

# BLURRED BOUNDARIES

A Martial Arts Legacy and the Shaping of Taiwan

A historical black and white photograph of a busy street in Taiwan, likely from the early 20th century. The street is lined with traditional buildings and shops, with numerous bicycles parked along the sides. People are seen walking and riding bicycles down the street. The scene is captured from a low angle, looking down the length of the street.

HONG ZE-HAN

Translated by Christopher Bates



## Advance Praise for *Blurred Boundaries*

The distinction in writing about martial arts luminaries is often—as the title here perhaps unconsciously indicates—“blurred” indeed. Is it biography or a hagiographic adulation? Further, such writing often posits the subject in an equally blurry history, one without much cultural or social context.

This book addresses both weaknesses in a marvelous presentation of a man who was both legend and very human, who lived in one of the richest eras of Chinese history, and who was profoundly influenced by the society and politics of that age.

*Blurred Boundaries* is not only an enormous pleasure to read, it also affords insights into a unique character, and as important, his time. This is an essential volume for understanding the nature of a martial art and the personalities it can produce. [*Blurred Boundaries*] is an absolute must for the serious student.

—Dave Lowry, writer, author of *Autumn Lightning*,  
*Persimmon Wind*, *The Connoisseur’s Guide to Sushi*, and  
*Chinese Cooking for Diamond Thieves*

This fascinating blend of storytelling and documentary; of martial spirit, principles, and strategy; of folk art and history, will captivate you for weeks, while you delve into facets of postwar Taiwan’s radical social and cultural change—only partly known to Westerners. Hong Ze-han opens our eyes first to the draining of martial knowledge from China to Taiwan during the tumultuous time of China’s civil war, and then to martial arts’ two-folded usage (as a weapon for criminals and as a weapon to ward off criminals). Out of this milieu, Hong Ze-han draws a vibrant picture of the genesis, development, and dissemination of his father’s art of Tangshoudao, which—rooted in traditions preserved by Chinese masters who fled from the mainland—grew out of the struggle of Chinese fugitives trying to gain a foothold in Taiwan, all while facing resentment, corruption, and social turmoil. Retracing and detailing his father’s deep understanding of martial virtues and combat efficiency, this book gives us profound insights nearly lost in our modern martial culture of watering down the old ways. *Blurred Boundaries* will expand your mind in unexpected ways, whatever your martial background.

—Hermann Bayer, PhD, professor and academic dean  
(emeritus). Black belt ranks in Doshinkan Karatedo, Shorin  
Ryu Shorinkan, and Okinawan Kobudo Kokusairengokai  
(Shodan). Author of *Analysis of Genuine Karate:  
Misconceptions, Origins, Developments, and True Purpose* and  
*Analysis of Genuine Karate 2: Sociocultural Development,  
Commercialization, and Loss of Essential Knowledge*

Never has a work been so aptly named. [This book] reads as if sitting in a tea house in twilight, with an old storyteller weaving an epic out of lives both ordinary and remarkable, all at once. It meanders from one tale to another, interspersed with recipes and small illuminations, like fireflies in fog, explaining in succinct detail, the essence of this or that martial art. Hong Ze-han has done justice to a monumental father, writing of him as he was, truly larger than life, yet he has also retained the humanity and generosity of the man, something I remember from the one time I met him.

—Ellis Amdur, master instructor Araki-ryu Torite-kogusoku,  
Tenshin Buko-ryu Heiho, author of *Little Bird & The Tiger*

*Blurred Boundaries: A Martial Arts Legacy and the Shaping of Taiwan* is a martial arts masterpiece that is destined to become a classic.

Divided into one-hundred and fourteen often brief chapters, the book is instantly engaging. From page one the author, Hong Ze-han, paints a vivid world from personal memory and anecdotes gleaned throughout his childhood and later years. Supported by many rare photographs, the translation remains sympathetic to the original Chinese text, delivering a banquet of interesting information, tales of great sadness, as well as stories of derring-do. Being the son of a famous father, particularly in the world of martial arts, can prove too burdensome for some. This author, however, has continued to maintain the legacy left to him with great dignity.

*Blurred Boundaries* is at times an intimate look at how world events are experienced at ground level by people far removed from the politicians who start wars and the generals who prosecute them on their behalf. The book covers a lot of ground, but the landscape is always worth the view, always worth the pause to ponder the information. Translated from the original Chinese into English by Christopher Bates, the enormous value of this book is not limited to readers interested in the Chinese martial arts alone. Indeed, historians of Japanese karate will discover many previously undisclosed episodes in that country's historical links with the Okinawan fighting art.

Without hesitation, I recommend *Blurred Boundaries: A Martial Arts Legacy and the Shaping of Taiwan* and congratulate Hong Ze-han and Christopher Bates for delivering to the English-speaking world a book so well written and executed as to set the bar extremely high for all who would follow.

—Michael Clarke, kyoshi 8th dan Okinawan Goju-ryu,  
author of *The Art of Hojo-Undo: Power Training for  
Traditional Karate*, *Shin Gi Tai: Karate Training for Body,  
Mind, and Spirit*, and *Redemption: A Street Fighter's Path to  
Peace*

Not only a glorious deep dive into the world of Chinese kung fu, this biography is also a rich and revealing look at the post-WWII decades in Taiwan. We see traditional family life and folk culture, the colorful temple parades, and run-ins with gangsters. We experience the sometimes-violent tensions between the local Taiwanese and the newly arrived mainlanders, a crucible of modern Taiwan from which rose the truly impressive Hong Yi-xiang.

I believe *Blurred Boundaries* is one of the very best books written about Taiwan this century. It's a three-generation martial arts saga with a fascinating protagonist, interesting secondary characters, and momentous background historical events. To all of this, we get a front-row seat, courtesy of author Hong Ze-han's viewpoint as Master Hong's son. The book has been expertly translated by Christopher Bates, the perfect translator for the project thanks to his four-decade-long association with the Hong family, his knowledge of martial arts and Taiwan, and his writing/translating skills. His *Blurred Boundaries* translation shows admirable precision and fidelity to the original text, giving the prose an intimate Chinese flavor.

—John Grant Ross, author of *Taiwan in 100 Books* and co-host of the *Formosa Files*, a history podcast

*Blurred Boundaries* is simultaneously a deeply philosophical and yet practical book. This work should take its place among the martial arts classics in the centuries to come. I wish there were already works like this one among the classics. The text is very quotable, and the translation is even poetic at times.

Hong Yi-xiang stands now in my mind among the greats who have changed the martial arts world. The stories and anecdotes in this book contain wisdom to be applied to any martial arts system or style.

Both Hong Yi-xiang and his son, the author, Hong Ze-han have a timeless vision and wisdom that is sure to enrich your practice and deepen your understanding of how the challenges of the past can inform our practices today.

—Matthew Krueger, host of the *Walking with the Tengu* podcast. He practices BJJ, Shuai Jiao, and Iaido.

*Blurred Boundaries: A Martial Arts Legacy and the Shaping of Taiwan* by Hong Ze-han and translated by Christopher Bates hit all the right buttons for me as a reader. First, anything relating to martial arts history is immensely interesting, not only to me but to many people in the martial arts. The fact that the author is relating the story of his family's involvement with martial arts as it relates to the history of China and Taiwan makes for a story that is both personal and historical, resulting in a fascinating book. While my primary interest is judo, with its rich history of development in Japan, the author drew me into his

family's story of how the Chinese boxing arts molded who they were, and who they are now.

*Blurred Boundaries* is a worthy addition to the library of every martial arts enthusiast.

—Steve Scott, 8th dan Hachidan Judo, 7th dan Shingitai  
Jujitsu, author of *The Judo Advantage: Controlling  
Movement with Modern Kinesiology* and over twenty other  
books on judo, coaching, and martial arts

We often romanticize how martial arts might have been in days of old, but here is a gripping account of how brutal and unforgiving it really was. *Blurred Boundaries* is the first English translation of Master Hong, Tse-han's story of his father, Hong Yi-xiang, as he struggled to found Yizong Tangshoudao against the background of the civil war between the Tawain's Kuomintang and the mainland communists. It vividly captures the turmoil of the times, as well as the inspirational real-life story of a historic martial arts master overcoming tremendous obstacles to further the art.

—Gene Ching, 32nd generation disciple of the Shaolin  
Temple, publisher of *Kung Fu Magazine*

## **Blurred Boundaries**

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**A Martial Arts Legacy and the Shaping of Taiwan**

**by**

**Hong Ze-han**

Translated by Christopher Bates

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This work is autobiographical. Everything here is true, but it may not be entirely factual. In some cases, the events have been compressed and certain identifying details have been changed to protect the privacy of the people involved. The events are portrayed to the best of the authors' memory.

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This book is dedicated to my father, Hong Yi-xiang, the founder of Yizong Tangshoudao school of martial art and to every renowned and unnamed teacher who taught at the Hong family's academy after being exiled from mainland China to Taiwan in the 1950s due to the civil war between the Kuomintang and the Communist Party.



Portrait of Master Hong Yi-xiang circa 1960.  
Used with permission of Chris Bates

## Acknowledgements

I first started writing this book in 2014, and when Chris and I were translating it into English in 2019, there were many details he asked about that I had to hypnotize myself through the words to reenter those lost places and memories, years of time and space, to reconstruct the mood and scene at that time. Special thanks to Christopher Bates for his hard work, patience, and tolerance during this lengthy, arduous, deciphering marathon translation process.

Thanks, too, to Thomas Argiro for copy editing and Marcus Brinkman for their generosity in making this book available in another language for everyone's enjoyment.

In the process of discussing the translation of the manuscript, I discovered many wonderful stories from the depths of my own memory that were not recorded in this biography. I hope that in the future I can find an objective way to present these past events.

## Foreword

### USING LOVE AND UNDERSTANDING TO SOOTHE HISTORY'S WOUNDS

In the 1940s, besides the 228 Massacre and The Great Retreat, there were other compelling cultural events and stories of the people on this island of Taiwan that flourished and then fell into obscurity.

*Blurred Boundaries* is the story, long past and covered in dust, of a Dihua Street merchant family's rise and fall. The author uses the life of his legendary martial artist father, Master Hong Yi-xiang, as the story's time axis, writing in a style like a movie screenplay, searching for the traces erased by time of his father's footsteps, while recreating the magnificent grandeur of the Dadaocheng area of Taipei in that era. This retrospective calls to mind one by one the youthful and passionate personages of outstanding ability sprinkled throughout that great age, conjuring them to reappear before our eyes and providing a fresh perspective on that extraordinary period.

