

Xiaoling Liu Interview:

1-Q. Master Liu; when did you start training in martial arts?

In August 1966 when I was 16 years old.

2-Q. What can you tell us about your first teacher Jing Xiangbao?

Master Jin practiced Shao Lin Liu He style martial arts, and he was also very skilled at Chinese wrestling. He was almost 60 years old when I started practicing with him. He was a good friend of my father's.

3-Q. You were quite young when you started your training; can you tell us what your practice consisted of and what was your Master Jing's demeanor in instructing his students?

Master Jing believed that the martial arts basics training (Ji Ben Gong 基本功) was very important. So when I first started, I mainly practiced basics for Shaolin and Chinese wrestling. For example, the basics training for Shaolin includes leg stretching and kicking, jumping exercise etc. He was very patient with us, and always explained to us the functions/reasons for each exercise.

4-Q. Can you tell us anything about Master Jing Xiangbao's teacher Dong Zhongyi?

Grandmaster Dong was a martial arts legend. He was most well known for his Chinese wrestling skills. In Qing dynasty, he was the official wrestling coach for the Emperor's body guards.

5-Q. How did you meet and when did you become a Disciple of the Great Master Pei Xirong?

Master Pei was also a friend of my father. My father was a Peking Opera artist and his circle of friends had close connection to the martial arts community in Shanghai. Because I was interested in learning martial arts at that time, my father introduced Master Pei to me .

6-Q. How old were you when you started training with Master Pei?

It was in 1972 and I was 22 years old.

7-Q. Pei Xirong was well known for his mastery of Hebei Xing Yi, Bagua and Taiji as well as Wudang Wushu; was there any particular progression in learning these systems?

I learned Xingyi first, and then Bagua. I later studied Wudang Wushu and Taiji.

8-Q. Which style of Xing Yi, Bagua and Taiji did you learn from Pei Xirong?

For Xing Yi, it was mainly He Bei Xing Yi 12 routines (河北形意十二形), He Nan Xin (heart) Yi 10 routines (河南心意十大形).

For Bagua, I learned Jiang style, Yin Style, Chen Style, and Liu style.

For Taiji, I learned Yang style, Chen style, Wu(吴) style, Sun style, and Wudang Taiji.

9-Q. Can you tell us about training specifics emphasized by your teacher in instructing Xing Yi, Bagua and Taiji?

For Xingyi, we concentrated on the basic five fist trainings.

For Bagua, it was mud stepping. We initially concentrated on outside three harmonies (wai liu he): hand/foot harmony, elbow/knee harmony, and shoulder/hip harmony. We later worked on internal three harmonies (Nei Liu He) as well: heart(Xin)/mind (Yi) harmony, mind (Yi)/Qi harmony, Qi/power (Li) harmony.

For Taiji, it was a combination of Xingyi, Bagua basics training, with the addition of breathing awareness. That's why we learned Xingyi and Bagua before we learned Taiji.

10-Q. Can you please talk about the theory of Six Directional Power in Xing Yi (Please provide Pinyin name)?

I have never heard that Xing Yi has the theory of six directional power. But I know that Xing Yi has 5 types of Jing (五劲之说). This includes Stepping (Cai 踩), Rushing/throwing oneself upon (Pu 扑), Wrapping (Guo 裹), Binding (Shu 束), Bursting (Jue 决). These are 5 types of Yang Jing(阳五劲). There are also 5 types of Yin Jing (阴五劲) which are all related to intentions and consciousness. Here the Cai Jing relates to the concept and image of stepping on a poison snake with your foot; Pu Jing is like a hungry tiger throwing himself upon a prey; Guo Jing is like wrapping around an item so that no one can see it; Su Jing is like binding something tightly from top to bottom, and then you can release like a spring; and finally Jue Jing is like water bursting open a dam.

11-Q. When people lack a sense of Six Directional Power the Xing Yi while forceful still looks empty: Why is this?

It is probably due to the fact that the person lacks proper coordination, therefore it looks he is trying to be forceful, but it is stiff force, and not very useful.

12-Q. Can the theory of Six Directional Power (六方向力) be applied to the other internal arts?

All internal arts have the same principles. The only difference is that sometimes for certain internal arts, some principles show up more obviously than others.

13-Q. It is said that in Bagua one should demonstrate the following: characteristics while practicing:

- **Move Like a Dragon**
- **Swing about like a Monkey**
- **Change postures like an Eagle**

像一條龍一樣的運動，大約像一隻猴子一樣的搖擺，和

Further:

- **Steps as if wading in mud**
- **Turn hands as if twisting a rope**
- **Use waist as if turning a stone mill**

湖步驟似乎你把泥弄成一團，擰手似乎你擰一條繩索，並且轉過來似乎你

The Above Points are often referred to as the Three Shapes and Three Step (三形三勢) Can you please give a deeper explanation on these key points?

