

BALANCE AND POWER

Interview with Master Chen Yingjun, Son of Grandmaster Chen Xiaowang,
20th Generation of Chen Family Taijiquan

MASTER CHEN YINGJUN

Son of Grandmaster Chen Xiaowang, will come to Magdeburg/Germany every year to teach and share his knowledge of his chen family treasure – taijiquan.

Back to the roots and learn directly from the source, clear your mind and develop power and balance – here is your chance. Don't miss it.

We feel very lucky to have Master Chen with us – Taiji Academy Magdeburg



Master Chen Yingjun 2016, Australia

OCTOBER 2017_MAGDEBURG_GERMANY

A few days after Master Chen Yingjun's seminar in Magdeburg, Germany, I drive him back to the airport, as every year for the past 5 years. Except for the times he is teaching me taijiquan, of course, this time is one of my favourite, with him in the car for two hours. Recapturing his seminar and the great hours of his teaching of the last few days, we usually talk about taijiquan, his students and the many cities, places and schools all over the world, which he has visited.

And I don't need any heating while I'm driving, because I can feel his powerful energy filling the whole car.

So, Master Chen Yingjun agreed to do an interview with me, which made me very happy. And because we are always trying to use every precious minute for taiji training when he is here, which is only twice a year for a few days, we agreed to do the interview in the car on the way to the airport in Berlin.

NK: Hello Master Chen Yingjun, thank you very much for taking the time for this interview. I am very happy to have the chance to ask you a few things about you, your life and about taijiquan, of course.

CYJ: Yes, hello, you're welcome, it's a nice day.

NK: Yes, it is indeed. Master Chen, you were born in 1976 in Chenjiagou, right?

CYJ: Yes, I was born on 6th of September 1976 in Chenjiagou.

NK: Your father is Grandmaster Chen Xiaowang and your mother is . . .?

CYJ: . . . you mean her name, yes?

„And I was very happy to train with some of my cousins, Chen Zhiqiang and Chen Zhijun. Yes, good times. We fought a lot (laughing), yeah.“



2017, Magdeburg, Germany,

Photo by Norman Kobow

MASTER CHEN YINGJUN

ZHENG YOU HUA

NK: Yes!

CYJ: Her name is Zheng You Hua.

NK: How would you describe your mother and your father?

CYJ: Well, my father is the Master, for me a very high-level master. He has devoted all his life training and teaching taijiquan. My mother is a country woman, so many people would say she is a very good woman. And I think she is a very good person. Yes.

NK: How did you grow up? How was life as a child in Chenjiagou?

CYJ: Yes, China was quite poor, but we were quite happy. And taiji was everywhere. Yes, you couldn't get out of taiji. People practiced everywhere. Naturally we practiced before and after school, during holidays. And I was very happy to train with some of my cousins, Chen Zhiqiang and Chen Zhijun. Yes, good times. We fought a lot (laughing), yeah.

NK: You told me once, you were lucky when you had a piece of meat for Christmas. Or you went catching eels and fish in the river, right? Can you elaborate on that poverty at that time?

CYJ: Yes (laughing), when I was very young, before I was 8 years old, China was still very poor. Yes, we had meat maybe two times a year and just a few pieces. I had only one pair of pants or shorts (laughing). My winter clothes, winter jumpers, was maybe 4th or 5th generation, come from my cousins. It had patches everywhere (laughing). And we went to the river to catch eels and fish for fun and also to eat, of course. Yes, China was very poor. We had no heating, no shower, ya . . .

But life was good. I think, when you in the poverty as a child, you don't realize, you have no comparison. And we were not starving, we had something to eat. Much better than the people before us, they didn't even have meat or enough to eat. And then like from the age of 8, China changed, China became much richer.

„ That is all I wanted, after I was 14 years old - study Taiji, training Taiji, more study, more training, I just love it. “

NK: How was school and education? And what did you want to be when you were a child?