This volume is a blend of reportage and non-classical Wuxia Romance. It features the author employing modern enterprise management and crisis management wisdom, replacing traditional martial arts fist and foot gongfu with clever and heartfelt sketches, anecdotal vignettes taking us back in time to the breakthrough moments of life's predicaments. Concealed within the background of each chapter's conflicts are expounded intricacies of understanding, change, and problem solving—worth savoring slowly, like sipping a fine old tea.

Tom Tsai



Tsai Cheng-wei, Chairman,  
Republic of China  
Olympic Committee  
July 22, 2015

## Preface to the Original Chinese Edition

THIS IS A BOOK THAT HAS BEEN DELAYED FOR TWENTY-ONE YEARS, after the passing of my father in 1993.

“Why not write down your dad’s story?” In 1995 two years after my father passed away, the chairman of San Min Publishing, Mr. Liu Zhen-qiang, invited my family’s seven brothers and sisters to dine at the Hankou St. Jiangsu restaurant, Fuxing Garden. It was here he spoke these heartfelt words.

At the time, when he uttered them, I dared not meet his eyes. There was the modesty of a son incapable of recording the biography of an extraordinary father; moreover, I had no way to face my father’s friends and respected elders. Although Mr. Liu indicated he could send manpower to assist in the writing, after conferring with my brothers and sisters, it was decided for a myriad of reasons to decline his kind offer.

In the blink of an eye, twenty winters and summers had passed, during which time no one dared deliberately broach this subject. It was not until 2014, when I retired from Jihsun Bank, and could earnestly face retired life and myself, that I had time to reconsider. One day, when cleaning out my liquor closet, I spotted a special bottle of twenty-one-year-old Chivas Regal Royal Salute Scotch whiskey, and it reanimated deeply buried regrets. Chris Bates had presented that bottle of whiskey for the twenty-year memorial banquet of my father’s passing. He had scoured the market and could only find a twenty-one-year-old vintage, so everyone agreed to gather again on the twenty-first anniversary to drink it. However, on that evening, I alone uncorked that bottle and drank it. Afterward, slightly drunk, I took my Samsung Note 2 in hand and began the work of writing this recollection.

Maybe it is just a personal prejudice, but I feel that were it not for this period of 1946 to 1993, an age of turmoil and tremendous change, Hong Wu-fan, Zhang Zhun-feng, Hong Yi-xiang, and the parade of personalities and circumstances in this book would not have emerged. These personalities, whether it was a hoodlum who failed to become a gang boss, the special operations assassin living deep in the mountains with his deranged wife, American soldiers far from home who came to fight in Vietnam, the CIA officer Robert W. Smith, who came to train Taiwanese intelligence operatives, Mr. C, who tried to get students to betray their teacher for personal gain, or the bellicose Westerner, the fighting fanatic Mr. K, nicknamed Sweet Potato, or... they were all, in many respects, the same. Each in their own way enriched that tragic and impoverished age, enlivening this story’s various chapters and enhancing the glory experienced by the Hong family.

Except for a portion of events I had the good fortune to witness with my own eyes, the majority of the people, incidents, situations, were recounted to me from the mists of past memories by my grandfather, Hong Wu-fan, second

uncle Hong Yi-wen, third uncle Hong Yi-mian, and my father, Hong Yi-xiang. I have relied on these memories, put them into words, and done some historical processing. To convey the richness of my father's remarkable life experience, and of those other remarkable people and events transpiring during this age of upheaval required that I occasionally take similar circumstances and condense them into the characters of representative personages, allowing these people and incidents of a similar age and environment to stand in as archetypes. To avoid the errors and distortions of memory—or, if in compressing incidents and people I have offended anyone through negligence, or disrespected or impacted the reputations of the characters or their descendants—I prefer to assert that this is a novel about the life and times of Hong Yi-xiang, and not a hagiography of a famous person. This is my original intent in naming the book *Blurred Boundaries*, and not *The Biography of Hong Yi-xiang*.

Through diplomatic eyes, I see the affairs of the world, including what is and what is not, truth and falsehood, good and evil, hard, and soft—all are relative to the circumstances of the moment, their relative relationship and subjective opinion; no position is absolutely right or wrong. A good person in the right age will do only good; in another age and from another value perspective, the same actions might be evaluated and appraised differently. And aren't many of the major and minor choices in life made in an environment of limited options and constant change, using fuzzy, blurred logic to make a decision? These types of decisions are neither made purely based on reason, nor are they made just with emotion. Therefore, the author considers that in all matters, a little more forgiveness and latitude for fault tolerance are called for. People should not skittle about assigning who is right and who is wrong, who won and who lost, so as not to rush to judgement.

I believe the most appropriate answers and solutions to even intractable, unsolvable problems can be found amid this blurry expanse. Fuzziness is by its nature not finalized. Doesn't the absence of finality express that there remains unlimited potential?

My father, Hong Yi-xiang, was born in 1925 and died abruptly in 1993, at the age of sixty-eight. I was born in 1955, hence my life overlapped with my father's for only thirty-eight years. Deducting the time when I was an unaware infant, my times of schooling and work, and my several years at university, I was with my father morning, noon, and night, practicing gongfu and teaching boxing, seeking out fine foods, paying calls on friends, and chatting with martial artists. But the time I spent truly close to him was not actually all that long, and this limited my understanding of my father's excellent life. I felt I could not really do justice to the precious source of material he embodied and the result merely skims over surface of an amazing life. I hope as I loosen my grip on this work, I can, as the saying goes, "release this coarse brick and get back a piece of fine jade in return."



Not long after my father was put in his coffin, the chairman of the Republic of China Guo Shu Federation, Mr. Chen Shou-shan, and the chairman of the Taipei Guo Shu Federation, Mr. Huang Shan-de, led a delegation from the martial arts community to visit our family's mourning hall at Dihua Street to pay their respects. They entreated, "Please allow us to do something to express our respect and appreciation for Brother Hong Yi-xiang!" However, a funeral committee formed of his disciples and those who had received benefits or kindnesses from him in life had already made the arrangements. Amongst my brothers and sisters, we could not think of some special way they could honor my father's life. The funeral committee decided, "Let his coffin be draped with the national flag." On the day of his burial, the blue sky, white sun, and red earth, symbolized in the flag of the Republic of China, was displayed on his coffin.

A "Black Arm Band Team" of one hundred-twenty local and foreign disciples, walked on foot, pulling on a white sash, dragging the bier, making a circuit around the entire Dadaocheng area, as they all accompanied him on his final stroll through this place best known by him. Along the way, merchants and stall owners who had no other way to say goodbye, set up their own prayer offerings on tables along the route. I, steely eyed up to this moment, now let loose a torrent of tears and emotions.

Finally, I wish to again express my deepest appreciation to Chairman Liu Zhen-qiáng. If not for his ardent hope and encouragement in 1993, I would not have had the courage to dig up deliberately neglected and evaded memories of the past, to face once again those images and circumstances of bygone days. If not for his righteous and impassioned support, the day of this volume being sent to press would not have come. In addition, I want to thank my wife, Huang Bi-xia, for these many months during which she sometimes assisted, as she read the proofs and seized on errors, allowing obscure terms intertwined in the volume to be explained to the average reader.

## Story Background

IN 1949, AT THE TIME OF THE GREAT RETREAT OF THE NATIONALIST Chinese government to Taiwan, Mr. Hong Wu-fan, the orphaned son of an impoverished Taiwanese farmer had built north Taiwan's largest manufacturer of candles and charitably took in a large number of martial arts masters who had made the ocean crossing to Taiwan. He invited them to live in his compound and teach Chinese Boxing, sparking the interest in and talent for martial art of the family's five children, thus establishing one of North Taiwan's illustrious martial art clans.

Hong Yi-xiang was the fourth in line of his sons. In the 1970s, Hong Yi-xiang was invited to the Nippon Budokan in Tokyo to demonstrate China's internal school of martial arts and received challenges from many exponents of various systems of karate, his victories in these matches shaking up Japan.

He was the first to receive the All-Japan Budo Alliance award of "International 9<sup>th</sup> Dan Black Belt Teacher," the highest honor awarded to a foreigner.

He was the Taiwanese instructor of unarmed combat fighting skills to American GIs transiting in Taiwan during the Vietnam War.

He was the private martial arts instructor to the American CIA agent stationed in Taiwan, Robert W. Smith.

He was the featured master in the 1980 BBC *The Way of the Warrior* series episode focusing on the Chinese internal school of martial arts (this series was broadcast around the world to a global audience and received great acclaim).

Finally, it is the story of three generations of martial arts transmission, Zhang Jun-feng, Hong Yi-xiang and Hong Ze-han.

This is not an orthodox biography of a famous person, nor is it a cut-and-dried martial arts romance. It is one son's attempt to leave the faintest of traces for disciples and successors, so they might come to follow the path and pay homage to his father. Of course, it is also my expression of infinite longing for and memory of a bygone era of elegance and intellectual brilliance. Because this spans forty to fifty years, a huge number of characters and events are dragged in. For this reason, although all the characters are real, and the events are real, for the purpose of presenting so many people and events, the author had no choice but to select some characters and some events and combine them into a limited field of representative characters and events, portrayed as occurring together.

I am not a professional author; I rely solely on the perspective of one son's unquestionable filial piety to his father and foolish bravery, thinking to leave behind some evidence of his father and his era. I only hope that these necessary compressions and changes do not distort the facts. Perhaps someday, on another plane, I will meet these characters again; from the bottom of my heart, I hope that I can carry them news from this modern age, and that they will find, from this account, comfort and affirmation of their existence and past struggles.

## Notes on the Translation

IT HAS BEEN MY GREAT HONOR AND GOOD FORTUNE TO HAVE HAD the opportunity, in 1982, to become one of Master Hong Yi-xiang's students. On his passing, I continued training in the lineage, and encouraged his son, Master Hong Ze-han, to continue teaching when I moved back to Taiwan in 2006.

Here, acting as translator, I would like to comment on this work and some technical details about translation.

In *Blurred Boundaries* Master Hong Ze-han has written a fine book, not a vapid hagiography. It is a folk history of a dramatic period in Taiwan during the second half of the twentieth century, full of heart, passion, courage, desperation, and dedication. With Hong Ze-han's pen, it is also filled with great compassion for the human condition and touching humor. Knowing Hong-Ze-han's love of the book *The Da Vinci Code*, it is also filled with hidden secrets of the martial arts for the industrious and clever reader to decipher.

