



The Life and Times of Master Luo Guang Yu



Nathan A. Wright
Chief Instructor

Introduction

Master Luo Guangyu was born in 1888 in the town of Penglai, a small coastal fishing village on the Shandong Peninsula. Luo was a simple family man of virtuous character, resilient spirit, balanced temperament, and formidable martial skill. From humble beginnings he would make his way into discipleship under one of the most prominent kung fu family's in Yantai, and eventually go on to represent the style of Star Praying Mantis Kung Fu on the national stage of Shanghai Jingwu. Luo's era was a tumultuous one marked by continuous states of upheaval, banditry, revolution, violence, famine and near chaos. His story is one of commitment and compassion.

- Part 1: Dynastic Transition and the New Republic**
- Part 2: Praying Mantis Kung Fu in the Imperial Era**
- Part 3: Shanghai Jingwu the Early Years**
- Part 4: Luo Guangyu in the 20th Century**

Part one provides a high level overview of some of the key political events directly impacting China and the region of Shandong in the 19th and 20th century. This is important to understanding the complex contextual backdrop in which past venerable masters were born into including Luo Guangyu. Part two briefly outlines the historical transmission and family lineage of Seven Star Praying Mantis Kung Fu in China's Imperial era starting with Li Sanjian (1821). Part three introduces the city of Shanghai in the 1900's and the newly formed Jingwu organization setting the stage and context for Luo's appearance. Part four follows Luo's story through Jingwu in the 20th century.

My primary source for this article includes the oral traditions as transmitted in our school under Master Pel and his teachers. I am also referencing a number of secondary sources including Luo Guang Yu Seven Star Praying Mantis Kung Fu – A Traditional Chinese Martial by Kai Uwe Pel and Andy Best, Annals of Jingwu by Chen Tiesheng (1919), and an assortment of Huang Hanxun's books written on Mantis Kung Fu between 1936 and 1957.

自強不息



Master Luo Guang Yu
罗光玉 1888-1944

1. Dynastic Transition and the New Republic



White Lotus
Rebellion Memorial



Soldiers - White Lotus
Rebellion



Depiction of Opium Trading
Ships, 1824



Chinese soldiers – The first
Opium War

Nearing the end of the eighteenth century the Qing dynasty was at its pinnacle. Ruling over a third of the world's population, it had amassed one of the largest empires by measurable land mass and was the world's biggest economy (1). But as it transitioned into the next century, political tensions and instability would grow eventually leading to its decline and the beginning of a new republic. This was the context for Luo's life and his predecessors growing up on the Shandong Peninsula.

The White Lotus Rebellion (1794-1804) serves as a good starting point marking the beginning of this decline. First appearing as a secret society in 1387 it played a key role in overthrowing the Yuan dynasty on the Northern Plains (2). With roots in Huiyuan Buddhism it was millenarian and believed in the coming of Buddhism's Eternal Unborn Mother. A sub-group of the White Lotus Sect re-emerged in Shandong in 1794 called the Eight Trigrams Sect. Its leader was a famous martial artist and qigong practitioner named Wang Lun. Born out of economic and social unrest he led more than 4000 peasant soldiers against the Qing government capturing three cities and laying siege to a fourth in Linqing - not far from Zhili (Beijing). Although ultimately unsuccessful, this movement was a precursor to the larger White Lotus Rebellion in the south.

The White Lotus Rebellion erupted with tax protests in the impoverished regions of Sichuan, Hubei and Shanxi. Promising personal salvation in return for loyalty the rebellion led a massive uprising of peasant soldiers against the Qing government, employing guerilla warfare tactics that lasted more than eight years. The Qing government sent 7,000 troops from Manchuria in combination with militia soldiers from the south and tens of thousands of local mercenaries to eventually quash the uprising.

In 1813 a sub-division of the Eight Trigrams Sect led a follow-on revolt in Zhili, Shandong and Henan provinces. The movement gained momentum and spilled over into the capital of Beijing when the rebels attacked the Imperial Palace. The Imperial Guards Brigade were able to suppress the attackers and eventually hunted the remaining rebels who fled. After years of fighting the rebellion on multiple fronts, the Qing government became increasingly fragile marked by a sharp decline in strength and prosperity.

While the White Lotus Rebellion represented turmoil on the domestic front, China was also dealing with foreign influence and growing opium trade led by the British in the early 1800s. Illicit trade became so rampant that it was destabilizing the already fragile social fabric of the country, while also leading to net outflows in silver which negatively impacted the government's ability to finance internal military operations. The Qing government banned opium trade and seized private opium stocks from merchants in 1839 while also threatening to impose the death penalty on future offenders.

This triggered the First Opium War (1839-1842) leading to full military engagement. The Qing government suffered a series of decisive defeats to the British Navy in 1842 resulting in the signing of the controversial Treaty of Nanking (1842). It granted five treaty ports (Shanghai, Ningbo, Xiamen, Fuzhou, Guangzhou) and ceded Hong Kong Island to the British. This marked the beginning of the end of the Canton System characterized by egregious terms in fixed trade tariffs, extraterritoriality, most favored nation provisions and the continued free importation of British opium. This led to what was later termed by nationalist revolutionaries as the next “century of humiliation”.