CYJ: Yes, school was good. I never liked to study in school. You know, yeh, many people may not know, from 14 years old, I wanted to become a real master of taiji. That is all I wanted, after I was 14 years old - study taiji, training taiji, more study, more training, I just love it.

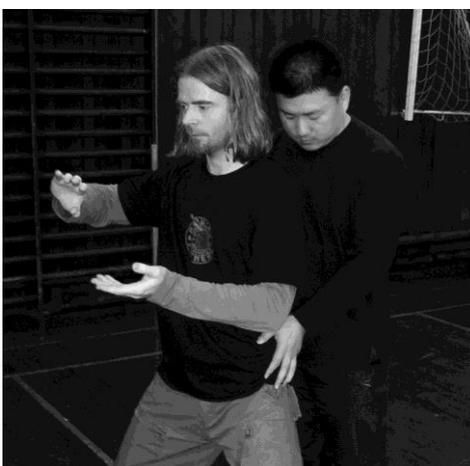


Taijiquan training in Chenjiagou

FIRST TIME



2004 I moved from Germany to Northern Ireland. After reading the book “Chen: Living Taijiquan in the Classical Style” by Master Jan Silberstorff, I was very keen to learn Chen Taijiquan. Well, I was in Ireland . . . , surprisingly I heard about a small group on the north-west coast of Ireland, taught by Gill Keogh, WCTAI Chief Instructor - my first Chen Taijiquan teacher. I was even more surprised when I heard that Grandmaster Chen Xiaowang and his son Master Chen Yingjun are visiting Ireland for a few days to teach every year. The time had come to meet Master Chen Yingjun and his father for the first time in 2005 in Garrison, County Fermanagh, Ireland. Well, what can I say, I was hooked immediately . . .



2008, Edinburgh, Scotland

JACKIE CHAN

NK: You told me once that you were called Jackie Chan at school, why? Were you fighting?

CYJ: I did, I hit somebody. Well, there was a man from Europe in an English Language Centre in Australia. And all new migrants had to go to learn English before we could go to a normal school. So, there were a lot of Asian people. So, this man was very tall, much bigger than the Asian people. So, he was always causing trouble for Asian people, like he would hit the head, hit the face, give them a little slap, and basically do something to hurt people.

And then we were in the same class one day, so he . . . , I remember it was a history class (laughing) . . . , and before that, everybody wanted me to beat him up, because he beat them up very often, boys or girls. So, we were on the same table and he was picking on me. He used his ruler to hit my head, like a bang, once. I looked at him and then he went bang again. I gave him my hard look and he went bang again for the third time. I just punched him and he took the whole table and chair and landed about two metres away.

And this is what happened next: The teacher saw it. I am very happy with what the teacher did. After I punched him, he called the teacher like: ‘Miss, Miss, Yingjun hit me, he beat me.’ And the teacher said: ‘Oh yes, I saw you, but you beat him first (laughing).’ And the teacher said to me after the class: ‘Detention, one hour!’ So, I was standing for one hour after everybody left. She said, ‘I know he beat you first, but you shouldn’t have punched him.’

NK: . . . you mean standing still?

CYJ: Yes, standing still for one hour. I was punished (smiling).

NK: How many years did you go to school?

CYJ: I went two years in high school in Australia. And I left China when I was 16, started school with 7 . . . So, about 9 years school in China.

NK: . . . must have been two very different school experiences.

CYJ: Oh yes, like I told you, we had to go to this language centre for one year, then go to a normal school.