It was my goal to retain the flavor of the author's distinct voice and that of the language in which the book is written, Mandarin Chinese. This can lead to some awkwardness for the reader, but I wished for the reader to come away from this experience having read Chinese, in English. For this reason, in some dense or long, flowery, or self-deprecating passages, I have retained the original flavor.

Some readers may take exception to my choice of methods for Romanizing Mandarin. With very few exceptions, I have used Pinyin for romanization purposes. Where I have not, such as in the city names of Taipei (pinyin Taibei) or Keelung (pinyin Jilong), I have done so because the alternative is more widely known or employed. I have broken with convention in Romanizing names by putting a dash between the two characters of the given name, Yi-xiang for example, rather than adopt the current convention of dropping the dash.

Throughout the book, Hong Ze-han addresses his father as 老四懿祥, literally Old Number-Four Yi-xiang. In every instance, whether it is in a conversation with his father or brothers, or among his friends, I have retained this usage throughout the book even though it means "fourth *brother* Yi-xiang" (not fourth son).

For some martial art technical terms, I have used translations closer to the flavor of the original, rather than simpler terms frequently seen in martial art teaching materials. An example would be 連根拔起, liangenbaqi, simply translated in Taijiquan texts as "uprooting" but I have gone with the more prosaic, "Pulling Up by the Roots."

Finally, in the English translation, any deficiencies are my fault alone. I hope they will not hobble your enjoyment too much.

Christopher Bates—Taipei, Taiwan

## **Reflections on Editing and Proofreading *Blurred Boundaries***

IT HAS BEEN MY SINCERE PLEASURE AND PRIVILEGE TO BE THE editor and proofreader for this outstanding work by Master Hong Ze-han. I have trained in Yizong Tangshou Tao Xingyi and other martial arts with Master Hong for several years, and his martial arts skills, knowledge, and instructional talents are indeed first rate. So is his talent as a writer, and it becomes very apparent in reading this engaging and exciting work that Master Hong's integrating of his family's generational history, Taiwan's history, and his own martial arts journey, practice, development, experiences, and wisdom, provides a unique and valuable insight into Taiwan's deeper martial arts culture.

Again, it has been my great honor and privilege to have been a part of this fine project, in working closely with both Master Hong Ze-han and Christopher Bates, and I expect that this work will achieve the status of an instant classic in the realm of martial arts literature.

Thomas Robert Argiro, associate professor of English (retired)  
Department of Foreign Languages and Literature  
Tunghai University, Taichung, Taiwan, ROC

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## I- GENESIS

Most early drafts of our history are written with the pen dipped in fresh blood. In those pages interweaving histories of blood and tears, the records of foreign invaders are few. Many more record the evil and vicious behavior inflicted by our own on our own.

*Scene: Dihua Street, Dadaocheng District, Taipei, Taiwan*

IT WAS AN AGE OF UNINTERRUPTED CONFLAGRATION. HAVING endured the torment of the Second World War with great difficulty, the Chinese civil war between the Nationalists and Communists ramped up without pause. Unlike World War II, this was a military disaster between our own, exactly as the stories told in China's histories of dynastic rise and fall. The two sides in this war, no matter how despicable and base their hidden motivations, could at the same time both spout moving grievances and resentments, point fingers, pursue "justice" with no regard for the consequences, hurl invectives at their opponent for "damaging the country and causing suffering to the people." And on the battlefield, they exchanged abuse, showering spit and pent-up hatred, but both without hesitation turning on the innocent commonfolk to pay the bill.

Whereupon the largest refugee exodus across the sea in the modern history of China or the world was created. Whereupon martial arts exponents of each style and from all over China, each with their similar miserable excuses, but driven out most efficiently, were herded and aggregated together on this strange southern island—Taiwan. Whereupon these martial arts masters or wanderers of the martial forest, insinuated between the forces of dark and light, accompanied the Nationalist government gangsters to this foreign land for the same humble reasons, forced to exchange in this alien place their acquired martial skills and wisdom for the requisite chips used in the dangerous casino of survival. Whereupon, with the backdrop of this cruel history and motivated by petty survival, all manner of the impossible became possible, and anything might happen.

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Hong Yi-xiang's father, the elder Mr. Hong Wu-fan hailed from Taipei municipality, Danshui, Ting He Xiang Zhou (present day New Taipei City, Luzhou District). He was an orphaned peasant, raised with the help of his

father's younger brother. With his special qualities of honesty and dogged perseverance, during the Japanese colonial period, he earned the favor of a Japanese engineer who passed on to him without reservation the latest candle manufacturing technology. With the full support of his eldest son Hong Yi-qin, step by step he became Northern Taiwan's largest supplier of candles and fireworks. Due to his personal interests, and due to the requirements of doing business in that rough and tumble era, the elder Mr. Hong Wu-fan embraced a high degree of passion for traditional martial arts.

Before and after 1949, following the Great Retreat of the Nationalist Government to Taiwan, came famous martial artists, swimming like shoals of fish across a river. Among these were martial artists who, through direct and indirect relationships, received relief and help from the Hong family of Dihua Street, and in repayment for the helping hand extended to them by Mr. Hong in the darkest moments of their lives, they permitted themselves to teach the Hong family without reservation, like emptying their pockets of secret treasures. In that time of turmoil and mutual mistrust, to protect the wealth they had acquired in their business and not be pressured by the extortions of dark elements, the Hong family thought of helping these martial arts experts to come and protect their business and family members. Mr. Hong never imagined that the ardor and sense of debt of these "Security Guards" would inspire the natural martial talents of the five children in the Hong family. The sons' enthusiasm further spurred the elder Mr. Hong to throw money into their training, enlisting the services of those martial arts exponents who had crossed the sea to Taiwan. They came to reside in the Hong compound and transmit their arts. Thus, because of a string of fateful circumstances for the Hong family, and if not for the confluence of the above social elements at the time, there should not have been a Master Hong Yi-xiang and the creation of this school of martial art—"Yizong Tangshou."



During the crossing of a dark stream of turbulent sea, a middle-aged man accompanying the retreating Nationalist government sat powerless and paralyzed on the deck, staring blankly at the many devastated and war weary old martial artists. They were thoroughly exhausted in body and mind, and unable to bear the torment of wave on wave of destitution and difficulty.

One after another, they dropped.

One after another, although not guilty of anything, they were compelled to forfeit their precious lives.

To a man, they were formerly famous in Chinese martial art circles, and here on this great unfamiliar sea, one by one their bodies were abandoned to the sea. Their martial skills and cultivation refined over a lifetime vanished, sealed within their lifeless forms, slowly sinking into the deep, inky black, becoming

eternal corruption beneath the waves.

He looked at the hand-written boxing manuals in a bag entrusted to him by an oldster now expired, and muttered a whisper, "Pa, you have not even any life left. What's the sense in leaving this behind?"

Like a soulless puppet he hoisted that bag and lurched toward the aft of the ship, removed the handwritten tomes one by one, tore the pages out, and handed them to the sea breeze like they were devalued dollar notes.

## 2– A MOMENT OF CHAOS AND ESCAPE

It is known that keys open locks, but who has considered a key carried to a foreign land in a time of crisis and exodus, what meaning can it claim in a new place? Even more so, what is the significance of a key left behind with no lock to open?

*Scene: Port of Qingdao, Mainland China, 1949*

EVERY SPECK OF EARTH ALONG THE SHORE OF QINGDAO HARBOR was packed with all manner of military and private vessels rushing to load refugees fleeing this ancient place. A bird's eye view revealed that even out into the open sea, the water was jammed with passenger and cargo ships slowly navigating out of the crowded harbor. Beyond them, more ships and boats of all sizes lined up, preparing to enter the port, ready to take on passengers, take on wealth.

On the shore were lined brokers of the nation's treasure, directly facing refugees begging for passage who were being charged exorbitant prices. In this setting, paper currency was worthless; apart from gold bars, boat ticket sellers would not even lift an eye to consider jewelry, paintings, and antiques that had no recognized value. Refugees desperate to sell off precious family heirlooms to obtain gold of sufficient weight were observed by antique merchants off to one side waiting to appraise and negotiate.

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"We're old. We can't take the tossing about on the high seas, you go and don't worry," his mother said.

"I'll take care of your mom; we'll await your return," his father said.

"Pa!" The son, tears and snot streaming down his face, kneeled on the ground. In his hands only two tickets for passage, not enough to transport the destiny of a family of three.

Who could say how this final farewell would end? Would the son, unable to cast aside the fetters of family ties, surrender the tickets just obtained to some other refugee, and stay with his aged parents to face an unknown fate? Or would he comply with his father's will to continue the family line and burn incense at the alter to his ancestors, which meant turning and boarding the ship to face yet another unknown fate on his journey? In that moment, there was no one who cared about this tragic scene or touching story. And no

one with enough heart or position to decide—who should stay behind? Who should leave?

In an era when war must be employed to decide cardinal questions of right and wrong, or have and have not, it is from the barrel of a gun or bore of a cannon that such human-destroying instruments of war issue their awful judgments. They cannot distinguish who is the evil person that should die, who is the kindhearted filial son on whom mercy should be shown. In the key moment when firepower decides everything, the wisest men of old have never stepped forward to protect the weak and preserve life.



Leaving the shoreline on a sampan, a wealthy family of six mouths plus their servants squeezed onto the deck, their brows knit, their two arms clutching the one precious bag each allowed by the captain, staring at the anxious and chaotic scene. In the bottom of their hearts they were clear, no matter how influential and illustrious their family had been, no matter how well socially connected, once they left the coast, any asset they could not carry was sealed up for safe keeping. For those things that could not be carried, sold, or shipped to someone to manage, they relied on an old lock, like a trusted servant who would refuse to yield, to seal up all their things until that day—that day when things were better, that clear and sunny day after the storm—when they could return from overseas, reclaim their land, wield their key, open their gardens, and resume the family business.

Only no one knew whether this old lock would be like Wang Bin-chuan, the virtuous wife of Peking Opera fame, able to resolutely protect the memories enshrined in the courtyard during the long absence of her husband. Who could say as soon as the boat left the coast, as the nation's masters changed, what claims this key making the ocean crossing could make? What did it prove? For a refugee fleeing turmoil, I am afraid that only the few precious items they pressed to their chests could be relied on to face an unknown future in a new land, relied on to protect them.



