JINGWU

THE SCHOOL THAT TRANSFORMED KUNG FU

BRIAN KENNEDY AND ELIZABETH GUO

JINGWU

THE SCHOOL THAT TRANSFORMED KUNG FU

Brian L. Kennedy
and
Elizabeth Nai-Jia Guo

Blue Snake Books
Berkeley, California

Acknowledgments

We offer our deepest appreciation to attorney and law professor Henry Lin. Professor Lin greatly assisted with the background history of Republican China and with the translations. We also thank Mr. Robert Louie of the Jing Mo Physical Culture Association. Sifu Louie made available to us a number of very valuable original documents regarding the early history of the Jingwu Association. We would also like to thank Mr. Patrick Hodges, who provided us with a mint copy of the Hawaiian Chin Woo anniversary book. All three of these men went out of their way to help us, and all three reflect the "Jingwu spirit" of helping to preserve and promote traditional Chinese martial arts. Our respect and thanks to them. Our respect and thanks also goes to Erin Wiegand for her outstanding work editing this book.

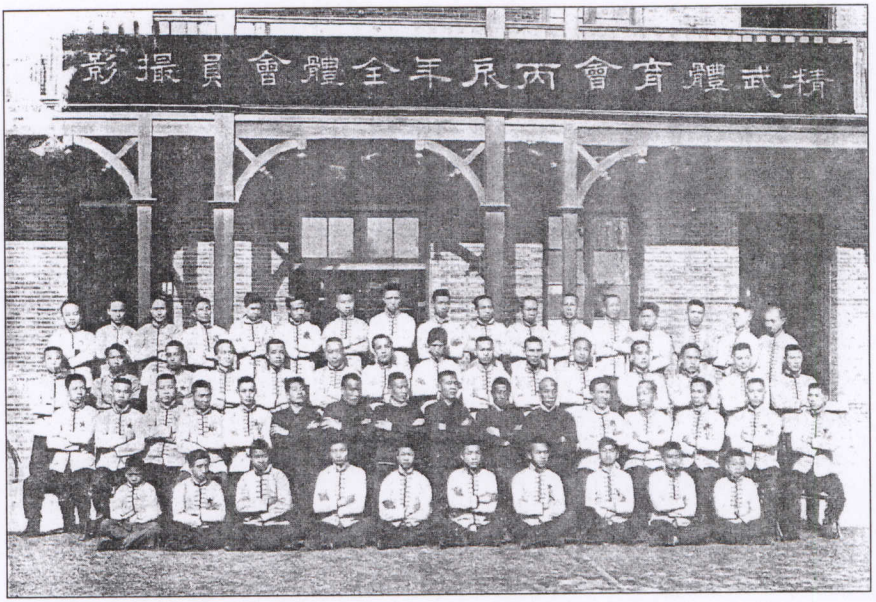
Contents

Introduction

The Qing dynasty collapsed into rot and disorder. The Republic of China scrambled for life. Sun Yat-Sen's vision of a new, democratic China was born, but as warlords roamed the land and foreign armies surrounded the major ports, people feared that the Kuomintang's hope for a democratic China would die an early and swift death. It was a time of both chaos and vision in China. Chinese martial arts were plunging into their darkest hours. In the wake of the Boxer Rebellion, people in China scorned the traditional martial arts, and whether traditional Chinese martial arts would survive at all was uncertain: their extinction was a very real possibility. Into this tumult was born the most famous and important Chinese martial arts training hall—the Jingwu Association.

The Jingwu Association preserved and developed Chinese martial arts to guarantee they would survive the transition from traditional to modern China. The Jingwu was the school that saved *kung fu,* the traditional martial arts of China. How the Jingwu did this is the subject of this book.

The Jingwu's most influential period ran from its founding in 1909 to 1924. Financial troubles and changing political climates brought the Jingwu's influence in China to a close by 1926. The Jingwu Association survived—and in some parts of the world thrived—after this time, but our focus in this book is on how the Jingwu Association was in its first ten years. Modern-day practitioners of Chinese martial arts owe much to the work of the Jingwu Association and its various branches. The Jingwu Association deserves to be better known for its contributions, and it is our hope that this book does in some small way popularize the Jingwu Association and its importance.



Jingwu members

Established in Shanghai in 1909, the Jingwu Association was a privately funded academy that taught Chinese martial arts as well as a wide variety of other sports and recreations. The Jingwu Association was:

- The first public Chinese martial arts training facility
- The first to teach Chinese martial arts as a sport or recreation
- The first to place women's programs on an equal footing with men's programs
- The first to use books, magazines, and movies to promote Chinese martial arts

Each of these "firsts" represents a major change from the way Chinese martial arts had been taught and practiced in the past. The Jingwu embodied both continuity and discontinuity: on the one hand, it sought to promote traditional Chinese martial arts, but on the other hand, it presented those arts in a fundamentally different way than they had been in the past.

Originally, the Jingwu Association consisted of a single academy in Shanghai. Within a few years, that single location had expanded into branches all over China as well as in Chinese communities in Southeast Asia, including Vietnam and Indonesia. At the Jingwu's height in the late 1920s, there were over fifty branch schools. The Jingwu program is still alive and well in the twenty-first century, with branches all over the world.

One of the biggest misunderstandings about the Jingwu Association and its program is that the Jingwu was just about martial arts. As a brief perusal of any of their publications would make clear, martial arts were just one part of the Jingwu program—and in some of the Jingwu Association's branches, they were a fairly small part. For many of the Jingwu Association's branches, other sports activities, cerebral activities such as chess or English language lessons, and social activities such as hiking and hunting trips were more central to the program than martial arts. But be that as it may, the Jingwu's place in Chinese history is really related to its martial arts programs. To see how this unfolded, a bit of background is necessary, and a good place to start is with the name itself.

The name *Jingwu* means literally "the essence of martial arts" or more awkwardly, "the selected best of martial arts." It can be spelled *Jing Mo, Ching Wu, Jing Wo,* or *Chin Woo,* depending on how it is romanized. The modern, Pinyin spelling is *Jingwu,* which is what we will use in this book. There are two variables in the spelling of *Jingwu:* the romanization system used and the specific Chinese dialect that is being romanized. Cantonese-speaking Chinese in Hong Kong will pronounce the name quite differently than will a Mandarian speaker in Beijing, and a speaker of Shanghainese will pronounce it differently, too. These different pronouncations can be converted to English letters using a number of different systems, including Wade-Giles and Pinyin. The end result is that the name *Jingwu* gets spelled a lot of different ways.

The formal Chinese name of the Jingwu Association changed during its Republican-Era lifespan, and these changes were more than

cosmetic. They reflected changes in the approach used, and although the different names may sound about the same in translation, the different names carried considerably different connotations to native speakers of Chinese at the time. At its inception, the association was named the Pure Martial Calisthenics School (Jingwu Ticao Xuexiao). Later, in April 1916, the organization changed its name to the Pure Martial Athletic Association (Jingwu Tiyuhui). The latter name carries much more of a "sports and recreation" connotation, whereas the former is more a straight "martial arts training hall" name.

Jingwu can be used to mean a couple of different things, which sometimes can get confusing. *Jingwu* can refer to the actual brick-and-mortar academy in Shanghai, or it can refer to the network as a whole (the Jingwu Academy and all of its branch academies). Lastly, it can refer to the idea, the *leitmotif,* of what they were trying to do. For example, some of the early promoters of the Jingwu Association spoke of spreading the "Jingwu spirit" across China and among the Chinese diaspora. Put more simply, Jingwu can be the place, the organization, or the idea. In this book, when we say "Jingwu Association" or "Jingwu" we are speaking of the central organization located in Shanghai, China, and we are talking about that organization as it was in the early part of the twentieth century.

Sources

The focus in this book is on material coming from a book published in 1919 by the Jingwu Association to mark their ten-year anniversary. The book's full title in Chinese is *Jingwu Ben Ji,* and complete editions have survived. (We will refer to this book as the Anniversary Book.) Our copy comes from the collection of Liu Kang Yi, who is the owner of Lion Books of Taiwan. Lion Books has reprinted the Jingwu Anniversary Book, but the book has not yet been translated into English. There are other sources that we have used, as well: Robert Louie was kind enough to make available to us copies of the fifty-year-anniversary book, and Pat Hodges made available the Hawaiian Jingwu fifty-year-anniversary book. We are indebted to both of these fine men for their help.

Jingwu youth program

The Jingwu story is a mix of myth and historical facts. Sorting out those two is difficult. In particular, when the discussion turns to the martial arts aspects of things, and especially the life of Huo Yuanjia (the famous martial arts teacher who helped establish the Jingwu Association), the legends far outstrip the solid documentary evidence. It is important to clearly distinguish what is reasonably solid historical fact and what is most likely myth. Both myth and historical facts have value, and both have a "reality," but they are separate things. For example, in Huo Yuanjia's case we have basically no contemporaneous documents about his life—that is, we don't have any historical evidence. But his mythic image is extremely important to the Jingwu Association, and in a sense, it is more real than the historical reality—and perhaps far more important. When a story is said to be a myth, people sometimes get the wrong impression that the story is being called a lie. "Myth" is not a synonym for "lie." Instead, myths are important models and stories that are not historically true but that we can look to as guides.

Much is devoted to myths in Chinese martial arts, because myths provide meaning, color, inspiration, and moral guidance. But the confabulation of myth and historical fact is a long-standing problem within Chinese martial arts writings. Writers of Chinese martial arts stories, be they nineteenth-century Chinese newspaper journalists or twenty-first-century American martial arts magazine writers, often mix and match between myth and historical fact without drawing much of a solid line between the two. Instead, the focus in this book will be on historical reality, while discussing the mythic aspects of the Jingwu story where appropriate; our hope is to keep the two separate.

1

Chaos and Vision: The Birth of the Jingwu Association

To see the true importance of the Jingwu Association, it needs to be placed in a bigger picture of the history of Chinese martial arts.

Four Historical Phases of Chinese Martial Arts

Chinese martial arts as they exist today are the outcome of four historical phases, all of which occurred within the last hundred years. These four phases were:

1. The original village-military phase
2. The Jingwu Association phase
3. The Nationalist Government's Guoshu phase
4. The People's Republic of China's Wushu phase

Each of the four phases brought something new to Chinese martial arts development. As mentioned, Chinese martial arts went from phase one to phase four all within a fairly short period of time. For most of its long history, Chinese martial arts were in the original village-military phase, and the other three phases unfolded in rapid succession in the twentieth century.

The original village-military phase

Up until about 1900, Chinese martial arts training was conducted either in the military by active-duty soldiers or in villages, where martial arts were practiced as either a recreation for children or by adults who were involved in village defense as part of militias. If you were an adult training in martial arts, you were preparing to fight as part of

Ming-dynasty military spear practice

an organized military unit. Learning martial arts was not an adult hobby, recreation, or pastime; it was a practical skill, a manual trade. Martial arts training in this village-military phase emphasized weapons use. Most of the time would be devoted to group formations using spears, staffs, sabers, and shields. Contact training was also a part of this. Padded weapons, like modern-day military pugil sticks, were used both in the Ming and Qing dynasties. Empty-hand practice and involved solo routines were a very small part of this kind of training. Also, training was "closed door," meaning that a stranger could not just walk up with a checkbook and say, "I want to learn your martial art; here is my money." We are not saying that martial arts was not a business in pre-modern China; on the contrary, one of the reasons martial arts techniques or training methods were not publically for sale was that they were viewed as trade secrets, which were shown only to those whom the teacher trusted. The idea that traditional Chinese martial arts were not a business is very much a modern, Western idea that has no basis in reality.

Ming-dynasty military spear sparring

Another Western idea that has no basis in reality is the notion that Buddhist monks, Shaolin or otherwise, and Daoist immortals, Wutang or otherwise, had any major thing to do with the development of Chinese martial arts. They did not. Much like the mythic aspects of the Jingwu Association, the

Bodhidharma–Shaolin monk story and its companion myth—in which the Daoist immortal San Chan Feng invents internal martial arts—are both largely the creations of Chinese pulp journalists and are all of fairly recent vintage. That is why the historical outline above does not have a "Shaolin monks and Daoist immortals" phase—there was none.

The Jingwu Association phase

The first public martial arts school where one could just walk in the door, pay a fee, and sign up was the Jingwu Association, which opened in 1909 and ushered in a new era in Chinese martial arts training. The Jingwu's most influential time ran from 1909 to 1924. The founding of the Jingwu Association, with its focus on "walk in, sign up, and learn Chinese martial arts as a form of exercise and recreation" marks the single most important turning point in Chinese martial arts—the transition from being a manual trade associated with the military, militias, and bodyguards to being a form of cultural recreation.

In fairness, it should be mentioned that there were other privately funded martial arts groups in China who were doing the same kind of things that the Jingwu Association was doing. But these other groups, for whatever variety of reasons, were all short-lived and not particularly influential.

The Nationalist government's Guoshu phase

The Jingwu idea of public martial arts instruction was expanded in the late 1920s and 1930s by the Nationalist-government-sponsored Guoshu Project. The Guoshu Project took the Jingwu idea one step further: the Jingwu had made martial arts available to the public; the Nationalist Guoshu Project wanted to create a national, standardized martial arts program that would be a tool for promoting government policies. The Jingwu was private, whereas the Nationalist Guoshu Project was a government agency. The Jingwu was a coastal-cities project with a limited number of branches; the Nationalist Guoshu Project was envisioned as being nationwide, with branches in every public school in China. However, by the time the Nationalist Guoshu Project was

coming to life, much of China had already sunk into civil war or had become subject to the depredations of the Warlord Period. This caused many of the plans of the Nationalist Guoshu Project to not reach their fulfilment. The Nationalist Guoshu Project's heyday ran for a decade, from 1927 to 1937.

The Communist People's Republic of China's Wushu phase

After the dust and blood settled from the Chinese Civil War, the victorious Communist government continued the Republican government's Nationalist Guoshu Project, albeit under a new name. The Communist government started work on their new National Wushu Project in 1959. *Guoshu* literally means "national arts"; it was the phrase used as a generic term for Chinese martial arts during the Republican Era, from 1911 to 1949. In contrast, *Wushu,* literally "war arts," is a phrase commonly associated with the Communist Chinese governement martial arts programs. Although *Wushu* in a more general sense simply means "martial arts," when Westerners speak of *Wushu* they are generally talking about this project.

The National Wushu Program created more physically demanding routines that involved many more gymnastic moves and converted Chinese martial arts into a high-level competition sport in line with such sports as figure skating and gymnastics. The Communist Wushu Program also made a pointed effort to remove the fighting applications and combat aspects from the training. These initial changes took place from 1959 to 1961, but to this day the Communist government continues to change Wushu on an ongoing basis. Wushu can be described as a very physically demanding type of folk dance or floor gymnastics with movements derived from traditional Chinese martial arts systems. And that brings us up to the twenty-first century.

The Jingwu Association and the New Culture Movement

The fact that cultural forces affected the development of Chinese martial arts may seem an obvious truism, but it is often overlooked. Martial arts reflect the culture and the times; to fully understand any period of

Chinese martial arts history, an understanding of the cultural and intellectual milieu is important. In the study of Chinese martial arts history, too often the cultural background is limited to some nonsensical talk about Buddhism or Daoism—and even then the Buddhism and Daoism mentioned is not Chinese Buddhism or Chinese Daoism but rather a Western or American faux-Buddhism or "dumbed-down" Daoism.

By way of a minor example, one sometimes hears that "Chinese master 'so and so' retired to a Buddhist mountain temple for a year and developed his system of kung fu"—which sounds very romantic. But the mundane reality is that Buddhist and Daoist temples usually ran a lucrative side business of what we would now know as bed-and-breakfast inns or tourist cottages that were rented by the month. There was nothing wildly exotic about someone renting a cottage on property owned by a Buddhist monastery in order to get away from the wife, kids, mistresses, and all the other daily hassles and turning one's attention to some private project: writing a novel, doing some reading, or developing a new system of martial arts.

The point is that what can initially seem strange or special is often somewhat less exciting when viewed in a proper cultural framework. In a broader sense, the development of Chinese martial arts did not occur in a vacuum; it took place in a given historical and cultural context, and a three-dimensional view of Chinese martial arts history requires at least a modicum of cultural background. With that in mind, let us take a look at the culture that swirled around the birth of the Jingwu Association.

Knowing the Players

The vocabulary surrounding the history of the Jingwu Association can get a bit confusing, so explaining who some of the players and organizations are will be helpful.

- The Republic of China is the official name of the nation that arose after the fall of the last imperial dynasty, the Qing dynasty. The Republic of China survives today on the island of Taiwan.
- The Nationalist Government was the government of the Republic of China between 1911 and 1949; this is also known as the Republican Era.
- The Kuomintang (KMT) was the main ruling party within the Nationalist Government. The Kuomintang survives today on the island of Taiwan.
- The warlords were military leaders or brigands who had private armies and ran various parts of China, either in league with other warlords, the KMT, or the Japanese. In the end, the warlord who won was General Chiang Kai-Shek.
- The Republican Era was the time between the fall of the Qing dynasty and the end of the Chinese Civil War: 1911 to 1949.
- The Japanese military had a presence in the far north of China during the Republican Era. They were also were a powerful force at the treaty ports and often worked in league with various warlord groups. On the civilian side, many Japanese were working to undercut Chinese businesses and increase Japanese influence over the failing Chinese economy.
- The Chinese Communist Party was not a major player until the mid-1920s and had little direct impact on the Jingwu Association's development. But later on, they took the ideas put forward by the Jingwu Association to develop their own Wushu Program.

The Warlord Period

Between 1911 and 1927, China was not politically unified. It was run by a collection of private warlords who had divided up China in the wake of the collapse of the Qing dynasty; some of these warlords worked in league with the Japanese to achieve their goals. When China was unified under the Nationalist Government in 1927, the Nationalist Government turned its support to the Nationalist Guoshu Project as their favored nationwide martial arts program.

The name "Warlord Period" conjures up images of chaos and warfare, but while it is true that the period was unstable and lawless, and many people lost their lives either in direct combat or by privation, the unrest varied from province to province and from one time to another. It was during this period that the Jingwu Association was formed and expanded into other parts of China. An astute reader might wonder how this was possible if China was not unified and the whole country was being ripped apart by brigands and warfare. The reason the Warlord Period did not disrupt the development of the Jingwu was the fact that the majority of the warlord battles occurred in the non-urbanized areas. They did not occur as often in the urbanized coastal provinces, where the Jingwu tended to operate and have its successes.

The New Culture Movement

The Jingwu Association was clearly a product of the new philosophy and intellectual ferment that provided a cultural foundation for the fall of the Qing dynasty and the founding of the Republic of China. The most important of these cultural movements was the New Culture Movement. The New Culture Movement was active and influential between 1907 and 1923, driven by university students and a new breed of Chinese intellectuals who had studied abroad and had learned a wider range of subjects than traditional Chinese intellectuals had.

Responding to the collapse of the Qing dynasty and the failures of the new government of the Republic of China, the New Culture Movement was a movement of intellectuals blaming the cultural heritage of

China for the many problems besetting China. This movement had a direct connection with the Jingwu Association, as the advocates for the Jingwu Association often wrote articles for the various New Culture Movement journals and newspapers. The Chinese public first learned of the activities of the Jingwu Association in the pages of New Culture Movement newspapers, and most of the driving members of the Jingwu Association were also members of the New Culture Movement. It is unknown to what extent the martial arts teachers who taught for the Jingwu Association agreed with the tenets of the New Culture Movement, but most certainly the Jingwu Association as a whole was in agreement with the movement.

The immediate trigger for the start of the New Culture Movement was the fact that several major warlords in northern China had established agreements with the Japanese that allowed the Japanese military to occupy various parts of northern and central China. This "selling out of China" by certain warlords led to student protest. This comes out in the Jingwu myth and in several of the movies about the Jingwu, wherein the Japanese are portrayed as the "evil heavies" who are working in league with corrupt Chinese to take over China. That certainly was a historical reality; the Japanese very much had their eye on taking over as much of China as they could. The corruption of the warlords and the competition among them provided the Japanese with many opportunities to expand their influence, and the Japanese took advantage of those opportunities.

This Japanese push into China provided several of the fundamental ideas of the New Culture Movement. There were five fundamental aspects that the New Culture Movement took a stand against: old culture, old politics, Japanese manufactured goods, old education, and old forms of literature. Some of these tenets were vague and others more concrete; nonetheless, all of them had a direct impact on the formation of the Jingwu Association. For example, the first tenet, which was against "the old culture," was expressed by the Jingwu Association's desire to modernize Chinese martial arts and lift them out of the realm of superstition and moribund tradition. The second tenet, against "the old

politics," referred to the policies that had allowed the warlords to thrive and the Japanese to carve up China. It was expressed in the Jingwu program by the insistence that the Chinese people must strengthen themselves to be able to resist foreign oppression and must develop a pride in being Chinese, so as to make it impossible for the warlords to continue with their treason against China. Of course, the primary mechanism to do this was through traditional Chinese martial arts.

The third tenet, against Japanese manufactured goods, came out indirectly in the Jingwu program through its focus on Chinese culture, society, and products (as opposed to an overemphasis on foreign goods). The fourth tenet, against "the old education," had a very direct impact on the Jingwu program; the Jingwu Association taught its martial arts very differently from the traditional approach. Also, the Jingwu Association had a women's program, and one of the Jingwu's main spokespeople was a female martial artist and New Culture Movement advocate named Chen Shi Shao. The last of the major tenets, against the old forms of classical Chinese literature, suggested an abandonment of the very stiff, formal type of classical Chinese writing and replacing it with a type of writing that more closely reflected ordinary speech. The Jingwu program incorporated this plank of the New Culture Movement by avoiding flowery and formal Chinese rhetoric. The Jingwu did not avoid rhetoric completely—they were masters at using the written word to inspire—but they did focus on modern vernacular Chinese rather than classical Chinese.

The Mythic and the Mundane

As is true for most aspects of Chinese martial arts, the history of the Jingwu Association has a mythic side and a truer, or at least more verifiable, mundane side. Turning first to the mythic, the Jingwu "creation myth" has it that a well-known teacher of Northern Shaolin named Huo Yuanjia arrived in Shanghai in 1907. Huo's fame (as depicted in movies and fan magazines) was due to his ability to beat down foreign wrestlers, boxers, strongmen, and loudmouths, all from the raised platforms known in traditional Chinese martial arts as *lei tai.* Huo's

most famous escapade, depending on which version you subscribe to, involved either a Russian or English strongman stage fighter who in 1909 or 1910 publicly claimed that the whole of China could provide no competition for his strength and fighting abilities. He pledged to "flatten any sick men of East Asia" who dared challenge him. The famous martial arts master Huo Yuanjia stepped up, took care of business, and restored the honor of the Chinese race. Huo, the man of the hour, was then approached by Chinese reformers who wanted to create a school where the Chinese could develop their martial arts skills so that China could stand proudly among modern nations. Thus, the Jingwu Association was born—or so the myth goes.

Certainly, there is some reality standing behind the myth. Huo was a skilled martial artist. And it is entirely likely that there were foreigners in Shanghai issuing stage challenges—such staged fights were a common form of entertainment in turn of the century Europe and North America as well as China. Because participants understood that it was a show and that they would split the profits, sometimes they would use inflammatory talk to get ticket sales up. Be that as it may, there is no reliable proof for the particulars of the Jingwu genesis story.

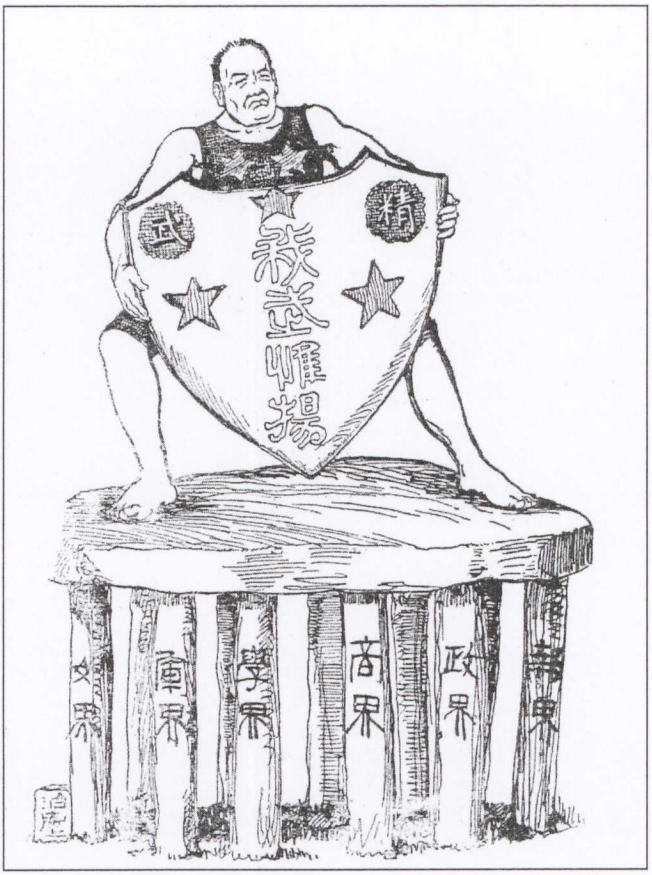
The creation myth of the Jingwu Association has a final chapter to it: Soon after the founding of the Jingwu, Huo died. The most likely cause was changes in Huo's medicine that he was taking for a chronic medical condition. The far less likely—but far more exciting—mythic reason was that an evil Japanese doctor who disliked Huo for his anti-foreigner stance poisoned him.

Now we turn from the mythic to the mundane. The Jingwu Association was founded by a group of pro-Republican journalists and reformers in 1909. The funding for the enterprise came almost exclusively from three early graduates of the Jingwu Association, all of whom came from wealthy business families. Plans were already underway for the Association when several of the founders approached Huo Yuanjia and invited him to become the chief instructor for the Jingwu and, perhaps more importantly, serve as a living symbol of the "new Chinese citizen" they hoped to create: one who was proud, well-educated, physically fit,

morally upright, and able to stand up to physical challenges from any source, whether on the *lei tai* stage, the sports arena, or the battlefield.

Jingwu Pillars

Although duke-outs and duels with foreign braggarts and boxers make good movies, the organizers of the Jingwu knew that if Chinese martial arts were going to successfully survive in modern China, they would need support from several sectors of modern Chinese society.



The "Jingwu pillars"

The man with the Jingwu shield summarizes it: the wording down the center of the shield states "to make our martial arts famous and widespread," while the pillars read "journalists, politicians, business people, academics, military, women's organizations." The Jingwu Association sought to enlist the aid of all of these sectors of modern China in order to achieve its goal of spreading Chinese martial arts.

From a modern perspective, it may be hard to see how radical a shift this was. The idea of "siding up" with merchants, scholars, and—heaven forbid—women's groups to promote martial arts would have been absolutely unacceptable to a typical Chinese martial arts instructor from a generation earlier. The Jingwu Association was the first Chinese martial arts training organization to make a concerted and systematic effort to convince other sectors of Chinese society that the practice of Chinese martial arts was a worthwhile recreational pursuit and deserving of society's support.

In a very modern marketing way, Jingwu advocates would make presentations to different groups—merchants, academics, and politicians—extolling the positive aspects of the Jingwu program and asking, quite directly, for those groups' support. These Jingwu sales presentations included movies taken at various Jingwu events. Movies were still quite the novelty in China, and the Jingwu's use of such a medium reflected the modernity of their approach.

Scientific Chinese Martial Arts

The "new Chinese citizen" that the Jingwu was trying to create was also a citizen who understood and used modern science. As such, the Jingwu's approach involved jettisoning such traditional martial arts superstitions as "spirit punches" that could kill opponents without touching them, "divine swords" that took on lives on their own, and other supernatural concepts.

A bit of historical context is in order. By the 1800s, Chinese martial arts were personified, in the eyes of the public, by the Boxers of the Boxer Rebellion: martial artists who were grossly ignorant, usually in poor physical condition, and often at or below the poverty line, with

no particular social roots. The average martial artist in the 1800s might think, for example, that if you get a good talisman from a Daoist priest, burn the talisman, and then add the ashes to some booze and drink it, you can jump over a building or become bulletproof. Of course, not all Chinese martial artists of the 1800s were superstitious lowlifes; people like Sun Lu Tang were intelligent, rational, and generally well-informed about the world. But then, of course, one of the reasons Sun Lu Tang was so famous was that his intelligence and rationality was unusual.

In place of "spirit punches" and "flying swords," the Jingwu incorporated modern (and Western) ideas of sports science, medicine, and nutrition into Chinese martial arts. Chinese martial arts were to be stripped of practices that either had no basis in reality or were detrimental to health, since in the Jingwu approach, Chinese martial arts were considered a form of healthy exercise in addition to being a form of combat.

Graduates and Certificates

Students did graduate from the Jingwu program, and their annual graduation ceremonies were often major productions (depending on the available budget) that served to both honor the graduates and get positive press for the Jingwu program. This was a marked departure from traditional Chinese martial arts, which generally avoided any kind of ranking system or the idea that one would "graduate" with a certificate (like in a Western university). The Jingwu introduced the idea of a curriculum with set requirements and the idea that when the student completed the lessons in the teaching plan, they would be given a certificate and graduated into some other series of classes in some other area of Chinese martial arts. This very clearly, albeit symbolically, reflected a different view of Chinese martial arts as well as their transition from being a soldier's trade to a middle-class recreation. No Qing-dynasty martial arts teacher would issue graduation certificates to students (or belts, for that matter). But when martial arts became a recreation, people wanted an external certification to show their progress, and the Jingwu provided that.

Books Are the Way

One aspect of the Jingwu approach that is certainly at odds with the "butt-kicking fury" of Bruce Lee's portrayal of the Jingwu is the fact that the Jingwu Association relied heavily on books, magazines, newspaper articles, and pamphlets to spread the Jingwu program. One of the Jingwu's mottos was, "Without 'letters,' the effort to spread martial arts across the nation is bound to fail."

One of the primary movers and shakers in the Jingwu Association was a journalist named Chen Tiesheng, who started the Jingwu's literary efforts in 1916 with a series of heavily illustrated magazine articles on different forms of traditional Chinese martial arts. Chen went on to write a number of widely read articles on the Jingwu that appeared in different progressive magazines. The Jingwu's magnum opus, however, came in 1919 with the publication of *Jingwu Record,* which was a three-hundred-page commemorative book published to mark the ten-year anniversary of the Jingwu Association.

In 1922, the Jingwu Association started publishing its own magazine through its own publishing company. The Jingwu also opened its own library, which contained books in both Chinese and English on a wide range of sports-related topics, including, of course, martial arts.

By devoting time and effort to producing martial arts books and magazines, the Jingwu was trying to bring together two very ancient streams in Chinese culture: the *wen* and the *wu,* or the literary and the martial. Although lip service had been paid to this ideal for centuries, the Jingwu was the first martial arts organization in China to actually create a coherent, sustained program to publish martial arts training materials and, more broadly, to unify literary and martial skills into one curriculum and one training program.

Women on an Equal Footing

Aside from the legend of Hua Mulan and the legendary female fighters of the sword epics, martial arts practice was considered an utterly inappropriate pursuit for women in traditional China; with some very rare exceptions, martial arts were for men only. The Jingwu attempted to reverse this reality and place women's martial arts programs on an equal footing with men's programs.