„ But my mum told me, my father started teaching me, when I was two years old, and outside in winter, with snow outside and minus something. “



GRANDMASTER CHEN XIAOWANG,
19TH GENERATION OF CHEN FAMILY

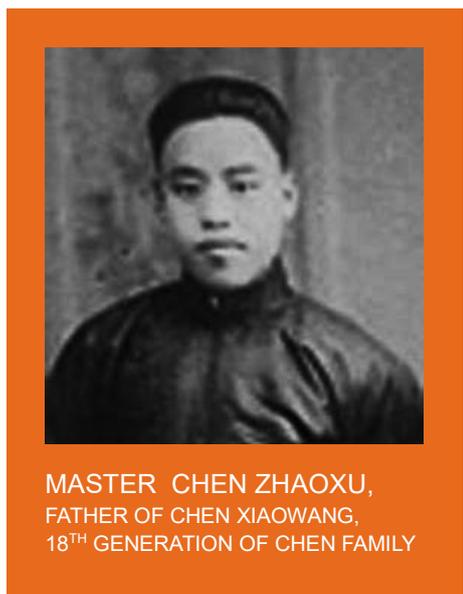
FATHER AND GRANDMASTER

NK: When did your father started teaching you taijiquan and how?

CYJ: We don't remember, we start so young. So, I don't remember at all. But my mum told me, my father started teaching me, when I was two years old, and outside in winter, with snow outside and minus something. My mum told me, I was shaking because it was too cold. And she asked him to come inside, he said no, this is to make him stronger. Again, I don't remember this, you know, two years old, this was told me by my mum.

NK: Do you think you started with laojia yilu?

CYJ: I think so, yes.



MASTER CHEN ZHAOXU,
FATHER OF CHEN XIAOWANG,
18TH GENERATION OF CHEN FAMILY

GRANDFATHER CHEN ZHAOXU

NK: You don't know your grandfather?

CYJ: Grandfather, no . . .

NK: Has your father ever spoken about his father Chen Zhaoxu?

CYJ: I know not a lot. I think his personality was a bit like my uncle Chen Xiaoxing. He was a real master of taiji, very high level. But like my uncle, he preferred to stay in Chenjiagou, don't wanted to teach outside of Chenjiagou. Maybe he just liked a calm life. The very common story we hear is, the very famous Chen Zhaoxu story, where he did a move, he threw a 100 kg person 3 metres in the air. That is very inspirational power, yes. That is the only story, the only thing, I know about him.

CHENJIAGOU

NK: When did the poverty stop in the village? What was the reason for that?

CYJ: Yes, we mentioned already. I think Deng Xiaoping opened China and the economy became better. China started trading with the west and opened up. When I was about 8, things changed.



20TH GENERATION OF CHEN FAMILY
CHEN PENGFEI, CHEN ZIQIANG, CHEN ZIJUN,
CHEN JUN, CHEN BING, CHEN YINGJUN

NK: Why did your father leave Chenjiagou in 1990? How was your training after your father left?

CYJ: Why my father left, I don't really know to this day. My father has never told me why. So, I was training with my uncle Chen Xiaoxing and with my cousins, with all my cousins, Chen Bing, Chen Zhiqiang and his younger brother.

NK: . . . must have been fun!

CYJ: Yes, it was really fun. There was a bit, a few fighting going on (laughing).

FATHER AND SON

(MASTER AND STUDENT)



2002, Master Chen Yingjun with his father



Master Chen Yingjun with his brother

Chen Pengfei and his father GM Chen Xiaowang

Photos by WCTAG

AUSTRALIA

NK: When did you follow your father to Australia and why?

CYJ: Well, there is no why. In Chinese culture the son follows the father. So, it was in 1994, when I was 16 years old. Yes, there is no why, you just do it. My father just took me to Australia.

NK: How did your life and your training change in Australia?

CYJ: Yeah, not much change. **(me laughing incredulously)** To learn from a real master is a big change, so I continued to train very hard and learn, yes.

NK: . . . so, your moving from China to Australia had no real impact on yourself?

CYJ: No. I always wanted to train very hard. So that part is no change. But learning from a real master is a big change. Yes!

NK: Did you ever regret going to Australia and not staying in Chenjiagou, . . . ?

CYJ: Oh no, I love Australia! I don't stay in China. Majorly, two reasons. The environment in China got quite bad in the last 20 years, too much industrial developments in a very short period of time. And the social life in China is too busy. So, if I live in China, the pollution, the busy life, I could not train, I could not hide and do my studies. So, I'm very happy in Australia. I don't have to go out, I don't need to see anybody, I can stay quiet and study, yes. No regrets!