“Ai! Didn’t I just change the lock this morning? How could the government fall so completely the same day, what’s the rush?” On a small craft laboring against the current in the busy harbor stood a middle-aged man, his face lined with his thoughts, his back to the wind on the bobbing sampan. Gazing at the far shore and the hazy images of constant life-or-death encounters as people scrambled to escape or say farewell, he thought he saw his own silhouette. He could not tell if it was his spirit torn from his body by the war or his physical body. Only the icy spray of the ocean water clashing with the hot tears flowing on his face woke him to his existence. On the overcrowded deck, he strained

Hong Ze-han

to create a small space and dropped to his knees, his two hands clutching the gunwale, his head pointing in the direction of that ancient land where he had grown into a successful man. He bowed his head against the gunwale over and over, again and again, vowing, "When the war is concluded, I will return."

In that moment of his great pledge, on that enormous sea, besides the sound of a steam whistle's cry, neither heaven nor earth offered any reply.

### 3- THE SILENT FLUTE

The reason for life's perplexity is just because the reality and the ideal are blurred, the false and the real are hard to distinguish! And mankind indeed has some subliminal instinct, always thinking that out of chaotic disorder can emerge order or regularity, but in the end to no avail. Because chaos, fuzziness, is an innate quality of life. Always amidst our blunders, we mistake our own feelings and expectations. However, man's greatness is precisely because, having erred, we make our amends, our hair grows white, we say our goodbyes, and inevitably pass away...

*Scene: A ship carrying refugees escaping Mainland China through the Straits of Taiwan, 1949*

A MID-SIZED MERCHANT SHIP IS NAVIGATING TOWARD TAIWAN IN the Taiwan Straits. The passengers move with the ship, the vessel moves with the waves. Jolting, bumping, splashing, no one is spared. The passengers talk or interact little partly due to the wave of seasickness, but mainly because of bewilderment and fear of an unknown future.

From their parochial, Middle Kingdom heartland perspective, Taiwan is just a remote island near the southern frontier. According to the mainstream historical view, the significance of Taiwan to China's historical rulers was that during periods of internal unrest, the island served as a foothold for the evil remnants of the previous dynasty in its last throes. Then, during times of foreign aggression, the island transformed into a bargaining chip tossed away to protect the motherland from the Great Powers negotiating "unequal treaties."

Which rebel parties and evil elements had occupied and seized the island in the past?

Which foreign nations and races have governed it?

How many times has the motherland declared its full-throated love for this piece of land, then sold it out, ceding it away, over and again?

It is not just the refugees and compatriots on this ship who are trying to escape from war and unrest who lack a full understanding of this disgrace. Even eminent scholars with a profound knowledge of Chinese history do not comprehend this island, which has tarnished the national glory and is often deliberately omitted in history annals or recorded only in unpopular chapters.

However, at this moment the shipboard compass is pointing toward this

unfamiliar island and the future and fate of these passengers.

During the development of the Chinese civilization, this isolated isle has never been given even the slightest consideration in the official history books, resembling an illegitimate child never cared for by its natural parents.

By a strange serendipity, these parents and children, who once lacked mutual trust, suddenly find their destinies entwined at this critical moment. Is there enough generosity to accommodate shipload after shipload of brothers and sisters born of a different mother, coming to rely on their distant siblings?

Is the shoulder strong enough to bear the weight, to carry this group, representing the national assembly members elected in perpetuity, legislators, and government dignitaries of the legitimate regime?

Is there enough depth to bear the thousand-year-old treasures stored in the National Palace Museum and the thousands of tons of gold in the national treasury?

No one knows.

No one knows what will greet them when the ship reaches the shore, and the gangway drops—cold steel and guns? Or a warm shoulder?

At this key moment of universal desperation, will these islanders, forsaken by their great motherland on numerous occasions, their bastard genes never lovingly recognized, turn heartless their emotions, fall out with their counterparts, seize the opportunity to unburden accumulated rage in the face of a thousand years of indifference?

No one knows.

The departure from the mainland represents a departure from the mainstream Chinese civilization and the heartland of China. A legitimate political regime turns into rebel scum overnight. When the reins of political power in the motherland change hands, the power to write and interpret history is passed on to this bunch you regard as illegal usurpers. No matter whether you are fighting to “Oppose the Qing and Restore the Ming Dynasty,” or fighting to topple the “Thoroughly Vicious Commie Bandits,” or rally under the flag of “Liberate the Motherland’s Comrades,” history only provides one answer:

*No one has ever been able to successfully restore the Chinese nation and recover political power from this island.*



“Stay with me, my dear,” the old lady whispered her plea as she supported her feeble husband.

“It’s the end of the road. I can’t go with you,” the old man said.

The old lady silently yielded to a stream of tears.

“Give this to Jun-feng.” The old man took a hand-transcribed copy of *Swimming Dragon Bagua Consecutive Palms—A Clarification* from the duffel bag



he held in his arms, handing it over to his wife.

“Look for him here,” he said while pointing at a couple of characters written on the book with a fountain pen. It was an address: Hongwanmei, Dihua Street, Taipei, Taiwan.

The old man summoned what little energy was left in his body to inhale a mouthful of moist and salty ocean air. He forced open his eyes to look around at this stretch of unfamiliar sea. “Such a beautiful flute song.” After the words were finished, a stale exhalation quietly leaked from his mouth; he closed his eyes and serenely passed on to the next world.

At the stern, on top of a messy pile of freight, a lone middle-aged man fingered a copper flute while looking out over the vast ocean, no sound. No melody.

On the deck, there was no unnecessary mourning or ritual. Only a piece of worn-out wooden board carried the old gentleman’s body after his soul left. His once magnificent physique, now frail and thin, was carried with the help of several refugees to the railing of the ship, the board inclined, and he slid into the embrace of the great ocean. His wife stood at the rail for a long time, her arms folded across her chest as her husband’s had been when he slid into the ocean, her eyes helplessly staring at the place where this old man, a mutually supportive companion of nearly a century, slowly, slowly submerged into the sea, silent and without tears! Only the noise of that *Swimming Body Bagua Consecutive Palms—A Clarification* book in her arms, pages flapping in the cold, ocean wind.



After sending away her true love, she closed her eyes slightly, trying to marshal her own flagging will to survive. She embraced the rare martial arts tome that her husband had written by hand with a lifetime of painstaking effort. With the other hand, she gently combed the gray hair that was disordered by the ocean wind, her expression solemn and respectful and with a dignified bearing, she slowly walked to the stern of the ship.

She blankly gazed at the long strip of the vessel’s wake, linking her back to her home port. Already she couldn’t distinguish the exact location where her husband had just slipped into the sea, nor was she sure in which direction her hometown was behind the ship. She turned around to observe one more time the disappointment on the faces of the unfamiliar refugees. She no longer cared for the world in which she lived. She cared even less about any significance or possibility in the words “Hongwanmei, Dihua Street, Taipei, Taiwan.”

With both hands she embraced the precious relic entrusted to her by her old husband and fell back peacefully in the direction she thought most probable was that of her hometown. Her mind returned to the days of her youth when she and her beau met and fell in love, when she was fresh and pretty, so beautiful, so beautiful.

She, a martial arts woman who had won dozens of national championships

## Hong Ze-han

with the Taiji Long Sword, thus died for love in the most poignant way, accompanying a master of the Northeast Internal School of Boxing into the boundless unknown. And together all their glory, legends, and experiences created over a lifetime in the field of traditional Chinese martial arts disappeared. No vestige. It was as if she and he had never existed.

## 4- TAIPEI MAIN STATION

Objects and energy always gravitate in the direction of least resistance. Courage is not the absence of fear, it is clearly knowing the fear and bravely standing firm, to do all one can without giving up.

*Scene: Taipei Main Train Station*

IT IS 1947, IN THE TIME JUST AFTER THE JAPANESE DEFEAT AND unconditional surrender in WWII, not long after they had departed from Taiwan. On the streets, each day, there were more and more mainlanders hailing from Tangshan Guangdong Province and places further inland from China, wearing their long male gowns, speaking with the accents of each region. Deep in the alleys, however, wearing their Japanese-style pajamas or undergarments, scores of Taiwanese continued to shuttle back and forth greeting each other in Japanese. In that time, the language barrier was a common, daily phenomenon. Although both parties tried hard to understand the other, and tried hard to help the other understand, it was like twins separated at birth to grow up in a different country, a different family. Even when they are joyfully reunited and embraced by their own parents, who would be able to overcome pernicious cultural barriers in the short term? In the markets, in shops, one often heard a brilliant cacophony, like chickens trying to talk to ducks. At the train station, on the street, one frequently saw conflicts, maybe big maybe small, continuing to erupt.

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In the past, Taipei Main Rail Station was always the convergence point of a stream of people and goods moving north and south, a key transport hub. Near Zhengzhou Street was the rear of the station. Although it afforded access to passengers, it primarily served as a dock for large goods and raw materials to be off-loaded. Parked on the plaza in front of the Rear Station, facing the right side of the ancient main city gate of Taipei, was a long line of trishaw pedicabs awaiting passengers. Some of the drivers lie alone on the passenger seats, their bare feet propped up, conical bamboo hats shading their faces, taking naps. Others squatted in whatever shade could be found next to their machines and played checkers on the ground with chips of red brick and white mosaic as pieces, gambling for small change to while away the boredom. Along the left side of the plaza stood a line of what were popularly called “Push-Pull Depots,”

large hand-pulled freight carts. Coolies,<sup>1</sup> wadded burlap bags padding their shoulders and a ceaseless flow of sweat beading their bodies, moved a cargo of candle wax arrived from Keelong harbor on the loading platform to the carts.

Zhang Jun-feng, attired in a long traditional men's gown, a cloth sack hanging on his right shoulder, an ivory-handled large black umbrella in his left hand, entered the Rear Station from the train platform and stopped at the wooden gate to inquire of the ticket taker, "Please, how do I walk to Dihua Street?"

In Taiwanese, "Don't understand. Go ask the trishaw drivers," replied the old wizened ticket taker who did not comprehend his heavily accented Shandong Mandarin.