Actually Bagua has more than three shapes. This should be **Dragon shape, monkey appearance, Tiger sitting, hawk overturning** (龙形猴相, 虎坐鷹翻

long xing hou xiang, hu zuo ying fan).

Bagua has 4 characteristics: first is walking/moving, and one has to move like a swimming dragon (Dragon shape). The second is your gazing, and your eyes should be following your hands -- you should have the alertness of a monkey watching its food source (monkey appearance). The third is whenever one changes a palm, you should use the stable sitting/squatting posture as the transition posture with two knees bending outward dynamically: since this looks like a tiger sitting down very stably waiting for his prey, it is called tiger sitting. The fourth is one should look like a hawk overturning in the air whenever one turns his body.

The three steps (三勢) are due to the fact that one is stepping around a circle facing a center, and one's head, hand, elbow, waist, body are all turned toward the center of the circle. This will generate a rotating force (Quan Jing 旋勁) – similar to a centripetal/centrifugal force (圓心力). This leads to the mud wading and rope twisting feeling when one is practicing.

14-Q. Many Bagua systems emphasize the Tang Ni Pu, Mud Gliding Step, in their practice. While this works well while practicing indoor or on smooth surfaces it's hardly practical on natural uneven terrain. This becomes even more evident during Yong Fa, practical applications. Please elaborate on the function of the Tang Ni Pu stepping method?

The characteristics of Mud Gliding Step is stepping out as alert as a cat, and stepping back as drawing back a silk thread (进如狸猫,回如抽丝). One should be very alert during the process. Imagine yourself walking in the water and you cannot see what obstacles laying on the ground under the water surface. During the stepping process,

one is using the front foot to detect whether there is any danger out there. So the center of gravity should be at the back foot, and one does not shift the center of gravity to the stepping foot until you have cleared the danger zone and stepped through the mud. This is mainly related to your mental state, and is regardless whether the surface is smooth or uneven. Of course, this is how Master Pei taught us, and other schools and masters may have different views on this.

15-Q. The Nine Palaces Post Training is regarded as highly important in Bagua Zhang; can you please share your thoughts on evolution and importance of this training method?

The Nine Palaces Post training (八卦穿九宫) is related to training for directional changes.

Initially, one will practice with fixed directional changes. As you get more advanced, you will practice by improvising various changes, and there will not be any fixed routines. This training sequence is similar to Ba Gua practice, first you start with very fixed and isolated posture and palm practice, later on you improvise as you go along by connecting different palms, e.g. the Bagua link palm practice (连环掌).

16-Q. It seems that the modern trend in all systems has been the creation of more routines. It is said that Cheng Style Bagua originally only contained three palms, often referred to as Lao San Zhang (Three Old Palms) and that Cheng Tinghua only passed these on to his disciples. Originally Xing Yi practice was focused on Wu Xing Quan, 5 elements Fists, and Taiji originated from 13 Postures. Why do you think that modern martial artists have focused so heavily on the development of new routines and what dangers or benefits do you see in this trend?

In old days, martial artists usually concentrated in trainings of strength and power (功力). This is because there were not any modern weapons such as guns and cannons at that time, and one depends on his physical body to fight his opponents. That is why Cheng Bagua people mainly practiced the three old palms, and Xing Yi people focused on 5 elements fists. My personal view is that both training methods have their respective pros and cons. The modern training methods are useful to boost one's agility and coordination, and different routines provide diversity and make it fun for students to practice. Traditional methods insure that one truly develops the power and a special expertise to defeat his opponents. People often says that old Xing Yi Master Shang Yun-Xiang(尚云祥) was able to beat every opponent coming his way by using Beng Fist (崩拳, one of the five elements fists). That does not mean that Master Shang only knew how to do Beng Fist. It only means that Beng Fist was his special expertise, and he was excellent in using that fist.

17-Q. You learned Liuhe Bafa from two teachers: Li Daoli and Liang Qizhong. Both of these masters learned the arts from Grandmaster Wu Yihui. During one of our meetings I asked you about the benefit of studying the art from these two teachers and what aspects each emphasized; can you share this with our readers?

The two LHBF teachers of mine practiced Liuhe Bafa with different emphasis and flavors. Master Li was Grandmaster Wu's oldest disciple, and he stresses the wrapping around and twisting feelings of the postures. Master Liang, on the other hand, was Grandmaster Wu's last disciple during Wu's later years. Master Liang is very short, but he is focused on the mind and intensions during the practice, and stresses the importance of letting one's intention to go beyond one's physical limbs and reaches. When you watch him practicing, you do not feel that he is a short man, instead you sometimes feel that he is very tall and has very long arms. So each of them has his own characteristics and emphasis.