NK: How has Chenjiagou changed over the years?

CYJ: Yeah that, I don't know actually. I don't live in China. Chenjiagou has become more famous, is much bigger and very busy now. The government is trying to build it up. Yes, so it's gone, the Chenjiagou as I remember it, the simple life is gone.

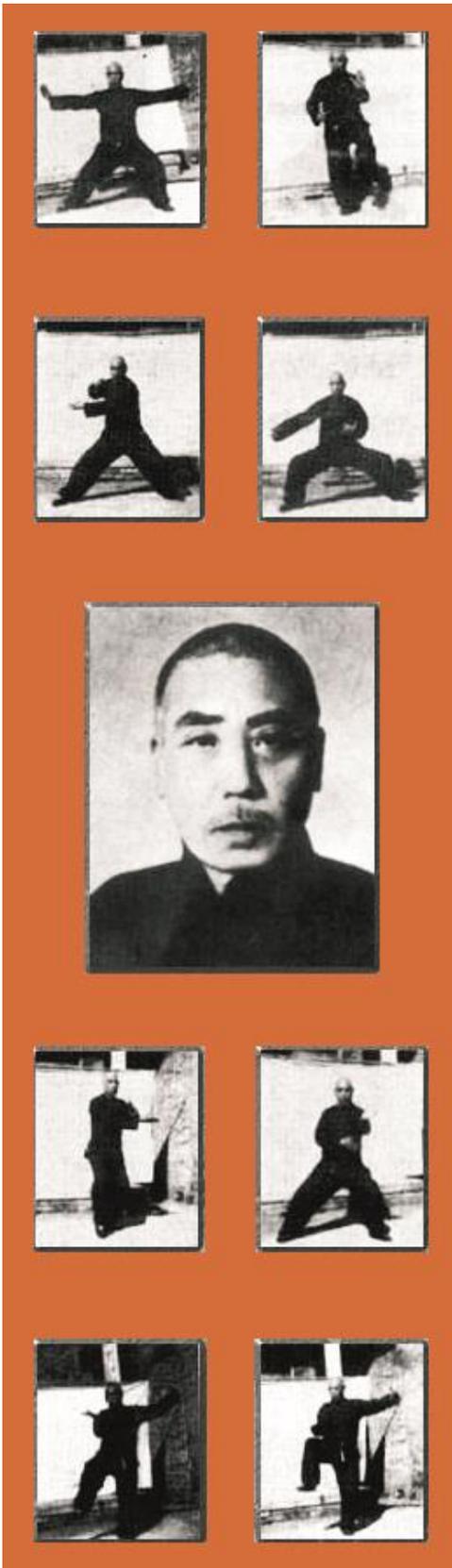
NK: When did you join your father on his world tour of teaching taijiquan and for how long?

CYJ: I've never taught with my father a lot, I just taught a few workshops with him, like Rogla, Slovenia. I've never followed him a lot around the world.



Rogla, Slovenia, Master Chen Yingjun with his father GM Chen Xiaowang and Master Jan Silberstorff, Photo by WCTAG

„ But learning from a real master is a big change. Yes! “



CHEN FAKE

NK: There is this story, that your father at a young age was sitting on a bus and everybody wanted to see the grandchild of Chen Fake. And then he realized that taijiquan is something special. When did you realize that your family art is something very special and that you wanted to follow in your ancestors' footsteps?

CYJ: Yes, I heard of a story. I think he was in a bus and somebody said, that his grandfather was very famous. Somehow, I don't remember the full story, but somehow that made him realize, that he has to do the same. Yes.