There was nothing Zhang Jun-feng could do but feign understanding of the old station employee pointing in a direction. Just as he was strolling across the Rear Station main hall, a street urchin of about three years old suddenly scurried around him. At that moment, a coolie bearing two large heavy sacks of paraffin blocks on his back was rushing in the opposite direction and just about to collide. The child was so small that the collision banged him away like a bullet from a gun, and he staggered back and fell on the floor. The coolie made every effort to arrest his forward momentum, but the one hundred pounds of paraffin followed the laws of physics and hurtled forward toward a crushing impact on the child.

"Ai, this is bad!" the coolie thought of the unfolding peril and could not help but shout out.

It happened in an instant, but Zhang Jun-feng was as quick as a spark. His left foot circled inward with a Bagua button step and his body followed to the right rear turning 180 degrees, placing him in a flash between the coolie and the child. His body released the centrifugal force of his turn into his right shoulder, colliding with one of the bags of paraffin and knocking it away. He shifted into a right bow-and-arrow stance and released Bagua's Upholding Palm, shoving away the second burlap bag. Without a hair's breadth to spare, he had agilely eliminated a thorny crisis. When he determined that both parties were safe and sound, he collected himself and calmly stood up. He reached out and helped the child up first, turned and picked up his umbrella and the sack dropped in haste, then sauntered out the main door like nothing had happened, leaving behind the coolie who had yet to collect his wits and a station full of gawking passengers.

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1 Coolie is not a Western derogatory term but originates in Chinese as *kuli* 苦力, 'bitter strength,' denoting someone working at hard physical labor.

## 5- BLACK SNAKE

Train platforms and seaside docks are not merely places where we see off departing guests and meet new arrivals, nor are they only a stage on which we fondly say farewell to our departing fathers. Generally, in places at the intersection of large flows of goods and people, there are always resources and opportunities, and they are focal points coveted by both black and white, by forces of darkness and light.

*Scene: The Plaza Behind the Taipei Main Train Station at Zhengzhou Street*

ZHANG JUN-FENG HAD NO SOONER STEPPED DOWN FROM THE platform at the rear of Taipei Main Station, his foot taking its first step on Taipei soil, when Black Snake, with excellent snake weaving technique, swerved into the head of the line of trishaws. "This one's mine! You take the next one." Although Black Snake's face sported the professionally insincere smile of a cabby touting for passengers, the tone of his voice carried a "take it or leave it" frostiness. Black Turtle intervened, "Stealing business. This is bad." Zhang Jun-feng would never accept this outrageous, brazen public hustle and glared at the cabby taking his measure. At a glance he could see this fellow worked all year outdoors, his skin nut brown from over exposure to the sun, lean sturdy build, dressed in shorts and a tank top, a conical plaited bamboo hat on his head, an old, faded scarf around his neck, on his feet he pedaled in "ninja shoes" popular among workers at the time (a mid-rise cloth boot with a space for the big toe and four little toes). From his active, shifty eyes, he subtly revealed the arrogant bearing of a ruffian, with an "I'm the boss, put up or shut up" attitude. "Yeah, don't ride his cab!" Black Turtle shouted, full of invective.

Although at the time Zhang Jun-feng did not understand the words being spoken, relying on many years' experience traipsing through all manner of markets, ports, and depots, he understood the nests of vipers that harbors and stations were, entangling all manner of interests and disputes. From the contemptuous tone of voice, he was already roughly informed of the subtle relationships between the two parties here at the station. So as not to step on any mines in a new place, nor having any desire to provoke people, he did not turn his head to see who shouted, instead feigning ignorance. But he firmly rejected riding on the trishaw of this boldly rapacious cabby. He insisted on getting onto the first pedicab that had been waiting in line.

"It doesn't matter. He's one of us. It's fine, just ride his," the good natured,

old cabby said, removing his hat and waving his hand to signal he was willing to give up this ride. Faced with the cabby's non-confrontational acquiescence, Zhang Jun-feng first felt a bit of doubt. He looked back at that line-cutting guy with his implacable "I told you so" bully's expression and thought he should not take his cab. In the end he strongly resisted his heart's annoyance and resentfully boarded.

"We're all friends here, Master," in Taiwanese. "What's your pleasure, sir? Do you want to go to 'Hong Wan Mei'?" Black Snake asked.

"I'm going to Dihua Street, Section 1, No. 177," Zhang Jun-feng said.

"Okay, take a seat," Black Snake responded.

Zhang Jun-feng had barely boarded and had not even turned around to seat himself, when Black Snake eagerly put some juice into his pedals, and the pedicab shot out of the station like an arrow. To his utter embarrassment, Zhang Jun-feng was caught unawares by the sudden acceleration and was thrown awkwardly into the two-seater bench.

"Your leg strength's not bad!" Zhang Jun-feng exclaimed as he hastily arranged himself in the seat.

"I have the fastest legs in Dadaocheng. From the city gate at the back of the station to Dalongdong Pig Slaughterhouse, nobody is faster than I am." After watching Zhang Jun-feng take a spill into the back seat, Black Snake felt quite full of himself. "That was called a Speedy Getaway. Pretty cool," the Black Snake said with pride on his face, having taken pains to dash away quickly.

"What did you say?" Zhang Jun-feng had an inborn fear of speed, but it did not show on his face and he feigned calm. His two hands, however, clutched the wooden armrests without letup.

"Don't understand, no matter. It's all cool," Black Snake said to himself.

"Master, I'm in no hurry. You don't need to burn so much energy," Zhang Jun-feng said.

"This is only 30 percent. I can go even faster!" Black Snake replied.

Perhaps he did not understand, or he wanted to intentionally make his fare suffer, but Black Snake continued in an ever-accelerating serpentine path through the traffic.

This was a small microcosm of what it was like back then, when so-called foreign provincials from the mainland and Taiwan provincials interacted. Hindered by language barriers and life's necessities, there was unavoidable contact and unavoidable collisions and friction. Provided an odd spark did not fall onto a pile of dry grass, provided the two sides employed a little goodwill and forgiveness to show consideration to the other party, if bystanders ardently assisted or came forward to try to dissolve disputes, then any sparks resulting from social collisions and friction would help everybody to see clearly the beauty of their differences and understand their mutual boundaries and limits. Thus, not only would events not evolve into intractable problems, but

they would also contribute to mutual respect, forgiveness, and fusion between different cultures and social groups.

This is entirely rationalized, wishful thinking and good intentions alone, since the origins of conflict and slaughter were often hibernating beneath the veneer of peaceful coexistence, well camouflaged to look like, "This is for the good of all." Yet pressures constantly would build up until one day when they had reached their limits, they would give vent with earth-shattering force. And that boundary kept in place to maintain harmony, to avoid overstepping into conflict, has always been blurred, since humans have no way to understand or control it. Without a fixed demarcation, it nevertheless exists.

When the majority have the homecourt advantage, they will demarcate the boundaries: "We aren't letting you interlopers suppress us." Later, the minority, controlling the military resources of the nation, commands, "You are not allowed to defy the powerful." Watchful people, standing between these two opposing forces, observe closely the aftermath of such chaos, to see the opportunities and possibilities for redistribution of resources and power, for at these times the watchful can grab golden prospects, netting twice the result with half the effort.

## 6- BLACK TURTLE

Labor is mankind's most primeval, and cheapest commodity. Within the Labor Market beneath the Taipei Bridge, to provide for their families, aging laborers still had to struggle to hold out. Those for whom strength had given out relied on skills; those without sufficient skills just marked time.

*Scene: The Plaza Behind the Taipei Main Train Station at Zhengzhou Street*

ON THE PLAZA BEHIND THE TRAIN STATION, COOLIES LIKE WORKER ants resigned to their fate endlessly trudged back and forth with a fixed rhythm, struggling to transfer a pile of paraffin blocks bag by bag onto a large lorry. The coolies on the bed of the truck busied themselves receiving the paraffin and piled it up layer after layer. From start to finish, laborers would busy themselves with this for at least an hour and only fill one lorry.

In that age entirely dependent on manual labor, many people arrived in Taipei from south and central Taiwan seeking to make a living. If they did not have enough capital of their own to invest in a small business, or if they temporarily could not find full time employment suitable to their skills, so long as their body was healthy and they had two arms and two legs, in such a commercially vibrant city most could find some temporary manual labor employment. The snag was that whether it was hot or cold, rain or shine, those seeking to make a living this way had to sacrifice their sleep, rise from bed in the dead of night and hurry to make it to the Labor Market underneath the Taipei Bridge before dawn at 5:00 a.m. Here they awaited the decision of the foreman to pick them for one day's wages of temporary work, selling their one day of labor in exchange for a pittance of income to raise a family. Here, over half of the laborers awaiting work orders were middle-aged, in their hometowns some had been farmers, some fishermen, others had repaired roofs, were plasterers, or carpenters, or metalsmiths. They came from each corner of Taipei, other villages all over Greater Taipei and from the north and west coasts; their backs hunched up at the black, star-filled sky, they rode their "iron horse" bicycles for the journey to assemble at Yanping North Road Section 2, the Labor Market under the Taipei Bridge.

In that dark cavern under the bridge assembled group upon group of older men, all sporting different accents. Seeing the longing in their eyes that the god of fortune might shine on them, it was hard not to feel the weight and pressure



on these breadwinners. For these elders any work order received from the foreman would do. It didn't matter if it was carrying loads or street cleaning, or if it did not require special skills, provided they could get any job order. This waiting continued until 7:00 a.m., by which time all jobs had been assigned. Of those who had not succeeded in getting a work order, some trudged away despondently to the train, sad to return home, some preferred to remain under the bridge with other leftovers who had been rejected and play Chinese Chess, whiling away the entire day, unwilling to return home to face their families and their wives' scorn.

The group of coolies working behind the train station had Black Turtle as their leader and were a gang relying on strength in organization. Assembled into a gang, they seized control of this lucrative spot that was the main traffic hub of Taipei. Every day at dawn, he would appoint a foreman to the Labor Market, sent to select for work as porters those waiting lambs; obedient, hard-working, and willing to surrender a cut of their wages. Most of the rest of the gang members were reprobates or thugs mixed up with local gangs, responsible for protecting the turf, or "additional laborers," used to pad the payroll, but these gang members were not expected to, and definitely would not, lift a finger to carry any burdens.

"Move out," his eyes noting that the truck was already finished loading, Black Turtle shouted from a shaded spot where he smoked a cigarette, the pack of New Paradise smokes rolled into his T-shirt sleeve. After issuing the order, he cast a glance to several footmen and immediately three chaps who were doing nothing jumped on the back of the truck. The three coolies who had been shouldering the heavy lifting were given not a moment to catch their breath. They removed the cloth pads from their shoulders to vigorously shake off the paraffin chips and dust, then scrambled for their lives to grab hold of the pile of burlap bags as the truck pulled out.

