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Liuhebafa Five Character Secrets

* chinese classics * translations * commentary

PAUL DILLON

六合八法五字訣

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Hua Shan, 韓星垣



Mr. Li (left) and Mr. T. T. Liang (right)

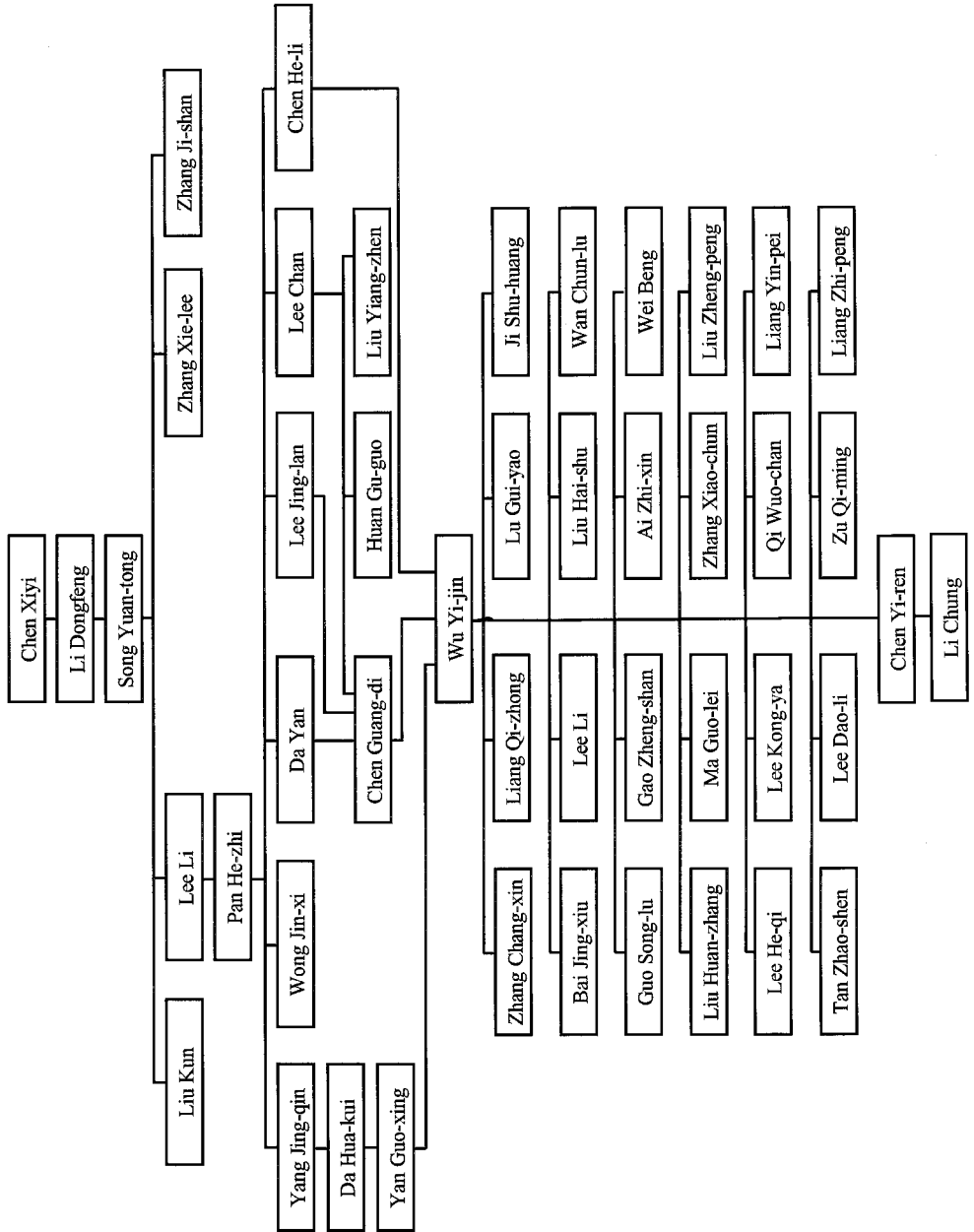


Li Chung, 李忠

Huayue Xinyi Liuhebaquan

The Five Character Secrets of Li Dongfeng are the original precepts of the rare internal martial art *Huayue Xinyi Liuhebaquan*. *Huayue* means the remote mountain fastness of Mount Hua where the Daoist Sage Chen Tuan created the system. *Huayue* can also mean a beautiful place within that is difficult to find. *Xinyi* means Mind/Intent or the Creative Imagination (Higher Mind), a faculty of the True Self. *Liuhe* means the Six Combinations which describe the natural merging of body, mind, and spirit. *Bafa* means Eight Methods which describe how to experience the natural unification of the Six Combinations as a martial discipline. *Quan* means the art of boxing.