Actually, I don't remember what happened to me, it's been so long ago, when I was 14 years old. I think it was Chen Fake's stories, the whole family history and how good my father was, gave me the idea that I should continue to practice. But to me, taijiquan is always in me. Yeah so, whether what made me realize, I don't remember, but to train hard, to study hard is always in me. I will continue to do that my whole life and hopefully to teach some strong students. It's something I don't need to think about, I just do.

NK: Chen Fake is a kind of a role model for you, right, . . .

CYJ: Yes! NK: . . . even though you've never met him. How come?

CYJ: The stories about him, the photos of him and the way my father talked about him, he is a real high levelled. So, I think the first influence came from my father. When we were young, even now, we know my father holds a very high level. He says Chen Fake's level is much higher than his. So therefore, you respect that a lot, just from what he said. And then I heard these stories, and we do professional training for a long time, yes, so do 30 forms every day is not easy. And the story was he did 100 sometimes. So, for professionals we know how hard 30 is and 100 is big power. For the power you need to do 100 forms, is crazy (laughing). And then you hear the stories about his few fights he had. One story was, he poked a hole on some bad people who was going to attack him, I think we all know the story. That is, yeah, inspiring and scary. I don't want to poke a hole on anybody's chest, but I like to have the power. Yes!

„ But to me, taijiquan is always in me. Yeah so, whether what made me realise, I don't remember, but to train hard, to study hard is always in me. . . . I don't need to think about, I just do. “

MASTER CHEN FAKE

17TH GENERATION OF CHEN FAMILY

BALANCE & POWER



2016, Master Chen Yingjun in France

FIGHTING

NK: There are a few stories about your father being challenged to a fight or about attacks without any warning, to test his skills. Have you ever found yourself in such a situation?

CYJ: Yeah, I think with martial arts people this is normal. I don't mind it, a few fights. It happened a few times.

NK: A few times?

CYJ: Yeah, happens, so, let's talk about the one I liked.

NK: Okay, yes, please.

CYJ: I am not talking about which country it is, let's leave that out. So I was teaching in a country and I picked a man to show him, what I think push hands is, balance and power. So, he was right in front of me, my hand was on his chest and we were both looking at the audience. I was looking at my students trying to talk about balance and power. You know what I talk about.

NK: Yes.

„ That is the one I liked, because I don't know what I did. It goes without the mind, that is the best. “

CYJ: And then without warning, I don't know what he did, but I know he was on top of me, no, he was not on top of me! He grabbed me or he bear-hugged me, or something. I don't know what happened and I found myself sitting on top of him in the next second. I don't know what he did, but I know he did a move. So, that is what I most happy about. I don't know what I did, but I found myself sitting on top of his chest. I do not know what I did, that is the important part. And then he was kind of shouting and trying to top me over. So for him, it was not over. Then I had to hold his neck and show him my punch. I didn't punch him on his face, yes so, you know, the quick one. And then he realized it was over and we both came up. That is the one I liked, because I don't know what I did. It goes without the mind, that is the best.

NK: Thanks for sharing. Are you afraid of something?

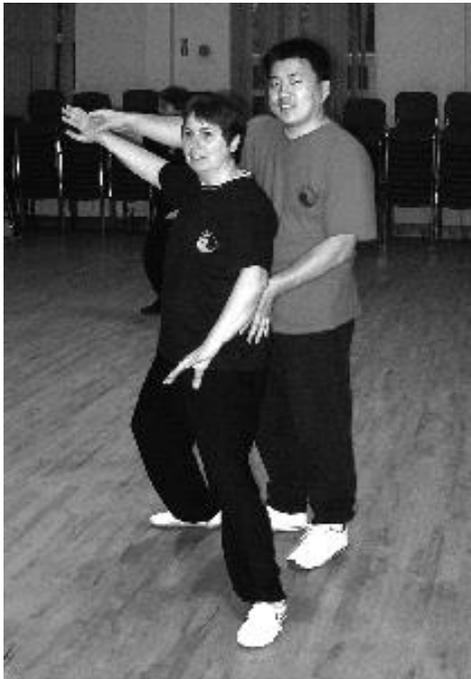
CYJ: I am afraid of I can not be a real master in my life. That's all! (Me astounded laughing) I will tell you something funny here. In Poland that student (laughing), quite strong, he always want to fight with me a bit, or he wants me to show him a bit of fighting. And I put him down many times. Then he said one day, Master, I know you can kill me very quick, but I am not afraid you. (laughing)

There is something here, afraid of something, yeah. This man is funny. Life is life, you know, and I am just afraid I can not be a real master in my life.