The Jingwu women's program got started in 1917, and within a year, the women's program was operating in several schools in Shanghai. The Jingwu's Anniversary Book contains a number of essays by women who were involved in the Jingwu program. The general theme of these essays was that in the new, modern, scientific China, women could and should participate in all activities; their gender was not a bar to physical or martial arts development. The thing that was remarkable about the Jingwu women's martial arts program was the fact that it was not a token effort or some kind of "window dressing." The women's martial arts program was every bit as serious and real as the men's program. Women participated in the full range of martial arts training, including sparring and weapons work.

Chen Shichao was the main advocate for the Jingwu women's program. Her courage and ability to withstand public criticism and censure were remarkable. Encouraging women to participate in sports, in particular in martial sports, was an idea that was not well received by many. She first founded the Jingwu women's team in 1918 and became the director of the Jingwu Women's Sports Association in 1920. She worked to establish women's sports programs in the various Jingwu branches. She was also one of the five

Chen Shichao, head of the Jingwu women's program

people who visited Southeast Asia in 1920 to initiate future Jingwu Associations in that area. Chen was also a skilled photographer. Her brother was Chen Gongzhe, who was also an important Jingwu figure.

Dollars and Demise

As mentioned, the Jingwu Association was privately funded through both membership fees and donors. The Jingwu Association came to rely on three of its early graduates for the bulk of its financial support: Lu Weichang, Chen Gongzhe, and Yao Chanbo, who were known as the "Three Corporations" because of the heavy degree to which they funded the Jingwu's activities. Lu and Chen were both from wealthy Guangdong families, and both men were highly educated hardware-store owners. Yao was from Jiangsu and had made his wealth through his family's dye business. The three of them met and became friends at the Jingwu Association. They worked together both to spread the "Jingwu message" and to financially support the organization. The three of them pooled their financial resources to invest in a range of businesses, the most important of which was a trading company that imported textile spindles from England. One of the other businesses they invested in was the Watsons chain of drugstores in southern China. (Watsons still operates in Hong Kong and Taiwan.) The firm's most famous early success was in 1832, when it established the first soda-water factory in China. This allowed its drug stores to make carbonated drinks and serve them in soda fountains in their stores. It is an interesting irony that the Jingwu, with its emphasis on healthy living, was partially funded by people buying soft drinks.

Although the bulk of the money came from these three men and their business ventures, the Jingwu did have other ways to generate money. It is often incorrectly assumed that the commercialization of Chinese martial arts is somehow a modern, Western evil; it is not. Chinese martial arts have always been a business and have always had a very obviously commercial aspect to them. And the Jingwu did much to increase the commercialization of Chinese martial arts. It was with the Jingwu that Chinese martial arts became a product that could be

marketed. The Jingwu also encouraged other businesses to buy advertisements in Jingwu publications and help support the program—businesses that included beer companies, tobacco companies, and insurance companies.

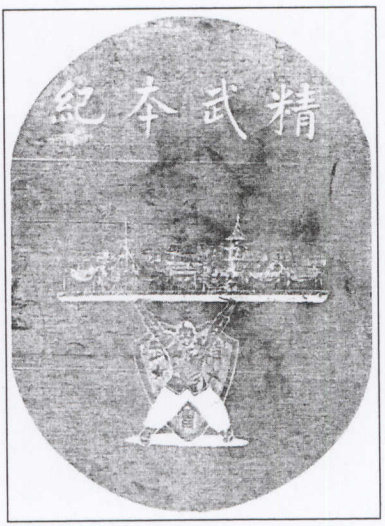
Nonetheless, the Jingwu still relied on the Three Corporations for the majority of their operating budget. In 1924, the trading company Lu, Chen, and Yao had formed to import spindles went bankrupt, taking with it their personal fortunes. With these three patrons gone, the Jingwu was bankrupt, too, and basically closed its doors in China. However, in other areas of the world—in particular in South Asia, Hawaii, and North America—the Jingwu program has continued to thrive into the twenty-first century.

2

Letting the Jingwu Anniversary Book Tell Its Own Story

The best way to tell the story of the early days of the Jingwu Association is through the ten-year Anniversary Book. Published in 1919, the Anniversary Book was a lavishly illustrated, three-hundred-page hardcover book, put together with obvious pride and care by the Jingwu Association. Although such anniversary books are common for Chinese associations, companies, and social groups, the Jingwu Anniversary Book is the only major anniversary book for a martial arts organization that we have surviving copies of. By looking through the Anniversary Book section by section, we can get a feel for how the Jingwu Association wanted to portray itself.

The cover of the surviving copies of the Anniversary Book has faded considerably. What has not faded is the message that the purpose of the Jingwu Association was to uplift China—and that the Jingwu was strong enough to do this. The cover shows, in dramatic fashion, the "Atlas" of the Jingwu Association literally holding up China. As a bit of graphic symbolism, this image shows how the Jingwu envisioned itself: not just as a martial arts school but as an important support for the uplifting of China.



The Jingwu uplifts China

Although we referenced the Greek god Atlas, there is an equivalent

figure in traditional Chinese mythology known as *Pangu.* Pangu is usually depicted in Chinese mythology as a kind of "super caveman": strong and primitive—but kind—dressed in clothes made of animal skins and leaves. He is easy to spot in temple parades with the horns on his head and his extremely bushy eyebrows.

Pangu temple puppet

Pangu was the first living being and the creator of everything else. In the beginning, before there was "time," there was nothing in the universe except a formless chaos. However, over eighteen thousand years, this chaos coalesced into a cosmic egg. Within it, the perfectly opposed principles of yin and yang became balanced, and Pangu emerged from the egg. Pangu set about the task of creating the world: He separated yin from yang with a swing of his giant axe. This created heaven and earth. To keep them separated, Pangu assumed a horse stance on earth and shoved heaven upward. To keep them apart, he held the stance for another eighteen thousand years. This stance was much like the horse stance held by the Jingwu member on the front cover, and for traditional Chinese, the connection between Pangu and the Jingwu student would be immediate. The Jingwu Association would create a new Chinese race that would take its rightful place in the world.

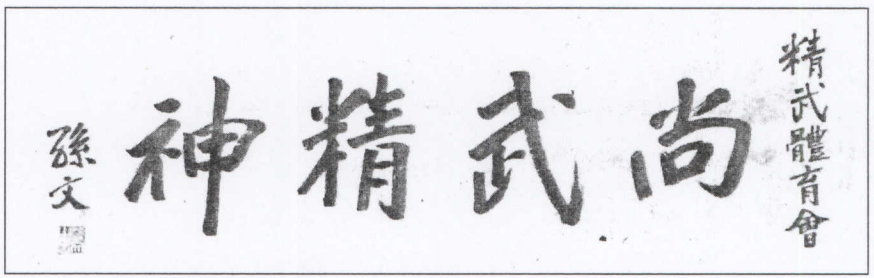
Sun Yat-Sen's Preface

The very first page of the Anniversary Book is devoted to a preface written by Sun Yat-Sen. Sun Yat-Sen was the first President of the Republic of China and is considered its "father." His preface gives the Jingwu Association considerable cachet and face. Having such an esteemed leader as Sun pen the preface was very important in establishing the credibility of the Jingwu in the public's view.

The preface talks about the demise of physical conditioning among the Chinese, and Sun laments the fact that China has become a nation of weak people. He lavishes praise on the Jingwu Association for its work in bringing physical education and physical development to the modern Chinese people.

The view that martial arts and physical development were important to the development of the Republic of China was a theme carried on by Sun's successor, President Chiang Kai-Shek. In President Chiang's supplement to Sun Yat-Sen's *Three Principles of the People (San Min Chu I),* he wrote:

> There are certain arts and technical abilities a modern Chinese citizen should be conversant with. We must encourage certain arts among which the following is the most important: Chinese boxing. Chinese boxing is not simply a form of physical contest; it is also pregnant with meaning for the physical education of our citizens. Its highest ideal is to enable the learner to remain calm and serene, to coordinate his mind and muscles, and to strike home with the full force of both. Such an attitude is somewhat different from the basic assumptions of the Western type of boxing. We call our type the "Chinese national boxing *(Guoshu),*" because we wish to emphasize its significance for the physical and mental health of our citizens. In all our future educational plans, we must regard Chinese boxing as an essential item in the physical education of our citizens and encourage people to learn it with all the persuasion and authority we can command.



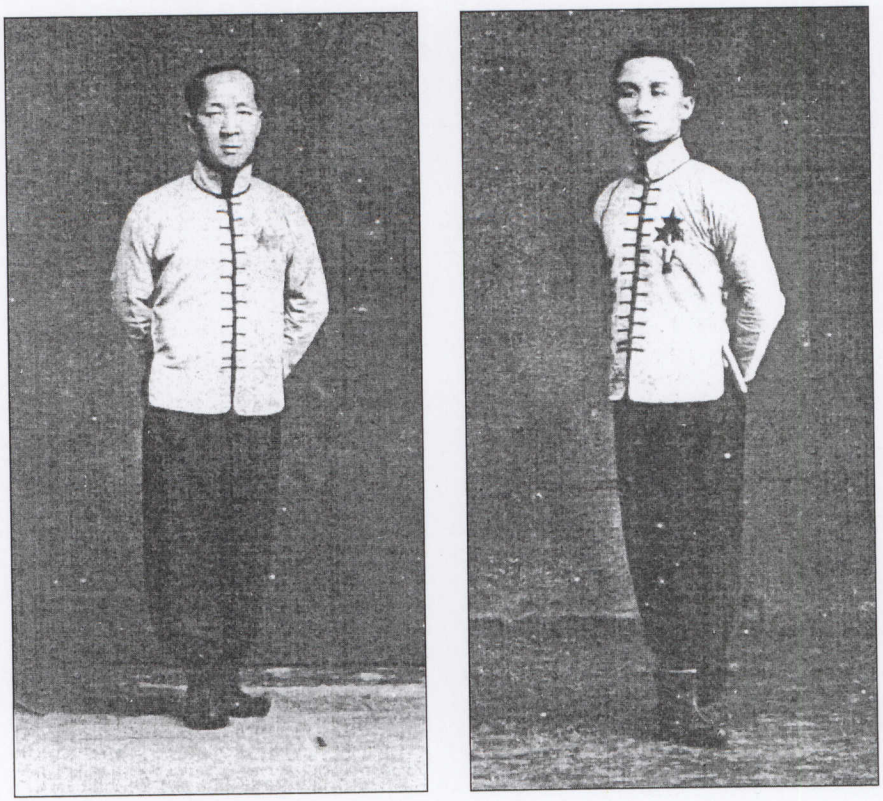
The spirit of advocating martial arts; calligraphy by Sun Yat-Sen presented to the Jingwu Association

Huo Yuanjia and the Main Founders

The first photograph in the book is a full-page portrait of Huo Yuanjia, who is identified as the founder of Jingwu. We will talk much more about Huo Yuanjia later, but one thing is clear from his full-page portrait: Huo was honored above all others as being what the Chinese would refer to as the "spiritual founder and leader" of the Jingwu.

Huo Yuanjia

On the next page, there are two portraits: One is of Chen Gongzhe, who is, according to the caption, the "photography director for this book and owner of a hardware business." The other is of Chen Tiesheng, who is identified as being "chief editor and by profession a journalist." It is a standard practice in Chinese martial arts books of the Republican Era to acknowledge the main editor and art director in the front of the book. In this case, both of these men were also among the main founders of and advocates for the Jingwu Association.



Chen Gongzhe (right) and Chen Tiesheng (left)

To give an idea of their role, we will present some of the background of their lives, along with some information about a few other major founders. These short biographies are compiled from various "official sources"—that is, Chinese government agencies. Note that "official" is

not a synonym for "accurate," but these sources do reflect the received view of events and in most regards are accurate. Huo Yuanjia will be discussed in the sections about martial arts, but this is a good time to introduce the lives of the main organizers and administrators of the early Jingwu.

Chen Gongzhe

Chen Gongzhe was one of the main founders of the Jingwu Association and was very involved in its early development. Chen Gongzhe, like most of the early proponents of the Jingwu Association, was a university graduate. He studied at Shanghai's Fudan University. Fudan University was newly established at the time Chen attended, and the university had a reputation as being one of China's most progressive universities.

In 1913 Chen inherited his father's property and became a businessman in Shanghai. The business prospered and Chen became quite wealthy. In addition to managing his family's business concerns, Chen was a very interested practitioner of Chinese martial arts, and he wrote a number of Chinese martial arts books, which were published as part of the Jingwu's martial arts program.

Chen Gongzhe made all of his family's business wealth available to finance the Jingwu Association. His largess allowed the Jingwu Association to open more than forty branches throughout southern China as well as in Vietnam, Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia.

In 1924, Chen became the assistant director of the Beijing Municipal Government and, in the same year, the member of the Tianjin Foreign Exchange Committee. Both of these were prominent government positions. In his later years he settled down in Hong Kong and led a quiet life. He returned to China in 1957 to attend a major martial arts conference. During the course of that conference he made recommendations about the development of the government martial art program. Upon his return to Hong Kong, he wrote his major work, *The History of Chinese Wushu,* which was a general review of Chinese martial arts as he had seen it over the course of his life.

Chen Tiesheng

While Chen Gongzhe was well known for providing the money that fueled the development of the Jingwu Association, it was Chen Tiesheng who provided its rhetoric. Chen Tiesheng was active in the New Culture Movement and had a long career as both a martial arts journalist and a social commentator.

The first author to write about the Jingwu's program, he began his work in 1916 with a set of illustrated articles on different martial arts training routines. These articles appeared in a widely read college students' magazine. Chen continued to write many articles for other popular magazines and newspapers extolling the Jingwu program. He was the Jingwu Association's "media guru" and chief publicist. Chen Tiesheng adroitly defended the Jingwu program and the value of Chinese martial arts when both were criticized as being backward. Chen was also the main editor for the Anniversary Book and contributed the bulk of its essays. When the Jingwu Association started its own magazine in 1922, Chen Tiesheng was the editor.

When the communists took over mainland China, Chen Tiesheng moved to Taiwan, where he spent the rest of his life.

Lu Weichang

Lu Weichang was one of the main founders of the Jingwu Association. Lu attended university in Shanghai and then took over management of his family's business, a major chain of hardware stores. When not running his family's lucrative businesses, he practiced traditional Chinese martial arts, leading him, in 1910, to get involved in the formation of the Jingwu Association. His involvement included both administrative duties and providing financial underwriting for the venture. He was responsible for the design of the Jingwu's three-colored banner.

Chen Yingshi

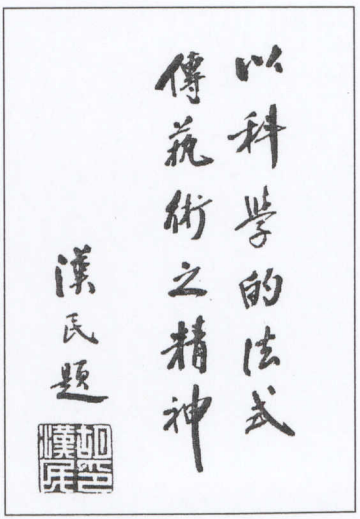
At his father's insistence, Chen Yingshi started his career as a businessman in Shanghai. But in 1906 Chen turned away from business and

went to study in Japan, where he met Dr. Sun Yat-Sen and joined the Chinese Revolutionary League to overthrow the imperial system and found a republic. Chen Yingshi advocated strongly for the use of sports to help build the new Republic of China. He felt that citizens who possessed physical strength and health would provide a strong foundation for the growth of the Republic of China.

Upon his return to China after his studies in Japan, Chen went to work recruiting new members and organizing branches of Dr. Sun's Chinese Revolutionary League. Chen was one of the people who approached Huo Yuanjia to help with the promotion of the Jingwu Association. Chen Yingshi presided over the first of the Jingwu sports meets and was involved not just in the Jingwu's martial arts curriculum but also their other sports programs. Chen remained an active supporter of the work of Dr. Sun Yat-Sen and became caught up in the faction fighting between Dr. Sun and the warlord Yuan Shikai. Chen Yingshi was murdered on the orders of Yuan Shikai in 1916. Dr. Sun Yat-Sen wrote in Chen Yingshi's funeral oration that he had "lived a great man and died a hero."

Commemorative Calligraphy

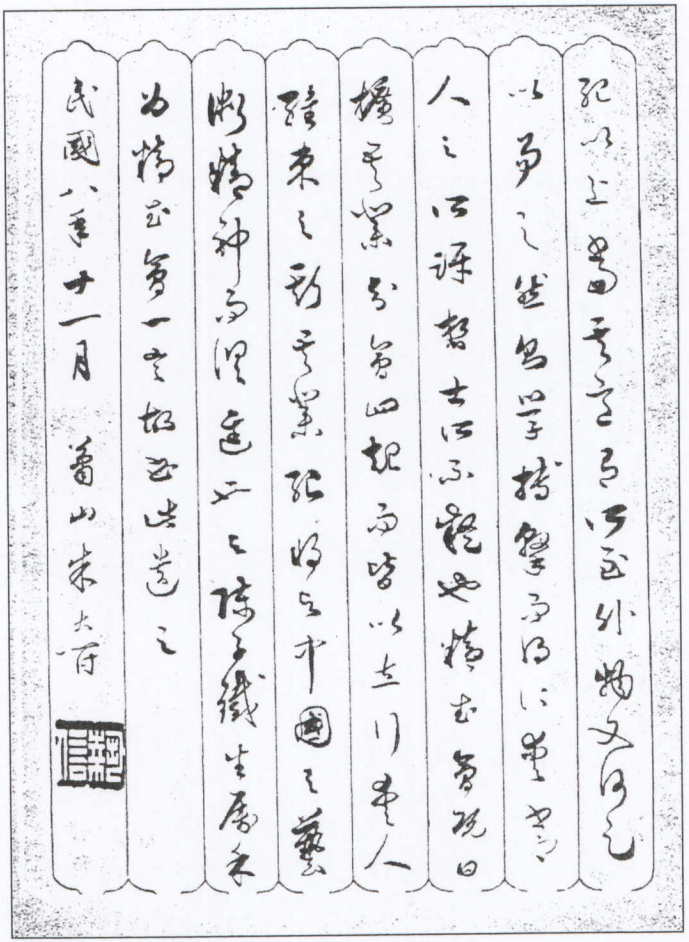
The next few pages in the Anniversary Book are devoted to different pieces of commemorative calligraphy. The first one is the famous Jingwu motto of "using the scientific method to pass on the spirit of arts." This motto became the byword for how the Jingwu intended to approach its mission and its view of martial arts. It paid equal respect to traditional arts and crafts—including, of course, martial arts—and modern scientific methods.



Calligraphy of the Jingwu motto: "using the scientific methods to pass on the spirit of arts"

What is often overlooked when people think about the Jingwu Association is the fact that for the Jingwu and

its progeny, the Nationalist Guoshu Project and the Chinese Communist Party Wushu programs, sports science was supposed to be equally as important as traditional approaches. The Jingwu Association has a very clear lesson here for modern "traditional Chinese martial artists," and that is the importance of using scientific sports methods to ensure that traditional Chinese martial arts stay alive and vibrant. The challenge the Jingwu faced is identical to the challenges that Chinese martial arts are facing in the twenty-first century: how to stay relevant in a world that seems to have passed them by.

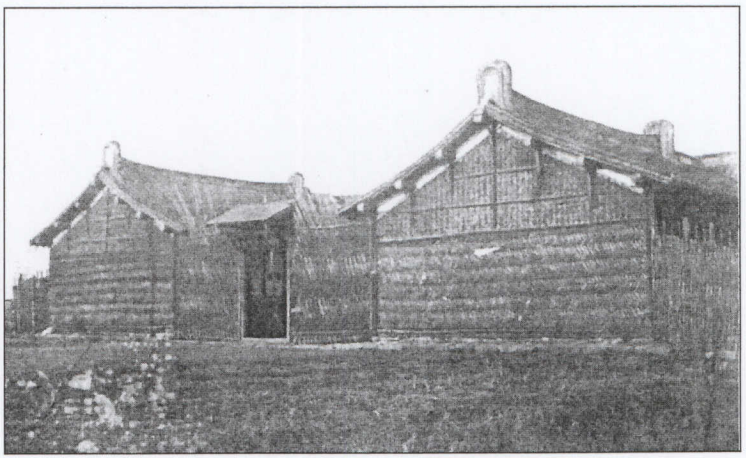


Calligraphy on bamboo strips

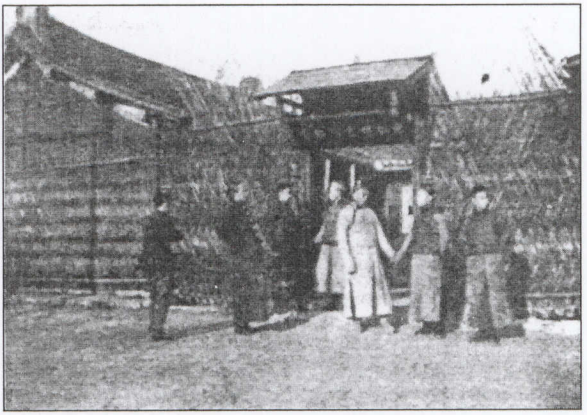
The second piece of calligraphy is a bamboo strip memorial. This method of creating memorial calligraphy is still practiced in China, and it is a throwback to earlier times when calligraphy was done on bamboo strips of a certain length. The bamboo strips were scalloped at the top and then tied together to make a lasting display that was more rugged and durable than calligraphy done on paper. On a side note, one of the earliest surviving editions of the *Dao De Jing* (or the *Tao Te Ching*—the Daoist classic ascribed to Lao Tzu) was written on bamboo strips and recovered from an imperial teacher's tomb that had been buried circa 278 BC.

The Jingwu Training Halls

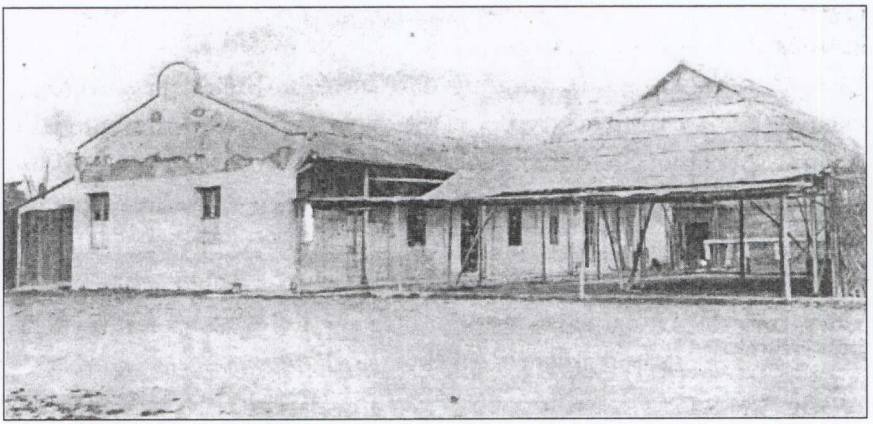
Shanghai was home to the original and most famous Jingwu training halls. One might have garnered from the movies that the Jingwu training hall was in downtown Shanghai, crowded in with buildings on both sides and a busy thoroughfare in front. But judging from the pictures in the Anniversary Book, the original Jingwu halls were set in a rural suburb of Shanghai. The original Jingwu hall was a building donated by the Wang family in 1909. It is not clear who this family was or what connection they had to the Jingwu project. The original house had a façade of bamboo and reed walls. The exact layout is hard to discern from the available photos, but it seemed to consist of at least two single-story halls and an enclosed courtyard area.



The first Jingwu training hall

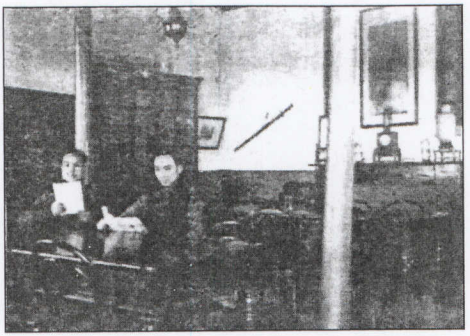


Jingwu members in front of the original training hall



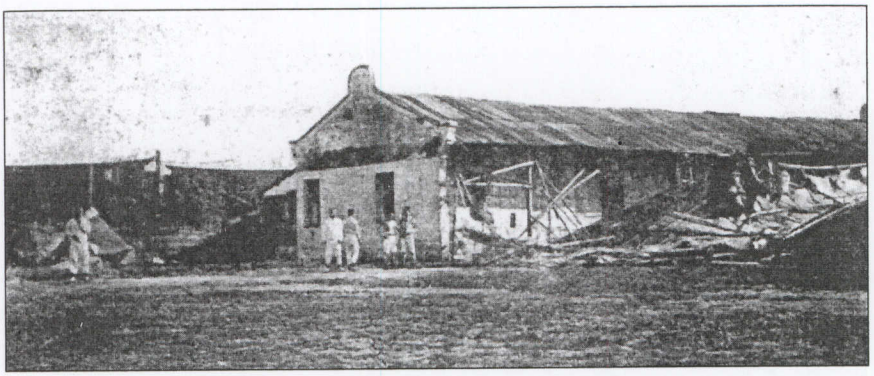
Backyard of the original Jingwu training hall

The photograph of this original Jingwu hall is deliberately staged to show a few important motifs. There is the Western-designed wind-up clock sitting on the table, which was a symbol of Western scientific technology; the Chinese sword and the traditional Chinese calligraphy hung up on the walls; and the two diligent Jingwu members reading. Western and Chinese science and culture, intellect, and body are all captured in this vignette. The backyard certainly shows an ample training area and again, the semi-rural nature is apparent; the Wang family building seems to have had no close neighbors.



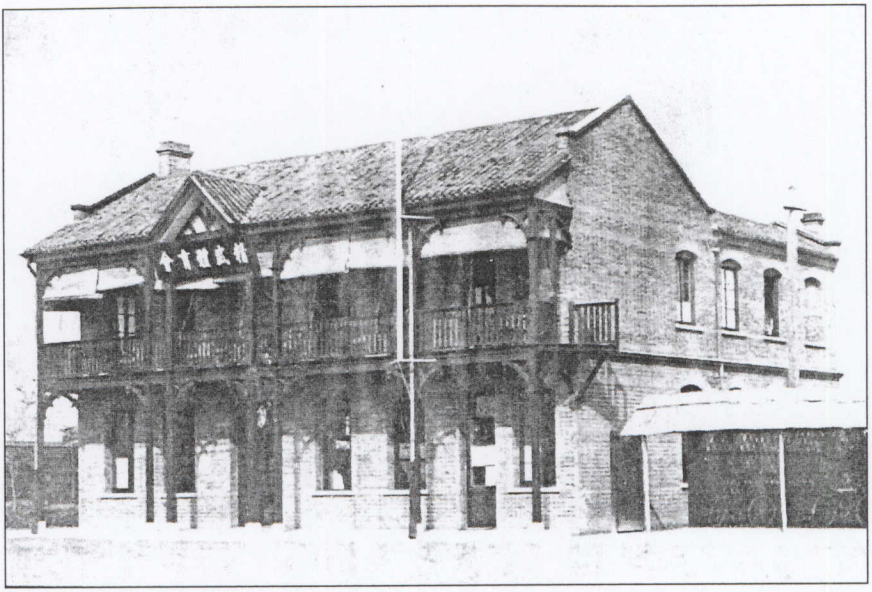
Interior of the first Jingwu training hall

In 1915, a typhoon damaged much of the Wang family building, and this picture shows the damage.



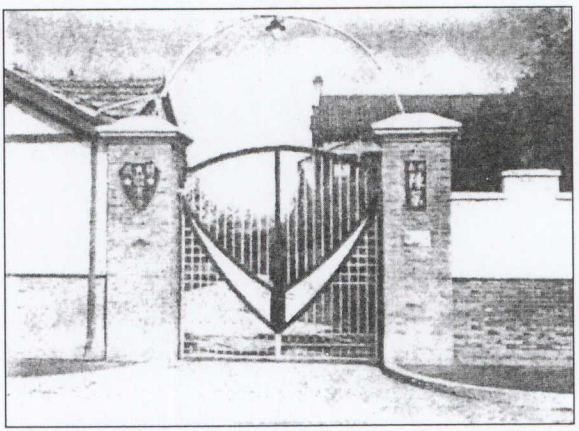
A typhoon destroyed the first Jingwu training hall

Three of the founding members of the Jingwu responded to this unfortunate turn of events by raising over twenty thousand yuan to build a new training hall and headquarters for the Jingwu Association. It is hard to say precisely how much twenty thousand yuan in 1915 would equal in modern U.S. dollars, but because the Anniversary Book boasts of the sum, one can presume it was enough money to give a certain amount of bragging rights. The Anniversary Book is at pains to point out that the new building was to be of "Western design," and that it would be built entirely by donations; the Jingwu Association would not take out loans or borrow to build the new hall. It was completed in 1919 and was a much bigger training facility than the Wong family building had been.



The permanent Jingwu hall

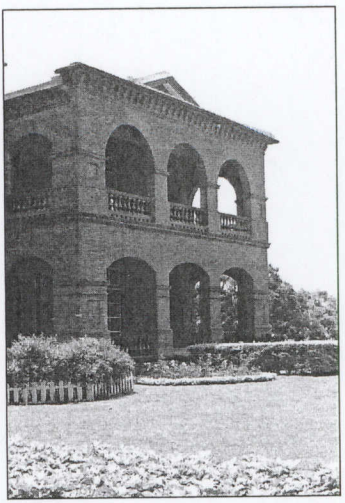
The new hall was big enough that it actually had its own fairly ornate gated entrance with an intentionally Western-looking, almost Bauhaus-style gate. A big part of the Jingwu philosophy was incorporating Western motifs into modern China, and the choice of a modern, minimalist Western gate with swooping wings was a physical



The front gate to the Jingwu hall

embodiment of this philosophy. (Although in fairness, that philosophical point should not be oversold; the Jingwu design committee may have simply thought the gate design looked interesting and different. Novelty always has a certain attraction.)

The new hall certainly was a very impressive building. Few modern-day Chinese martial arts schools could rival it for size or facilities. As can be seen from the photographs, it was a two-story building with a promenade and balcony. The front of the building had a flagpole mounted on it where both the Republic of China and the Jingwu Association flags were flown.