LINEAGE OF LIUHEBAFAQUAN



Chapter 1

From Chen Tuan to Li Chung:

A Brief Overview of the History of Liuhebafa

The origins of Liuhebafa, also called Water Boxing, can be traced to the Daoist sage Chen Tuan (陳搏) (c.871-989 A.D.) also called Tunan and Fuyaozi. Chen is a mystical figure whose advice and perspective was sought by Chinese emperors during the period of the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms (907-960 A.D.) and at the beginning of the Song Dynasty (960-1279 A.D.). In addition to Liuhebafa, he is credited with the creation of Taiji Ruler exercises, qigong and neigong systems that are still practiced today, and a form of Dream/Sleeping Daoist Yoga. Let's take a look at the life of this fascinating figure.

In c. 871 an unusual boy, often called a child prodigy, was born into a wealthy and high ranked family surnamed Chen. This child was called Tuan. His parent's estate located in Sichuan province was quite large and dotted by ponds and crossed by streams. Young Tuan was very much attracted to the water and could often be found walking or playing by the ponds or streams.

At the age of five, Tuan was playing by a pond one day when he noticed a beautiful bluish-green light moving toward him. Out of the light stepped the Immortal that Tuan called his Green Dressed Lady. The Lady took Tuan by the hand and said, "Look for me tonight in your dreams". She faded back into the light and then dissolved into the distance.

True to her words she came to him in his dreams that night and for many years to come. Through these visits the Lady took him to vast temples and places of learning where he began to study from the fountain of all knowledge. Of course he also had normal physical tutors who schooled Tuan in the Chinese classics such as the *Yi Jing* and *Dao De Jing*. This schooling provided an interesting counterpoint to the in-depth training he was getting by studying these works at a higher level. At these inner temples he could see and study the wisdom in its original form that

had manifested as the *Yi Jing* and *Dao De Jing*. By seeing these works in their original form, he realized that his tutors merely repeated years of conjecture and commentary that had replaced any real understanding of these esoteric classics.

Following the expectations and wishes of his family, Tuan took the civil service examinations that would have placed him highly in the service of the emperor. He was already known as an authority on the classics; famous teachers in their own right came to confer with him. However, for whatever reason, he managed to fail the civil service exams. Not long after this apparent set back, both of his parents died. After an appropriate period of mourning, Tuan began to travel throughout Asia. This gave him the opportunity to study and confer with the great masters of the time.

Many years were spent at the feet of these teachers until he came to find hermitage in the Wutang mountains of central China. His retreat was called the Rock of Nine Rooms where the Five Dragon Immortals helped Tuan assimilate all that he had studied over the years. The time then came for the Immortals to test Chen Tuan. Each of the five in his turn, posed a question and as Tuan answered the last question successfully, he was immediately whisked away to his new retreat on Hua Shan, a sacred mountain in north-central China.

In a time when there was no mass communication it is surprising how quickly seekers after truth began to find Master Chen on Mount Hua. Amidst the cloud-shrouded peaks, Tuan endeavored to teach Chinese cosmology in its original simplicity. From his own direct experience, Master Chen taught that energy manifests as matter and that matter will return to energy. To illustrate this he outlined the process of birth, life, and death in the Six Combinations: Body combines with Mind, Mind combines with Intent, Intent combines with Energy, Energy combines with Spirit, Spirit combines with Movement, and Movement combines with Emptiness. The greater legacy of the Six Combinations is that it is a step-by-step method to move from the physical into a higher state of consciousness so that you can study from the same source as the old master himself.

During his hermitage on Mount Hua, the emperors of the time would often seek his guidance. But Chen Tuan would have none of it. He sought to live simply and explore the worlds of consciousness rather

than the world of society. Nevertheless, the first Song emperor, Zhao Kuangyin (r. 960-976, reigned as Taizu), appointed Tuan as an advisor to the court.