2017, Taiji Academy Magdeburg, Germany

Photo by Birgit Timmer



2005, Garrison, County Fermanagh, Ireland,
Master Chen Yingjun and Gill Keogh, WCTAI Chief
Instructor

TEACHING

NK: When did you start teaching and which was the first country you visited for teaching?

CYJ: Oh, I started teaching quite young, when I was about 22. I think Rogla Camp in Slovenia was one of the first ones, England and Ireland was one of the first.

NK: You often say, you teach power and balance, that is what you do. Can you elaborate on that and explain what you mean by that?

CYJ: Ah okay, yes. I learned this from my father. He always says, balance is very important. Taiji is based on the yin yang symbol, and the yin yang symbol is balance, half yin, half yang. And relaxation is balance. So, when you are relaxed and balanced, plus well trained, you can have power. So, good teaching should be based on balance, yeah. You can feel whenever you have balance, you can kick and punch. When somebody really take your balance, you cannot move. So, therefore balance is so important. So, all your taiji training, if you relax, you get balanced. Then you train based on these two, you should get power, yes.

NK: What is Qi for you and how is it used or developed in taijiquan?

CYJ: Yeah, Qi is very important. You can say, taijiquan in one way is Qigong, because we try to make the Qi flow in the whole body. And hopefully, it flows stronger and better in our body and then you can use the Qi as power, yes. Qi in Chinese, in taijiquan can be equal to (nei gong) internal power. Basically, internal power is Qi, yes, and taijiquan is an internal martial art. So, they are like one.

So, internal power is Qi. How to use it, well, you have Qi, you develop Qi, which is power you can use. And relaxation is the way to make Qi flow in taijiquan. So, you must relax! Yes!

Our training is to build up internal Qi. And of course, when you get stronger, your Qi is stronger. But one thing I would like to mention: In my family we say, Qi and the physical body work together. Internal and External working together. So, it is very important that we train the external body too, like heavy weapons and push hands.

INTERNAL POWER



2016, Taiji Academy Magdeburg, Germany

Photo by Birgit Timmer

„ And relaxation is the way to make Qi flow in taijiquan. So, you must relax! “

BALANCE & POWER



2016, Taiji Academy Magdeburg, Germany
Photo by Birgit Timmer

NO MOVE

NK: But you have never trained with weights, right?

CYJ: No, you can say no. I just did weights a bit a few days just for fun, never in my training. Yeah, heavy weapons is enough.

NK: We once talked about the 3 internal and 3 external connections in taijiquan. And you mentioned, that the 3 external ones would be easier to achieve. Can you explain that?

CYJ: Yes, it is easier, external is always easier. It is something you can feel easier, something you can look at and it is something which can happen earlier than the internal. Shoulder and hip, you can feel that, you see that much easier, elbow and knee, you can feel that easier, hand and foot. Also, you can imagine it easier because you can see it. With the internal ones, your level has really be there, much higher, to understand and therefore to feel anything, therefore it is much higher, yes.

NK: Once you were asked by a student while teaching laojia yilu, what your favourite movement is. You responded, your favourite movement is no movement. Can you explain that?

CYJ: Yes, I like this one. Favourite move is no move. Because, if you can make a strike or a move on your opponent, without any other moves to prepare or to start, while he is making a move, he is too slow. That is what happens with internal training. So, it's a natural progression when you're high levelled, you move less. If you look at the Master, my father's videos from the 80s/90s to now, he is barely moving now. But he is still punching like a real master, with big power. So, if you make a move and you get punched already, of course, yeah, no move is better (laughing).