18-Q. I studied Liuhe Bafa with Dao Pingxiang who was a training brother of Master Li Daoli and Liang Qizhong (You had the chance to meet Master Dao in Maryland). Many masters claim that Liuhe Bafa incorporates elements of Taiji, Xing Yi and Bagua. In my view I believe that Liuhe Bafa is very distinctive from these systems and that it has its own characteristics: What is your opinion regarding this matter?

The history of LHBF is older than Xing Yi, Ba Gua and Tai Chi. It originates from the legendary Chen Tuan (陈抟老祖) around the end of Tang Dynasty and beginning of Song Dynasty. It is different from Xing Yi, BaGua and Tai Chi. I believe that the reason some people say that this incorporates elements of Taiji, Xingyi and Bagua is because LHBF has the uniformity/harmonies (整劲) of Xingyi, the directional changes and stepping agility of Bagua, and the light/heavy, gentler/fa-jing characteristics of Taichi.

19- Q. Master Dao preferred to refer to the system as Water Boxing rather than Liuhe Bafa which he felt appropriately referred to the guiding principles of the art. Wu Ying Hua, the son of the Grandmaster refers to the system as Huayue Xingyi Liuhe Bafa (Mind Intend Six harmonies Eight Methods from Hua Mountain). What is your personal view regarding the different names?

Because the great grand master Chen Tuan (陈抟老祖) achieved his enlightenment in Hua Mountain, therefore the complete name of LHBF is **Huayue Xingyi Liuhe Bafa Fist (华岳心意六合八法拳)**: Huayue refers to Hua Mountain, Xingyi refers to one's mind and intention when practicing LHBF, Liuhe refers to the six harmonies of the body, Bafa refers to the eight methods of practical applications. Other people call LHBF Water Boxing, and this is due to its water-like characteristics such as rising and falling, opening and narrowing along its way.

20-Q. Many years back, Master Dao Pingxiang wanted me to travel to Shanghai to learn the Liuhe Bafa Sword form. He only ever mentioned Li Daoli as having learned the sword from Wu Yihuy. Nowadays many different forms are surfacing along with numerous weapons; did you learn the sword form from Li Daoli and what are your views regarding the later phenomena?

I learned the LHBF Green Dragon Sword Form (青龙剑) from Master Li Dao-Li. This is in the same lineage as the LHBF fist form. There are actually many sword forms with the same name “Green Dragon Sword” in different schools. Even though the name is the same, the sword form and its associated characteristics are very different. The LHBF Green Dragon Sword belongs to the internal martial arts family, and this is totally different from, for example, the similar named sword forms in Shao Lin or other style of martial arts.

21-Q. What can you tell us about the LHBF straight sword form and the benefit of its practice?

The sword form should have the same characteristics of LHBF, rising and falling like a swimming dragon, opening and closing with corresponding breathing control. One’s breathing has to be regulated, so that it is smooth, slow, deep and long.

22-Q. LHBF contains extensive Nei Gong practice, both standing and moving; can you provide us with details about this practice?

According to Master Liang Qi-Zhong, great grand master Chen Tuan (陈抟老祖) is an expert in the Chinese Classical Book of Changes “Yi Jing” (周易), and he is also a Qi Gong master.

Therefore, the NeiGong practice of LHBF has multiple dimensions. For example, some of the postures in LHBF can be practices as still standing postures. In addition, there is a set of Qigong practices that has the themes of seasonal changes, with each posture corresponding to one of 24 round solar terms in Chinese constellation.

23-Q. In ancient times many famous martial artists traveled around looking for skilled master with whom they could further their skills and increase their knowledge. We see very little of this today and many teachers will not allow their students to cross train in other styles or learn from other masters: What is your personal view on this matter?

I think that both in ancient times and nowadays, good martial artists would learn from different masters with different lineages so that they can adopt the good things from different schools to increase their own skills. For example, Master Sun Lu-Tang (孙禄堂) learned Xing Yi from Master Li Kui-Yuan (李奎元), learned Ba Gua from Master Cheng Ting-Hua (程庭华), and learn Tai Chi from Master Hao Wei-Zhen (郝为祯). Therefore, I always believe that one should learn from multiple teachers if possible, to further one’s skills and knowledge.

24-Q. Why is your school named Wudang Long Men?

My teacher Master Pei was a disciple of Xu Ben-Shan(徐本善), the head of Wudang Long Men (WuDang Dragon Gate) lineage at that time. That is why I named my school as Wudang Long Men.

Master Liu, thank you for your interview, I ma sure the readers will find this interview interesting and informative.