On the emperor's way to consolidate the northern regions of China, he stopped at Mount Hua to solicit Chen Tuan's advice with strategy in this campaign. Rather than compromise his ethics and serve in a campaign of conquest, Tuan offered a wager on a game of chess. If he lost, he would go with the emperor; if he won, the emperor would deed Mount Hua to him.

Tuan knew that the emperor was agitated by battle plans and distracted by affairs of state. This lack of concentration on the wager at hand cost the emperor the game and the mountain. Afterwards, Tuan revealed to the emperor that if his attention had not been in the past or the future, he might have won the game. He told the emperor that he was asleep and that he must awaken to the present. By focusing on the problem at hand, he would clearly see which step to take and that he must take one step at time. Following this advice, Zhao Kuangyin unified the northern kingdoms and ruled China in what would later be regarded as a cultural renaissance in China.

To this day, there is a monument to the contest between Chen Tuan and the emperor. It is located on top of the central peak of Mount Hua and called the Chess Game Pavilion. The second Song emperor, Zhao Kuangyi (r. 976-997, reigned as Taizong), held Chen Tuan in such respect that he named him Xi Yi Xian Sheng meaning the unfathomable gentleman.

While on Mount Hua, Chen Tuan perfected methods to dream consciously. He would often go into a sleep state for up to one hundred days. From these forays into the dream world he discovered much and manifested it as practical methods for self-cultivation. From this repository of knowledge he created Liuhebafa and qigong methods that are still used today. For his many creations, derived from the dream state, he still revered as the Sleeping Immortal.

One day, Chen Tuan called his closest disciple, Jia Desheng, and asked him to excavate a new cave in a nearby hillside. After some time, the cave was finished and Tuan moved in with all his belongings and manuscripts. It was in this cave that the master died. Some seven months after his death, his body was still warm and life-like and a multi-colored

cloud stayed at the entrance. It was said that at night one could see a light shining from within the cave.

About three hundred years after Chen Tuan's death at the beginning of the Yuan Dynasty (1279-1368 A.D.), Li Dongfeng went off on a pilgrimage to Mount Hua. He was directed to some of the old caves and huts that Chen had used but there seemed to be a veil drawn over the exact location of Chen's last cave. Disheartened, Li resolved to give up the search and return home. That night, as he sat by his campfire, he noticed a light emanating from the side of one of the mountains. He anxiously made his way toward the light. His excitement was intense as he sensed the fulfillment of his quest. The light led him to the final resting place of the old mystic.

In that cave were all of Chen Tuan's belongings and manuscripts. Among those manuscripts were detailed instructions on Liuhebafa. Li who was a martial artist and a scholar proved himself to be a worthy student. Over the next months and years, with the help of the Daoist hermits there, Li mastered the intricacies of this internal art. Li then returned to Mount Yun to teach a small group of Daoists all that he had learned on Mount Hua.

Over the centuries, after Li returned to Mount Yun, Liuhebafa was taught only to a choice few. These fortunate students were usually chosen because they were adept in a martial art. These students brought their experience in styles such as Shaolin, Mantis, Xingyi, Bagua, and Taiji. The benefits of these arts were incorporated into Liuhebafa and made it a better and more complete art. In the Main Form, Liuhebafa already has the movements of Bagua; so a student with Bagua experience would simply enhance or emphasize that when performing the movements. Not unlike an accent, the inner person is not changed by the accent gained by moving to another locale.

During the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911 A.D.) people were aware of Taiji, Xingyi, and Bagua but Liuhebafa was almost regarded as myth. It took the Nationalist Revolution to bring some of the best martial arts masters to cities like Shanghai where Grandmaster Wu Yijin (1887-1961 A.D.) began to teach in the late 1920's. As Wu's fame as a peerless martial artist grew, so did the reputation of Liuhebafa as a preeminent martial art begin to grow.

In 1936 Wu took the position of Dean of Studies at the Nanjing

Wushu College. After WWII, Wu returned to Shanghai and taught many students Liuhebafa.

Two of Wu's main students, Chen Yiren (1909-1982 A.D.) and Liang Zhipeng (1900-1974 A.D.), moved to Hong Kong at the end of the 1940's and taught Liuhebafa, Xingyi, Bagua, and Taiji. My teacher, Li Chung (李忠) (1903-1982 A.D.) studied and explored Liuhebafa with Chen Yiren, Liang Zhipeng, and others.

Li Chung began his study of Chinese martial arts with the external systems. He was very adept at these arts and won the respect of martial artists throughout China. In his late twenties he was responsible for re-establishing the Ching Wu Martial Art Association as a positive force in the martial arts community. He held the position of president of that organization for ten years.