"Hit the road." Black Turtle flicked his butt away like a bullet and slapped the truck door hard, urging the driver to be on his way.

"You, you, you, you three are escorts. Collect the fee," Black Turtle ordered. The loafers immediately sprang into action, nimbly jumping one by one on board the back of the truck.

"What the fuck are you gawking at? Get on board." Several coolies who had just finished moving goods to the truck and with nary a moment to drink a mouthful of water nor catch a breath were pressed to climb on board. They had no choice but to drag their knackered frames onto the truck and await with weary resignation the next round of heavy labor, off-loading into the go-down.



Zhang Jun-feng, filled with martial vigor, arrived in Taiwan as a fruit wholesaler, 1947.

## 79— THE LONG MARCH TO JAPAN PART 4

The king's authority comes from conquest, not inheritance!

*Scene: Tokyo Budokan and hotel coffee shop*

“KYOKUSHINKAI KARATE-DO THIRD-DAN BLACKBELT, YOKOYAMA Tatsuhito requests of his elder, please enlighten me.”

Kyokushinkai Karate-do emphasizes “full contact sparring.” It was founded by Mas Oyama in 1964. It is a style narrowly focused on practical combat. Its moves are unpretentious, simple, capable of hitting, and being hit as signature features. Commonly used moves in Kyokushin Karate include straight punches, uppercuts, front kicks, spin kicks and other basic moves. The usage is quite simple, unadorned, and uniform, such as: hitting the chest with a straight punch, hitting the ribs with an uppercut, using a front kick to attack the heart, using a sweeping leg to attack the knees, and using a hook kick to hit the back of the head...fists meeting muscle, techniques exposing bone, it is extremely destructive. Because it emphasizes full contact sparring, it is different from other Karate styles with their “score a point and stop” habit. One can often see two exponents pushing through the pain to continue. They don't jump around, don't clinch, don't side-step, and don't even move much, standing opposite each other trading body blows with the opponent, until one of them falls or admits defeat.

The tall and sturdy Yokoyama was like a brown bear, step by step facing square and ready to pounce. Confronted with this strong enemy, Hong Yi-xiang as before did not shift forward or backward. He merely used a simple technique to pry open Yokoyama's right straight punch and seize Yokoyama's center of gravity to the left and support the ground with the sole of the left foot. The intention was such that at the instant when Yokoyama lifted his right foot to launch a head attack with a spin kick or a hook kick, Hong Yi-xiang used his right hand, already attached to the opponent, to apply “Clever Energy—*Qiao Jin*” and lightly pull down. Yokoyama's left support foot immediately slid forward, causing his attacking tempo to slow down slightly. Hong Yi-xiang seized the delay and snaked his left palm slapping the opponent's right neck. Because the method employed was a consecutive and hooking palm, Yokoyama was caught by the palm and was irresistibly moved forward by the palm strength. The instant his body was out of balance and he stumbled, Hong Yi-xiang's right knife hand gently chopped the artery between the left side of Yokoyama's throat and the collarbone. Afterwards he saw Yokoyama's eyes go blank, the body deflated, as

he collapsed to his knees on the spot. Hong Yi-xiang immediately took a half step forward and braced Yokoyama under his armpits, not letting him collapse in front of the tens of thousands of spectators on hand. When the other five karate exponents watching the exchange at close range saw this, they immediately rushed up to catch Yokoyama's paralyzed body. Before the audience could figure out what had happened in the ring, Yokoyama had already been caught and first aid was on the scene...

"Enough! Put a stop to this." Taking into account the consequences of this spectacle and the emotions of the audience, Ryoichi Sasakawa immediately made a decision to stop all subsequent arrangements, and personally went on stage to take charge of the situation, expressing the thanks of the organizer directly to Hong Yi-xiang for his instruction.

"I sincerely appreciate Hong Sensei's generous and selfless demonstration, so that we can experience the vastness and unpredictability of martial arts in such a grand event. I hope all lovers of martial art attending today, regardless of nationality or style, can unite hand in hand to vigorously explore even more profound hidden vistas of the martial arts."

High up in a row far from the VIP seats, a thirty-one-year-old Matsuda Masashi, later to be known as Ryuchi, sat spellbound. Sasakawa's words spoke directly to his heart. He had started teaching himself to fight in elementary school but began to train karate in earnest in middle school, setting up his own karate club in high school. He had studied with "The Cat" himself, Gogen Yamaguchi, in Goju-ryu and with Mas Oyama. He had trained in Jigen-ryu and Daito-ryu Aikijutsu. His first exposure to Chinese boxing had been a demonstration by Wang Shu-jin at the Meiji Jingu Shrine after which he had sought Wang's instruction in Xingyiquan in Tokyo. But today's demonstration blew him away. He had to get to Taiwan to taste this for himself.



Under instructions from Ryoichi Sasakawa, that evening Suzuki Masafumi invited Hong Yi-xiang and Chen Xi-zhao to visit Tokyo's Seibukan dojo for practice and arranged for all the senior cadres of the black belt group to host a banquet to treat Hong Yi-xiang and his accompanying friends. Everyone quickly completed the preparation of tables, chairs, dishes, and drinks. Except for the main folding table with chairs, the other black belt members all sat on the floor at unique low Japanese-style tables. In addition to a variety of sushi and yakitori skewers and other convenient take-out treats and dishes on the table, there were rows of large bottles of Japanese Hakutsuru Dai Ginjo and Gekkeikan sake and all kinds of beer.

"Toyoda, shouldn't you be the first to toast Master Hong, thanking him for his guidance at the Budokan today," Suzuki encouraged warmly.

"Yes. Sensei," Toyoda said, "Master Hong. Toyoda Higashio would like to

thank you for your guidance today. Kampai!”

“Who taught you to ask questions? Are you afraid of being dressed down in public,” Suzuki said.

“I really wanted to solve a puzzle baffling me, because all along I couldn’t understand why Chinese culture and martial arts attach so much importance to the operation of the ‘circle,’” Toyoda said.

“Do you understand now?” Suzuki asked.

“Actually, I should be thankful to Toyoda. Because of his question, I could share with so many people at the same time my own superficial experience of Internal boxing,” said Hong Yi-xiang.

“Since you got Master Hong’s personal guidance on the stage, do you want to demonstrate what have you learned from Master Hong today?” Suzuki invited.

“*Hai!*” Toyoda Higashio signaled his *kohai* in the neighboring seat to get up quickly, and went with him into the U formed by the tables. The two demonstrators bowed in front of the main table. Based on Hong Yi-xiang’s method in the Budokan, he recreated a paint-by-numbers image, and carefully explained his own sensations at the time. He carefully explained how a small circular movement during sticking, when targeting the body’s balance produces a disruptive effect. When his body was pushed by the front semicircle, to stabilize his center of gravity, his body instinctively leaned into the push so as not to be overpowered by an expected subsequent shove. What he didn’t expect was that when the force of his pushback surged out, he would suddenly discover that the original opposing force had disappeared. The force he returned found nothing solid to receive the force, no fulcrum or obstruction to press against to maintain his balance. His entire body was being pulled down by a powerful vortex, and in that moment all he felt was the blood and qi of his entire core flowing in reverse and his brain going blank. When consciousness was restored, it seemed the whole thing was over too suddenly, and he had lost all memory of what had happened until he returned to the sidelines and knelt down. Then slowly his brain reconnected the blank spaces.

To demonstrate, Toyoda began to repeat the same actions over and over on the *kohai*, and the shots were merciless, using more and more force, until he was so proficient that he could use a Yanking Palm to drag the *kohai*, forcing him to sprawl on the ground. Under the arousal of applause and alcohol, Toyoda made many derivative changes and improvements, such as Yanking Palm followed by a reverse choke and a leg sweep to make the opponent fall face up on the floor.

“Look how happy they play,” Suzuki said.

“Such a spirit of research is admirable,” Hong Yi-xiang said.

“Japan’s cultural foundation is shallow and resources are scarce. If we can’t rely on this kind of spirit, turning one into ten, turning less into more, and turning roughness into refinement, Japan would never have a chance to compete with the great powers in the world,” Suzuki declared.

“Toyoda is dishing it out quite heavy,” Hong Yi-xiang said.

“This is the tradition of the dojo. He is training all the *kobai* to let them understand that it was not because he was too weak in the ring just now, but because you were too strong. He wants them to experience what he felt at the time when he was knocked out. This is sort of passing down the experience, especially after lading on a little more pain, will be remembered more deeply,” Suzuki said.

In such an atmosphere of refined martial study, everyone ate and drank this simple meal, talked and tested skills until nearly midnight.



The next day, at seven o'clock in the morning, Ryoichi Sasakawa and Suzuki Masufumi met to have a Western breakfast together at the coffee bar in the hotel lobby.

“In the final analysis, what system of martial arts does that technique belong to?” Sasakawa asked.

“It should be a deliberately hidden ‘secret skill,’” Suzuki said.

“Is this the reason why he mysteriously disappeared a while ago?” Sasakawa asked.

“I don't know, but I believe that he sensed Yokoyama's strong intention and eagerness to win, which was far beyond the boundaries of a ‘well intentioned request for instruction,’ such that it pushed Hong to the point whereby he had no choice but to really ‘teach him a lesson,’” Suzuki said. “I think by executing such a surprise attack on such an occasion, Yokoyama has really made the host lose face.”

“Don't blame him. I asked him to do this,” Sasakawa said.

“Why?” Suzuki asked.

“If not done, we will never see real gongfu. If not this way, karate will arrogantly stop learning and progressing. If not this way, the Japanese karate that we have cultivated so hard will wither like the brief moment of a flower, and will decline and wane in the martial arts world,” Sasakawa said.

“Chairman...” Suzuki said.

“The technique is mysterious and unfathomable to be sure, but the key lies in his wisdom to respond in the moment,” Sasakawa said.

“Yokoyama originally calculated that he would move to the left and right first as was his habit, so it was rather gutsy he thought to use a feint to force Hong to move, and then use the moment at which he was occupied to attack him with a high spinning kick to the head, hoping to flatten Hong, but he didn't expect to be the one carried out. Sooo! After all, the ability to adapt varies widely among people,” Suzuki said.