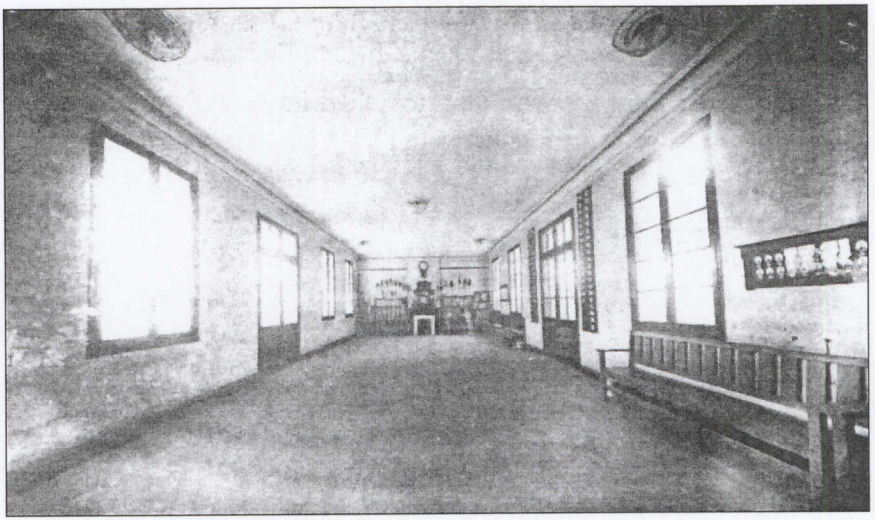


The British Embassy in Taiwan as it was in the 1800s

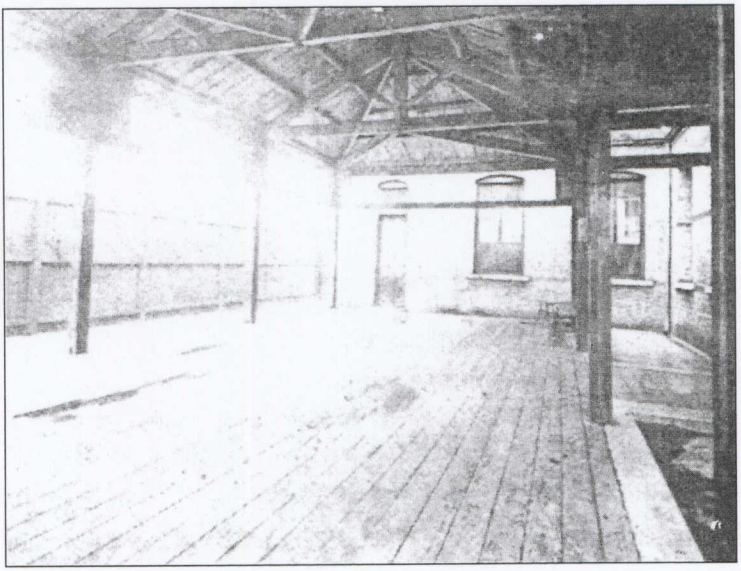
It is a bit of an irony that the Jingwu Association is often viewed as being either overtly or covertly anti-Western (in part because of its connections with Huo Yuanjia's legendary "foreigner fights"). It is impossible to divine what exactly the Jingwu founders or members thought of Westerners, either as a collective or as individuals, but it is certain that the Jingwu was more than willing to incorporate Western motifs and methods into its training, physical facilities, and philosophy. For example, the Jingwu headquarters building is designed like a typical Western embassy in any part of China—in fact, it looked much like the British Embassy in northern Taiwan (which has today been restored to the way it looked in the late 1800s).

The Anniversary Book then goes on to show the two main demonstration halls. They are both spacious, have wood floors, are well lit, and have two racks of traditional Chinese weapons on display.

In fact, several of the pictures in the Anniversary Book show traditional weapons racks. There are a myriad of Chinese names for each of these traditional weapons, and most of the names are more poetic than descriptive, so we will stick with the more prosaic Western names.



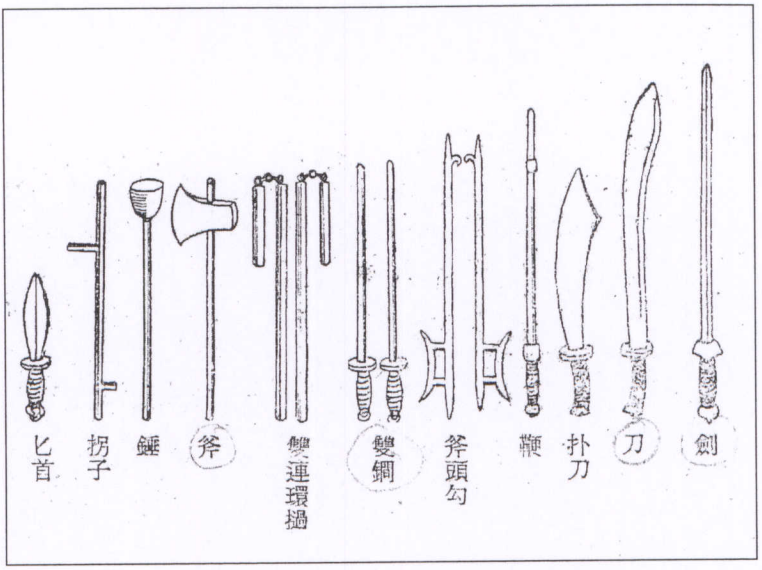
Main martial arts training area



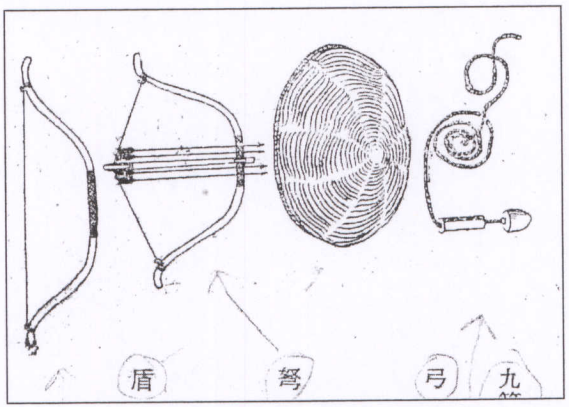
Second-floor martial arts training area

The Anniversary Book provides an excellent diagram of the commonly seen long weapons. They include the horse cutter, which as the name implies was used by infantrymen to cut down the legs of cavalry horses

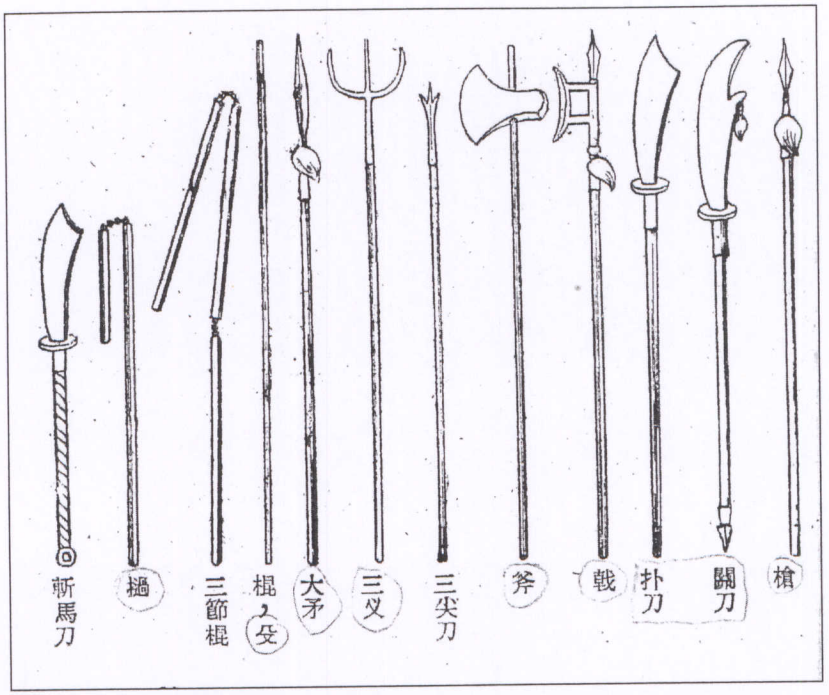
that had been surrounded. There were also two- and three-section flails, staffs, spears, two versions of trident, battle-axes, half-moon spears, and two types of halberds, including the famous General Kuan's Knife.



Traditional short-range weapons



Traditional military weapons



Traditional long-range weapons

A picture of the Jingwu's reading room is shown on page 35. It is furnished with the usual accruements: glass-door bookcases, a cello, elegant reading tables and chairs, modern electric lights, and, somewhat disconcertingly, a human anatomical model. It is impossible to judge from the photo—and the Anniversary Book is silent on exactly what it is in the glass case—whether it is a real human skeleton or a medical school model.

Whatever its precise origin, a graveyard or a craftsman's shop, the display of a human anatomical figure reflects an important aspect of the Jingwu martial arts program. The Jingwu was, as we mentioned earlier, endeavoring to put Chinese martial arts on a modern sports-science footing. Martial artists of the Qing dynasty, for the most part, had almost no idea how the human body produced movement—or if they did, their view relied exclusively on traditional Chinese medical models that were poorly developed in terms of anatomy, biochemistry,

Main study room of the Jingwu hall

and biomechanics. The anatomical model was likely meant to teach the members of the Jingwu about how the human body operated from an anatomical and biomechanical standpoint, or at least to give them some rudimentary information. In any event, it no doubt made an eye-opening (if not unnerving) display.

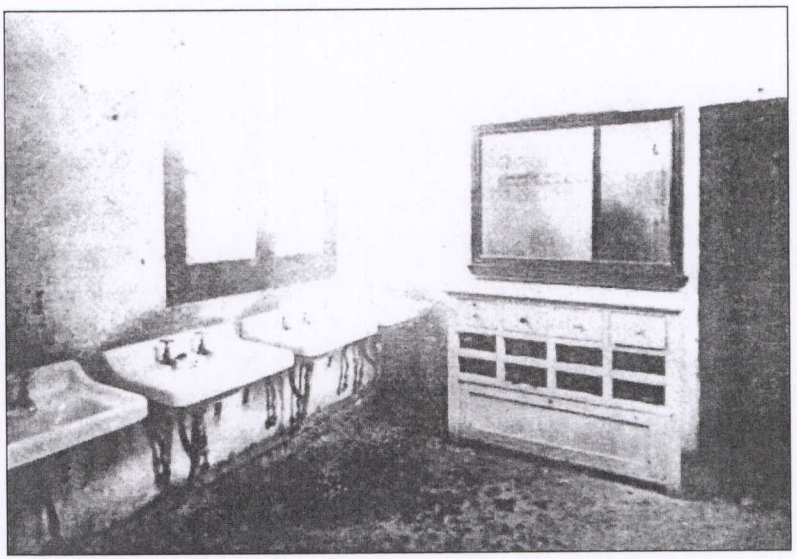
Anatomical model on display in Jingwu hall

The Jingwu hygiene facilities

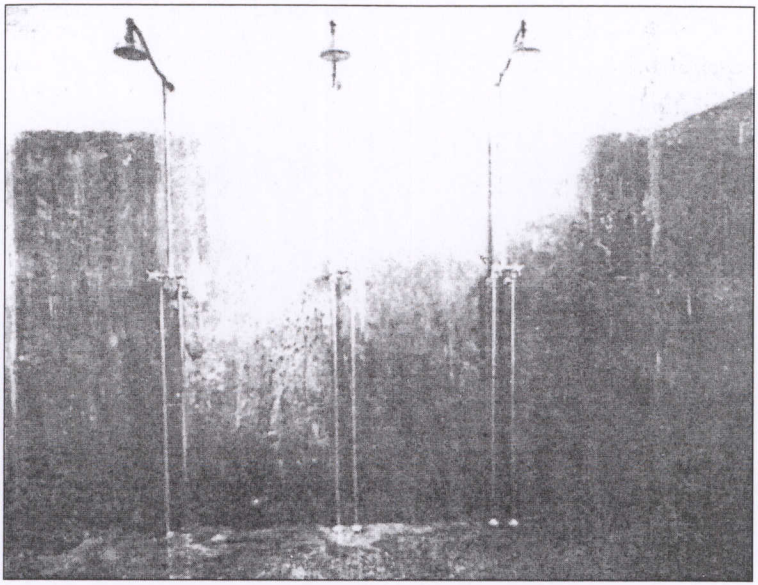
Bathrooms and shower stalls might seem an unusual scene to photograph for an organization's ten-year anniversary book, but for the Jingwu organizers, having modern (Western) bathroom facilities reflected the Jingwu's commitment to basic hygiene. The common view of the Chinese public in the early 1900s was that martial artists were dirty, in a very basic sense of being physically filthy and having poor personal hygiene. This was, in a sense, to be expected, as the average Qing-dynasty martial artist was a manual laborer who felt no real necessity for regular personal hygiene. This is not to imply that every single person in the Qing dynasty who practiced martial arts walked around all day covered in grease, grime, and

stench, but nonetheless, an inattention to personal hygiene was the norm.

The Jingwu was very interested in "cleaning up" the image of martial artists, so to speak. Toward that end, they made a point of displaying the shower and bathroom facilities available to Jingwu members. In addition to reasons of aesthetics and public image, the Jingwu was also pushing sports hygiene for another reason: personal hygiene was the foundation for good health; good health was the basis of martial arts; and martial arts was one of the foundations of a strong, modern China. Again, the Jingwu's emphasis must be seen in the context of the times. Diseases spread by poor hygiene had a huge negative impact on the Chinese military as well as on the civilian population during the late Qing dynasty and even into the Republican Era. Washing your hands and hitting the showers after your Jingwu workout was a concrete step forward in strengthening the Chinese nation.



Bathrooms with indoor plumbing



Jingwu shower facilities

Flying the Colors; Flags and Pins

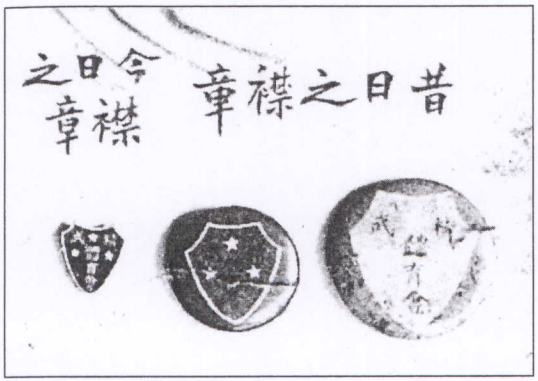
Like all organizations, the Jingwu wanted a logo and flag, and those two things often show up in their photos. The Jingwu organizers were already quite aware of the business idea of "branding"—developing a trademark, be it a name or a logo, and then using it to develop a "brand name" that would be positively viewed by the public. The brand name could then be marketed to other businesses that would bring in money to the organization. A modern example of this is the interlinked rings of the Olympic games; that logo generates a lot of income for the International Olympic Committee. In a similar way, the organizers of the Jingwu Association succeeded in branding the Jingwu name and logo. In the 1920s, there were even Jingwu holiday cards featuring the Jingwu logo.

The Jingwu flag had three stars: for the first seven years they were red, blue, and yellow, and afterward they were red, green, and yellow. The use of three stars might seem to symbolize Sun Yat-Sen's "Three Principles of the People" (government of the people, by the people, and

for the people), which was the core motto for China's democracy. But according to the Anniversary Book, the three stars represent "liberty, equality, and fraternity." The Anniversary Book does not say these are modeled after the famous French slogan of *liberté, égalité, fraternité,* but the terms used are exactly the same as those used to translate the French. The Anniversary Book mentions that the Jingwu flag could have either a white or blue-green background.

Jingwu flag and pennant

Along with the Jingwu flag there was a design for a Jingwu coat of arms and lapel pins. The coat of arms was made of "purple copper," which is bornite. Both the pins and the coat of arms featured the three stars and the Chinese characters for "Jingwu Association."

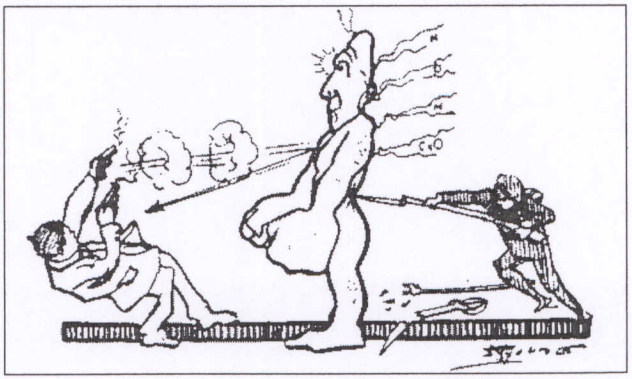


Jingwu lapel pins

Jingwu coat of arms

Decorative Comic Drawings

An interesting, and somewhat mysterious, aspect of many Republican-Era martial arts books is the presence of little comic drawings to mark chapter endings in the books. The Jingwu Anniversary Book has several of them. Because they do not have captions and are apparently unrelated to the chapter that just ended or the one that is about to start, the reader is left to ponder what, if any, meaning attaches to them. If nothing else, they are a source of amusement.



The Bulletproof Man

"The Bulletproof Man" (previous page) shows a kind of Chinese superman with huge fists. Bullets bounce off of him, and saber and bayonet attacks simply cause him to emit smoke. Quite cryptically, the smoke spells out H-O-N-O.*

The Pickaxe Lad

In "The Pickaxe Lad," the man's shadow casts the character for "work" *(gong)*. He sports an axe in one hand and a pickaxe in the other. He is wearing a Jingwu uniform and what would later be known as a Chairman Mao cap. The artist has signed his name (S.Y. Young) in Roman script (yet another indication of Westernization). One would surmise that the message of this graphic is that the Jingwu Association is going to get busy with the job of building a new Chinese nation; the Jingwu is ready to work hard toward this goal.

"The Opium Smoker" (following page) shows a man smoking an opium pipe with circles of smoke rising above. To his left are two weak

*This might mean "oh no," as in, "Oh no, I have been shot!"

The Opium Smoker

or disabled people—one on crutches—and to his right are a child and a soldier. The implication seems to be that opium is weakening the Chinese nation and that the Jingwu program is a solution to this problem. It is hard, if not impossible, to assess the overall state of physical health of the Chinese people during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. But certainly the view of the Chinese themselves—expressed on many occasions by Sun Yat-Sen, who was a medical doctor as well as a politician—was that the Chinese people as a whole were in poor physical condition. This was probably a combination of poor diet, disease, poverty, crowded living conditions, a lack of concern about and knowledge of public health, a lack of healthy exercise, and to some extent, the bane of opium. These factors came together, along with the general malaise that marked the end of the Qing empire, to make China a very unhealthy place. The Jingwu targeted all of this in its program to make China a healthy and strong nation.

The General

"The General", also done by S.Y. Young, shows a general in traditional Chinese battle armor with his banner tied to his back and his sword at side; his beard is blowing in the wind, and he is overlooking a battle from a mesa. This illustration is clearly trying to romanticize the image of China's military leaders by calling forth images of China's historic military heroes.

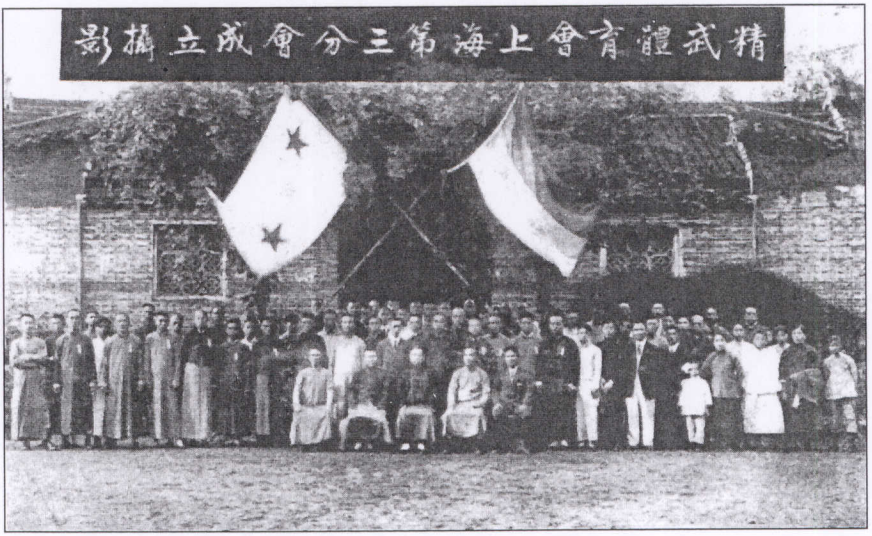
Branches in Shanghai

The Jingwu Association had several branches in the greater Shanghai area. The Anniversary Book contains photos taken at all three Shanghai branches: the Inner-City Branch, the South Shanghai Branch, and the Third Branch in the French Concession Area. The three photos provide some interesting contrasts and show the different approaches that the Jingwu Association took. The Inner-City Branch members

are decked out in Western-style sports gear—shorts, tank tops, and track shoes—and look, except for the teacher, to be younger than the members of other Jingwu branches. Track-and-field events (or maybe gymnastics) seemed to have been the main practice. In contrast, the members of the South Shanghai Branch are shown posing in a much more traditional Chinese martial arts manner. All of them wear full-length traditional scholars robes, the picture of Huo Yuanjia is front and center, and the group is flanked by two racks full of traditional Chinese weapons. The focus here was clearly on traditional Chinese martial arts. A further contrast is presented by the Third Branch in the French Concession Area group photo. This group is a large one, with a little bit of everything: women, children, and men in Western suits as well as traditional Chinese robes. This photo gives the impression that this branch had a wide-ranging focus and that social activities were perhaps a big part of the program.

Jingwu Shanghai Inner-City Branch

Jingwu Shanghai South Branch



Jingwu Branch in the French Concession

Five Races under One Union

Many of the pictures in the Jingwu Anniversary Book show different Jingwu groups with two flags. One is the Jingwu flag; the other is the "Five Races under One Union" flag, which was the national flag of the Republic of China from its founding in 1911 until the end of the Warlord Period in 1928 (the Jingwu's most active period).

The idea of "five races as one" was one of the major doctrines of the Republic of China. The doctrine emphasized the harmony of the five major ethnic groups in China as represented by the colored stripes of this flag: the Han (red), the Manchus (yellow), the Mongols (blue), the Hui (white), and the Tibetan people (black). Sun Yat-Sen was said to have disapproved of the flag's design because the colors, and by extension the races, were stacked one higher than the other. The Han Chinese were on top of the flag, and the Tibetans were on the bottom.

This flag highlights an often-overlooked part of Chinese history and culture: the fact that Han Chinese are only one of several ethnic groups that have historically existed in China. China was home to many ethnic groups whose power waxed and waned over the centuries. This brings up another often-overlooked fact, which is that racial tensions and racial violence in China have existed in the past as well as in the present. The idea that China used to be an ethnically homogeneous nation is false. Racial tensions existed and led to violence. The word "racial" is here meant in a broad sense, indicating distinctions between groups based on ethnicity, language, or place of origin. For example, much of the Qing Dynasty "racial" violence in Taiwan occurred between groups of Han people who happened to speak different dialects of Chinese and who came from different parts of southern China.

The reality of the five races had an impact on Chinese martial arts. It is common to talk of Chinese martial arts as if China were a collective whole. But many "Chinese" martial arts systems were predominately practiced, taught, and to some extent kept secret within certain racial or ethnic groups. This sometimes was due to accidents of geography, but sometimes it was driven by the idea that a certain martial art should

be kept within a certain ethnic group for reasons of self protection from the "outsiders." For example, there are "Chinese" martial arts systems that were, up until the end of the Qing dynasty, largely kept within different Hakka, Mongolian, or Hui ethnic groups. One of the goals of the Jingwu Association was to bring together China's various martial arts, including arts that were tied to certain ethnic groups, into a unified whole.

Shanghai Concession Areas

The topic of ethnic diversity and tension naturally leads to another aspect of the early history of the Jingwu Association: the concession areas. Many port cities in China had "concession areas" that were under the sovereignty of a foreign nation as a result of treaties signed between China and foreign powers. The Shanghai foreign concession is perhaps the best known, and its fame comes largely because of its lurid mix of sloe gin, fast women, drugs, money, gangsters of all races, and wild nightlife. The Shanghai foreign concession area was the major route of entry for foreign business ventures into China and a major banking center. Shanghai was also the point where Chinese and Western cultures met and intermingled.

It is no accident that the Jingwu Association was founded in Shanghai, which was China's avant-garde capital—or as it was called then, the Paris of the East. If the Jingwu was about innovation and making contact with and learning from the West, then Shanghai was an appropriate city for the Jingwu headquarters.

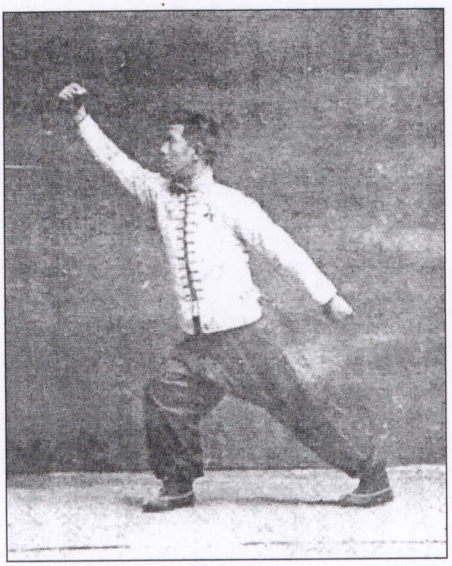
The fact that the Jingwu was founded in Shanghai, home to a number of foreign concessions, also figured in the Jingwu founding myth with all the fights, matches, and showdowns with various foreign wrestlers and strongmen. Elsewhere, we will discuss the "foreigner fights" and their impact on the Jingwu in more detail, but it should be kept in mind that Shanghai was a melting pot of various martial arts styles, including the Western martial arts of boxing and wrestling alongside Japanese martial arts such as judo, jiu jitsu, and kendo. If there was a capital for "mixed martial arts" in China in the early 1900s, it was Shanghai.

Jingwu Martial Arts Groups and Demonstrations

A fair majority, although certainly not all, of the photos in the Anniversary Book are of various Jingwu martial arts groups or demonstrations. This photo was taken in 1912 and shows the first graduating class of "first-degree students," which was the beginning level of the Jingwu martial arts program. Master Huo's picture is prominently displayed.

Jingwu graduating class

The photograph presents an interesting contrast between the graduating students, in traditional Jingwu uniforms, and the audience, who are almost all in Western-style clothes and hats. Although high-collared, long-sleeved jackets with contrasting "frog" closures had been normal, everyday wear for men all through the Qing dynasty, when they were worn as part of a martial arts uniform, these tops became known as "Jingwu uniforms" because of their close association with the Jingwu.



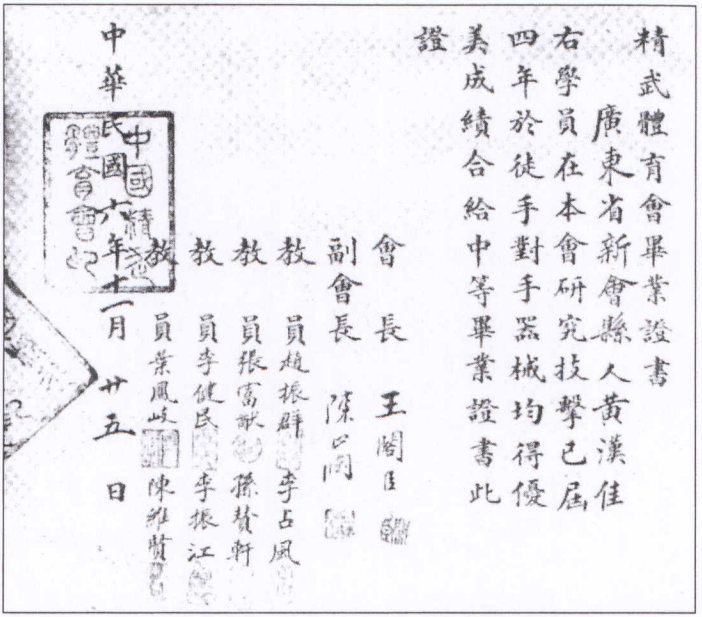
The official Jingwu uniform

Students of the Jingwu martial arts program would graduate from the different classes in the program, and were given a certificate and title upon graduation. Although there is little solid information available from before the Republican Era, Chinese martial arts, both in the Jingwu program and in the Guoshu program, certainly had a structured system of classes, levels, graduations, and titles by that time.

It should be mentioned that since the 1950s, several of Taiwan's major traditional martial arts associations have used a class and graduation structure much like the Jingwu's, in which a student would start with a group that would attend class A for six months. The students in class A would then be given certificates, and they could move on to class B (which would usually involve starting new training routines) for some other period of time. They would then get certificates for completing class B and could move on to classes C, D, and so on.

An example of such martial arts graduation certificates, as issued by the Jingwu, can be seen in the next photograph.

This is a diploma signed by eight different Jingwu martial arts teachers. The diploma states that the student has studied *jiji* for four years, including both hand-to-hand fighting and the use of weapons, and that the student has achieved excellent grades. *Jiji* is a generic term for hand-to-hand fighting, in the sense of practical combat techniques, and is the most commonly used phrase in the Anniversary Book to refer to martial arts. For example, all the martial arts instructors are referred to as "jiji instructors." Immediately above the picture of the diploma is a photograph of the first advanced jiji graduating class. The photo was taken in 1915.


精武體育會畢業證書

廣東省新會縣人黃漢佳

右學員在本會研究技擊已屆四年於徒手對手器械均得優美成績合給中等畢業證書此證

會長 王
副會長 陳
教員趙振群 李占風
教員張富歆 孫贊軒
教員李健民 李振江
教員葉鳳岐 陳雅賢

中華民國六年十一月廿五日

Jingwu martial arts diploma

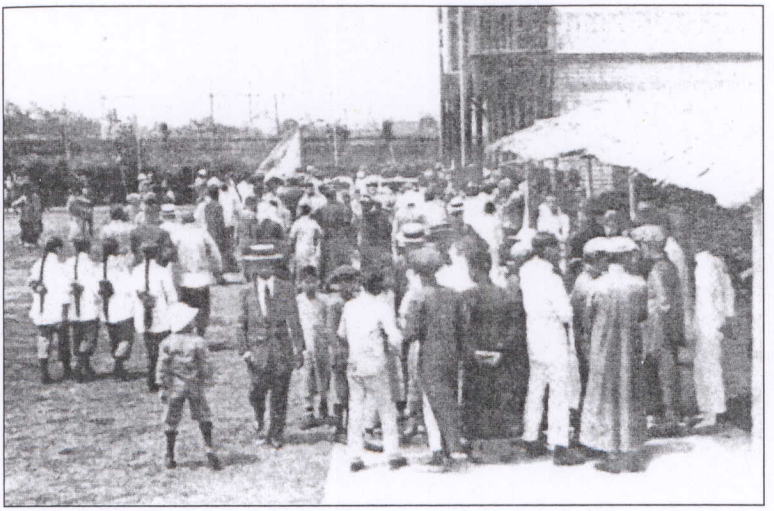
Jingwu martial arts graduates

Monthly Meet-ups

As the Anniversary Book puts it, "because the Jingwu always sends martial arts teachers to many places in Shanghai, including to different schools and companies, each month the Jingwu Association calls together all its students and groups in Shanghai at the Jingwu athletic field to practice martial arts, together as a group." The photos show a quite large field adjacent to the Jingwu headquarters and many Jingwu members, supporters, and interested members of the public clustered about. It is interesting to see that in one photo the instructor is standing on a raised tower leading a large group in jiji practice while the public watches.