As his reputation as a fierce competitor grew, he became known as the "King of the Hard Style". His last match in which an unfortunate incident occurred proved to be the turning point in his life. He left the external methods behind and put all of his attention on acquiring the internal method. He mastered the Wu and Yang styles of Taiji before moving to Hong Kong.

In Hong Kong he began his study of Liuhebafa under the tutelage of Chen Yiren. Chen left to teach in Singapore. So, Li Chung began to explore the deeper aspects of Liuhebafa. This led him to several teachers that expanded his view and experience into Liuhebafa. He wanted to restore Liuhebafa to a more subtle and concealed art. Over the years, the external expression of the Main Form had taken on a Xingyi, Bagua, or Taiji flavor. Li Chung enlisted the aid of Han Xingyuan (韓星垣) a Yiquan teacher who helped soften and round out the over torqued and extended movements of Bagua and Xingyi that had crept into the Main Form.

In 1969 Li Chung immigrated to the United States. He taught Liuhebafa in New York City, New Haven, Hartford, Providence, and his home base in Boston. Li Chung taught that the core of the art, the principles, were of utmost importance. He maintained that Liuhebafa begins and ends in your dreams. The Five Character Secrets of Li Dongfeng was the foundation of all of his teaching and the inspiration for this work. Master Li Chung passed away in 1982.

Chapter 3

The Five Character Secrets of Li Dongfeng

Li Dongfeng, a scholar and martial artist, left his home on Mount Yun to seek Chen Tuan. While camping at the base of Mount Hua, Li noticed a light on the side of the mountain. When he went to investigate, he found the entrance to a cave. In the cave he found the illuminated remains of the old Sage along with detailed manuscripts that described Liuhebaquan.

Realizing the importance of what he had found, Li decided to remain on Mount Hua until he mastered the material in the manuscripts. Some of the local Daoist monks helped Li Dongfeng to understand the principles and train in this new approach to the martial arts.

After mastering Liuheba, Li left Mount Hua and returned to his home on Mount Yun. He shared what he had learned with a small group of Daoists who lived nearby. After his return to Mount Yun, Li Dongfeng recorded all that he had learned on Mount Hua in one hundred and thirty-four verses (lines) of five Chinese characters per verse. His manuscript has become known as *The Five Character Secrets of Li Dongfeng* and is the only existing treatise today on the original principles of Liuhebaquan.

The Chinese word for secrets in the title, *The Five Character Secrets of Li Dongfeng*, is *jue*. *Jue* carries the connotation of the oral tradition of passing the secrets of a system on to a chosen student. These special inner circle students were chosen only after many years of dedication and service to their teacher. They had proven to their teacher that they could be trusted to maintain the integrity and validity of their teaching.

Recording the physical, mental, and spiritual principles in a verse that could be easily memorized allowed the system to be passed on from generation to generation. This method of learning, however, is more than simple memorization. The verses being recited were taught and explained so that the student gained an understanding of that line. The verse then would become a seed that would bring forth the whole teaching when repeated.

In times past, the student was given one line at a time to study. The student committed the line to memory and then went about trying to understand its meaning. Although a line's meaning can seem obvious, there are many levels of understanding with each line. Since these lines are composed as contemplation seeds, they are meant to be dwelt upon.

In your study of these secrets, take one line and contemplate on it for a week. Keep a journal handy to jot down the observations and insights that you get as you go through the week. You will be amazed how the information will come to you. Set the tone of your study by picturing the master imparting the secret to you, his most trusted student. You might want to use the following story as a visualization exercise.

In a small neatly kept house, Master Li Dongfeng waited for his best student, Song Yuan Tong. Since Master Li had returned to his home on Mount Yun, he had been teaching Liuhebafa to a small group of Daoists. From this group Song had proved to be a worthy successor to Master Li.

Soon, a knock came at the door. "Come in, come in, and sit beside the fire, Yuan Tong." Not knowing why he had been summoned, Song hesitantly took a seat. "You have been with me for many years and I am very pleased with the way you have caught the true flavor of our art," Li said smiling warmly. "It is because of your integrity, understanding, and ability that I have called you here." Song was relieved that he had pleased his master but he was still puzzled. Li went on, "It is to you that I will pass the mantle of mastership. Tonight you will begin to learn the secrets of Liuhebafa, one verse at a time."

