation. Thus, he was able to describe in detail the processes of his ancestors' learning and creation of martial arts, encountering troubles, avoiding danger, enlisting, being killed, and fleeing. His authenticity is reliable. Even for historians and martial

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artists, it would be difficult to fabricate such detailed and credible information.

Li Yuanshan recorded the deeds of his relatives who joined the bandit group of Li Zicheng as generals. As a tribute student, he would never take the risk of being executed and fabricate a bandit father or bandit uncle in the genealogy. He could not conceal the truth from his descendants, so he had to warn them to “know the current situation and follow the right path” and “do not mention the genealogy when worshipping ancestors”. It can be confirmed that Li Yuanshan had no motive to fabricate falsehoods.

The person who owned and kept the Li Family Genealogy, an old woman named Wang Guiying, was an illiterate rural woman who was reluctant to show the genealogy. She had neither the ability to fabricate nor the motive to forge it.

It is thus argued that the historical materials discovered in Tang Village have undergone the relevant verification and examination.

5-3. Historical Materials from Tang Village Included in Authoritative National Historical Records.

Through the examination of these various sources by national and Henan provincial historical experts and scholars, these relevant historical materials (such as the Li Family Genealogy and two martial arts manuals of Tang Village) have recently been included in authoritative publications such as China Regional Culture Overview (中国地域文化通览), Chronicles of Chinese History (中华通鉴), and Encyclopedia of Central Plains Culture (中原文化大典). Among them, the Encyclopedia of Central Plains Culture: Folk Customs and Martial Arts Volume (中原文化大典·民俗·武术卷) is one of the 55 volumes of the Encyclopedia of Central Plains Culture. In this volume, the martial arts system of the Thousand-Year Temple in Henan Province is listed as one of the three major martial arts systems in Central Plains, alongside the Shaolin Temple system on Mount Song and the Hui ethnic system. The Thousand-Year Temple system includes taijiquan, Changjia boxing (苌家拳), Xinyi

boxing, Wangbao spear technique, and some other small boxing styles scattered in northern Henan.^{38,39,40}

Of the same encyclopedia, in the section of “The Origin of Taijiquan”, it is certified that Li Zhong and Li Xin, along with Chen Wangting created Taiji HPMA and Thirteen-Momentum Martial Arts at the Taiji Palace in the Thousand-Year Temple. This is the first time in the history of Chinese martial arts that the name of Taiji has been combined with boxing techniques and named as a skillful martial art, called Taiji Martial Arts.

Another authoritative publication: “Chronicles of Chinese History: Henan Volume (中华通鉴·河南卷)” was written following the same format of Sima Guang's (司马光) “Zizhi Tongjian or Comprehensive Chronicle of History (资治通鉴)”. Page 222 of this large publication records that in the 18th year of the Wanli period (1590), Li Chunmao created the Wuji Martial Arts and authored Wuji Health Preserving Boxing Treatise and Song of Practicing Thirteen Momentums. Page 225 records that in the seventh year of the Chongzhen period (1634), Li Zhong and Li Yan, two tribute students from Tang Village in Henan (Boai County), and their cousin Chen Wangting from Chen Village in Wen County, learned martial arts at Thousand-Year Temple, where they created taijiquan and authored the Taiji HPMA Manual. This marks the beginning of Chen-style taijiquan.^{39,40}

6. Conclusion and Perspectives

The historical materials discovered in Tang Village have convincingly clarified the scientific and thorough study of the origin of taijiquan, which was previously unclear and often misunderstood.

The authenticity of the Li Family Genealogy, compiled in the 55th year of the Kangxi reign (1716) of the Qing Dynasty, has been confirmed by experts and by scholars. The genealogy records the history of a family in Boai County, Henan Province, which was known for both its cultivation of literature and their understanding of martial arts. It documented the experiences of Li Zhong, Li
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Yan, and Chen Wangting, three young men who created taijiquan. It also records the Thousand-Year Temple, a martial arts holy land that gave birth to taijiquan. The genealogy further describes three classic martial arts documents related to taijiquan, namely Wuji Health Preserving Boxing Treatise, Song of Practicing Thirteen Momentums, and Taiji HPMa Manual.

The two martial arts manuals of Tang Village prove that the Thirteen Momentums originated from the Wuji HPMa of Tang Village and were later transmitted to taijiquan. The Thirteen Momentums were the initial source, and taijiquan was the subsequent flow.

Additionally, the two manuals provide the world with the real authors of the famous Taijiquan Classics in terms of scriptures, treatises, songs, and knacks. It is particularly credible to confirm the time and place when Li Chunmao, Li Zhong, and Li Helin created these classic martial arts documents. The above-mentioned historical materials on the origin of taijiquan in Tang Village have been incorporated into academic and authoritative publications locally and nationally.

The excavation and discovery of historical martial arts materials of Tang Village were both a coincidence and a necessity. These precious historical materials have helped us unravel the historical mysteries, which have long surrounded the origins of taijiquan, and they now guide us to explore new paths for taijiquan. The excavation and inheritance of traditional martial arts are systematic projects. The purpose of excavation is inheritance, and the purpose of inheritance is development, and the driving force of development is innovation.

We need to seek development through innovation. Open academic discussions and diverse opinions are essential for the development of martial arts and are a powerful driving force for the development and innovation of taijiquan.

Currently, there are still some doubts and some resistance within the martial arts community towards the historical materials

of Tang Village. The main manifestation is the suspicion that the new historical materials of Tang Village are forgeries of modern times. For example, it has been suggested that Li Chunmao's Wuji Health Preserving Boxing Treatise plagiarizes Sun Lutang's book: "A Study of Xingyi Boxing" published in 1925. The criticism is regarding the language and grammar used in the Li Family Genealogy, which may not conform to the norms of the Ming and Qing dynasties. Another concern is the conservatism of certain sects and local protectionism, which has resulted in blocking news and setting up obstacles. The appearance of these phenomena is not unexpected. It is therefore hoped that further academic research will distinguish between truth and falsehood, correct any deviations, unify our understanding, and help us embark on a new journey for taijiquan.

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