Jingwu monthly joint training

In a fundamental way, this image encapsulates the difference between the new Jingwu approach to martial arts and the older approaches. The Jingwu wanted to place Chinese martial arts front and center for the general public to see and learn. Their vision was one of public martial arts. In contrast, the earlier approaches placed a major emphasis on secrecy. Teachers would only trust "closed-door students" (as opposed to "open-door students") with the secrets of the system—all based on the idea that there were secrets to keep in the first place. And while there would be public performances—for example, at temple events—the teachers were quick to inform the audience that what was



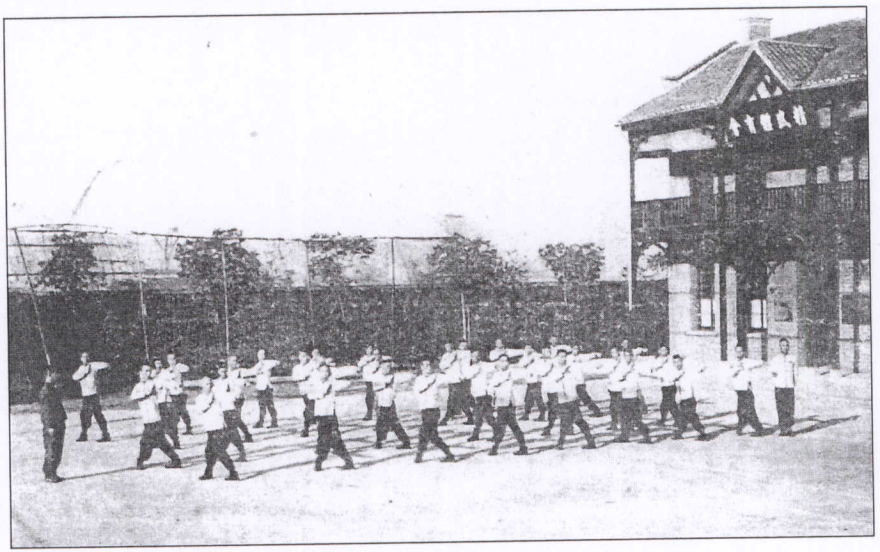
Jingwu monthly group training

being shown was not "the real stuff" but was simply a performance; the "real stuff" was secret and would never be shown in public. The purpose was to cast a mystique over the whole of Chinese martial arts. The Jingwu cast off that mystique.

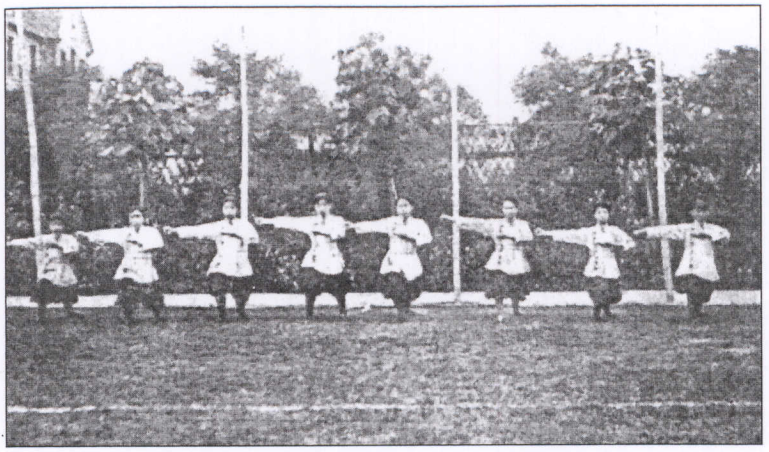
Jingwu monthly joint training

Also, this photo reflects that the Jingwu program was a franchise, and like all franchises, the Jingwu hoped that there would be a uniformity in the programs. All the students were supposed to do the training routines in exactly the same way so that they could train or drill as a group. This was aimed at creating a sense of group solidarity, teamwork, and group cohesion. This, too, was a contrast with more traditional approaches, in which each teacher wanted his system to have individual signature touches that served to identify his system as being somehow unique.

The photos also point out the social nature of the Jingwu program. The Jingwu program sought to include everyone in an open and free environment, which was in sharp contrast to the exclusiveness of more traditional Chinese martial arts. This open approach is aptly illustrated by the photo of a group of Jingwu members going through their training forms in the open yard in front of the Shanghai Jingwu headquarters. This openness extended to women too; another photo shows a group of women doing their martial arts form training while dressed in the Jingwu women's uniform.



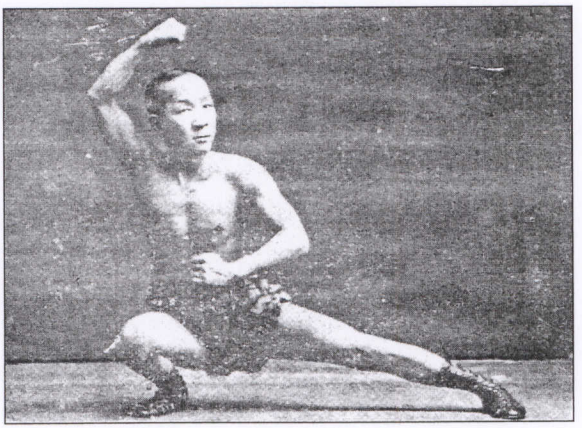
Jingwu students train in front of the headquarters



Jingwu women's training

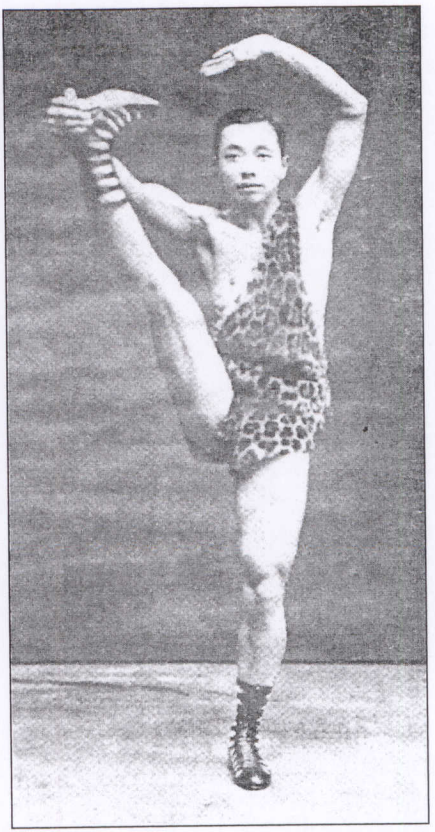
The Musclemen of the Jingwu

Attired in leopard-print singlets, wearing Western wrestling boots, and hitting both bodybuilder and martial arts poses, the Chinese men in these photos make an odd and interesting juxtaposition of West and East. These men are the founders of the Jingwu Association: Chen Tiesheng hits a low poke stance, Chen Gongzhe shows his chest and upper body development, Yao Zhanbo demonstrates his flexibility and balance, Lu Weichang shows his leg development, and Hwang Telung strikes a martial pose.



Chen Tiesheng

Chen Gongzhe



Yao Zhanbo

Twentieth-century Chinese men wearing nineteenth-century European strongmen outfits might seem bizarre, but the Jingwu was trying to convey a message through these pictures, which is to say that Chinese people—not only white Westerners—can and should develop, display, and take pride in their physical strength.

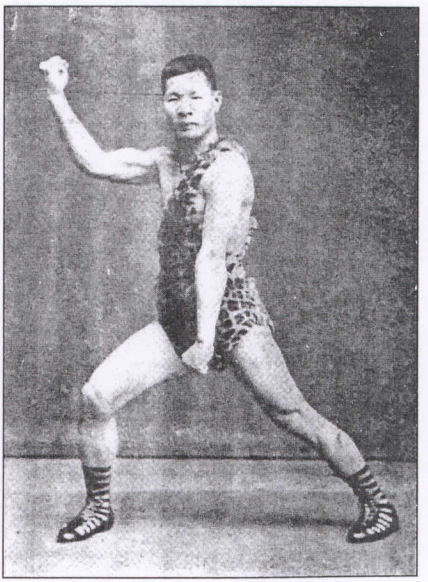
The founders and advocates of the Jingwu Association were fighting against a number of deeply-rooted Chinese prejudices concerning what a "proper" Chinese man should look like physically. Many Chinese at the time thought that a sallow- or pale-skinned, almost emaciated "scholar's appearance" was the ideal for Chinese men. This model reflected the fact that a proper Chinese man spent all his time studying books or writing calligraphy, and that any sign of physical

Lu Weichang

"muscleman" photos clearly showed their position. By taking very typical poses and costumes out of advertisements for Western strongmen's programs and substituting in Chinese martial artists, the Jingwu suggested the Chinese could be as strong as Westerners; the Jingwu's task was to develop a new Chinese race that would not be intimidated by anyone—including Western strongmen.

development reflected the fact the person had to engage in some type of manual labor—which would significantly lower his social status. Farmers and day laborers had muscles; cultured and successful Chinese did not. Some Chinese also took the view that Westerners were biologically superior—they were naturally bigger, stronger, and taller—but that the Chinese people were morally superior, and that China ought to focus on mental development rather than physical training, as they were never going to succeed at it anyway.

The Jingwu spoke out against both of these views, and their

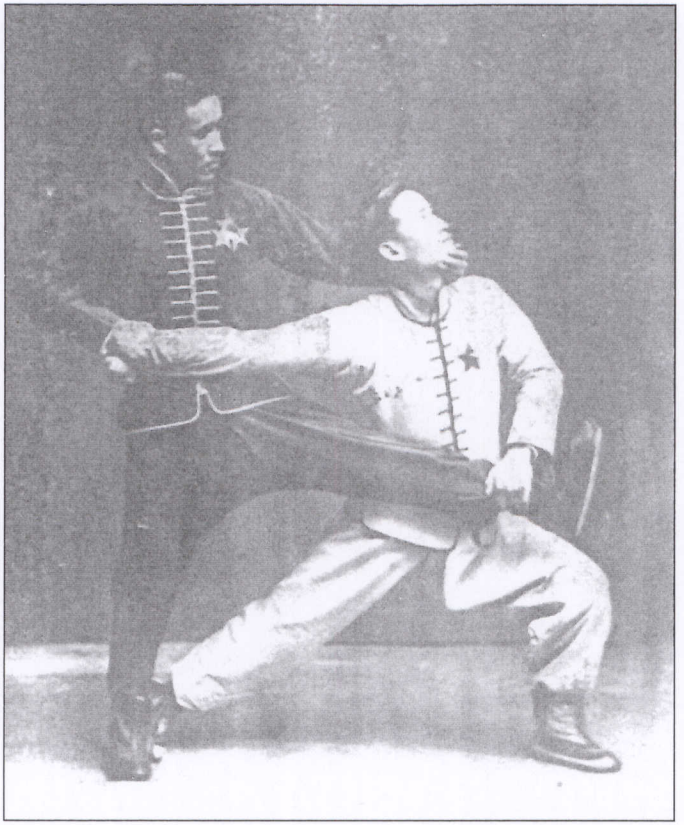


Hwang Telung

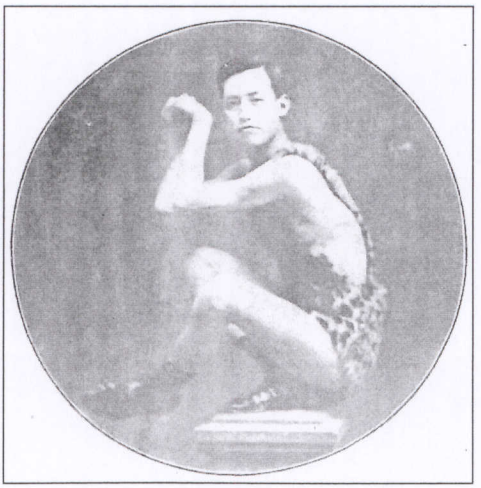
Martial Motifs

The next few pages of the Jingwu Anniversary Book are devoted to various martial arts motifs. These include two-person grappling techniques and feats of balance. Also featured are two-person *chin-na*—the Chinese art of joint locks—and kicking and punching drills. There are also two-person drills for sword practice.

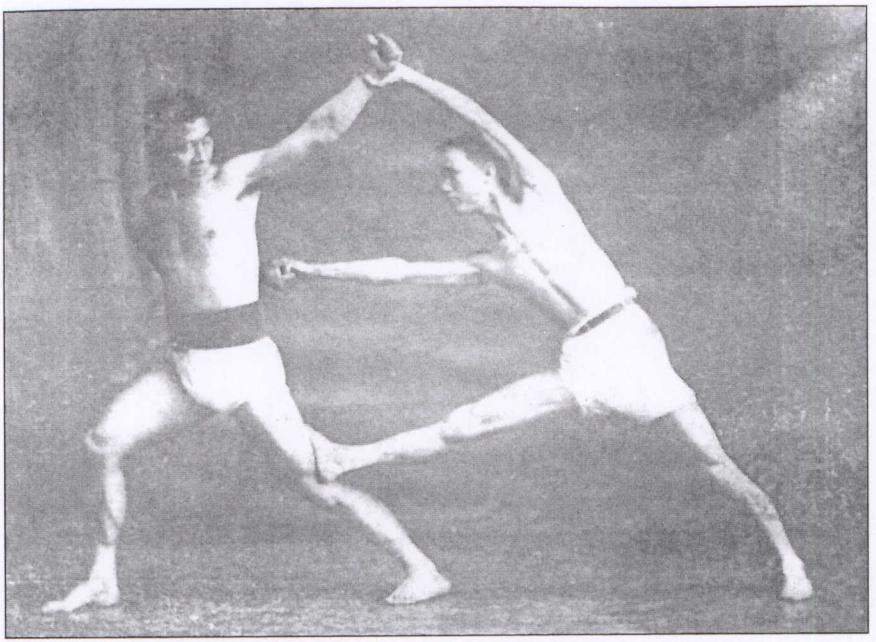
Jingwu grappling training



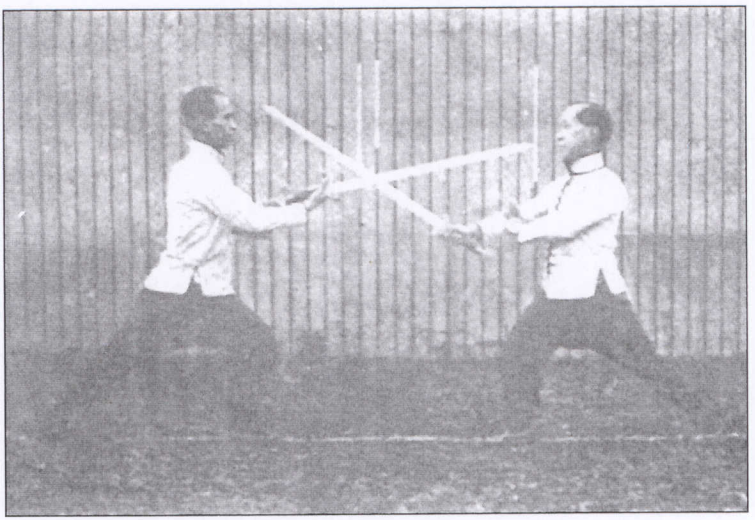
Joint locking training



Balance training

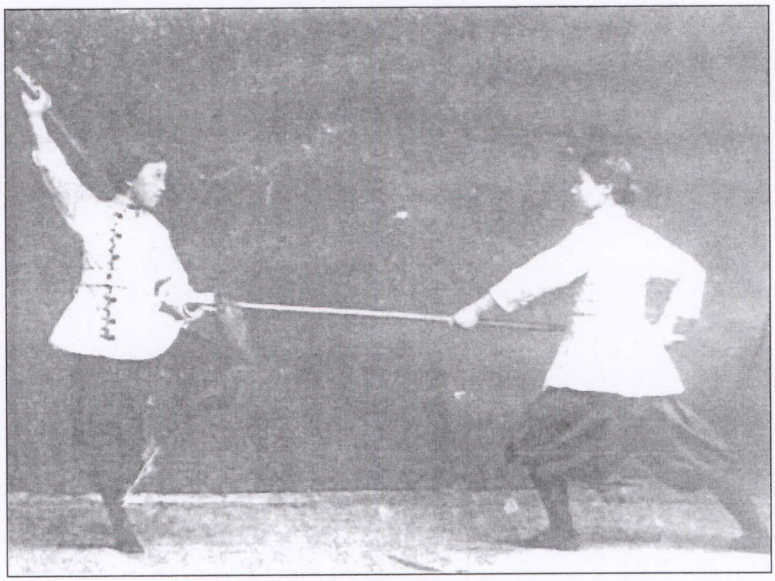


Two-person joint-training exercise



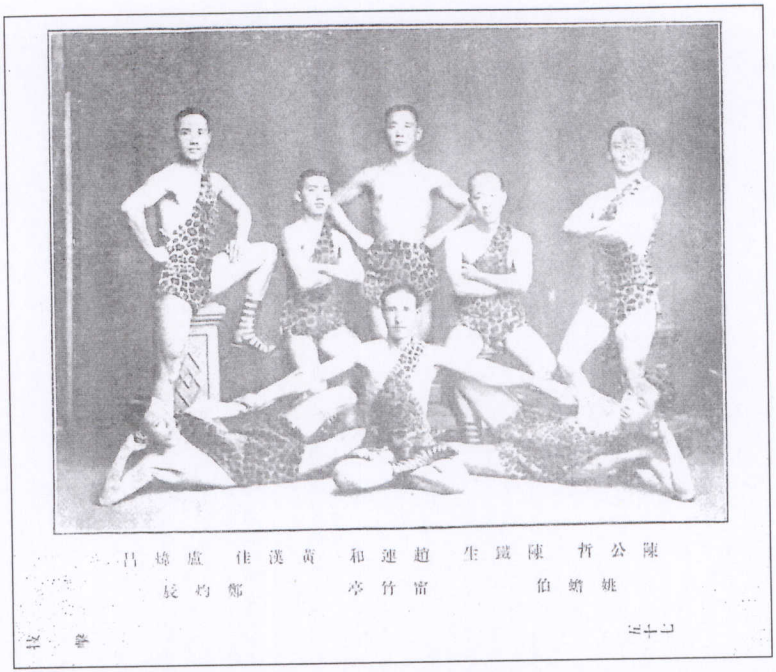
Jingwu sword practice

The women were not excluded, either, as can be seen from the photos of the women's two-person training. The woman with the sabers in the picture below is Chen Shichao. Chen was the main, and quite vocal, advocate for the Jingwu's women's program. She toured around China and through South Asia advocating for women's martial arts programs and for women to have an equal footing in the Jingwu program.



Woman sword training with Chen Shichao (left)

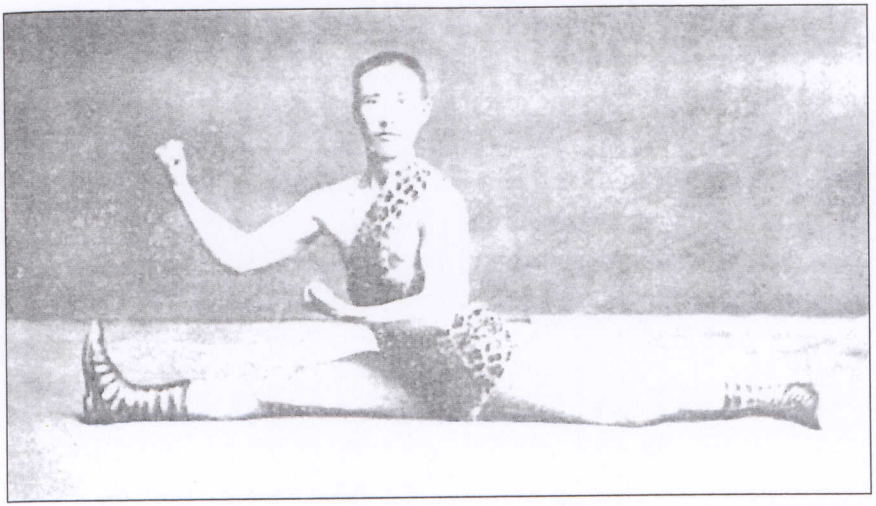
The motifs often involved a somewhat strange mix of elements. For example, in a group photo, the Jingwu members, including several of the major movers and shakers in the organization, pose in their Western strongman outfits. Some of them are striking typical "strongman poses" with their arms across their chests. But alongside this, one member sits in a full lotus, while two recline on the ground like recumbent Greek statues.



The major leaders in the Jingwu program strike strongman poses for a group photo

Other poses include "human chains" and a member showing his flexibility by doing the full front splits.

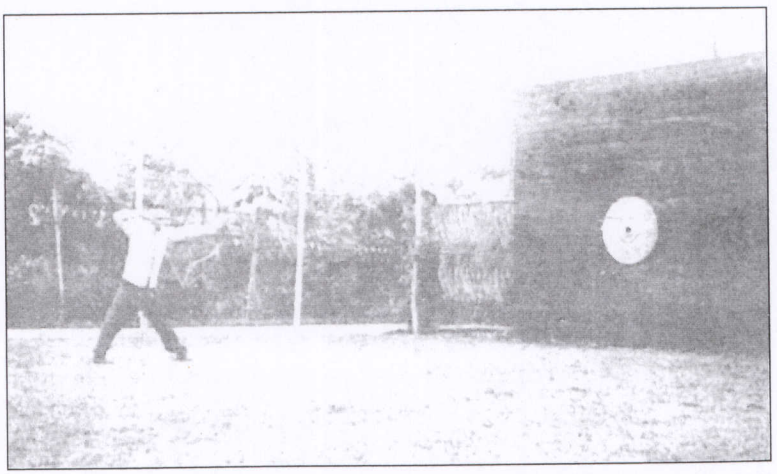
"Chaining together to strengthen the Chinese race"



Full splits

Classical Archery

China has had a very long tradition of military archery. Archery is mentioned in the Confucian classics, and several of the earliest surviving martial arts training manuals discuss archery. The Jingwu Association had an archery program that focused on traditional Chinese archery, with an outdoor archery range set up at their headquarters in Shanghai.



Archery practice at the Jingwu training hall

The Anniversary Book mentions that the ability to draw certain bow weights was an important part of Ming dynasty military examinations. This reference to the historical roots of archery in early Chinese dynasties is in keeping with the Jingwu Association's goal of giving the Chinese pride in their own martial traditions. Archery also has the advantage of being an ancient part of Chinese classical culture—it has strong ties with Confucianism, which considers archery a worthy activity for a gentleman and a literati. The *Confucian Book of Rites,* which is a key Confucian classic, has an entire section devoted to the "ritual of archery."

Youth Programs

The cliché that "our children are our future" was very much taken to heart by the Jingwu Association, and they devoted a lot of time and effort to children's and youth programs. Like any organization that hopes to have a long-term influence, the Jingwu Association considered its youth programs to be an investment both in China's future and its own.

Martial arts was certainly the key activity in the youth programs. In a very real sense, the Jingwu Association was the ancestor of every kids' Chinese martial arts program in existence. It is hard to determine what kind of martial arts training existed for children and young people in China before the Republican Era, but it was probably offered not as a form of recreation but rather for practical reasons; parents secured martial arts training for their children if they thought that they would soon be joining village militias or that their future careers would be in some field related to martial arts (for example, as an army professional, security guard, street performer, or gangster).

The Jingwu's approach to their youth program was fundamentally different. Rather than teaching martial arts to children as a future "manual trade skill," the Jingwu used Chinese martial arts as a form of childhood and youth recreation, along the lines of Little League baseball. Chinese martial arts was promoted as a perfect youth activity: first,

it instilled in young people a sense of pride in being Chinese, and second, it was physically demanding, so it ensured that the students would become strong and healthy.

The Jingwu Association's youth program focused on solo hand forms done in formation. Chinese martial arts, both in the past and in the present, involve a number of different kinds of training. This includes training in the basic techniques of the art—for example, repeating punches and kicks either as shadowboxing or against some type of striking bag. There is also two-person sparring, in which the contact can range from very light to quite heavy. The third major type of training is repeated practice of longer solo-hand forms. These solo-hand forms are preset routines that link together individual techniques. Either by themselves or in a group, students will go through the various moves of the form. Form training was a central part of Jingwu martial arts practice, and it remains so in many modern Chinese martial arts systems.

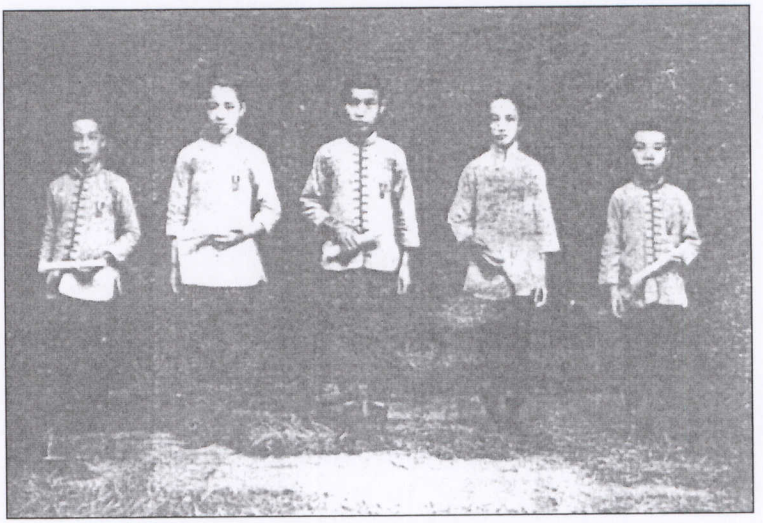
This approach to Chinese martial arts was easier to teach than previous approaches had been; everyone would practice the same thing, and beginners could mimic the more advanced students. With a focus on forms rather than sparring, the Jingwu youth program was also quite safe. The range of available forms kept the program interesting, and form training provided a mental and physical challenge to the students in that they had to memorize long sequences and learn the physical skills to perform the movements in the forms. Chinese martial arts forms are very demanding from both an aerobic and anaerobic perspective. They emphasized stretching the limbs and provided a full range of movement for the students. Finally, form training was simply a lot of fun for young students. As the students advanced through the program, the learning of new forms gave them a sense of accomplishment.

A feeling of accomplishment is very much on display over the next few pages of the Jingwu Anniversary Book, which features photos from a wide variety of youth programs that the Jingwu had sponsored over its first decade.

Elementary school boys practice Jingwu martial arts

Jingwu youth martial arts class

Jingwu youth training



Young Jingwu martial arts graduates with their diplomas

Two of the photos feature young women's martial arts activities, including two young women engaging in sword practice.

Jingwu girls martial arts class at an all-girls elementary school

Jingwu women's saber contest

3

Martial Arts of the Jingwu

Although martial arts were not the only activities the Jingwu had in its program, they are its enduring legacy. The Anniversary Book devotes the next section to what it refers to as its "wushu program." (As pointed out earlier, the Chinese phrase *wushu* is simply a broad term for martial arts, although in modern practice, *wushu* has come to exclusively refer to the performance sport developed by the Chinese in the 1960s.)

Before turning to the Jingwu's martial arts program, some background in how Chinese martial arts are organized is useful. Chinese martial arts are divided up into various schools or systems, which are then categorized using different criteria. This way of organizing Chinese martial arts is used both by Chinese martial arts historians and by practitioners, although the categories and criteria used are often very subjective.

Over the course of Chinese martial arts history, there have been untold thousands of different schools and systems. The actual difference between "schools" and "systems" is not a clear, sharp division. Generally, schools are a subset of systems, but that is not always true. A school is often viewed as belonging to one specific teacher—for example, Master "X's" school of Northern Shaolin. A specific school (such as the Jingwu) may teach a variety of different systems. A martial arts system can be defined as a group of techniques that has been combined with a common theory and passed on over a lineage of teachers. A system has a common theory, a common corpus of forms, and historical continuity.

Each system will have a name. The name may reflect the location where the system was developed; for example, Fukien White Crane boxing was developed in Fukien, China. Or another example is Northern Shaolin, which had its origin, according to its own history, in the

Northern Shaolin Temple. The system may also be named for a philosophical idea that the founder of the system thought was germane to the system. An example of this is Bagua Zhang; the *bagua* are the eight trigrams or symbols that are central to the study of the *Yi Jing,* the Chinese *Classic of Changes.* The founder of the Bagua system felt that his theoretical approach to martial arts had things in common with the *Yi Jing.*

Systems are often named after the families that developed them. Examples of this include Hung Gar, named after the Hung family, and Yang Taiji, the form of taiji developed by the Yang family.

Jingwu Northern Shaolin

The Jingwu's wushu curriculum was largely based on Northern Shaolin. "Northern Shaolin" is used to refer to systems or individual routines that:

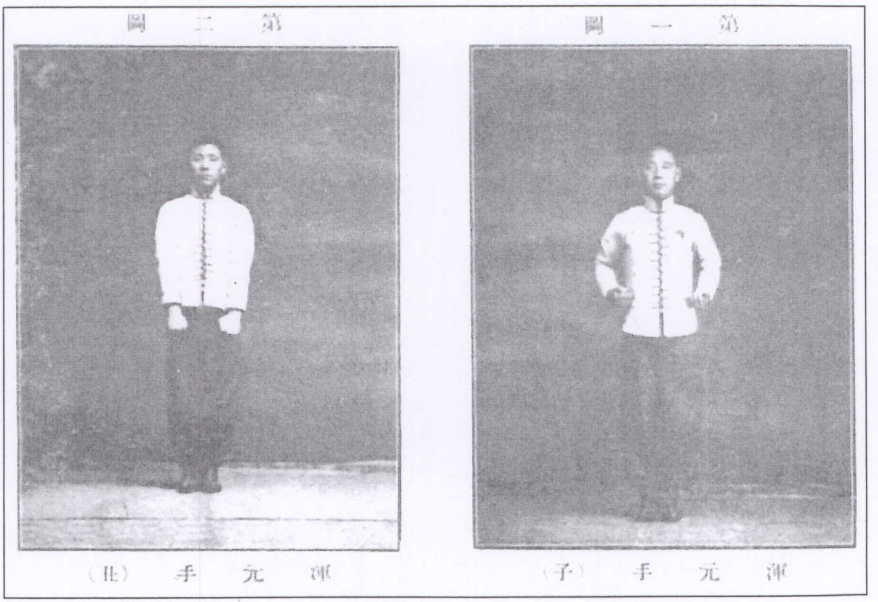
- are said to have been developed in the Northern Shaolin Temple, located in Henan Province, or have been derived from systems coming from there;
- are normally performed along a straight line running from left to right and back and forth;
- have training routines that focus on expansive moves with the limbs extended out to their full length;
- have routines that place more emphasis on leg techniques—such as sweeps, kicks, and jumps—than on hand techniques.

Two comments about this classification: First, the whole issue of the historical authenticity of the Shaolin Temple and whether there were one or more Shaolin Temples is very much an open question. Secondly, the Northern versus Southern Shaolin classification scheme has many exceptions. It should also be noted that what is called Northern Shaolin is often referred to in older Chinese works (including the Jingwu Anniversary Book) as "boxing from the Yellow River" (the Yellow River is the major river in Northern China).