"Now, pull your chair over a little closer and repeat the line that I will recite." Excitedly, Song came closer to his teacher and Master Li began, "Mind/Intent is the basis of Methodlessness." Years later Master Song would repeat the same scene with his four top students: Liu Kun, Lee Li, Zhang Xie Lee, and Zhang Ji Shan.

In the last line of *The Five Character Secrets*, Master Li Dongfeng reminds the student not to take these *Secrets* lightly. There is more here than meets the eye. It is wise to approach the *Secrets* with a beginner's mind. Imagine being beckoned to sit by the fire. Lean a little closer to better hear the master as he recites the lines that will open the doors of your mind and heart.

THE FIVE CHARACTER SECRETS

TRANSLATION GUIDE

心意本無法

⇐ Chinese characters

XIN YI BEN WU FA

⇐ Pinyin romanization

*Mind, Intent, root, without,
method*

⇐ Word for word translation

⇐ Literal translation

Mind/Intent, root, no method

⇐ Interpretive translation

Mind/Intent is the basis of
“Methodlessness”.

Methodlessness is the state of doing without doing. In the state of Methodlessness there is no difference between what you are doing and that which is being done by Nature. When you are in this Total Harmony, you appear to be doing nothing, yet nothing is left undone. Your quest for this harmony begins with Mind/Intent.

⇐ Commentary

1

心意本無法

XIN YI BEN WU FA

Mind, Intent, root, without, method

Mind/Intent, root, no method

Mind/Intent is the basis of “Methodlessness”.

Methodlessness is the state of doing without doing. In the state of Methodlessness there is no difference between what you are doing and that which is being done by Nature. When you are in this state of Total Harmony, you appear to be doing nothing, yet nothing is left undone. Your quest for this harmony begins with Mind/Intent.

In Liuhebafa, Mind/Intent is the Higher Mind, Wisdom Mind, or Creative Imagination. Higher Mind is a faculty of the Essential or True Self. Mind/Intent is the neutral point between cause (*yang*) and effect (*yin*). By attaining the neutral point, you can understand the ebb and flow of life so that you do not run contrary to it; you consciously cooperate with it.

Mind/Intent is not the physical will that originates in the reactive mind (subconscious and conscious). The physical will tries to force and manipulate; it is always reactive rather than active. The Higher Mind is active and creative and in harmony with the will of Nature.

To approach this study, leave your preconceptions behind. Begin with an open and child-like mind. As you progress in Liuhebafa, you find that this unique perspective allows you to go beyond technique; indeed, you become the technique.

Secrets of Liuhebafa Revealed!

The origins of Liuhebafa (also called Water Boxing) can be traced back to the Daoist sage Chen Tuan (c. 871-989 A.D.). Chen is a mystical figure whose advice and perspective was sought by ancient Chinese Emperors.

Liuhebafa was the last of the internal methods to be taught outside China. Even inside China, Liuhebafa had an almost mythic quality. Among the groups of inner circle students, Liuhebafa was graduate study in the internal arts.

Liuhebafa's Five Character Secrets (of Li Dong Feng) are the original precepts of this rare internal martial art known as Huayue Xinyi Liuhebafaquan. Li Dong Feng discovered aged manuscripts of Chen Tuan, during an expedition to Chen's ancient mountain home. Realizing the importance of what he had found, Li remained on Mount Hua until he mastered the material in the manuscripts. Li returned to his home and then recorded all he had learned on Mount Hua in one hundred and thirty-four verses now known as *The Five Character Secrets of Li Dong Feng*. This is the only existing treatise on the original principles of Liuhebafa.

This book contains the original Chinese treatise of Li Dong Feng, Pinyin Romanization of the Chinese characters, word for word translation, literal translation, interpretive translation and the author's commentary on the meaning of each verse.

There is more here than meets the eye. It is wise to approach the Secrets with a beginner's mind. Imagine being beckoned to sit by the fire. Lean a little closer to better hear the master as he recites the lines that will open the doors of your mind and heart.



Paul Dillon began his martial art training in 1962, primarily in the Japanese arts. In the early 1970's, he began his training in Liuhebafa under the tutelage of Master Li Chung. He has also trained in Xingyiquan, Baguazhang, and Yang Style Taijiquan. Paul Dillon studied Chinese at the College of Far Eastern Languages at Yale University and served in the US Air Force. Paul resides near Boise, Idaho.



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