

# The Demise Of T'ai Chi Ch'uan

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defense defence bagua bagwa, dim mak dim-mak, baguazhang internal martial arts

By Erle Montaigne

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What ever happened to "the Supreme ultimate boxing"? Once, Taijiquan chi) lived would look upon this system and its founder as Gods in the martial arts area. Many were jealous of the Yang family and would plot to kill them for fear that their own style would some day have to prove itself against these warriors.

So, what happened? Nowadays, most other martial arts and even ordinary street fighters are able to take on any of the current modern so called masters and grandmasters and defeat them no trouble at all. Most would have no hope of defending themselves in the streets. The reason? T'ai Chi has lost its roots, its beginnings and what people teach as being representative of the whole art today is only a mere shell of its former glory. Even the most important exercises of small and large san-sau are ignored by most masters from China and in the west, preferring to only teach the slow form and at the most, some ineffectual push hands which itself has come to be nothing of its former meaning.

Now, we see most people who practice the art being non martial artists. People who do not wish to actually fight to defend themselves. Most completely dismiss taiji's original purpose, that of self defence. The reason is that modern taiji cannot be used for self defence, and most if not all, modern masters no longer know how to teach it for self defence.

It started out on top of the martial arts heap, now it is on the bottom, due mainly to one man. Yang Cheng-fu! Woh! Montaigne having a go at God? Yes, it has to be said, that when Yang Cheng-fu changed his father's form, he rang the death knoll for taiji as a self defence art. Then people like Cheng Man-ching actually pulled the trigger to kill taiji completely as a self defence art. Many of the American Chinese 'masters' and 'grandmasters' now actually teach western boxing skills to prop up their useless taiji arts. Some use western wrestling skills, others rely upon tournament push hands. Others resort to trickery to cause us to believe that because they are not able to actually defend themselves using their own bodies, they are able to move people without touching them etc. This is only because they are so unsure of their own ability that they must resort to these circus tricks. They know that they are able to fool many people all of the time and still have classes of 200 and 300 people never even thinking of questioning what he is giving them.

Yang Cheng-fu changed his father's style so much that the original essence of the fighting art has now been lost in this style forever. So few martial artists take up this form of taiji now that what **was** left of the original is now not being passed on, because martial artists do not want to know about it. Karate people know about martial arts and they are able to pick out the bullshit. Karateka are usually good honest people and they know that when they see something that is good, they take it, but if it is not so, then they leave it.

We had a seminar in the Capital State of Australia recently when the so called leader of the Yang Family, Fu Zhongwen actually stated that one of the secrets of taiji was not to do it (the form) when wearing a short sleeved shirt! The reason? Because one loses one's Qi out of one's arms if one does not wear a long sleeved shirt! What are we, stupid! 400 people believed this at this seminar, well not quite, many left half way through, but most did not even think to question this statement. Karate people laugh at this, and it makes the art that I teach look bloody stupid!

Luckily, there are still a few, only a few who still know the taiji art of Yang Shou-hou, the brother of Yang Cheng-fu who did not change the style. We know that taiji or "Hou Ch'uan" as it was originally called before this century, is the greatest of all fighting arts, but we must distinguish between what Yang Cheng-fu taught and what his brother taught and his father before him and his father before him. There are two distinct Yang style taiji methods now. One is the most common Yang Cheng-fu form, from whence the Cheng Man-ching style comes, the other is the original Yang style (the **only** style that can rightfully be called this style) of Yang Lu-ch'an. In fact, if Yang came back today, firstly, he would not even know what we were talking about when we said "T'ai Chi Ch'uan". "Supreme Ultimate Boxing" he would say, "please teach me". He did not invent T'ai Chi Ch'uan, he founded "Hou

Ch'uan" or loose boxing from the original art of Chang Sang-feng, dim-mak or death point striking.

Self defence is not pretty, it is not easy, it is ugly and requires ugly methods to successfully defend against ugly people. There is no easy way nor is there any way that one is able to put someone down without hurting them. Sure a drunk in a pub, but the person who is really trying to get you, you really have to use dire methods to defend yourself, and it is not pretty.

A prediction that I made many years ago was that in China there would be no-one left who would know about the real fighting art of T'ai isn't it. If you **must** have tournaments, get in there and beat shit out of each other and then you can claim to at least be a better fighter than your opponent, but let's not place this undue attention upon push hands. Taiji is an internal art where no-one is able to see what is inside of you. They can only judge the physical movements and I learnt long ago, that physical movements meant nothing.

I do these workshops, all over the world and barely make expenses, so that people will see this art for what it used to be. Not that I am any great warrior, but at least I have learnt what I believe to be the original art of Yang Shou-hou from Chang Yiu-chun, his student. All martial artists see T'ai chi" people who attend these workshops, mainly in the U.S.A. are really put off by the fact that they must actually fight to defend themselves. Well, not all of them as I have some excellent students in the U.S.A. but all have done some other styles and all are martial artists before I get to them, but the purely "Taiji" people who do not wish to 'get their hands dirty' think I'm some sort of animal! Me! Come on now, I have a snake! This is where taiji has come to. A bunch of self centred individuals who know about human nature and the fact that a person will take the easy way out every time, have changed what was once great but difficult to obtain, and made it small and easy to obtain.

It all began with one man, Yang Cheng-fu who decided to change it all to make it easier for us, from then on it all went downhill. Luckily though there are still those who believe in hard work and who follow the ways of the original Yang System. And as more and more real martial artists get onto this martial art, hopefully, we will see a resurgence of something that was once great, slowly making its mark again.