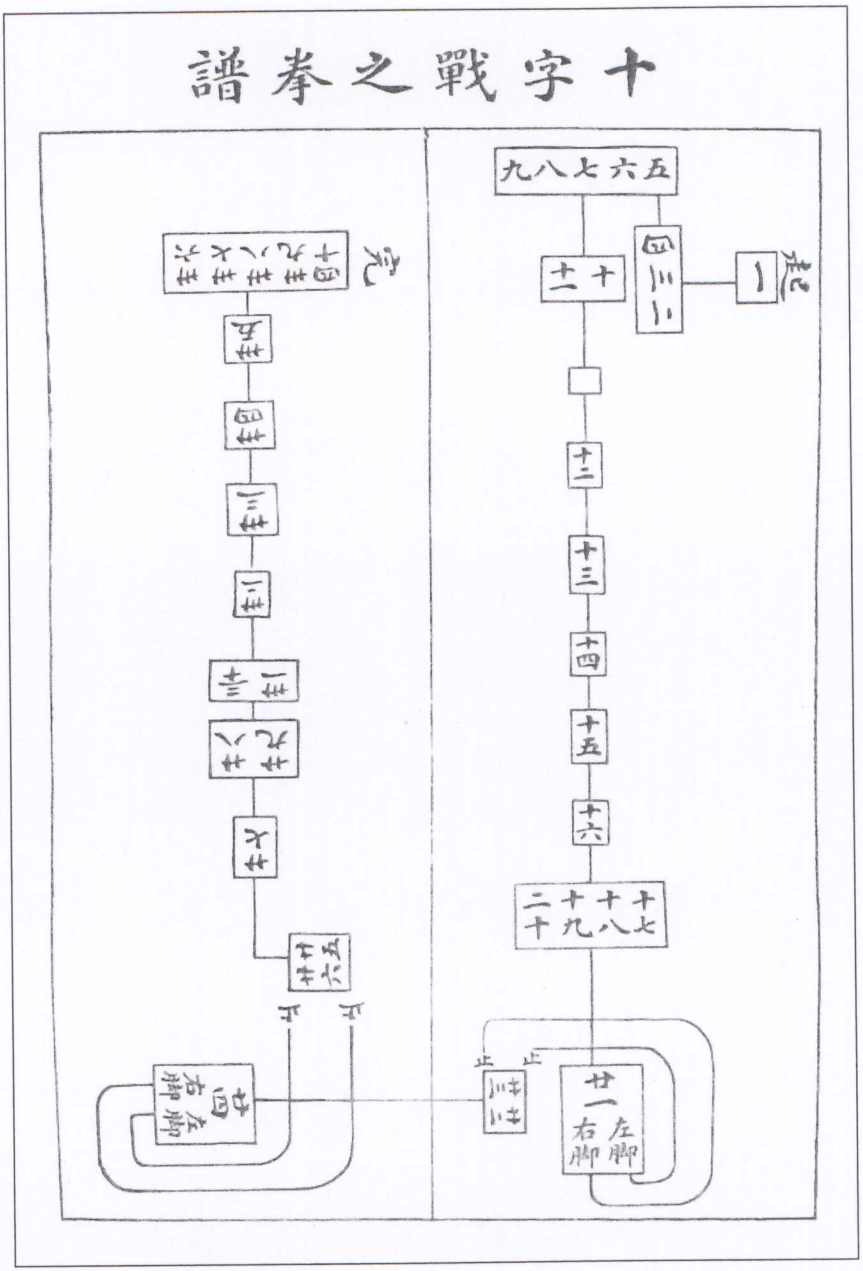
Huo Yuanjia was himself a practitioner of the Mizong Quan system, which is a form of Northern Shaolin. The name *Mizong Quan* means literally "Confused-Tracks Boxing." Mizong Quan is a very complex

and physically demanding form of Northern Shaolin. It was also the "indoor" system of Huo Yuanjia's family, meaning that it was a system of martial arts that was kept secret and reserved exclusively for members of Huo's family. When Huo Yuanjia started to teach the general public at Jingwu, he changed the name of what he was teaching from *Mizong Quan,* which means "Mizong Boxing System," to *Mizong Yi,* which means "Mizong Techniques." The implication was that Huo was not really supposed to be teaching the Mizong Boxing System, as that was his clan's closed-door system. Instead, he picked various techniques and training routines out of his family's system and then changed the name slightly.

The Jingwu's signature routine, which is shown in their Anniversary Book, is a form called "Cross-Shaped Routine." The routine is presented in its entirety with photos, written descriptions, and a footwork diagram. This training routine was very highly thought of. The Anniversary Book says, "It was said, if you know cross shaped form you can defeat half the heroes in the world. This may sound like boasting but it shows how popular the routine was."



The two opening moves to the Cross-Shaped Routine



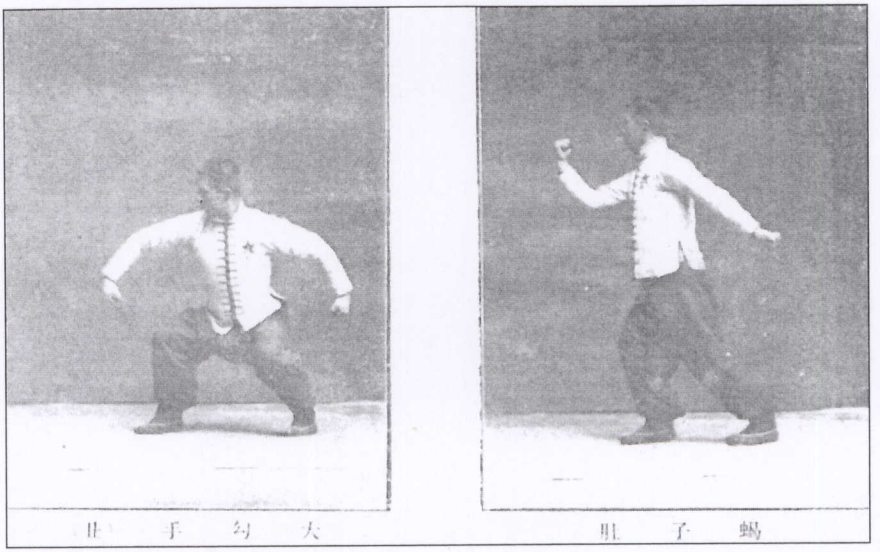
The footwork diagram for the Cross-Shaped Routine

The Anniversary Book shows the Cross-Shaped Routine in detail with photographs and a written description. There is also a diagram that shows the layout of the form. The form basically consists of one line that goes up and back. This training routine had also been recorded in a separate book that featured the same photos. The person performing the routine in the photos is Zhao Lianhuo. Zhao was born in the Zhao family village in Hopei. He was an expert in Shaolin boxing and had been hired by Huo Yuanjia to be the head martial arts teacher for the Jingwu Association. Soon after Huo's death, Zhao Lianhuo was named one of the chairmen of the Jingwu Association.

Zhao Lianhuo performing the Cross-Shaped Routine

The routine that "could defeat half the heroes of the world" was one of the five core routines of the Jingwu program. According to the Anniversary Book, the Jingwu Association's martial arts program consisted of "Five Battles Boxing": Paired Boxing, meaning two-person, pre-arranged routines; the Big Boxing Routine; the Short Boxing Routine; and the Cross-Shaped Routine. The Jingwu curriculum aimed to

give the students a sample of the best of Northern Shaolin, including a variety of different martial arts routines to keep it interesting.



Moves from the Cross-Shaped Routine

Huo Yuanjia's Martial Arts

While most of the discussion about the Jingwu's martial arts program focuses on Huo Yuanjia, in fact, he passed on quite early in the Jingwu's history. The high quality of martial arts instruction that the Jingwu was and is famous for was due to a multitude of fine martial arts teachers who taught for the Jingwu over the years. Several of the early Jingwu martial arts teachers are mentioned in the Anniversary Book, and one of the appendixes in this book is devoted to them. However, the Anniversary Book is primarily concerned with the martial arts instruction of Huo Yuanjia.

It is interesting to note that although the Jingwu Anniversary Book honors Huo Yuanjia with the very first photo in that book—a handsome, full-page portrait with a caption reading "Founder of Jingwu"—it does not retell any of the stock Huo stories, in which Huo fights the evil British, recovers his friend's dead body from the corrupt Germans, posts a notice in the paper about the weak men of Asia, is poisoned by

a Japanese doctor, or any of the other well-known legends. In fact, the Anniversary Book does not make any further mention of him, except in passing.

What we actually know about Huo is almost nothing beyond the kind of general information you might find on a job application—born in such and such a place and in such and such a year; parents are so and so; has children; studied Lost Track Buddha Disciple system; taught very briefly for the Jingwu Association. Contemporaneous, trustworthy accounts of Huo's life are virtually non-existent. The only information we have about Huo comes from either the Jingwu Association, which claims him as their founder—so there is an inherent conflict of interest there—or from his descendants, who often are trying to make money off their ancestor's name and fame (and none of whom ever laid eyes on their respected grandfather). Neither source can be expected to be objective.

But the historical reality is only part of the picture; in many ways, the myth and the legend of the Jingwu and of Huo Yuanjia are equally as important. Just as the public image of the Jingwu was and still is driven as much by mythic images as by historical reality, the standard Huo myth has value not as historical fact but as a reflection of what the Chinese—and Westerners, for that matter—want in a martial arts "hero." The myth is a cultural mirror that tells a lot about what the Jingwu hoped for and wanted as its image.

The Huo legend

Huo Yuanjia was born in 1868 in Tianjin, China, the fourth of ten children. His family worked both as farmers and as professional martial artists. His father was well respected as a martial artist and as a private security guard who provided guards to accompany goods or cash being moved in northern China. Huo's family members were lineage holders in the Mizong Quan martial arts system.

Huo was born weak and was ill throughout most of his childhood. His father would not teach him the family system, fearing that Huo was too weak and lacking in athletic aptitude to learn the physically

demanding system of Mizong Quan. If Huo attempted to do so and then at some point got involved in a fight—and lost—it would shame the family and demean the family's martial arts reputation. His father's solution was to forbid him to learn martial arts and to instead encourage him in academic pursuits. The Huo myth says that Huo's relegation to academic pursuits served to create a strong sense of humility and gave him a more refined and knowledgeable bearing than was the norm for martial artists of that time.

Some versions of the Huo myth have his father hiring a Japanese martial artist to tutor Huo and suggest that this Japanese tutor had influence over Huo by exposing him to more modern, and perhaps Western, ideas. (The Japanese integrated Western ideas into their culture decades earlier than the Chinese did.)

Almost all versions of the Huo myth have Huo refusing to accept his father's order to not learn the family's martial arts. Instead, Huo secretly hides in the bushes near where his family practices. From this secret vantage point, Huo learns the family system that he then secretly practices alone with a superhuman diligence.

Huo's debut as a martial artist has two legends connected with it. In one story, Huo's father somehow finds out about his secret training and is furious about Huo's defiance. Huo's father scolds him, and by way of apology, Huo promises his father to never compete or fight with other martial artists and to never harm the family's reputation in any way. Somewhat mollified, Huo's father agrees to allow him to join his brothers in the family training sessions. In the end, Huo's father teachers him the entire system, and because of his natural ability and diligence, Huo eventually becomes the most skilled among them.

His martial arts debut is a bit more dramatic in another version of the legend. This version has the stock mysterious challenger visiting the Huo family. (A common character in martial arts legends is the "dark, mysterious stranger" who walks in the door of the training hall and issues a challenge.) In the reality of Qing-era China, this kind of thing was extremely unlikely. China was not some kind of lawless "Old West" where kung fu masters simply wandered about engaging in

challenge matches. Nonetheless, the Huo legend has it that such a challenger defeated one of Huo's older brothers. It was looking like a dark day for the Huo family when Huo—although younger and less experienced—stepped up, met the challenger that had defeated his brother, and defeated him. Huo then became a hero to his family and started to establish his reputation.

His fame notwithstanding, Huo ended up working as a day laborer, hauling firewood and working as a porter. The legend has it that it was during this stint as a day laborer that Huo came to see how the foreign powers were destroying China and humiliating the Chinese people.

Around 1896, Huo met Liu Chengsheng in Shangdong. Liu had heard of Huo's fame and sincerely wanted to learn martial arts from him. Huo could sense that Liu had a "pure heart" and accepted Liu as a full student, and Huo taught Liu all of his family's indoor system. This broke the rule about not transferring the system outside the family. In return for Huo's teaching, Liu became Huo's closest student and surrogate fighter when necessary. This implies that Huo was broad minded and willing to "bend the rules" to help out a worthy person like Liu. This story follows a typical *wuxia,* a Chinese knight-errant genre wherein the martial arts master accepts a worthy disciple even if it contravenes regular social duties. For example, despite his clear social duty to not reveal his family's system, Huo consents to teach it to Liu because of his "pure heart."

Huo's strong feelings toward the cause of Chinese nationalism were reinforced by another major episode. Huo had made close friends with another martial artist named "Big Saber Huang Number 5." This kind of *nom de guerre* was quite common among Chinese martial artists. Normally, it would include their family name and their favored weapon. If previous martial artists had used the same name, then they would be numbered; Huo's friend was thus the fifth martial artist named Huang to prefer the big saber. (As a side note, we should mention this was not Huang Bo Nien, who was also famous for his saber work.)

Big Saber Huang Number 5 was active in the Boxer Rebellion, and the legend states that he was killed in battle by soldiers of the Eight-Nation Alliance. (The Eight-Nation Alliance was the group of nations

that suppressed the Boxer Rebellion: Austria-Hungary, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, England, and the United States.) After killing Huang, the soldiers cut off his head and put it on public display as a warning and simply to show their disrespect. Huo and his student Luo personally walked out to where the head had been hung and took it down for a proper burial—a very audacious response to the German soldiers. Defying the Eight-Nation army in this way was a reflection of both Huo's courage and his sense of human decency.

A few years later, Huo had another run-in with a foreign power. In 1901, Huo responded to a challenge advertised by a wrestler from Russia in Tianjin. The wrestler had openly insulted the Chinese, calling them "sick men of Asia" and the "weak men of the East" because no one would accept his challenge to a fight. When Huo accepted his challenge, the Russian—who claimed to be the strongest man in the world—forfeited.

Having dealt with the Russian wrestlers, Huo and his students Liu Chengsheng and Zhang Wenda accepted the open challenge posed by a boxer from Britain called Hercules O'Brien. The fight never happened, and different versions of the legend give different reasons why. Some versions say the two sides could not agree on common rules—that is, whether to use Western boxing rules or allow kicking as well. Other versions of the legend say they could not agree on money: the foreigner wanted ten thousand dollars guaranteed, but after Huo raised the money the foreign fighter left anyway. (In the next section, we will talk a bit more about these foreigner fights and why they need to be viewed with suspicion.)

Chen Qimei, a member of Tongmenghui (the Chinese Revolutionary League) approached Huo to act as the spokesman for the newly formed Jingwu Association and to become its head martial arts teacher. Huo gracefully accepted, with the hope that the Jingwu Association would help the Chinese learn to stand up for themselves and be strong enough to deal with the Western nations and Japan as equals.

As Huo's fame spread across Shanghai, the Japanese community in Shanghai sought to test Huo and his Chinese martial arts against their

Japanese martial arts. Huo's physical condition was weakening because of longstanding health problems, and he started visiting a Japanese doctor to see if anything could be done. In the meantime, the Japanese Judo Association, based in Shanghai, invited him to a competition. Huo's student Liu fought one of the Japanese judo champs. Both sides claimed victory, and the disagreement flared into a full-on brawl. The Chinese version has it that Huo and Liu ended up defeating all ten members of the Japanese judo contingent.

Soon after, Huo died of poisoning. The implication of the legends is that the Japanese doctor deliberately poisoned him in revenge for the humiliation of the judo brawl. Some Chinese newspaper accounts in the late 1980s talked about "forensic proof" that Huo had been poisoned. These accounts came about when the tomb of Huo and his wife was relocated and the bodies were disinterred.

This is the legend that dramatically increased the Jingwu Association's popularity; it is portrayed in several movies starring such luminaries as Bruce Lee and Jet Li. The general theme of the legend is that Huo rose from modest beginnings, worked hard, had traditional martial virtues, wanted the Chinese to have the strength and courage to stand up to the Japanese and the Western nations, successfully did so himself in the various foreigner fights, and then was killed in a sneaky, underhanded way—poisoned by a Japanese doctor. Nonetheless, he was able to form and inspire the Jingwu Association, which then continued his efforts to raise the courage, character, and strength of the Chinese people.

The foreigner fights

In both Chinese- and English-language retellings of the Jingwu legend, the centerpiece of the story is usually the "foreigner fights" that Huo Yuanjia engaged in. In all probability, these legends were greatly embellished or invented entirely by Chinese journalists. The turn of the century, both in the West and in the East, was a time of pulp journalism. Inflammatory and exaggerated stories were the norm, and any story that had a racial aspect was particularly likely to be used by journalists to add fuel to the fire and increase newsstand sales.

Another part of the confusion about the Huo legend concerns the term "fight." "Fights" could mean "worked matches," which were the mainstay of turn-of-the-century stage fighting all over North America and Europe; in a "worked match," the winner was predetermined and the fight was scripted. Worked (or "fixed") matches were often tied in with gambling fraud. Another common type of "fight" was an exhibition fight, which had rules, but in which neither side was trying to kill the other—the objective was just to look good. A third type of "fight" was a real, competitive fight, meaning that both opponents were roughly equal in skill and that both were there to win. A real fight was a great rarity at the turn of the century, at least in Europe or North America, and they were probably uncommon in China, too. The bottom line is that it is quite hard to say which "fights" were works or exhibitions and which were real fights.

The other complication is that none of the foreigners whom Huo or his students supposedly fought have names that are traceable by modern historians. The fight with a Russian wrestler in a park involves an unnamed Russian—not much to go on here. Then there is the British boxer, Hercules O'Brien. "Hercules" is a stage name, and "O'Brien" is a common Irish family name, so modern historians have no idea who this was. Having said this, it is still possible Huo fought a foreigner or foreigners, but it is not historically verified—and that makes it a legend.

The private security business

While the foreigner fights really do not prove much about Huo, he and his family still have great martial arts credence through their work as private security guards. The private security business in China involved several different types of work. There were personal bodyguards who accompanied their clients for protection when they traveled or went into town. Personal bodyguarding required sharp eyes and the ability to deal with close-range and sudden assaults. The skills of Northern Shaolin would be most useful in such a line of work. Residence guards protected their client's home or businesses on a daily basis. Here too, martial arts skill was required. A working knowledge

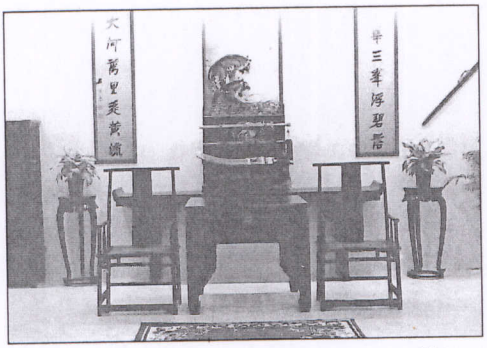
of traditional weapons was necessary for residence guards. There were also guards who accompanied goods or cash being moved from one place to another. Huo's family probably specialized in guarding goods in transit.*

Huo's family's private security business relied on three major factors: First, the family had a reputation for martial skill, which is why Huo's father was so concerned that there should not be any "losses of face" that would erode the family's reputation. Second, the family's business required that they be well connected not only with potential clients but also with potential bandits. A goods-guarding company used a carrot-and-stick approach to dealing with bandits: Martial arts skill was half of it; the other half was bribery of the outlaws. The third factor was keeping the business well armed and armored and presenting an image of confidence and a can-do attitude.

A typical, successful Qing-dynasty bodyguard business would lay out its office or reception area in a way that best presented this sort of confidence. It was here that the owner of the bodyguard service would meet with potential clients. The company's banners would be prominently displayed; advertising was always part of the bodyguard business. These banners were flown at the front and back of any convoy the security business was guarding. They served both as advertising and as a warning to bandits that this convoy was well guarded.

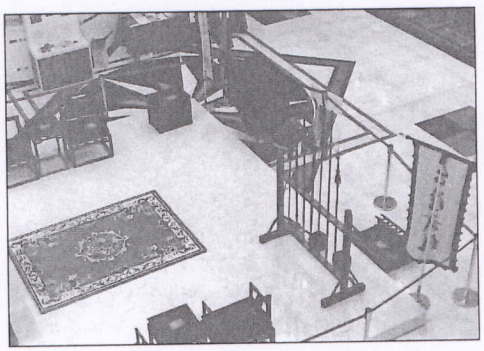
Historically accurate reproduction of a Qing-dynasty bodyguard services reception area

*Taiwan's major martial arts book publisher, Lion Books, has collected a number of historical artifacts connected with the private security business, and these items were on display in Taipei, Taiwan, as of 2006. The photos that accompany this section were taken at that public display.



The owner of the bodyguard business would greet clients from these chairs

The owner and the operations chief of the bodyguard business shown in this picture would sit in the two chairs with their clients at right angles to them. The tiger painting and the scrolls both carried with them a strong martial message. Many private security companies were quite well connected and the owners fairly wealthy. As a result, the furnishings and the calligraphy would be of a high quality. Huo's family was probably not this wealthy, but the general layout would have been the same.



Reproduction of a Qing-dynasty bodyguard services reception area as seen from above

Inside the offices would be weapons stands, which would sometimes be stocked with exotic weapons—such as maces with metal claws, or spears with multiple heads and edges. These exotic weapons were intended to impress the potential client, and were not for serious use. Qing-era security guards stuck with basic weapons: sabers, spears, and firearms. The ornate straight swords hanging on the wall were simply wall decoration.

Private security businesses like the Huo family's would supply the various types of vehicles needed to transport the valuable goods. These included beefed-up strongboxes and the heavy-duty carts to carry them. The Qing-dynasty armored cars shown in this picture were most often used for gold or silver bullion and other expensive items.

Reproduction of a Qing-dynasty strongbox

Martial Arts Manuals and Posters

The Jingwu was very active as a publisher of martial arts teaching material. They had their own in-house publishing division with full-time editors and photographers. Their Anniversary Book proudly shows several examples of books and posters produced by the Jingwu publishing department. These publications included a number of small books illustrating various Northern Shaolin training routines and a well-known poster of a Tan Tui (springing legs) form that is still available today. (This poster has gone through many editions and publishers, but almost a hundred years after it was first made, it is still being printed—quite a longevity record for a martial arts poster.)

It may surprise modern readers that a traditional organization like the Jingwu would advocate learning martial arts out of a book or off a poster. It was commonly assumed among Republican-Era Chinese martial artists that martial arts could fruitfully be learned from a book. They did not view martial arts as something so "arcane" as to defy being put in book form. The idea that one can not learn martial arts from a book is a modern, Western idea; many Chinese think that one can

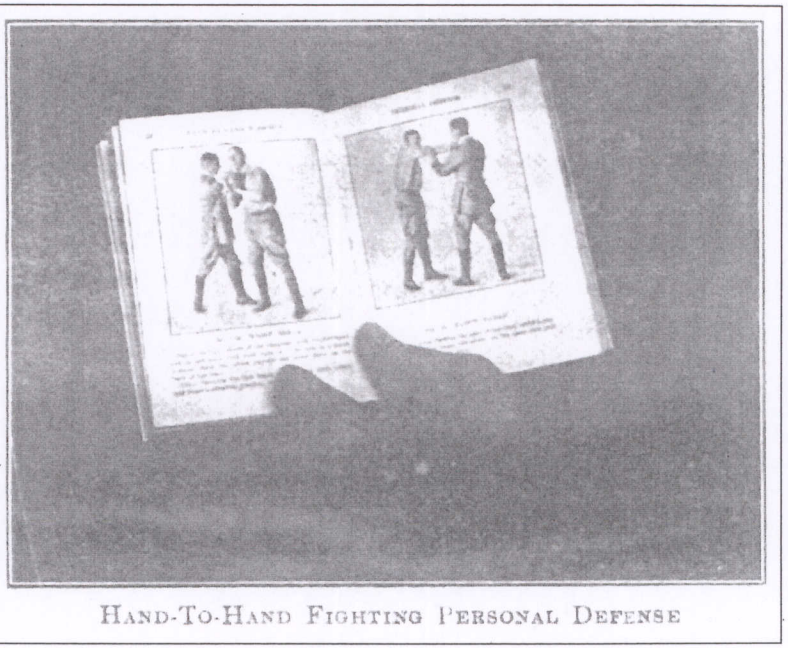
Jingwu Tan Tui poster

Jingwu martial arts training manuals

profit by learning martial arts from a book, although, of course, it depends on what one's level is and how difficult the material is. Whether or not one can learn martial arts from a book is an open question, but the Jingwu Association felt that one could and one should—by buying their books. In 1922, the Jingwu Association also began publishing a monthly magazine titled, accurately enough, *Jingwu Magazine.*

Western Martial Arts Books

The Jingwu Association had a large library of both Chinese and Western martial arts books. The Anniversary Book boasts of how the Jingwu Association had a large library of foreign martial arts books, in particular books from England and the United States. These books were thought to portray modern, "scientific" martial arts.



English-language martial arts manuals that were in the Jingwu's library

English-language martial arts manuals that were in the Jingwu's library

In another interesting twist, with a bit of cultural pride and concern, the Chinese authors of the Jingwu Anniversary Book state that "these American books all feature techniques that come from Chinese martial arts; if we Chinese do not continue to develop our martial arts, then our children will have to learn Chinese martial arts from American books!" It was, and for many Chinese martial artists still is, an indisputable article of faith that all martial arts knowledge has its origin in Chinese martial arts. When they claim that the Japanese, British, and Americans all somehow stole or appropriated their martial arts from the original martial arts of China, they say it not as a joke but as a historical fact. This view that China is the origin of all martial arts is not a thing of the past; many modern, college-educated, Taiwanese martial arts teachers will tell you the same thing. Exactly how British and American martial arts authors came to learn Chinese martial arts and morph them into Western martial arts is usually left vague.

What the Jingwu authors were driving at with their comment that "our children will have to learn Chinese martial arts from American books" was their concern—a legitimate concern, at the time—that Chinese martial arts were being neglected and stood a strong possibility of being tossed into the dustbin of history. One of the Jingwu Association's goals was to revive Chinese martial arts in lieu of the interest in Western martial arts that was sweeping China at the time.

Saving Chinese Martial Arts from Impending Death

One often hears modern Chinese martial arts pundits bemoaning the impending death of Chinese martial arts, but the reality is that the closest traditional Chinese martial arts ever came to dying was in the late 1800s, right after the Boxer Rebellion. As mentioned earlier, the public view of Chinese martial arts and Chinese martial artists had reached an extremely low point, in large part because of their connection to the Boxers of the Boxer Rebellion. But even beyond that, there had been a general decline in the social status of Chinese martial arts and martial artists throughout the Qing dynasty. Chinese martial artists were quite rapidly drifting downwards on the social scale. In earlier dynasties, skill in martial arts led to a degree of social status because one could have a military career based on these skills or make a reasonable living as an instructor. But with the introduction of firearms and modern weapons, manual martial arts skills—such as unarmed fighting and the use of spears or sabers—became largely useless for a military career. Instructors also suffered a downward slide in status; as the military use of martial arts ended, the need for instructors ended as well. Those who had taken up a career in martial arts were falling further down the socioeconomic ladder, getting pushed down and out.

This downward drift can best be shown by a witticism often made at the time: "Chinese martial arts are practiced and taught by men too dumb to write the character for *ding*." (The Chinese character for *ding* consists of just two lines, one across and one down.) But Chinese martial arts were actually in a much worse position than just being the butt of jokes. After the Boxer Rebellion, Chinese martial

arts became viewed as superstitious nonsense that did not work in a "real fight." The Chinese public in the early 1900s thought that in a head-to-head confrontation, Chinese martial arts were useless against Western methods. This view is much the same as that held by many modern Mixed Martial Arts practitioners; it is an interesting historical parallel.

The Jingwu Association spoke out vigorously against this view and in support of traditional Chinese martial arts. In their Anniversary Book, in the section about traditional Chinese martial arts, the Jingwu addresses three very mistaken views that the Chinese public of that time had about Chinese martial arts.

Ming Dynasty print showing a magic Daoist sword

The first of these three mistaken views, to quote directly from the Anniversary Book, was the idea that traditional Chinese martial arts are "like what the I-Ho-Quan does." The I-Ho-Quan was the formal name of the Boxers of the Boxer Rebellion. The name means "Righteous and Harmonious Fists." The average Chinese person of the early 1900s, right after the Boxer Rebellion, held the members of the I-Ho-Quan in utter contempt. The I-Ho-Quan and its members were viewed as examples of everything that was wrong with China: They were violent, but their violence was useless against the superior forces of the West. They were filthy, crudely ignorant, and backward. They were closely linked to superstitious martial arts practices such as "spirit fists" and "divine swords."

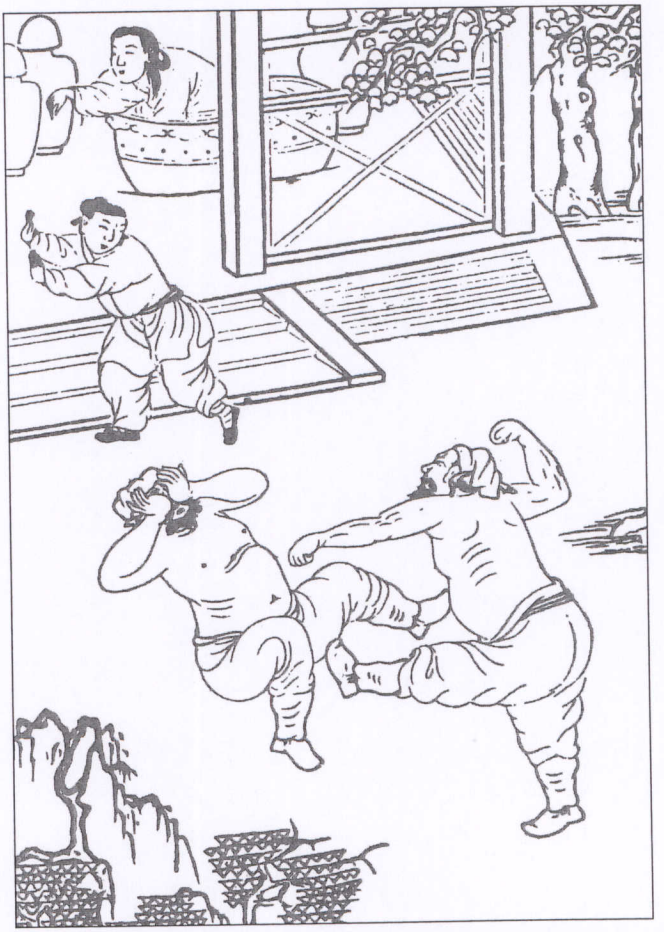
The Anniversary Book sharply distances "true" Chinese martial arts from the absurd practices of the Boxers. While the martial arts of the Boxers failed in actual use, the Jingwu insists that true Chinese martial arts are the most effective form of fighting. While the Boxers were uneducated and dirty, the Jingwu emphasized study and hygiene. While

the Boxers were superstitious, the Jingwu said that true Chinese martial arts were scientific.