“When confronting an enemy, habituation is a fundamentally fatal weakness, but I never expected it to be turned into a tactic to deceive the enemy,” Sasakawa said.

“Also, Yokoyama relied too much on his own ability to take a hit with his *nogare* and *ibuki* training, he guessed wrong. At best, it is just that he figured he could take one or two strikes from Hong and would be able to recover. Unexpectedly, one wrong move on the chessboard, the entire game was lost,” Suzuki said.

“When trading blows with a master, there is no tolerance for even a slight margin of error,” Sasakawa said.

“He first used his right hand to suck in Yokoyama’s body, and then used that left palm strike to clock the back Yokoyama’s head. Yokoyama’s neck was hit by such a heavy hand, his brain would instantly lose consciousness and control. This one palm strike was the equivalent of popping Yokoyama’s ‘balloon’...,” Suzuki said.

“If the body is not filled with protective *Qi*, people will be vulnerable to even one strike,” Sasakawa said.

“The most amazing kiss of death was after he slapped Yokoyama’s neck, his palm was like an elephant’s trunk wrapping around the neck, and he pulled Yokoyama into a collision with his right knife hand chop. This combination is so refined and hard to get out of. This is an opposing force that accelerates the collision at the same time. Even though it doesn’t employ any special secret skills, people can’t withstand such an attack, especially on the carotid artery. Yokoyama’s loss today is just a loss of self-confidence in his ability to take a heavy blow. In the future, we must keep this in mind and take it as a warning lesson. By the looks of it, when this Mr. Hong is facing hostile intent and plotting, he is not such a soft-hearted and charitable character,” Suzuki said.

“At the critical moment, one must be able to harden your heart. Only then have you the creds to become a world-class master,” Sasakawa said.

“I dare to predict that Hong Yi-xiang will become a world-class martial arts master in the future,” Suzuki said.

“No. After running the gauntlet yesterday and taking care of nearly all the exponents we put up against him with only one move, Hong Yi-xiang has proven his strength to the world: he is *now* a world-class martial arts master. Moreover, I think I can confirm what his secret technique is,” Sasakawa said.

“Oh. Really?” Suzuki asked.

“It should be the ‘Art of Controlling the Bull.’ A soldier who served during the Second World War in the Yunnan-Burma border area in southwest China witnessed it and told me about it,” said Sasakawa. “Art of Controlling the Bull? Isn’t that the technique that Kyokushin-kai’s Mas Oyama used to overpower and demolish a wild bull?” Suzuki asked.

“No. Not overpowering. Humans have always used intelligence to bring down animals larger than themselves. Not raw strength,” Sasakawa said.

After this long conversation, Ryoichi Sasakawa’s mind was clearly resolved. For his remaining years, he would dedicate himself to the ultimate goal of promoting the great Japanese nation’s karate. He would mobilize the wisdom, wealth, and



Hong Ze-han

contacts he had accumulated over a lifetime in the commercial world to go all out, to not give up until the goal was reached...

“For the long-term development of our Japanese karate, we must find a way to obtain this secret technique. No matter how much time, money, and also by any means,” Sasakawa said.



Hong Yi-xiang and Suzuki Masafumi hold a press conference in Tokyo, 1972.



Hong Yi-xiang imparts knowledge of Neijia boxing to the Tokyo Seibukan main dojo at the invitation of Suzuki Masafumi, 1972.



## 80- DARK ARTS AND DIRTY TRICKS

Black and white, dark and light, all exist in relation to each other. In a world that has no light at all, with nary a beam of sunshine or colors, no one knows whether one can still differentiate gradations of black? In the eyes of ordinary people living in a dark and disorderly country, is there another set of completely different rules of survival and moral code, and an operational logic that allows everyone to maintain ecological balance?

*Scene: Anxi Street*

“MR. HONG, THANK YOU FOR YOUR ARDENT HOSPITALITY DURING this period, I will leave tomorrow.”

“Where do you plan to go?” asked Hong Yi-xiang.

“Hualien.”

“Okay,” Hong Yi-xiang said.

The man was silent, as if waiting for Hong Yi-xiang to say something important.

“Tomorrow, I would like to treat all the masters to a farewell dinner in your honor at Another Heaven,” Hong Yi-xiang said.

“Oh. Save it for my wake. No need.”

“Okay. If that’s what you want.”

“I will make a move early in the morning. I won’t be saying goodbye then.”

“Alright. Just a toast with this glass of wine now, to thank you for everything,” Hong Yi-xiang said.

“Bottoms Up!”

The man resumed his silence, shyly searching for words. “Mr. Hong, I want to sell a book to you to raise a little cash.”

“I have no need of books. How much money do you need?” inquired Hong Yi-xiang.

“Ten taels.” In that era of turmoil, solid gold was the only thing that made people feel most secure. It is just that coming from a teacher employed by the family, the number he proposed to the boss was not a reassuring number.

“Whew! Okay. I’ll have to get it from my mother.” Facing the request of such a significant sum, Hong Yi-xiang was a little surprised, but he didn’t inquire further.

“This is not extortion.”

“Don’t speak that way. It’s ten taels—done. I will deliver it to you later tonight,” Hong Yi-xiang said conciliatorily.

“Thanks!”

The next day, before sunrise, Hong Yi-xiang got up, hoping that he could see off the teacher who hadn’t even left a name. When he arrived at his residence, the door was open, the lights were on, but the man had gone. Only a piece of paper and a dilapidated handwritten manuscript were left on the desk. The paper read:

*Physical Strength - Gongfu Skills - Strategies and Tricks -  
Dark Arts and Dirty Tricks*

Looking at the empty scene left by this man, Hong Yi-xiang understood in his heart he had lost the opportunity to say goodbye to the unknown master, last night was their final farewell. The realization cut into him, since this unnamed master was going to disappear from the world forever. Even the records of their meetings, traced in time, would be lost in drips and drabs. With some disappointment he picked up the dog-eared manuscript on the table, opened the cover to the place inscribed “Dark Arts and Dirty Tricks,” and read the header of the homepage:

*One leaf to obstruct, no view of Mount Taishan!*

*After removing the leaf, you will discover all that you are facing. In fact, it has always been a world in which the successful are “kings” and the defeated are “bandits,” without right and wrong, crooked and straight, ethical and moral!*

#### Postscript:

“Dark Arts” are kinds of techniques not practiced openly. They use secret arts employing some specialized inventions, tools, or techniques to achieve the goal of destroying targets.

“Dirty Tricks” is to hide in dark places waiting for the opportunity to attack. It is clearly understanding humanity’s blind spots, the limits of human thinking, and the limits of experience. Using a tool, technique, or trap that ordinary people can’t imagine, striking when it is difficult for them to be on guard, during an awkward situation in which there is no way to counterattack.

Hidden in the dark and employing methods, tools, or techniques not openly trained, such techniques are able to leap over the boundaries of innate human strength. They transcend acquired skills intensely trained in martial arts, bare-hand, and weapons. They even exceed the practiced strategies and schemes of military commanders. They render people incapable of making sense of them. Defenseless. “Dark Arts and Dirty Tricks” was like a turbocharger, making the original engine’s output more powerful. They can take innate talent, techniques,

and strategies and generate a more potent killing effect. But they have a fatal and insoluble flaw. That is, they cannot exist independently. They must first find a host. A host sufficiently intelligent, phlegmatic, and cool under pressure. Only in this way can such omnipresent and omnipotent value be embodied. And such people or hosts are not common.

Opportunity seeking people and people looking for opportunities. Equally unpredictable, elusive.



Physical Strength ~ Gongfu Skills ~ Strategies  
and Tricks ~ Dark Arts and Dirty Tricks.

## 81- THE AMERICAN MILITARY TRAINING BASE

In extraordinary times, one must take extraordinary steps. The jungle warfare in Vietnam was not a place fussy about fairness and principles. For the purposes of proving your strength and virtue, you needn't sacrifice your physical advantages. In fighting to the death, only survival is the truly virtuous path.

*Scene: Dadaocheng—Yongle Primary School auditorium*

IN THE AUDITORIUM OF THE YONGLE PRIMARY SCHOOL IN Dadaocheng, a whole row of tatami mats leaned against the wall at a 15-degree angle. In front of each tatami mat stood a bare-chested American soldier, entirely showered in sweat, training straight punches on the mats serving as punching bags. This group of American soldiers of various heights, skin colors, and hair colors all volunteered to participate in the training at their own expense. Since their first step into this dojo, they had regarded this place as a sanctuary for the body and mind outside the barracks. Punch after solid punch on the tatamis, more coarse and harder than punching sandbags. They faced this simple, make-do equipment with no complaints in their hearts. With this short-term reinforcement training they only sought to improve their chances of surviving the Vietnamese battlefield.

The most conspicuous thing about the three tatami mats tightly bound together were red splotches of fresh blood stains from the three soldiers bravely mortifying their flesh with this drilling. In order of height from tallest to shortest they were: Blunder, Rocco, and Johnson. All three of them had beautiful blue eyes. Blunder was the tallest, about 195 centimeters tall, with a small face and a high nose, a long and thick neck, a slender figure with a pure baby face, like a high school student. He was a big boy with a gentle personality. Rocco was about 185 centimeters tall, with a moderate build, a handsome face, bashful and introverted. If he was not heading to Vietnam to fight, but going to Hollywood to act in a movie, he would be another Alain Delon (the handsome French guy who co-starred with the Japanese actor Toshiro Mifune in *Red Sun*). Johnson was about 178 centimeters tall. He was an American of Swedish descent, with distinctly craggy facial features and a smart, sharp, decisive, and valiant leader's persona. The three of them were the first wave

of the US servicemen who entered the dojo for training. It was also through their enthusiastic behind the scenes arrangements and support from the troop drillmaster that the representative of the US military was persuaded to come forward and ask Taiwan counterparts to assist in the loan of Yongle Elementary School. Local authorities agreed to rent the school playground and auditorium at night for a token sum, to provide them a training base for unarmed combat skills.

After completing the necessary boot camp training in the United States, these American GIs were first moved by warships or military aircraft to several bases in Asia to await orders for Vietnam deployment. They were members of the Air Task Force 13 (Provisional) numbering over 10,000 GI's in Taiwan. With a call up from the commander of the Vietnamese military region, they would enter yet another unfamiliar country, engaging in a fight for survival in a jungle where they did not belong. To facilitate this large number of American soldiers trying to obtain effective survival skills within a limited time, Hong Yi-xiang had already conducted training for a cadre of Taiwanese assistant teachers as early as half a year ago. He selected ten senior disciples from the original "Guandu Dragon Boat Team" for hellish training, and consonant with the goal of 'quick results in a short time,' he had prepared the new course.