„ So, it's a natural progression when you're high levelled, you move less. “

NK: Your father wrote about the 5 levels in taijiquan. How many people have you met on the 4th and on the highest 5th level?

CYJ: Okay, I leave my father out of this one. So, I am not going to judge my father. I don't think there is anybody on the fourth level. I don't think about which level I'm in. Some people think, I'm in the fourth level, but I think, I'm on the way to the fourth level.

NK: What do you think is important/needed to reach a higher level in taijiquan?

CYJ: This one is a good topic, it is good for the people to know, what is important.



2018, Taiji Academy Magdeburg, Germany
Photo by Birgit Timmer



2017, Taiji Academy Magdeburg, Germany

Photo by Birgit Timmer

TRAIN VERY HARD

CYJ: I realized this when I was very young age, maybe because I am in the family. I think I read it in the books, in Chen Xin's book, I think, or in some other Chinese books.

You need to find a good teacher, a good master and you need to train very hard. And if you are talented, you always do anything quicker or earlier than other people, of course. So, you need these three. But at least, if you don't have talent, you need to learn from a high-levelled master and a good master, and train very hard, yes.

So, what does a good master give you? He gives you not just theory, he gives you theory . . . in real. Do you know what I mean by that, you know. So, everybody can talk about theory, about the five levels, move your whole body all together, move you centre, . . . but a good master will try to show you theory in real. It means theory you need, okay? Yes.

„ You need to find a good teacher, a good master and you need to train very hard. “

NK: How was training without having a teacher/master for quite a long time and having the pressure of following your father's footsteps at the same time?

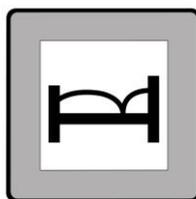
CYJ: Yeah, it can be frustrating. It can be, yeah, very frustrating. I used many ways to encourage myself. And I always trying to pressure myself, to push myself. And of course, something as deep as taiji, there are different times, many times I was frustrated, yeah, at these times I just tell myself, just do it.

And more often something happened when I was not really enjoying the training, found it tough, something happened, a new idea happens. But I don't usually have any problems with my training, with my studies, because I believe in hard training is the only way to reach a high level, after you have learned well.

And when I find it tough, sometimes I read some stories of the Chen family members, Chen Fake or my father, that gives me power to continue, yes.



EAT



SLEEP



LAOJIA

WORLD CHEN YINGJUN TAIJIQUAN ASSOCIATION



We feel very lucky to have
Master Chen with us –
Taiji Academy Magdeburg

OWN ASSOCIATION

NK: You have started your own association “World Chen Yingjun Taijiquan Gongfu Association” this year, how exciting! Can you explain what led you to this step and what your plans for the future are?

CYJ: With my own association I can put my idea of taiji, my idea of the way of taiji and the love of taiji to people easier. I can not really do it with other people’s association. And also, I think everybody has their own levels of taiji, their own way of taiji, it’s about teaching my way, better maybe. My plan is to bring up more and more people who can have a higher level, who can represent me and my taiji in many countries. So hopefully taiji will be much bigger in the coming years. That’s my plan.

NK: Great, thanks a lot.

CYJ: Okay . . . , I give it to you. (Master Chen Yingjun is giving me my mobile phone back, which recorded the interview while I was driving.) I hope everything is on that. I’m not doing it again!

He is laughing with that typical laughter of his which comes directly from the heart and is so infectious.

NK: Thank you so much for your time, Master.

CYJ: You’re welcome, . . .

„ So, everybody can talk about theory, about the five levels, move your whole body all together, move you centre, . . . but a good master will try to show you theory in real. “



2016, Magdeburg, Germany
Photo by Birgit Timmer



2015, Magdeburg, Germany
Photo by Birgit Timmer

CYJ – Master Chen Yingjun

NK – Norman Kobow (head coach-taiji academy magdeburg)

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