The second incorrect view that the Jingwu Association addresses in the Anniversary Book is the idea that people who learn Chinese martial arts are like the "108 Outlaws of the Marsh." This is a reference to a famous Chinese novel that was written in the Ming dynasty, titled *Water Margin* or, as it is often translated, *Outlaws of the Marsh.* The novel involved the exploits and adventures of 108 outlaws and gangsters—all with their own unique forms of martial arts—who formed a loose confederation that operated in the marshes and mountains, on the margins of normal society.

Ming-dynasty print showing characters from Outlaws of the Marsh

While *Outlaws of the Marsh* made quite entertaining reading and inspired exciting Chinese opera plots, the 108 outlaws were not a group that the general public would try to follow as role models. The outlaws spent most of their time divided between drinking bouts, immoral sexual liaisons, street fights, and running from the law. The characters may have been somewhat romantic, but they also tended to die violent, quick deaths and were left with no descendents to tend to their graves—which for the Chinese was abhorrent.



Ming-dynasty print showing characters from Outlaws of the Marsh *engaged in their favorite pastime, street brawling*

The novel became deeply embedded in Chinese culture, and because almost every chapter in the novel talks at length about some type of Chinese martial arts, the image that many members of the public had about Chinese martial arts derived directly from this novel and from the fictional outlaws it depicted. (It is somewhat akin to the fact that the image many Americans have of Chinese martial arts derives directly and exclusively from the television show *Kung Fu* and the character of Kwai Chang Caine.) The Jingwu Association challenged this view, arguing that "'Chinese martial arts practitioner' does not equal 'gangster,' 'thug,' or one of the 'goons' out of ... *Outlaws of the Marsh.*" The Jingwu emphasized that Chinese martial arts were an important part of mainstream Chinese culture and that they were practiced by normal, law-abiding people. Pushing the idea even further, the Jingwu asserted that Chinese martial arts practice would strengthen Chinese society and ensure law and order. Put simply, the Jingwu's position was that Chinese martial arts were for the good guys, not just for criminal low-lives.

The third erroneous view that the Jingwu challenged was the public's idea that Chinese martial arts were inherently tied in with the warlords. As mentioned earlier, during the early years of the Chinese Republic, there was no central government. China was divided up into various warlord fiefdoms. Although the warlords of the Republican Era used modern weaponry, they often dabbled in traditional Chinese martial arts, and they co-opted many themes and buzzwords from traditional Chinese martial arts. For example, many warlords and their generals fancied themselves adroit swordsmen and made a point of being seen practicing traditional Chinese martial arts. Also, they often adopted names and titles that were taken from the legends and folklore of traditional Chinese martial arts. The result was that the public linked the horrific violence, corruption, and misrule of the warlords with the practice of Chinese martial arts.

To counter this, the Jingwu Association pointed out that in historical fact, the practice of traditional Chinese martial arts was connected with brave, wise rulers. The true practitioners of Chinese martial arts,

the Jingwu responded, were good soldiers and generals, men who served China and helped the nation become great, and who were utterly unlike the greedy, corrupt warlords. It is a testament to the persuasive skills of the Jingwu organizers that they were able to effectively counter these long-held public prejudices against traditional Chinese martial arts.

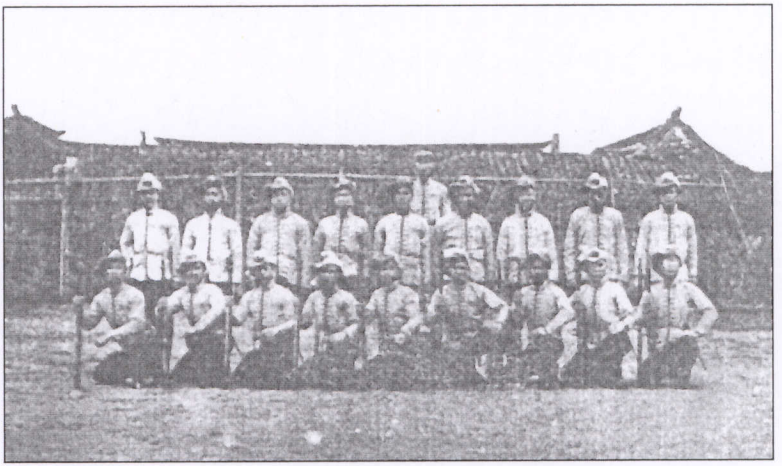
Jingwu Military Training

One of the Jingwu's chief tenets was that practitioners of Chinese martial arts needed to return to their military roots and help China become a nation of citizen-soldiers: civilians who were in excellent physical condition, had basic hand-to-hand fighting skills, and knew the rudiments of military drills and the use of modern weapons. The disorganized, superstitious martial arts of the Boxers had to be replaced by an organized, scientific approach that utilized weapons and military tactics that reflected modern battlefield realities.

Toward this end, the Jingwu Association created programs to train Chinese citizens in various military drills, tactics, and skills. As the Anniversary Book put it, "The Jingwu Association always has these military training courses ... this kind of training is based on how the German and Japanese armies train, and it uses the most modern approaches." The reason the Anniversary Book makes a special mention of the German and Japanese armies is that both nations were widely admired by the Chinese of the Republican Era. The German military was present in Shandong, and there had been a long history of Sino-German military cooperation starting in the last years of the Qing dynasty. It can be said that the German military was the single most influential model in the development of the Republican-Era Chinese armies, including both the official army of the Republic and the various warlord armies. Everywhere you looked in China, there were German military officers acting as advisors and trainers, and there were many military-equipment factories that were joint Sino-German projects. The German government had an official military mission to China that ran from 1927 to 1938. In the 1930s, several high-level Chinese leaders even met with Adolf Hitler.

While the Republican-Era Chinese openly admired and sought the assistance of the German military and industry, the Chinese had a far more ambivalent attitude toward the Japanese because of Japan's various incursions into China. Be that as it may, the Chinese still had a solid respect for Japan's military development and their rapid modernization.

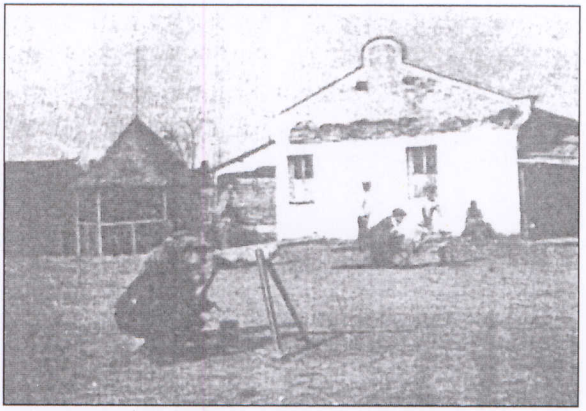
Like other aspects of the Jingwu program, its military training program was eclectic, and the first photo in the military training section shows that fact. The photo shows two lines of Jingwu trainees. They are sporting the Jingwu martial arts uniform but with Western-style cavalry campaign hats and wooden rifles. By way of explanation, the Anniversary Book mentions that these are "special uniforms, which are not so formal and use the martial arts uniform which is already standardized, thus [saving] money."



Jingwu "special uniforms" for military training

For people who only think of the Jingwu as a traditional Chinese martial arts school, it is an eye-opener to see the Jingwu training with machine guns—albeit wooden, "training" machine guns. The Jingwu also taught its military trainees how to operate replica cannons and artillery. As the Anniversary Book points out, it was perhaps just as well that the Jingwu trainees used bamboo replicas, as the training took place right outside the Jingwu headquarters building. The Jingwu also

hosted flag-raising military ceremonies for the celebrations of Double Ten Day. (Double Ten, which is the tenth day of the tenth month, is the holiday marking the founding of the Republic of China.)

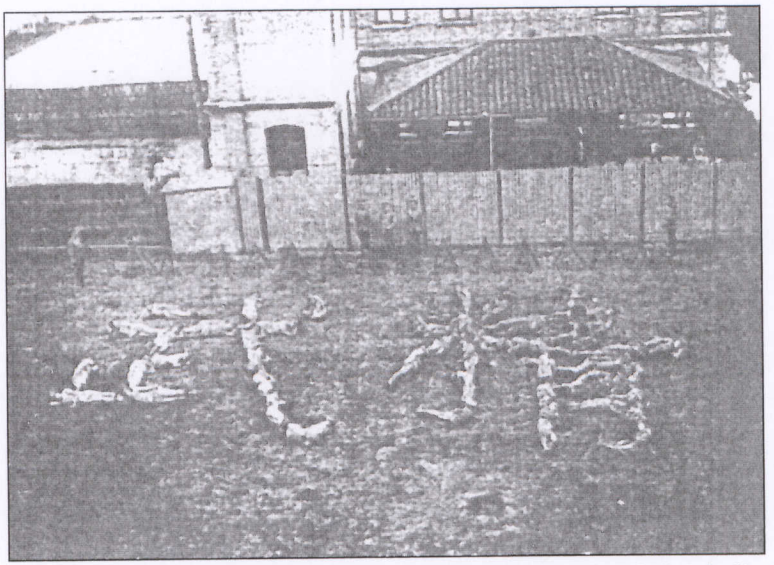


Jingwu members practice with bamboo cannons as part of their military training

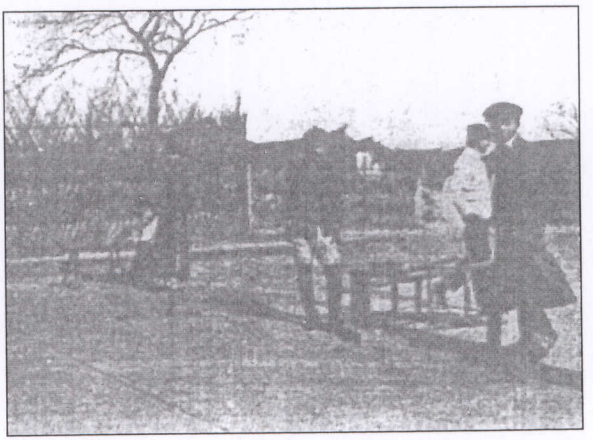
It did not take the Jingwu long to get their uniforms to a more standard modern military form. The Jingwu's sixth graduating class appears in full uniform with real sabers and rifles. These uniforms are modeled on Japanese uniforms.

Jingwu military trainees

These newer uniforms were on display at a number of Jingwu events. It was common to have the soldier trainees stand in a formation that spelled out the characters for "Jingwu."

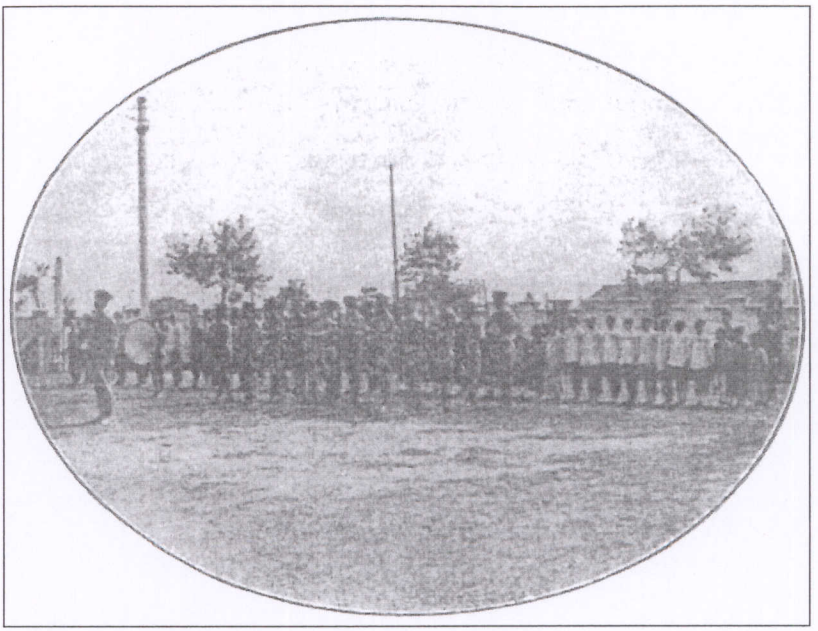


Jingwu military trainees spell out "Jingwu" with their bodies.



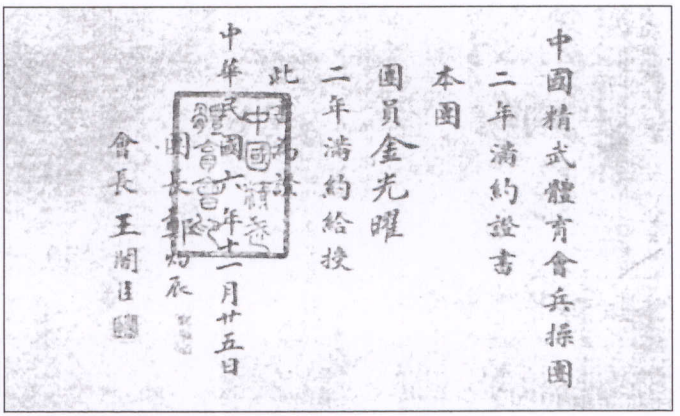
Jingwu members' military training

The Jingwu also organized a military band to play at events.

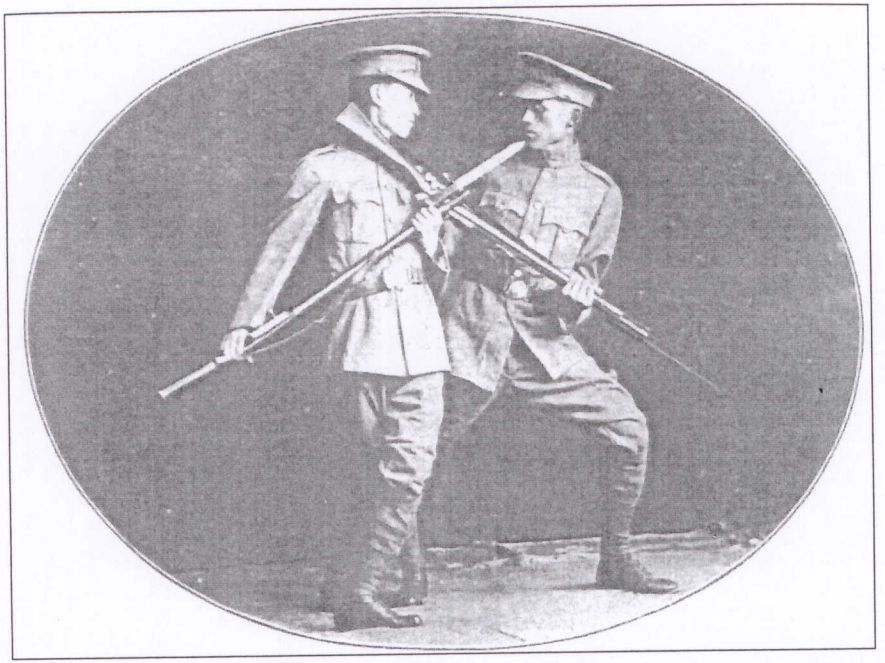


Jingwu members military band

As with other Jingwu programs, the Jingwu army-training program was of a fixed length of time. The Anniversary Book shows a certificate given to a student who graduated in 1917 with two years of Jingwu soldier training. The term used for this type of training is *ji ji soo,* which is perhaps best defined as "skill in military hand-to-hand combat." In modern parlance, it would be "military combatives."



Jingwu "military training" diploma



Jingwu military bayonet training

Ji ji soo included Western-style bayonet and saber training. Two of the photos in the Anniversary Book show Jingwu soldier trainees using modern rifles with bayonets, sabers, and Western uniforms. The Chinese had considerable interest in Western bayonet and saber training, and they merged traditional Chinese martial arts methods with Western methods to produce what they viewed as a modern military system that had solid roots in traditional Chinese martial arts. The Chinese military had a long tradition of spear training, and this spear training, with its emphasis on parrying and stabbing, was well suited to modern bayonet training.

Pici training in Republican-Era China

Pici: Cut and Stab Skills

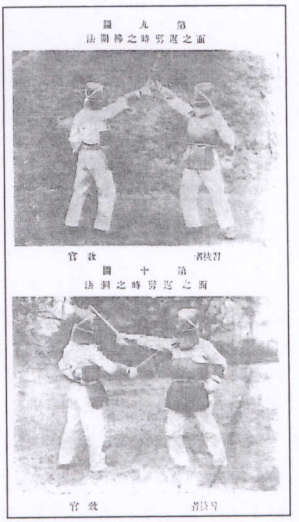
"It is quite often that we Chinese are pitted against foreign armies and soldiers, so we must learn the skills of 'cut and stab'"—so says the unknown author of a Republican-Era Chinese military training manual called *The Study of Short Sword and Pici Skills.* This view was completely in line with the Jingwu's military training doctrine, and a look at Chinese military history will help place it in context.

The Qing-dynasty military, during the closing decades of its existence, had a less than stellar record; it had suffered losses in the First Opium War (1839–1842), the Second Opium War (1856–1860), the Taiping Rebellion (1851–1864), and the First Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895), and had no wins. Although the Taiping Rebellion (1851–1864) was stopped, it was brought to a halt by privately funded regional forces known as *Yongying* ("Brave Battalions"), not by the regular Qing military. This poor military performance was, as one would expect, a cause for considerable concern among the Qing leadership. A number of solutions were attempted, but all of them seemed to be too little, too late, with too much corruption to overcome.

The Republican government was keen to strengthen its military presence and equally keen to avoid the disgraces and military failures that had been part of the demise of the Qing. They were also concerned, and realistically so, about the rise of Japan's military presence. Both the Chinese public and the Republican government had what could best be described as a love-hate relationship with Japan. The Chinese both admired and envied Japan for being an Asian nation that had successfully modernized and had some "face" in the international community—something that the Chinese had not yet accomplished. The Chinese also disliked the Japanese for their "easy" victory in the First Sino-Japanese War.*

*The Chinese public viewed the Japanese victory as having been "easy" because of its speed as well as the fact that the Japanese suffered far fewer casualties than did the Chinese.

This love-hate relationship was strong among Chinese martial artists and military reformers as well: while they loudly proclaimed that the best military and martial skills came from China (and that Japan's methods were simply poor imitations) they also lifted training methods straight out of Japanese martial arts. An outstanding example of this curious attitude can be seen in the development of Chinese *pici*.



Pici training in Republican-Era China using Japanese Kendo gear

Pici literally means "cut and stab." In simple terms, pici is a type of military saber and bayonet fighting—using protective equipment—that was practiced in China starting in the Republican Era. For all intents and purposes, it can be viewed as the Chinese version of the Japanese art of *jukendo*. In Chinese martial arts jargon, the word *pi* refers to any movement that is a downward and forward cutting action. For example, pi is one of the five main actions in the Chinese martial art of Xingyi Quan (Form-Intent Boxing), and it is often translated as "splitting" (as in splitting a log with an axe). The action is both slightly forward and straight down. In pici, the term *pi* refers to the downward cutting of either a sword or rifle with a bayonet. The word *ci* means stabbing straight forward with the entire body mass behind the stab. In pici, *ci* refers to the full-body lunge used in bayonet attacks.

During the Republican Era, *pici* came to mean at least three different (although related) things: a system, an approach to training, and a philosophy. In its most basic sense, *pici* referred to a system of bayonet and short-sword fighting that had a corpus of techniques and a number of set routines. In a broader sense, the phrase referred to an approach to training that includes realism, in the sense of focusing on basic practical techniques and on contact training. Pici practitioners often wore some type of protective equipment and engaged each other with some

level of actual weapon-to-weapon contact. In a still broader sense, the phrase served as a metaphor for the idea in the Republican Era that all Chinese, whether they were in the military or not, should strengthen themselves, learn practical forms of combat, and be prepared to defend the new Republic of China against foreign foes.

Pici is not a system in the sense of having a lineage, an established list of routines, or a unifying theory. It is not a system in the sense that Taiji Quan or Shotokan karate are systems. Pici is better thought of as a set of basic skills. Pici focuses on the use of the rifle bayonet and the saber. The techniques are normally directed against an opponent armed either with a rifle bayonet, a saber, or a Japanese-style, double-handed sword. The techniques are straightforward: usually some type of parry or block followed by a stab. One aspect that is quite noticeable is that almost all the techniques shown place an emphasis on closing in on the enemy. This aggressive closing of space between the two fighters is in keeping with a common military martial arts dictum, which is that one must close, kill, and be quick about it. Simplicity and speed are the bywords of pici.

Although the techniques start with weapons use, many of them address the practical reality that the soldier or civilian may end up getting the weapon knocked either to the side or completely out of his or her hands. In that event, the manual shows a number of techniques for quickly responding with bare hands. Toward that end, the manual also contains the usual stock diagrams of vital points and hand formations to use.

Pici equipment

The illustrations in the various training manuals show the standard training equipment used during the Republican Era. The standard gear consists of a wooden rifle, some type of wooden sword, head protection, chest protection, and padded gloves. Chinese pici training gear of the time seems to have come in two broad categories: homemade protective gear and imported Japanese gear. Homemade protective gear could be as crude as Tweedledum and Tweedledee's outfits in *Alice in*

Wonderland (which consisted of "bolsters, blankets, hearth-rugs, table cloths, dish covers, and coal scuttles") to equipment based on Japanese kendo equipment that provided a modicum of protection. In addition to the Chinese sets, there were sets of protective equipment imported from Japan during the Republican Era.

Pici as "realism"

The topic of protective gear leads naturally into a broader sense of pici. In addition to being a set of techniques, pici was known for its emphasis on realism. When pici was enjoying its heyday in Republican-Era China in such organizations as the Jingwu, a number of martial arts reformers—including the Chinese martial arts historian Tang Hao—felt that Chinese martial arts had been horribly infected with what Tang Hao called "flowery techniques and embellishments." As a result, Chinese martial arts were almost useless on the battlefield or as a way for civilians to maintain basic physical fitness.

Tang Hao and other Chinese martial arts reformers sought to simplify and refocus Chinese martial arts on techniques and training methods that had real-world applicability. Toward this end, the reformers placed an emphasis on two-person practice with weapons that were in modern-day use, with some level of contact and perhaps competitiveness thrown into the mix. Pici training came to represent this approach. Pici training used swords and rifle bayonets (weapons that were in use on battlefields of the time); it was generally conducted with partners, not as solo form routines (part of the "flowery techniques and embellishments" Tang Hao referred to); and it could involve contact and competition.

Pici training also helped foster an attitude of aggressiveness, which is certainly an aspect of realism, at least on the battlefield. The two-person practice of pici training allowed for immediate feedback and served as an objective test of what would and would not work. If some master said that his qi would project out the end of the sword and knock the other person's sword from his hands, pici training provided a quick and clear way to test that claim. Also, pici training allowed the students

to make progress in fairly short periods of time, because the techniques were fairly simple and few in number. Paired practice also allowed students to easily see what they were trying to do with the techniques. In addition, the contact element allowed students to see and feel results, as opposed to having to take things on faith.

This idea of the physically fit citizen-soldier is still around in modern China. A manual released in 2004 by the National College of Physical Education and Sports states in its introduction that "the bayonet martial art attack exercise is a fighting martial art [that] fits every walk of life. In addition to military service, we can also stay fit by learning it in our daily life. Every school or community is supposed to use the bayonet martial art in teaching so as to establish community anti-violence [self-governing] groups."

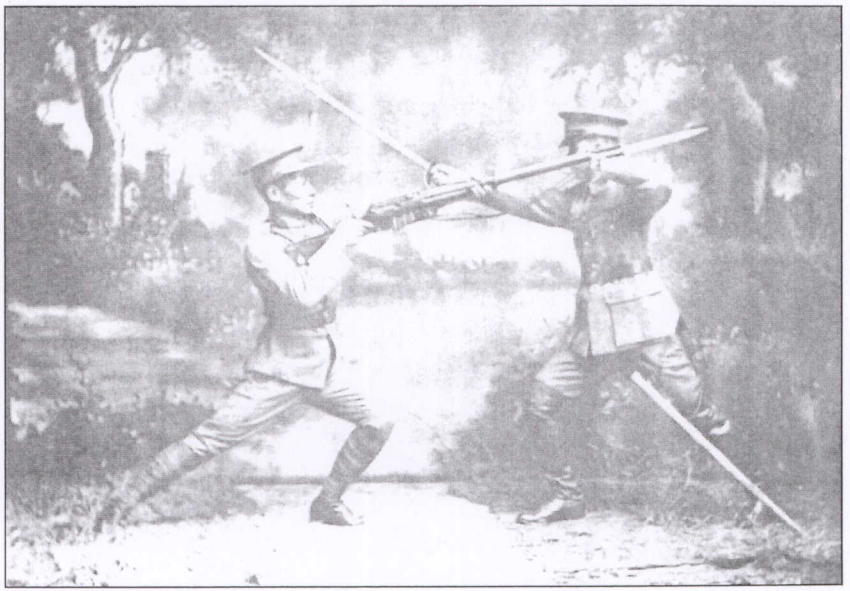
The history of pici

The idea of contact weapons training is an old one in Chinese martial arts. Ming-dynasty martial arts trainers often had their soldier-students don protective chest gear and engage in some limited form of contact weapons work. Whether that included light weapons sparring is unclear. Certainly it did consist of weapon-to-weapon contact, although probably with pre-arranged techniques and counters or what is known as "one-step sparring," in which the attacker uses only one move and the defender responds as he or she sees fit.

However, pici, in its Republican-Era incarnation, was borrowed, stolen, or copied—whatever word one wishes to use—directly from Japan, at least in Tang Hao's view. It is hard to disentangle exactly what the historical relationship is between Chinese pici of the Republican Era and the Japanese developments in jukendo (the military fighting art of the bayonet). What Tang Hao did make clear is that Republican-Era pici was developed based on things seen in Japan. At some point in the early 1920s, Tang Hao led a delegation of Chinese martial artists on a fact-finding tour of Japan, with the goal of seeing how the Japanese were modernizing their martial arts. One of the things they brought back was pici. It should be mentioned that this "importing" of pici was

not just Tang Hao's doing. Although he was a big advocate of the idea and wrote a number of articles on the topic, other people—most notably Chinese students studying at Japanese universities—also brought back the ideas and practices that became pici. Both of these factors probably influenced the Jingwu's incorporation of pici into their programs.

Citizen-soldiers, practical methods, physical fitness, and modern training equipment—these were all buzzwords of Republican-Era reformers, and pici training came to be a very visible example of how these reform concepts could be turned into reality. Unfortunately for the people of China, before these reforms could take root, the Republican Era came to a close, and the idyllic visions of happy, healthy citizen-soldiers doing their pici exercises were swept aside by the grim realities of World War II and the Chinese Civil War.



Pici training at the Jingwu Association

4

Other Jingwu Activities

Although modern views of the Jingwu tend to focus on the martial arts side of things, the Jingwu's non-martial arts recreational programs were a major part of its attraction in its early years. The Jingwu presented itself as a bastion of both martial arts and fine arts, cultivating both the minds and the bodies of its members.

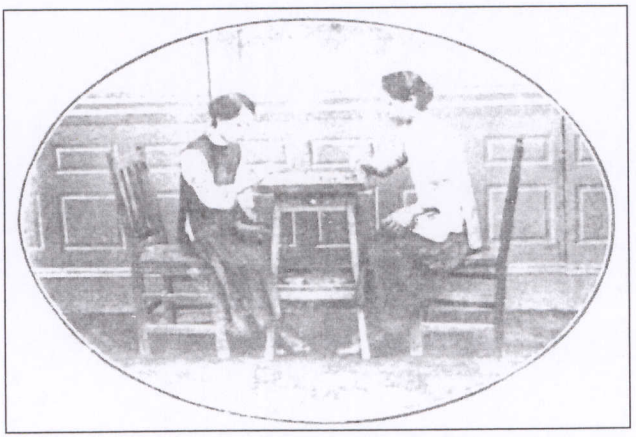
Recreation and Music

This mental cultivation included such things as chess playing, which was thought to be a fine form of "mental martial arts," and traditional Chinese musical ensembles alongside Western chamber orchestras. For those whose image of the Jingwu comes primarily from Bruce Lee movies, it may be somewhat unexpected to see the Jingwu teaching classical music or a Russian violinist performing in front of a traditional Chinese martial arts weapons rack.

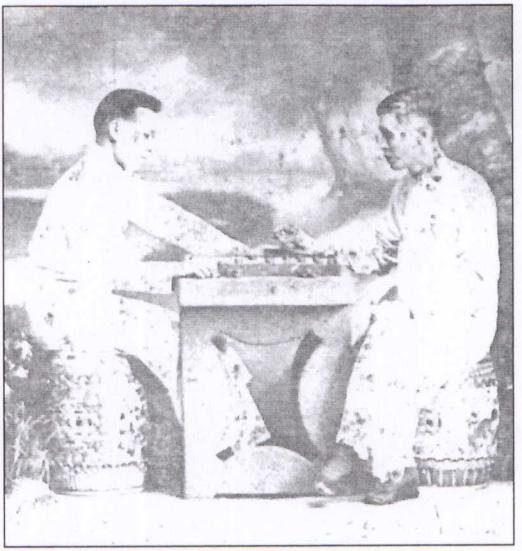
Jingwu's Chinese music ensemble

Russian violinist performs at the Jingwu

Yet there have always been links between Chinese martial arts, temple performances, and traditional lion or dragon dances. The Jingwu simply expanded this to include other forms of music and brought the martial arts and the musical arts together in a unified cultural program. The inclusion of such "highbrow" pastimes as chess and chamber music reflected the goal of the Jingwu to raise the overall level of Chinese culture and to bring in Western cultural elements.



Jingwu students enjoying a chess game



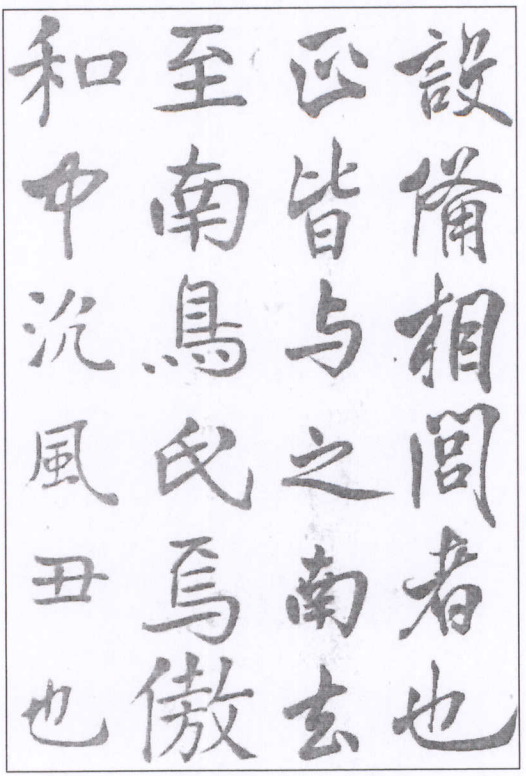
Jingwu students playing board games

Jingwu piano recital

It is important to keep in mind that the Jingwu wanted to promote a "Chinese culture" that included Western elements but remained fundamentally Chinese. The Jingwu was not seeking to replace Chinese culture with Western culture, just as they were not seeking to replace Chinese martial arts with Western martial arts. The goal was a new Chinese nation with a people who were fundamentally tied to their traditional Chinese culture but also integrated aspects of Western culture that were useful or pleasing into their lives.