"In extraordinary times we must use extraordinary means," Hong Yi-wen said.

"We must make good use of the innate physical advantages of Westerners. Don't reject the advantage of size and strength, as long as you can win," Chen Mei-shou said.

"The moves must be practical, simple, and easy to learn. Regardless of the Internal School or the External School, if it can take out the enemy and preserve life, use it. Don't use long training routines, just single, and sparring techniques, best practiced with both the right and left hands," Hong Yi-mian said.

"If you want 'quick results in a short time,' you have to go with the Internal School trained like the External School," Hong Yi-wen said.

"Where human life is concerned, we can't cling to traditional moves and teaching methods. If they have a chance, and come back alive in the future, then we can try to teach the original traditions," Hong Yi-xiang said.

Based on the "think-tank's" brainstorming discussions these Yizong Tangshou basic rudimentary learnings were created: "*BaBuDa*—Eight Step Fighting," "*BaLianShou*—Eight Consecutive Hands," "*BaShou*—Eight Hands," and "*BaTi*—Eight Kicks." In addition to these thirty-two simple, short techniques, the key was to drill them against a variety of different opponents every day in the hopes that they could quickly accumulate in the shortest period a variety of actual combat experiences and the courage not to shrink in the face of the enemy. There were six classes in the dojo every night practicing together at the same time, and each class counted about fifty people. In sparring, the fifty

people were divided into two rows. They bowed to each other, then started one-on-one sparring. Every twenty minutes of sparring, they would rest for ten minutes. After the break, they would change partners and spar again. Individuals would have to engage at least four matches a night, facing four different opponents and styles of play. Between the six classes, there was yet another cross confrontation every week. This was to employ a realistic, concrete method of actual combat to make these soldiers experienced, hand-to-hand fighters before entering the jungle.

The emphasis on actual combat training methods generated many limb injuries in the initial stage. To avoid the impact these injuries had on training, Hong Yi-xiang borrowed from the design of special armor used when practicing Japanese kendo and commenced research and improvement into protective gear. In that era, the sports equipment industry was not as developed as it is today, and almost all needed items relied on one's own brain power and hand-craft. Fortunately, there were many diverse talents in the gym, from all walks of life.

After the general design direction was established, Hong Yi-xiang personally drew the original sketches of the soft-shell armor and handed it over to the disciples from various professions to procure related materials and make a proof-of-design. Whereupon the world's first flexible protective gear especially designed for free-hand sparring was born. The innermost layer of the prototype soft shelled protective gear was stitched from a double layer of extra-thick cow hide leather. A layer of high-density foam rubber was strongly glued to the outer layer of the leather. The purpose was to buffer the force of the collision. Both hitters and those getting hit were properly protected. The outermost layer of the protective gear was made of a special durable canvas.

Wearing flexible armor while sparring generated a lot of sweat. The original cotton straps used to tie on the gear easily rotted and broke. Later, all the armor was retrofitted with parachute-grade nylon cords provided by the US military for strapping on the protective gear, solving the cotton rot problem. And because rawhide soaked in a lot of sweat for a long time would easily get moldy and smelly, after several discussions it was decided to adopt the suggestion of the US military supply officer to change the innermost leather protection layer to a special industrial rubber as an alternative material. At this point, the specifications and materials for the flexible protective gear were finalized.

Hong Yi-xiang felt that the ideal self-defense armor for practice must not only be able to effectively protect the user, it must also not impede movement and flexibility. Therefore, the seams of the protective gear should also be designed in accordance with the structure of the human body and the range of motion. The ideal was to achieve the purpose of protection, but not over-protection such that there would be no pain or sense of risk of injury. Otherwise, the person wearing the armor would have no sensation, and his lack of fear

would become a dangerous illusion on a real battlefield.

The operation of a martial training hall is like this; from scratch, step by step, and placing attention everywhere, with effort it unfolds gradually. When the Vietnam War reached its peak, an average of about 350 locals and foreigners would squeeze in the auditorium and playground of Dadaocheng Yongle Elementary School every night, together participating in the formation of this martial arts system. For Taiwan, which was still in the period of mobilization and martial law, this colossal and specialized “military organization” was an “arsenal” to which national security and intelligence agencies paid special attention. Therefore, it was inevitable that mixed among the many students were undercover agents and informers sent by the security units. Their main mission was to prevent this powerful civilian force from causing national security or public security problems.

Many years later, a retired informant invited to a banquet to thank the teacher timidly revealed the truth of this untold secret under the influence of liquid courage. Fortunately, this Hong family never had a special political stripe, and the massive martial arts system never had any political inclination or activities, thus avoiding many possible troubles and entanglements.

This special disciple who had exposed these secrets hidden for so many years, later died. His family ran a restaurant serving fresh fish and free-range chicken and offering hot-spring baths. The spring had become clogged and the two workers in charge of maintenance were overwhelmed by the sulfur gas and passed out in the bottom of the well. The boss, in a rush to save them, didn't wait for the arrival of the firefighters, so he first used ropes to descend into the well to rescue the unconscious workers. Because of his courage and decisiveness, both workers were rescued. Fortunately, they dodged their brush with death, but regrettably it was he himself who succumbed to inhaling too much sulfur gas and died at the bottom of the well.

His surname was Zhang; he had a strong build and swarthy complexion, a gentle and kind personality, sober and calm, prudent in action, an exponent worthy of respect. I remember back then, every hot summer, he would provide gratis to the training hall bunches of Chinese herbs his family had dried themselves such as: Smallflower Beggarticks, Rough Leaved Holly, Mint, etc. used to decoct into a cooling herbal tea to share with all the students. To think back that such an enthusiastic and kind-hearted young life was extinguished in such an accident truly makes one weep. (Those of you students in the school, whoever drank this herbal tea, should know the Mr. Zhang mentioned here and raise a glass in remembrance).





Hong Yi-xiang and a GI student sent to do battle in Vietnam, Martin Brond, 1967.



## About the Author



HONG ZE-HAN IS THE SECOND SON OF HONG YI-XIANG. HE WAS born in 1955 and was admitted to the Department of Film Directing at the National University of Arts. However, during his summer internship, his boss, who was also the most famous film and television tycoon in Taiwan at the time, told him, “Stay here. In film school, you won’t learn more real and useful things than here.” So he dropped out of school to work as a director and screenwriter for the then three major TV networks, TTV-Taiwan Television Enterprise, CTV-China Television Corporation, and CTS-China Television System. Many of his works have won awards.

After getting married, he turned to advertising, working in sales and creative direction until he caught the eye of client Tera Electronics, which brought him into consumer electronics marketing and business management.

After successfully serving as Deputy General Manager at the Sheraton Taipei Hotel, where his main task was to carry out a challenging full renovation of the largest five-star hotel in Taipei, he joined Jihsun Financial Holding Group as Chief Executive Officer and Deputy Chief Executive Officer leadership until his retirement in 2014.

Zehan has a wife and two sons. In his spare time, he enjoys Chinese calligraphy, reading, writing, hiking, fine food, and Yizong Tangshou martial arts training.

He can be contacted at Facebook *Hong Ze Han*.

*Blurred Boundaries* is his first full-length narrative work.

## About the Translator



CHRISTOPHER BATES HAS A BA ASIAN STUDIES AND A MASTER OF International Management and took his senior year of university in Taiwan in 1976 and is fluent in Mandarin Chinese. His interest in Asia was fueled by a passion for training in Asian martial arts. He holds the rank of 8th level black belt in American Bando and commenced training under Master Hong Yi-xiang in 1982 studying all the elements of Yizong Tangshoudao under Master Hong and his son Hong Ze-han.

His business career in Asia spanned 40 years in industrial product sales, business intelligence consulting, and executive search. He retired in 2016 to pursue interests in writing, motorcycle touring, and training martial arts. He has published two novels: *The Wave Man* is a crime thriller set in Thailand and Japan, and *Rise of the Water Margin*, a near-future cyber thriller set in China and the USA. His translations of Chinese have been published in *Journal of Asian Martial Arts*. He is also the co-author of *Culture Shock! Taiwan* now in its 4th edition. *Blurred Boundaries* is his first published long-form translation.

He and his Taiwanese wife of 45 years spend their retirement in Taipei and Seattle.

**“Essential for understanding the nature of martial arts.”—Dave Lowry**

**“Will expand your mind in unexpected ways.”—Hermann Bayer, PhD**

**“As if sitting in a tea house [with] an old storyteller... remarkable.”—Ellis Amdur**

**“A martial arts masterpiece that is destined to become a classic.”—Michael Clarke**

**“One of the very best books about Taiwan.”—John Grant Ross, *The Formosa Files***

**The civil war** between the Nationalists and the Communists drove the largest refugee exodus in modern China’s history—across the sea to Taiwan. Martial artists of many styles were among this diaspora.

In the 1940s, Taiwan’s laws were enforced unevenly, and local businessmen were often subjected to extortion by gangs. Martial artists who had retreated to Taiwan along with the Nationalist government from mainland China found an opportunity to use their skills to answer the urgent need for local security. They provided the best protection for the Hong family’s business empire, and unexpectedly gave rise to a world-class martial arts master.

Author Hong Ze-han tells the true story of his father Hong Yi-xiang, and the cultural story of Taiwan in the 50-year period between the 1940s and the 1990s. Hong Yi-xiang was the founder of the *Yizong Tangshoudao* school of martial arts and earned his renown by using the philosophy of the internal arts to outwit his opponents.

Blessed with access to his father’s life and teachings, the author conjures intimate conversations with the master and weaves a tale of success out of the struggle to survive. We are invited in—to become outside students to these teachings and the cultural times in which the master’s art developed. We become part of an art and of a country made stronger by the character and strength of its immigrants.



**HONG ZE-HAN**, born in 1955, is the second son of martial arts master Hong Yi-xiang. He is an expert in Chinese internal martial arts. His unique life story is a first-hand account of the shaping of Taiwan’s modern society and its flourishing martial arts tradition. Now retired, he has held management positions in media, electronics, hospitality, and financial industries. Hong Ze-han continues to teach his father’s Yizong Tangshou martial arts system and resides with his family in Taipei, Taiwan.

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