Literary Studies

Chinese culture is often divided into the *wen* and the *wu:* the civilian and the solider, or the literary arts and the martial arts. Having looked at the Jingwu's military training, the Anniversary Book next turns its attention to the opposite side of Chinese culture, literary studies. As the Anniversary Book puts it, "the Jingwu Association thinks that just learning martial arts is not so balanced, so Jingwu students must learn some literary skills."

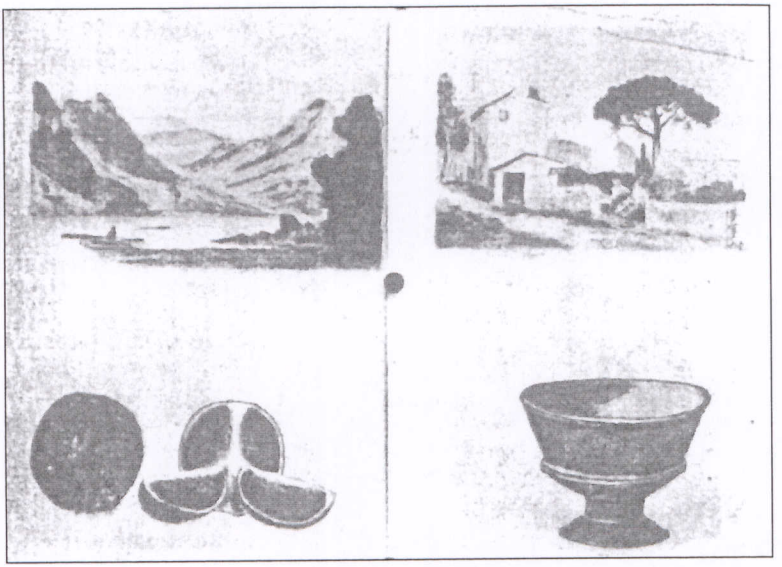


Calligraphy done by Jingwu students

Jingwu students in calligraphy class

Calligraphy study at the Jingwu

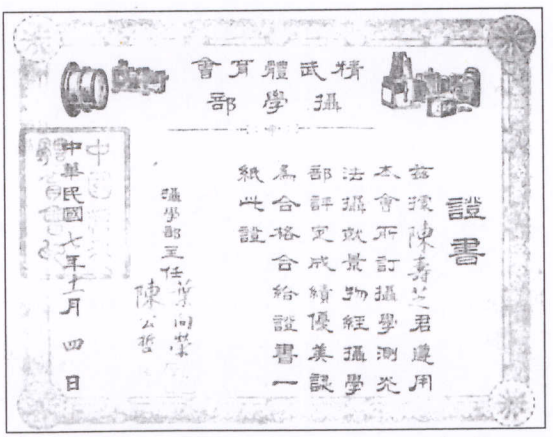
Calligraphy has always been the height of refinement in Chinese culture, and having a good hand at calligraphy was the mark of a gentleman and scholar. A work of calligraphy was a respected gift, and famous Chinese often made gifts of their own calligraphy. Because calligraphy has such a major place in Chinese literary arts, the Jingwu Association had a calligraphy program that taught its students both basic and advanced techniques of the art. The Anniversary Book added, by way of encouragement for their more martially inclined students, that "learning calligraphy helps the student to improve [his or her] sword work." This mix of the martial and the literary is highlighted by the photo of the Jingwu students hard at work on their calligraphy with traditional weapons racks in the background.



Watercolor paintings done by Jingwu students

The Jingwu Photo Studio

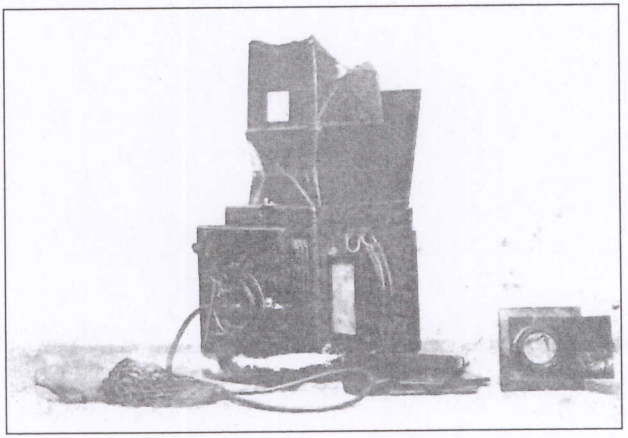
In addition to the traditional fine arts of calligraphy and brush painting, the Jingwu also taught modern fine arts such as photography. The Anniversary Book shows the Jingwu photography club on outings. A number of the club's photographs are shown, as well as a Jingwu photography class graduation diploma.



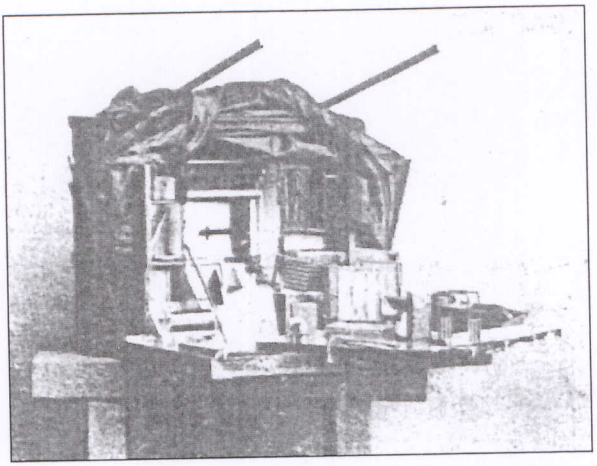
Jingwu photography diploma

Guo Wei Yi, head of the Jingwu photography division

Nowadays, DVDs, VHS cassettes, and Web sites full of photographs and videos are all standard ways to teach and promote Chinese martial arts. But it was not always so. The Jingwu Association was the first Chinese martial arts group to make instructional films, and these films became an important part of the Jingwu's promotional efforts. The Jingwu had its own in-house film and photography studio, which is covered in some detail in the Anniversary Book. This was certainly a first for a martial arts school; in fact, there are few modern martial arts schools that can boast of having an in-house studio. The head of the film and photography division in the Jingwu Association was Guo Wei Yi, and his picture is prominently displayed in the Anniversary Book, as are the various cameras and developing equipment the Jingwu had.



Jingwu photography equipment



The Jingwu's mobile photo-developing equipment

The Jingwu Association had asked Guo to research modern methods of filmmaking and photography because, as the Anniversary Book put it, "films and photos are the modern way to promote the Jingwu Association and Chinese martial arts." The Anniversary Book boasts of how their director of photography had made a trip to the United States to buy the best and most modern American photographic gear.

With this new gear, the Jingwu film division shot over five thousand Chinese inches (about six hundred feet) of film footage of the Association's martial arts program. These reels of film were used in Jingwu promotions across China and were taken to South Asia by a special Jingwu delegation. Apparently, the audiences were extremely impressed by the film presentations, both in China and in South Asia. In China, filmmaking was still in its infancy, and the novelty of film (combined with the public's interest in martial arts) made for very memorable presentations; it was a powerful marketing tool. The use of film footage also represented a major turn away from the secrecy that had marked much of Chinese martial arts up until this time. Regrettably, it seems that none of the film footage shot during the 1910s and 1920s by the Jingwu has survived.

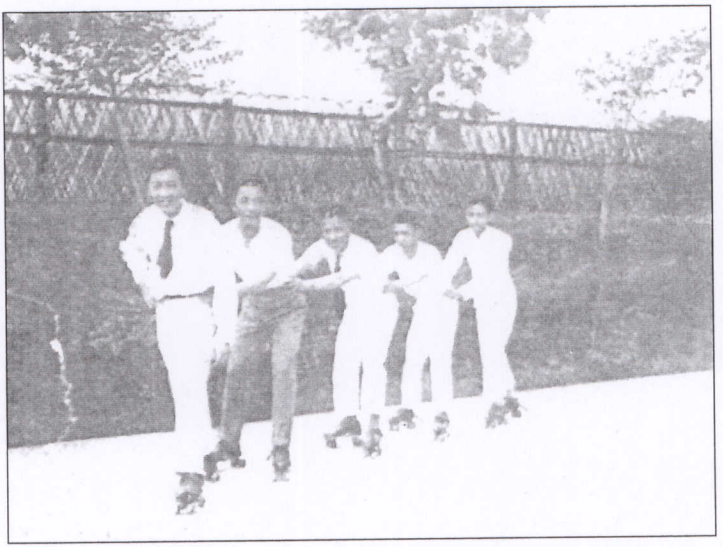
Western Sports and Outdoor Adventures

The Anniversary Book shows Jingwu members playing such competitive sports as tennis, basketball, and soccer.

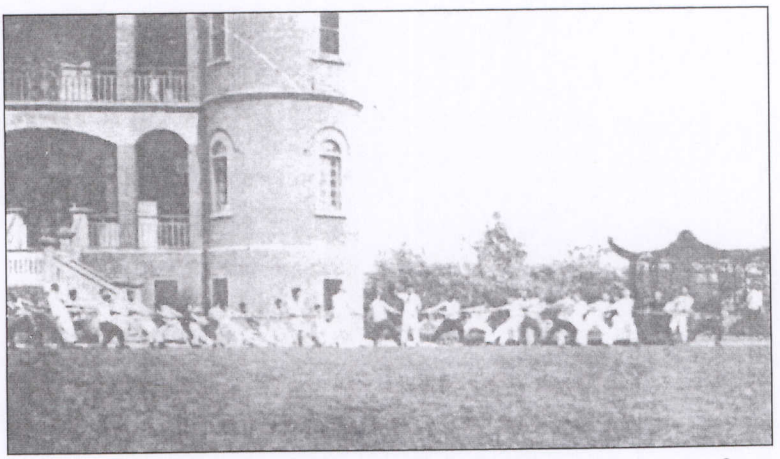
The Jingwu's tennis court

The Jingwu's basketball court

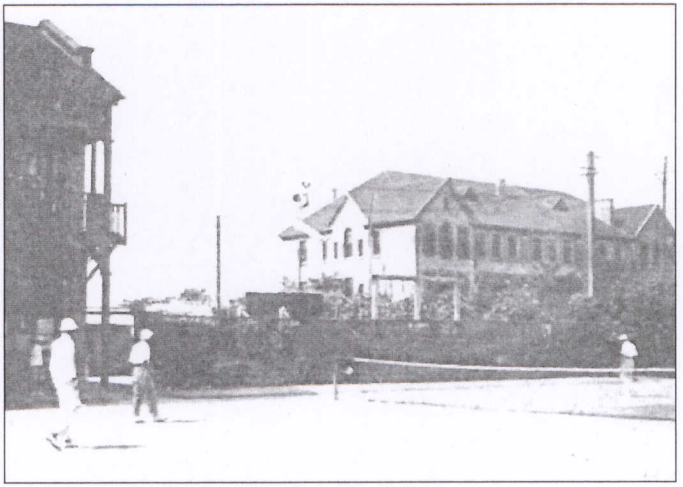
The Anniversary Book also shows Jingwu members engaged in such urban outdoor recreations as roller skating, playing tug-of-war, and engaging in "the skill of keeping position in the air." The latter consisted of a pulley arrangement that Jingwu members hung onto as they flew across the Jingwu courtyard in mid-air. It was a type of "wire-work kung fu" long before the Hong Kong kung fu filmmakers thought of it.



Jingwu members roller skating

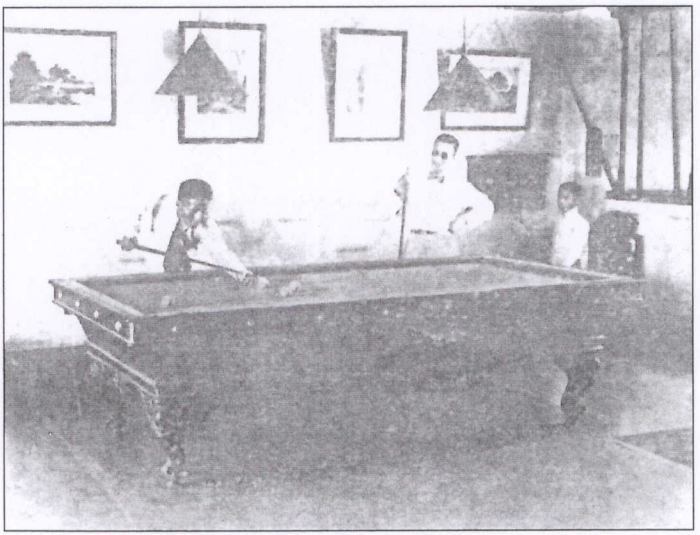


Jingwu members engage in tug-of-war



Jingwu members playing tennis

Although pool and billiards have a somewhat unsavory connotation for Westerners, they were considered "high-class" European indoor recreations for Chinese at the turn of the twentieth century. The Jingwu Association had a pool table to allow members to partake of this indoor sport.



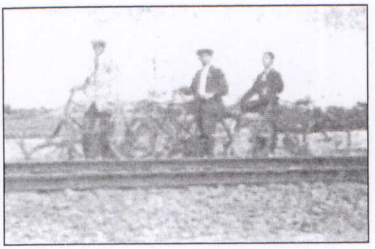
Jingwu members shooting pool

Table tennis at Jingwu

Ping pong, or table tennis, was another more traditional indoor recreation that the Jingwu sponsored.

The Jingwu Association also sponsored more rural outdoor adventures, including hunting trips. One photo shows a Jingwu group that seems to have had a very successful day of hunting; note their European-style hunting caps, firearms, hunting dogs, and killed game, which includes pheasants and rabbits.

Jingwu members on a hunting trip



Jingwu-sponsored bicycle trip

For those who were not inclined to hunt, the Jingwu also sponsored hiking excursions and bicycle trips. Although bicycles would become a common sight in China in the 1940s and 50s—with hundreds of thousands of Mao-capped Chinese riding the streets—in the early part of the twentieth century, bicycles were still considered a kind of Western oddity. Nonetheless, the Jingwu Association sponsored bicycle trips, both because of the association of bicycles with the West and because bicycles were thought to be somewhat advanced technology. The specific trip shown in the Anniversary Book seems to have followed a set of railroad tracks, as each of the pictures shows the Jingwu group posed with their bikes alongside the tracks.

Weight Training

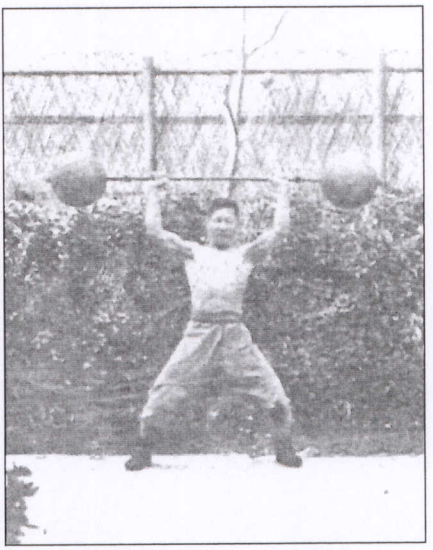
Traditional Chinese martial arts had various forms of weight training. These traditional training devices included stone locks, which were either made of cement or carved out of stone and were shaped to have a handle and a triangular base. These traditional Chinese kettle balls were used in pairs. There were also larger weight machines such as the "thousand-jin gate," which was a kind of overhead press, and a squat machine, in which a slab of rock could move up and down on guide tracks inside of a wooden frame. To keep the exerciser from being crushed, there were safety ropes attached to the frame and the weight. As with modern squat machines, there were side pins that would allow the lifter to preload the weight at a certain position and then begin the lift from there.

The role that weight training played in traditional Chinese martial arts is made clear by the fact that Qing-dynasty military exams had a stone-lifting component. To pass, the candidate had to lift a series of heavy stones to chest level and rock them back and forth. These stones were rectangular, with shallow finger grooves on each end, and each weighed 200, 250, or 300 jin. One jin, at least in modern Chinese measurements,

"Thousand-jin gate" training device

equals 1.32 pounds or 0.6 kilograms—that would make the three stones range from 264 to 396 pounds, which might stretch the credibility of this claim. But no matter what the exact weight of the stones was, the fact that basic weightlifting was required to get into the Qing military indicates that weight training was likely also a part of Qing-dynasty martial arts.

The Jingwu added a modern, Western spin to traditional Chinese weightlifting, and imported Western-style barbells and dumbbells for their members to use.

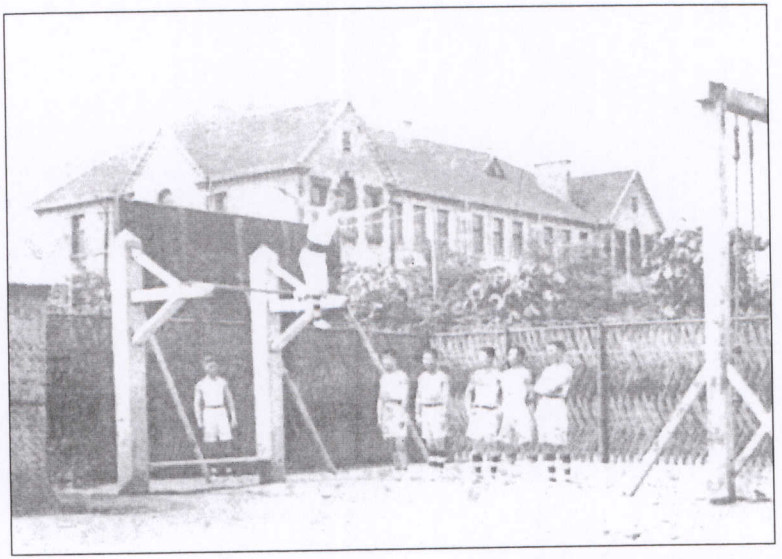


Jingwu member working out with "modern" weights

Gymnastics and Track and Field

Western gymnastics and track and field were also part of the Jingwu's recreational programs. The Anniversary Book shows members posing while throwing the javelin and discus, performing shot puts, doing long jumps and high jumps, and working on such gymnastic devices as the uneven bars, rings, and pummel horse. Judging from the photos, one of the side yards at the Jingwu headquarters building was devoted to these activities.

One of the Jingwu's goals was to make China competitive in international contests for such sports as gymnastics, which they felt was an important part of China's taking its place in the international community. International sports competitions were utterly ignored by the Qing dynasty, and the Jingwu's interest in these contests was an example of their New Culture Movement roots.

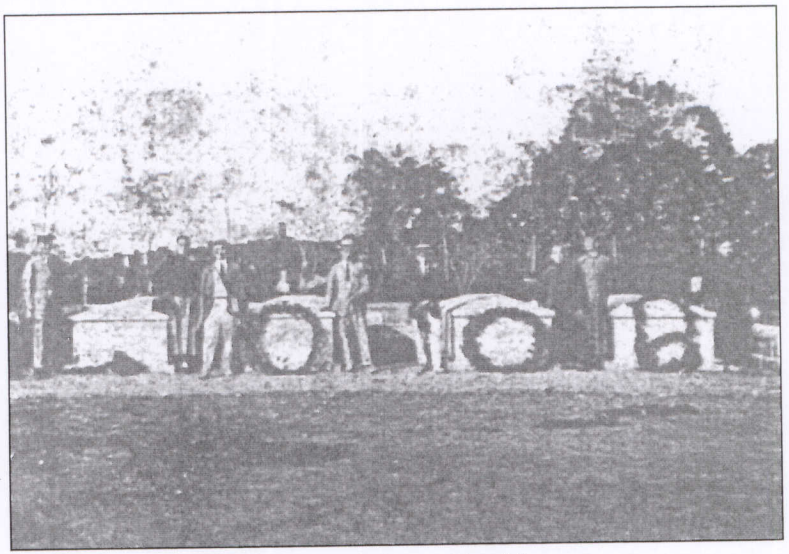


Jingwu gymnastic training

Jingwu track-and-field training

Revolutionaries and Martyrs

The Anniversary Book talks quite a bit about the recent revolution that had toppled the Qing dynasty. Although the Qing dynasty is usually cast as a weak and feeble government, it nonetheless did not "go peacefully," nor did it topple at first push. The Manchus, who had centuries before conquered China, were not going to simply surrender. Plenty of blood was shed by both the Imperial government and the revolutionaries.



Jingwu members at the Tomb of the Seventy-Two Martyrs

Because the Jingwu Association was in many ways a child of the revolution, it glorified the revolutionary martyrs who had died in the cause. The Anniversary Book, for example, has a photo taken at the Tomb of Seventy-Two Martyrs in Guangzhou. That memorial was built in 1918 to pay homage to the martyrs who died in the Guangzhou uprising against the Qing dynasty, which took place on April 27, 1911. A special group within the alliance had been formed by Sun Yat-Sen and ordered to attack government buildings in Guangzhou City. The attacks occurred over a twenty-four-hour period and over

130 revolutionaries were killed. Of those, seventy-two were highlighted for their martyrdoms. These seventy-two were chosen because they were all young and well educated—often in Japan or Europe—and because they could have been very successful under the Qing dynasty. While these seventy-two martyrs would have had no trouble leading financially rewarding careers under the Qing, they had instead stepped forward to fight for Chinese democracy—and had died for it. The unspoken but clear point was that these were not the superstitious and ignorant Boxers of the Boxer Rebellion, nor were they simple-minded peasant farmer malcontents like those who had fought in other Qing-dynasty uprisings.

A group of Jingwu members made a memorial pilgrimage to the Tomb of the Seventy-Two Martyrs, and photos of this pilgrimage appear in the Anniversary Book. Although it is not shown in the photo, the tomb is topped by a smaller replica of the American Statute of Liberty, which reflects the high esteem the Chinese revolutionaries gave to American democracy. The essay in the Anniversary Book makes special mention of four of the revolutionary martyrs. Interestingly, three out of these four martyrs were suicide bombers who had killed various Manchu Qing officials. The fourth one had used a gun to kill his target but was immediately cut down himself.

One of the seventy-two martyrs was Lin Yin-Min, who lived from 1887 to 1911. He was a professional martial arts teacher who, according to the Anniversary Book, used his bare hands to kill a number of Qing officials before being killed himself.

Lin Yin-Min

To place this in a broad context, it should be noted that the myth and the reality of the founding of the Republic of China have little in common. In many ways, it parallels the myth and reality of the founding of the Jingwu.

According to myth, Sun Yat-Sen was the central figure and the driving force behind the revolution, with major support coming from young, educated, middle-class Chinese such as Lin Yin-Min. Sun tried ten times to overthrow the Qing. Each time he failed, each time he tried again, and on the eleventh attempt, the evil Qing dynasty fell—and was replaced by a glorious, modern, democratic, unified China led by Sun.

The historical reality is more complicated and gritty. The major driving force that pushed over the Qing was actually made up of various factions within the military that had, for whatever reason, had enough of the Qing. These military factions included a prominent Qing general, Yuan Shikai, who became a warlord. General Yuan and his private army, which was the largest in China at the time of the revolution, were far more responsible for the revolution than were Sun Yat-Sen or any of the student groups. In reality, Sun Yat-Sen's role in the revolution was largely as a charismatic spokesperson who was good at getting funding from overseas Chinese.

While many of these generals, including General Yuan, did hope to modernize China (and in particular its military forces), they had no deep or abiding commitment to democracy or Western social values. General Yuan had, for example, six wives: a main wife and five concubines.

It is important for modern-day martial arts aficionados to remember that although the Jingwu Association did have a recreational component, it placed an equal emphasis on military martial arts. After all, the Jingwu was also a military organization and had clear links with the revolution. It is fair to say that the Jingwu was born of the blood of the revolution.

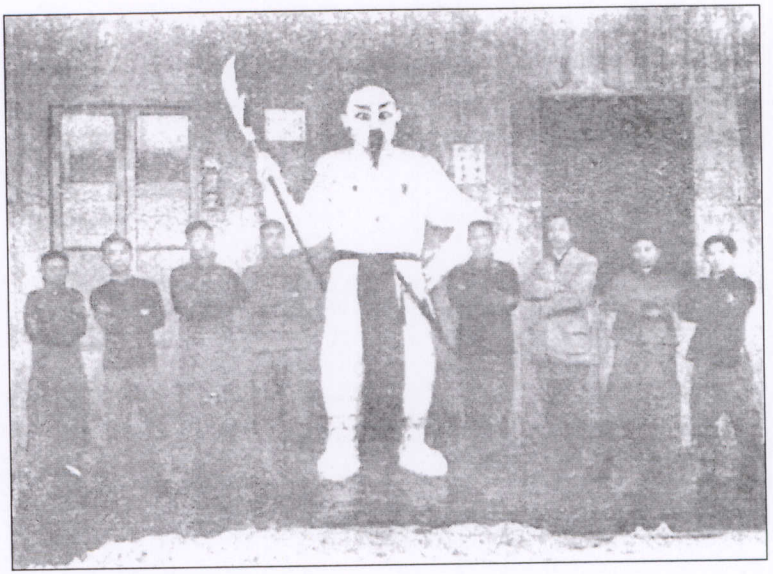
Neither Rain nor Bitter Cold Will Stop the Jingwu

Jingwu members prided themselves on their dedication to Jingwu activities. That commitment was manifest in various photos in the Anniversary Book that show Jingwu members braving the elements to engage in Jingwu activities. Some of the photos are tongue-in-cheek, but even in

jest, they do reflect the personal commitment that many Jingwu members had to the organization and its goals. Some members are shown standing in the snow in bathing trunks or lined up to "fight against winter weather." One photo shows a "snow deity" that some members made, and another features a Jingwu troop posed with all their equipment, ready to travel anywhere to spread the Jingwu doctrine.

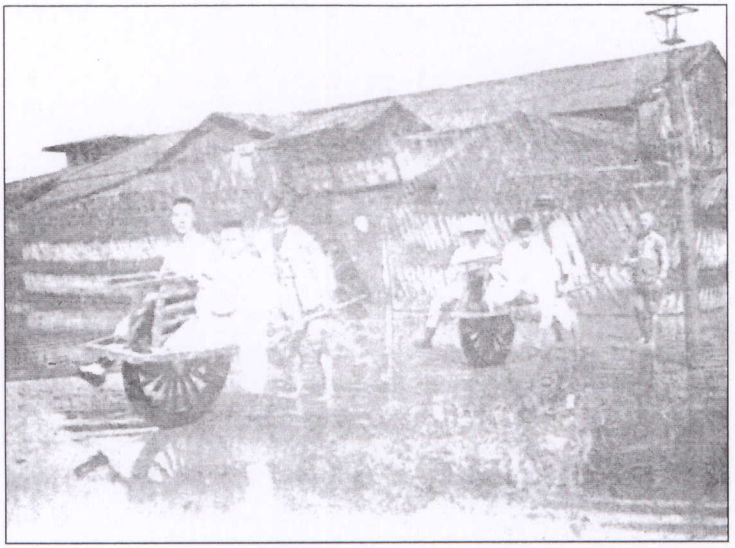
Jingwu members braving the cold

Braving the snow



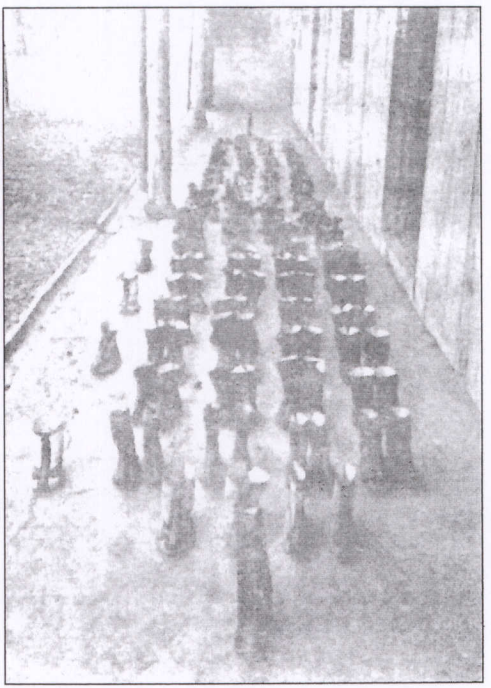
Jingwu snow god

The Jingwu team, ready to travel anywhere



Jingwu members crossing the sea of mud to train

Another photo shows Jingwu members sitting in one-wheel carts heading to the Jingwu headquarters. The caption says that because the road is always flooded, they must use wheelbarrows to get to the Jingwu headquarters. Below that is a photo of thirty or so pairs of kung fu shoes laid out; the caption to this somewhat mysterious photo reads, "These are members' old shoes which are worn down, showing the members' diligent practice of Chinese martial arts."



Jingwu members' worn-out shoes reflect their hard training

The diligence and commitment of the Jingwu Association and its membership could not be doubted. The organization they created spread Chinese martial arts across the globe, and it survives even to this day. Although the sands of time have carried off the personal stories of many of the founding members of the Jingwu, the legacy they left behind is alive and well.

Appendix A

Historical Methods in Chinese Martial Arts Research

by Brian Kennedy

Chinese martial arts practitioners are often quite confused about the art and science of historical martial arts research. This lack of knowledge of the basic research methods used by historians is apparent on almost any Chinese martial arts Internet discussion board or in any letter to the editor of any martial arts magazine. Part of the problem is that historians paid almost no attention to Chinese martial arts for most of its history; serious historical research into Chinese martial arts is a very new phenomenon. It is true that China has had a long line of professional historians—beginning with the patron saint of Chinese historians, Simu Chen—but these professional historians almost never turned their attention to the historical development of Chinese martial arts. While these historians did give military matters a fair amount of attention, the actual development of the martial arts and martial systems used by the Chinese military received virtually no attention. Although there were historian pioneers in the Republican Era—most famously a Chinese martial arts historian named Tang Hao—it has only been in the last few decades that there has been anything resembling a community of Chinese martial arts historians.

The void left by the lack of serious historical research has always been quickly and colorfully filled by stories that range from the believable but unsupported to pulp fiction and ludicrous legends. Little of what passes for Chinese martial arts history is really history as a professional historian would know it. While these legends and pulp fiction stories may have value as sources of motivation and entertainment or as reflections of a society's goals or aspirations, solid historical research has its place too.

One might ask why historical accuracy matters so much. What difference does it make if the comic-book version of Chinese martial arts history is the one that we see in the magazines, the Internet, and the chat forums? The reason it matters is respect. Real people—not cartoon characters, Shaw Brothers Shaolin monks, or Daoist immortals—made Chinese martial arts what they are today; they are the ones who deserve the credit. To honor these people—the teachers, students, developers, and creators of Chinese martial arts—means looking at the historical realities of their lives. To fill their lives with absurd feats is not to honor them; to honor them we must present them as they truly were. If one has respect for Chinese martial arts and their founders, then one owes it to those people to not mix myth with fact—to keep crystal clear what is fiction and what is nonfiction.

To help distinguish fact from myth, historians prefer to use contemporaneous accounts of events: accounts written at or near the time of the event they talk about. For example, a newspaper account of a fight that came out a day after the fight is contemporaneous. Of course, contemporaneous accounts can be wrong, biased, or exaggerated, but historians consider them to have more value than such things as hearsay or memories of events that occurred long ago.

Hearsay is not admitted in court for a very good reason: it has little value for determining the truth of a situation. Witnesses who actually attended and observed an event are the best sources of information about that event. Each time a tale is repeated it loses a bit of its truth and becomes more distorted. Sadly, a solid 99 percent of the English-language material on Chinese martial arts history is nothing but hearsay told over and over again; often, one martial arts Web site will simply copy what is written on some other site. Instead, historians try to rely on eyewitness accounts as much as possible.

Of course, a contemporaneous, eyewitness account can still be utterly inaccurate, and so these are not the only criteria a historian uses. A big part of the problem for Chinese martial arts historians is that even contemporaneous accounts of martial arts events are often more myth than historical fact—when written, these accounts were designed

to inspire, amaze, and entertain their audiences. As discussed earlier in this book, a myth is not the direct opposite of truth; a myth simply serves a different purpose than do factual accounts.

Professional Chinese martial arts historians rely largely on documentary evidence. The documentary evidence includes such things as handwritten martial arts training manuals, commercially published training manuals, official histories and gazettes, surviving newspapers, and magazine articles. Oral histories are consulted for newer events, and there is surviving Chinese martial arts film footage starting from the late 1950s. However, the bulk of research centers on Chinese martial arts manuscripts.

The problem with manuscripts is authenticating and dating them; the production of fake antique manuscripts is a minor cottage industry in China. The supposed antique training manual shown in this photo is an excellent example.

Qing-dynasty martial arts manual

This manual is titled "Shaolin Vital Points and Their Herbal Cures Manuscript." It claims on the cover to be from 1850. Each page has a hand-drawn figure with the "death touch points" (the vital points) marked, and listed below each of these points is an herbal remedy that will cure the injury.

It is virtually impossible to tell whether this manual is what it appears to be or not; there is probably a fifty-fifty chance that it was actually produced in 1850 as opposed to earlier this year. (My working presumption is that all antique Chinese martial arts manuscripts are fakes until proven otherwise.) Modern forensic document examination relies on many criteria that are not available for older Chinese manuscripts. For example, a modern manuscript can be analyzed to see how old its ink or paper is. This can be done because forensic specialists have access to a wide range of known samples of ink and paper; they can chemically compare the questioned document to these samples. None of this is possible for older Chinese manuscripts, because we have no known samples with which we can compare them.

Instead, the historian or art dealer must rely on other criteria. If you were trying to determine the authenticity of a Qing-dynasty document, for example, you would first read the text itself: Does the text mention the Internet or Bruce Lee? Then it is probably not authentic Qing dynasty. Second, you would look at the physical aspects: the paper, ink, binding, and calligraphy. Third, you would consider the item's history, in the sense of the person you bought it from and where that person got it. Finally, you would assess your overall impression and make a judgment call based on your other observations.

But for most manuscripts, it is going to be unlikely that any of these areas are really going to reveal much—so you are left with whatever presumptions you started with. (For example, in the case of "Shaolin Vital Points and Their Herbal Cures," my presumption is that the manuscript is fake.) In Taiwan, I had the chance to examine a wide range of historical Chinese martial arts manuscripts, and one thing that always amazed me was the beauty, attention to detail, time, and care given to the production of fakes.

In addition to historical records such as training manuals and gazettes, historians look at both past and current Chinese culture to develop a history of Chinese martial arts. In present-day Chinese culture, for example, *guanxi* or personal connections are far more important than skill in getting government appointments to teach martial arts. A

historian who knows this can make a fairly strong educated guess that this was also true in the past. To look accurately into Chinese martial arts history, a historian must actually live in a Chinese culture for an extended period of time—not just read about it. This may seem like an odd requirement, but many aspects of Chinese martial arts history will only be correctly grasped when one has had extended contact with Chinese culture in a Chinese environment, be it in Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, or China.

When historical records and cultural knowledge are insufficient, historians sometimes must admit that there is no evidence to verify a story as being true or false. The amount of reliable, verified documentary evidence we have concerning the development and history of Chinese martial arts is very, very small. There are a number of reasons for this: Chinese martial artists often are not the sort of people who pen memoirs; official historians rarely gave any attention to the martial arts; many of the people involved in martial arts history were illiterate; and information about martial arts was normally passed on orally, not in written form.

Also, the various ups and downs of Chinese history have resulted in the destruction of what few documents may have survived, the most recent example of that being the Cultural Revolution in China. Because the Red Brigades viewed traditional Chinese martial arts as "reactionary bourgeois evil," anyone found in possession of historical documents connected with the martial arts would be punished. (To be "punished" by the Red Brigades meant being killed, crippled, or driven to suicide.) As a result, many historical martial arts documents were destroyed during this period. Most likely, many historical documents were also simply thrown out by heirs who thought they were just some of grandpa's old notebooks about martial arts.

In particular, there are very few authentic documents available from before the mid-1800s. Martial arts materials from before the Ming are non-existent, except for fleeting references. As an obvious result, historians know almost nothing about how Chinese martial arts were practiced prior to the Republican Era—and because any existing written

materials have already been found and catalogued, we are most likely never going to know any more than what we do now. While many people refuse to accept this and will talk about what Chinese martial arts were like a thousand years ago, as professional historians we must be willing to admit what we do not know when there is no evidence.

As a historian, I often laugh when I hear someone start talking, with seeming authority, about something that happened in Chinese martial arts history hundreds of years ago or even one hundred years ago. The reason I laugh is that even in my short period of time as a martial artist and martial arts historian (since 1976), I have seen numerous historical events about which no one can agree upon what the "facts" are. Let me give some examples:

- What happened in the fight between Bruce Lee and Wong Jack Man?
- Was Rickson Gracie undefeated?
- What was Count Dante's role in American martial arts?
- Was the Taiji master Cheng Man Ching invincible in push hands?
- Were Robert Smith's depictions of Taiwanese martial artists accurate or not?

The answer to these questions is that nobody knows for sure—and all these events have occurred within my lifetime. So when you hear people talking about something that happened in martial arts history five hundred years ago, realize that we often do not even know much about our own present-day martial arts history, let alone something that happened a hundred years ago on the other side of the globe.

It is also important to remember that the profit motive has a strong impact on writing about Chinese martial arts history, and that these problems occur both in Chinese-language and English-language writings. First, martial arts books and magazines are a business. Writers sell their words to a publisher, who in turn sells them to the general public. This creates an economic pressure to tell the public what they want to hear. For example, if stories about Shaolin monks having invented

Chinese martial arts are more attractive to the general public and sell better, then publishers are more interested in those kind of books than they are in books that say that Shaolin monks had very little to do with Chinese martial arts. And this has a very apparent effect of skewing what is said in Chinese martial arts books about their history.

Publishers also often favor bizarre or exaggerated stories over normal, mundane stories that reflect the regular workings of life; boring stories do not move magazines on the newsstand. As a result, accounts of the lives of martial arts masters will often include wild stories of fights, death matches, and secret techniques. Masters are never depicted as normal soldiers but are all described as generals or "commandos," and they all followed impossibly difficult training regimes.

Another major way that money affects martial arts history is through the lucrative business of martial arts tourism. Places such as the Shaolin Temple, the Wudang Mountain area, Chen Village, and Yong Chun Township have all become successful martial arts tourist sites. The attraction of these places comes from their supposed place in Chinese martial arts history—but historians doubt that some of these areas really had much to do with Chinese martial arts history. The owners and business operators of these places attempt to establish their historical credentials by pointing to historical manuscripts that probably are modern forgeries and by cranking out magazine and Web site articles that make unsupported historical claims. The Shaolin Temple and the Wudang Mountain areas are notorious for this.

When the person or group that is making a historical claim is likely to benefit—financially or otherwise—from the claim, there is a clear conflict of interest. These conflicts of interest can occur on a large scale (say, the Shaolin Temple) or a smaller scale (individual teachers). For example, a teacher might claim that he is the sole legitimate heir or disciple of some famous teacher and might produce some historical proof of this. One should view such "proof" with a very wary eye, especially if the proof seemingly materialized out of thin air. I noticed a trend in China a few years back of so-called ancient martial arts manuals that were suddenly being found in temples or hidden tombs. Each of these

manuals supposedly showed that village X, Y, or Z was the true home of some famous Chinese martial art. Such claims that suddenly appear are very suspect.

Historical claims are also often influenced by "hopeful beliefs." Some people writing Chinese martial arts history are hoping to find historical proof to support their strong personal beliefs. The most common example of this is people who believe in the Shaolin Temple myth. Chinese and Americans alike are strongly attracted to the image of the Shaolin Temple. And when people deeply love an image, they will often become blind to evidence that suggests that their idealized perceptions do not have any factual evidence to support them. Professional historians are, in theory, impartial observers of the historical data, and they as professionals do not allow personal hopes to skew their historical analysis. But a fairly large part of what passes for Chinese martial arts history is in fact nothing more than somebody's hopeful belief.

There is a lot of work left to be done in the field of Chinese martial arts history. There are many, many areas in which we have historical material that still needs to be analyzed and written about. It is my hope that a new generation of historians will be trained and will publish new material on the proud and wonderful history of Chinese martial arts.

Appendix B

What the Jingwu Said about Itself — in English

Most discussions in English about Chinese martial arts history are written either in modern times or by non-Chinese. It is most interesting to have a chance to read how the Jingwu described itself in its own English phrasing, in the last three pages of the Anniversary Book. (They would have been the first three pages of the book if the book had been opened Western style; traditional Chinese books seem to open "the wrong way" by Western standards—that is, the back cover is the front, and the front cover is the back.)

Here is the complete text of these three pages, with footnotes added for further explanation. (The text has been reproduced exactly as it appeared in the Anniversary Book.)

*History of Chinese "Kung Fu"**

> China in its prolonged lethargy now discovers that she possesses an undisputed claim to be the author of the great art known to the Japanese as "Judo" or "Jiu-Jitsu." Professor Arima in his work "Judo" (Chapter II) maintains that "Judo" is indigenous to his countrymen and not foreign, basing his argument on a book called "Kuyamitoride" and the existence of the Takenouchi School some 400 years ago. Self-defense being natural to everybody, the art is known to all people on the globe almost since the birth of humanity. Of course as Professors Arima says, it was in its initial stages.†

*It is interesting to note that the Jingwu uses the phrase "kung fu," as that is sometimes thought to be a more modern and Western term for martial arts.

†The logic of this paragraph may seem "jumbled" to Western readers; nonetheless, it is typical of traditional Chinese rhetoric.

The history of the Chinese art of self-defense or "Kung fu" begins from the time when our ancestors first came to dwell in the best part of the continent of Asia. Emperor Hwang Ti made it possible for us to live permanently and extend our area of occupation by defeating Chi Yao, the leader of the Miao tribes.*

The battle was fought at Ti Lo, Chihli, and won for China such a glorious future that till 1895† she had been the one power of Asia.‡

Since the days of Hwang Ti till the Boxer Upheaval in 1900 entrance to military service was by way of examination of the knowledge of "Kung fu." No man in the service was not versed in it and the military leaders could only distinguish themselves by being its master.§ Because of the wretched condition of communication and the lack of police organization, "Kung fu" was a necessary equipment of every businessman in traveling. Many a story is told of travelers meeting gangs of desperadoes and extricating themselves through defeating their opponents at "Kung fu." In those days daring men with good knowledge of "Kung fu" carried on a business that was called "Piao Chu." At a certain charge "paopiao" would be sent to accompany the traveler through bandit-infested areas and whose service was like that of a personal guard.‖

---

*Hwang Ti (the "Yellow Emperor") was the first emperor of a united China, which came about largely because of his military defeat of non-Han peoples, including the Miao tribes.

†1895 was the year when China surrendered to (or perhaps more graciously, negotiated a settlement with) Japan, ending the First Sino-Japanese War. One of the results of this settlement, known as the Treaty of Shimonoseki, was the handing over of the island of Taiwan to Japan. Japan ruled Taiwan until the end of World War II.

‡This is a typical "China has always been one unified county" statement that modern historians laugh at. Over the thousands of years of its existence, China can hardly be described as anything vaguely resembling "one unified county."

Old China keeps no official record of events other than literature. This explains why a record of the art of "Kung fu" is found only in a few strayed leaflets. Either because suppression of the desire of authors to avoid abuse, a good deal of the works on "Kung fu" was lost. It is a great pity, but one that could not be prevented. The only work that is still in existence and authentic is "Ba Tuan Ching" or "Eight Developments" by Yoh Fei (A.D. 1300), one of China's greatest warriors. There is another work named "Yih Chien Ching" or "Developing the Muscles" by Ta Moh. In this latter book many alterations have been made and it is difficult to vouch for its authenticity.

After the overthrow of the Ming Dynasty, the Chinese resenting the Manchu's began to pay particular attention to "Kung fu." Many of the warriors who served under Ming fled to distant parts (including Japan); others became monks and lived in secluded places. It was then that Japanese began to have "Judo." Among those who entered monasteries were the founders of the two famous schools in "Kung fu," "Siao Ling" and "Wu Tang." These two schools existed for quite awhile and had many followers. "Siao Ling" was noted for "Wei Kung" (external development) and "Wu Tang" for "Nai Kung" (internal development). The former however has more followers.

None of those persons well versed in "Kung fu" would say that they do not belong to "Siao Ling." But the school

---

[§]It is revealing to note that the first thing the Jingwu description turns to is the military use of "Kungfu." This is a reminder that the development of Chinese martial arts owes very little to Shaolin monks, Daoist immortals, or wandering knight-errants.

[‖]The second driving force that the Jingwu mentions is another quite pragmatic, quite combat-orientated sector of the Chinese martial arts profession: the bodyguard business.

has many divisions each claiming its advantages over others. They can be grouped under two sections, the North and the South. Professor Fok in founding the Chin Woo Athletic Association had in mind the object of uniting the different divisions for a complete development of the art. His success is seen to-day in the number of professors maintained by the Association representative of all divisions and the number of followers, adults of both sexes and children.

"Kung fu" is one of the best forms of physical exercise. It combines development of muscles with self-defensive movements. It gives equal work to the foot, hand, and the whole body. Advantages are that this gymnastics is so amusing besides instructive that persons once having taken a lesson seldom give it up. In other words, persons stick to it without being compelled to do so and what this means is understood by all engaged in the physical culture work.

There is a new meaning in "Kung fu" with is found in the work of the Chin Woo Athletic Association. It is mental development and moral uplift, based upon the old principle of "Sound Mind in a Sound Body."

S. S. Chow

Following this description is a one-page, English-language preface titled "The Anniversary." It, too, has some interesting things to say:

The Anniversary

This volume contains pictures descriptive of the history and work of the Chin Woo Athletic Association. Ten years ago when the Association was founded, the press and the general public criticized and called it a place for breeding "boxers."*

*When the Jingwu refers to "boxers," it means the disreputable fighters of the Boxer Rebellion. "Boxer," at this point in Chinese history, was basically a synonym for "violent, uneducated lowlife."

The gentlemen interested, however, were not discouraged, knowing the need of physical culture for the 400 millions and the value of "Kung fu" as gymnastics.

From a membership of 8 to 800 and from a hut to its present commodious building with modern conveniences, the Association has grown beyond expectations of its promoters. In Shanghai alone it has three branches with a total membership of 500. Canton and Hankow each prides of a branch association. What is most important of all is that Association provides voluntary physical directors to two universities, three colleges, and about a dozen schools in Shanghai.

"Kung fu" has been called boxing, but it is no more than gymnastics combined with that sporting contest which young men so greatly delight. With the old material in hand, the Association attempted to follow modern methods of instruction. It has already passed the experimental stage, and its success is proved by "Kung fu" being adapted for class work along the modern line. During the year 1919 the Association has compiled and published several textbooks which are having very large circulation.

While all the schools now demand a system of Chinese gymnastics "Kung fu" the Association has also other forms of physical exercise for its members. Football, basketball, tennis and other such games and field and track sports are provided. Besides, there are instructive classes for intellectual development and amusement. The Camera Club has an invention by one of its members now being patented in England and the U.S.A. Its Orchestra claims to be the only one among the Chinese in Shanghai. English and Chinese classes are also conducted for its members.

The year 1919 has been a significant one for the Association. The donation of $30,000 from an anonymous well-wisher makes it possible for further extension. A recreation park will soon be thrown open to all Chinese and the Directors take this

opportunity to thank the Associations friends for their past support.

C.C. Nieh, President of Heng Foong Cotton Manufacturing Co.
H.K. Yuen, Ex-Compradore of International Banking Corporation
C.L Ch, Ex-Civil Governor of Kwangtong
H. C. Tam, Compradore of Hanson, McNeill, Jones & Wright
Wen Tsung-Yao, Co-Director of Pukown Port,
F. C. Tong, Chairman of China Bureau of Public Information
S. W. Fock, Managing Director of Yu Fen Mining Co.
C.S. Wong, Compradore of International Banking Corporation
V.Y. Kwauh, Vice President of Chung Mei Trading Corporation

Contemporaneous English-Language Newspaper Articles on the Jingwu

The Anniversary Book includes three clippings from what is simply identified as a "Kwangtung English-language newspaper." The three clippings are small but provide a rare view of a contemporaneous English-language discussion of Jingwu activities. None of them are dated, but because all three describe a large and active Jingwu outside of Shanghai, one may presume they were from somewhere between 1916 and 1919, and probably toward the end of that range.

Chinese Art of Physical Culture Once More Becomes Popular

Ching Woo Athletic Association of Shanghai Extends Movement to Canton

LEADING CITIZENS ORGANIZE TO PROMOTE PHYSICAL TRAINING

The Chinese ancient art of boxing, long neglected, formally regained its rightful place of honor in Canton yesterday, when several thousand men and women greeted the inauguration of the Chin Woo Athletic Association at Hoi Chu Theatre. The Aim of this Association is to promote physical training through the ancient system of health culture and self defense

or, in the words of the speakers at the opening ceremony, to make China strong by first making her citizens morally and bodily strong.

The opening exercise consisted of the band playing the national anthem, reports by the officers and speeches of greeting from noted guests. President Lin Sun of the Chinese Senate and Chief of Police Ng Bong-ping addressed the audience. Shields of thanks were presented by the association to the promoters.

After the opening ceremony, set-up exercises, squad drills, fencing, lance combat, sword display, chain breaking and other exhibitions of physical skill or exercises in various forms were demonstrated.

The combats, enacted as real, surprised the audience to no small extent, when one was able to defend himself against knife or lance attacks single handed.

Two sons of General Lee Fook Lum, one being but seven years old, Lee Wing Chong, drew much applause from all present, especially when he entertained the audience with his smart sword display.

Chinese art of boxing might be well taken up by women as well as men. Three daughters of Hsiung Chang-ching together with their two brothers appeared to prove what may be done inside a family for pleasure and for health.

Kung-che Chen, Lu Wei Chang, Yeh Feng Chi, Yao Chan Pa, all attracted wide attention by their skillful movements both by hand and with weapons.

◆▶

Militiamen Receive Chin Woo Athletes

A THOUSAND AT ENTERTAINMENT

The members of the Canton Militia, in their headquarters at Sai Gwa Yuen, kept open house for their friends and gave

a reception in honor of the visiting members of the Shanghai Chin Woo Athletic Association yesterday afternoon, April 15.

The members of the Chin Woo Athletic Association demonstrated various forms of physical drills to entertain their hosts and fellow guests, and more than sixty of Lee Fook Lum's soldiers were also present to give a "Lion Play."

More than a thousand persons were present, Cahn Lim Pak, president; Ken Kam Shek, vice president of the Canton Militia; General Lee Fook Lum, Commissioner of Defense, and General Ngai Pong-ping, Commissioner of Police, were among those noticed on the militia Parade Ground.

Among other who deserve a special mention yesterday were Chen Tieh Hsiang, Yang Cheng Lun, Hsueh Kang Chu, Yu Hsia Chang, Li Chan Feng, Huang Han Chia, Lin Chao Ming, Cheng Chi Hsin, Tuan Wen and Haiao Pin.

Lee Hing Chang, Wei Kung Yuan and Hsieh Tung Kuei were the boys who demonstrated that day.

Several of the athletes appearing yesterday have come from Shanghai to organize the association in Canton. There is a strong Chin Woo Athletic Association in Shanghai.

The Chin Woo Athletic Association wishes to thank all its friends for their attendance at its inauguration last Wednesday and for the gifts presented. The association will have temporary headquarters at Hoi Tong Temple, Honam, until a permanent building is erected for club purposes.

◆▶

Chin Woo Athletes Being Honored by Many Organizations

The Cantonese students and merchants* are all interested in the revived Chinese art of physical culture.

---

*It is interesting to note that "merchants" were interested in the arrival of the Chin Woo group. Martial arts must have been good for business.

After the Chin Woo Athletic Association was formally opened at Canton and the arrival of many visitors from Shanghai, many meetings and entertainments have been planned by the students and merchants to welcome the movement. The pupils of the Man Moo Middle School, Honan, will give a reception in honor of the member of the new association at one o'clock today. This evening the members of the Chin Woo Athletic Association will busy themselves attending the entertainment to be given by the Kwangtung Educational Association at Gao Yau Fang Street. The members of the Canton Militia will assemble at the headquarters on Sai Gwa Yuen Street to welcome the members of the Chin Woo Athletic Association, at noon tomorrow, and the girl students of the Physical Training School will also give a reception to them tomorrow evening.

Appendix C

The Martial Arts Teaching Staff

The Anniversary Book features pictures of the "jiji teaching staff" as it existed in 1909. *Jiji* is a term for "combat techniques" or, put another way, "practical martial arts." The Jingwu Association teaching staff was blessed with some of the most famous and skilled Chinese martial artists.

Jingwu's Martial Arts teaching staff in 1909

Huo Dongge (霍東閣) was the son of Huo Yuanjia. He joined his father at the Jingwu Academy when he was only fifteen years old. In 1919, he was invited to teach in the Jingwu's Guangzhou branch. Later, in 1923, he went to Southeast Asia to teach in the Jingwu branches in that region. He died in 1956.

Liu Zhixiang (劉致祥) was a famous Eagle Claw master.

Sun Zanxuan (孫贊軒) was also part of the Jingwu teaching staff.

Sun Yufeng (孫玉峰) was well known for his Northern Shaolin Lohan skills. He was nicknamed the "Saber King of Seven Provinces." Sun taught both at the Shanghai Jingwu branches and then later in the Kwangchou Jingwu branch. Like Huo Yuanjia, Sun had owned and operated a private security company prior to working for the Jingwu.

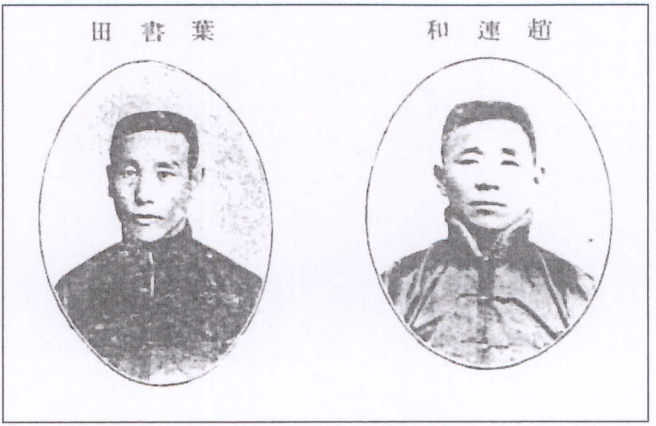
Luo Guangyu (羅光玉) was a famous Seven Stars Praying Mantis teacher and was one of the Four Pillars of the Jingwu.

Li Huiting (李匯亭) was a master of Ch'a style and Northern Shaolin. He was known for his skills in double spears.

Chen Zizheng (陳子正) was a famous Eagle Claw master. He was really the first pillar of the Jingwu Association and was the first master to respond when Zhao Lianhuo sent out invitations to teach at the Jingwu Association after Huo Yuanjia's death.

Liu Zhensheng (劉振聲)and Zhao Hanjie (趙漢傑) were the two most senior disciples of Huo Yuanjia. After Huo's death, they took over the martial arts program at the Jingwu but did not have the administrative skills to continue running it. They, along with other supporters of Huo, invited Zhao Lianhuo to be the head martial arts instructor at the Jingwu. Liu and Zhao had been close friends and personal students of Huo Yuanjia for many years. Huo always brought Liu Zhensheng with him when he went to a challenge match, and Lui would always fight before Huo.

Zhao Lianhuo was the head martial arts instructor for the Jingwu after Hua Yuanjia's death. Before he died, Huo had written to Zhao asking him to assist with teaching duties. Zhao arrived at the Jingwu in 1911. His first task was to prepare numerous lectures on Chinese martial arts. In the early 1920s, he wrote his most famous books—*Twelve Rows of Tam Tui, Twelve Rows of Sparring Tam Tui, Northern Shao Lin*



Zhao Lianhuo

Combination Battle Fist, Ta Mor Sword, and *The Northern Shao Lin Cross-Battle Set*—while still working for the Jingwu Association. Zhao Lianhuo developed and standardized the twelve rows of Tam Tui and the twelve rows of sparring Tam Tui. The Jingwu board of directors was so pleased with Zhao Lianhuo that it appointed him the Jingwu's Head Martial Arts Instructor. He was then responsible for all of the Jingwu schools throughout China.

Jingwu martial arts teaching staff

Ye Shutian was a Xingyi master and herbalist. Born in Jing County, Heibei Province, he was one of the Jingwu's most skilled teachers and was among the first five Jingwu teachers to spread Jingwu martial arts outside China. His brothers also taught for the Jingwu in Malaysia.

Appendix D

Chinese Character List

Books

精武本紀 *(Jingwu Ben Ji)* literally means "Jingwu Association Record," but we have referred to it as the "Jingwu Anniversary Book" or just "the Anniversary Book." It is the main source featured in this book. For further research, we recommend another book that came out much later, *Jingwu: A Fifty-Year Retrospective.* (精武50年武術發展史)

Groups and Organizations

精武體操學校 *(Jingwu ticao xuexiao):* Jingwu Association, literally "Pure Martial Calisthenics School"; the first name of the Jingwu organization

精武體育會 *(Jingwu tiyu hui):* The second and more widely known name of the organization, literally "Pure Martial Athletic Association"

同盟會 *(Tongmenhui):* The Revolutionary Alliance

國術 *(Guoshu):* Literally "National Arts"; the phrase used for Chinese martial arts during the Republican Era, from 1911 to 1949

武術 *(Wushu):* Literally "War Arts"; the phrase most commonly associated with the Communist Chinese government's martial arts programs

People

霍元甲: Huo Yuanjia

陳英士 (陳其美): Chen Yingshi (also known as Chen Qimei)

陳公哲: Chen Gongzhe, one of the three main financial supporters of the Jingwu

陳鐵生: Chen Tiesheng, the main writer-journalist advocate for the Jingwu

盧煒昌: Lu Weichuan, one of the three main financial supporters of the Jingwu
姚蟾伯: Yao Zhanbo, one of the three main financial supporters of the Jingwu
陳士超: Chen Shichao, head of the Jingwu women's program
林覺民: Lin Yin-Ming, one of the Seventy-Two Martyrs
唐豪: Tang Hao, famous Chinese martial arts historian
劉康毅: Liu Kang Yi, owner of Lion Books of Taiwan

Martial Arts Systems and Terms

迷蹤拳: *Mizong Quan,* or Long-Track Boxing
迷蹤藝: *Mizong Yi,* or Mizong techniques
北少林: *Bei Shaolin,* or Northern Shaolin
技擊: *Jiji*, combat techniques or "practical martial arts"
擂臺: *leitai,* or stage match
比武: *biwu,* or martial match
武館: *wuquan,* or martial arts hall
拳師: *quanshi,* or boxing teacher
合戰: *hezhan,* or unified boxing
大戰: *dazhan,* or Big Boxing
短戰: *duanzhan,* or Short Boxing
脫戰: *tuozhan,* or Escape Boxing
十字戰: *shizishan,* or Cross-Shaped Boxing
劈刺: *Pici,* or "cut and stab"
形意拳: *Xingyi Quan,* or Form-Intent Boxing
劈: *Pi,* a downward and forward cutting action
刺: *Ci,* to stab

Cultural and Historical Terms

文: *Wen,* or literary studies
武: *Wu,* or martial studies
新文化運動: *Xin Wenhua Yundong,* or New Culture Movement
勇營: *Yong Ying,* or Brave Battalions

義和團: *Yihetuan,* the Righteous and Harmonious Organization. This group is also known as 義和拳 or *Yihequan,* the Righteous and Harmonious Fists.

Appendix E

Sources for Further Study

For people interested in the history of Chinese martial arts during the Republican Era, the one book we would recommend as a "must-have" is *Marrow of the Nation: A History of Sport and Physical Culture in Republican China* by Andrew D. Morris, published by the University of California Press.

The Spring and Autumn of Chinese Martial Arts by Kang Gewu, who is one of modern China's best martial arts historians, is a fine English-language source for the history of modern wushu as well as the history of Chinese martial arts in general. It is published by Plum Publishing.

"On Politically Correct Treatment of Myths in the Chinese Martial Arts" by Stanley Henning is an outstanding article that discusses the problem of mixing myth and historical research. It first appeared in the Journal of the Chen Style Taijiquan Research Association of Hawaii (Vol. 3, No. 2, Summer 1995). We recommend anything and everything written by Henning on the topic of Chinese martial arts history.

For further reading on historical Chinese martial arts manuals, we suggest our book on the subject, *Chinese Martial Arts Training Manuals: A Historical Survey* (also published by Blue Snake Books).

Index

In the early twentieth century, traditional Chinese martial arts were in danger of extinction due to the rise of modern weaponry and the failed Boxer Rebellion. In order to keep the ancient arts alive, the Jingwu Association was formed—forever changing the path of kung fu.

Jingwu: The School That Transformed Kung Fu tells the story of the Jingwu Association, the first public martial arts training academy and the first school to promote martial arts as both sport and entertainment. Through these efforts, it helped guarantee that the arts would survive the transition from traditional to modern China.

Today, the Jingwu Association is the model for modern Chinese martial arts schools and is legendary among serious practitioners. This lively history covers its tumultuous beginnings; the four historical phases of Chinese martial arts that inform it; important practitioners such as Huo Yuanjia; those elements, including the integration of women, that have made it distinctive and enduring; individual branches and practices within the larger system; and much more. Rare historical documents and vintage photographs take the reader directly into one of the most fascinating stories in martial arts.

"Brian Kennedy and Elizabeth Guo have produced a fascinating and thorough work on the real Jingwu Association, providing heretofore unprecedented access to the foundation, training, and culture of this very important and interesting time and place in the history of Chinese martial arts."

—Tim Cartmell, translator of *A Study of Taijiquan* by Sun Lutang and *The Method of Chinese Wrestling* by Tong Zhongyi

"A spectacular contribution to filling the gap in early twentieth-century Chinese martial arts and cultural history."

—Stanley Henning, Chinese martial arts historian

Brian Kennedy and Elizabeth Guo both write regularly for *Classical Fighting Arts* and *Kung Fu Tai Chi* magazines. They have coauthored three books, including *Chinese Martial Arts Training Manuals: A Historical Survey.* Kennedy lives in San Diego; Guo lives in Taipei.

Martial Arts

BLUE SNAKE BOOKS
BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA
WWW.BLUESNAKEBOOKS.COM

US $17.95 / $21.50 CAN
ISBN 978-1-58394-242-0
51795
9 781583 942420