The Taiping Rebellion of 1850–1864 was by far the largest and bloodiest civil war since the Ming-Qing transition. The leader, Hong Xiuquan converted to Christianity following a vision that he was the son of god, and led a movement that controlled the entire south up to and including Nanjing by 1853. In efforts to secure victory over the Hakka born leader, the Qing government leveraged its experience gained in defeating the White Lotus Rebellion and permitted provincial governors to raise their own militia armies. This would have repercussions in the Warlord Era to come. The rebellion was highly debilitating resulting in over 20 million deaths and the mass migration over 30 million people. With the central imperial authority already in a weakened state, foreign powers continued to press.

Concurrently the Nian Rebellion was an armed uprising that took place in northern China from 1851 to 1868. The movement originated in Shandong led Zhang Lexing and eventually encompassed the regions of Anhui, Jiangsu and Henan. Less ideologically motivated than the Taiping Rebellion, it was driven by sheer desperation resulting from the Yellow River floods in 1851 creating wide scale economic loss and famine. Adopting the slogan “kill the rich and aid the poor” it would eventually morph into direct action against the Imperial regime with 40,000 well armed rebels (3). Nian rebels conducted “indiscriminate raids out of safe bases in surrounding local regions in the manner of bandits that went unchallenged for nearly 17 years.” (4) It was at this time that Shandong experienced the “golden age” of banditry and lawlessness until it was ultimately put down by the combined forces of Qing governments troops and the Ever Victorious Army.

At this time Penglai was a small port city on the Northern Shandong Peninsula. Similar to Weihai, Yantai, Qingdao and Dalian, it historically served as a naval military base and docking port during the Ming dynasty providing defenses against foreign and domestic threats, as well as port access facilitating trade and commerce. Worth noting, General Qi Jiguang (1528-1588) and his father (General Qi Jitong) previously both commanded the Dengzhou Garrison responsible for defending Shandong’s coastline against woko pirates. Dengzhou was a subdistrict of current day Penglai.

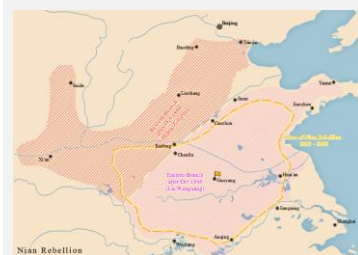
Qing dynasty naval power peaked with the completion of the Beiyang Fleet in the 1888 surpassing the Shanghai based Nanyang fleet. It was the largest fleet in Asia consisting of 78 ships that docked in and amongst the ports of Lushunkou, Weihaiwei and Tianjin. These ports and the surrounding Bohai Sea were of key strategic interest to the powers who could exert control. Nearing the end of the 19th century, Shandong’s coastal region witnessed ever increasing exposure to Western colonial influence.



Taiping Rebellion with mapped regions of conflict



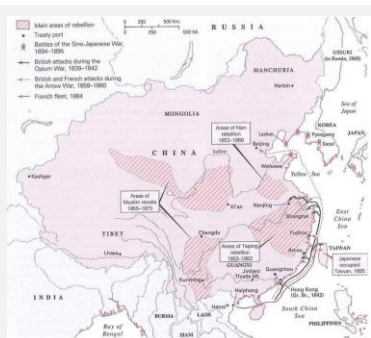
Retaking the City of Suzhou, Taiping Rebellion – Beijing Library



Nian Rebellion with mapped regions of conflict



The Beiyang fleet at anchor in Weihaiwei 1900



Map of military engagements including First Sino Japanese War

The First Sino-Japanese War (Jiawu Zhanzheng) of 1894 involved military conflict between China and Japan over influence and control of the tributary state of Korea. Land battles took place in Pyongyang while seaside battles took place at the mouth of the Yalu River. The Beiyang troops and fleet suffered an unexpected and humiliating loss resulting in Japan taking control of the peninsula including Dalian, Lushunkou (Port Arthur), Jinzhou and Weihaiwei. Canadian journalist James Creelman in the New York World described the Port Arthur event as a “cold blooded massacre” in which Japanese forces slaughtered upwards of 60,000 people (5). From here Japan marched further northward and southward to control Manchuria, in addition to invading Taiwan.

The Treaty of Shimonoseki was signed in April 1895 ceding the Liaodong Peninsula, Taiwan and the Penghu islands to Japan. Commercial treaties permitted Japanese ships unrestricted access on the Yangtze River and the operation of manufacturing factories in the treaty ports. Meanwhile, foreign powers further jostled to divide up China. Russia signed a 25 year lease of the Liaodong Peninsula in 1898, Qingdao was acquired by Germany, Guangzhouwan by France, and Weihaiwei and the New Territories by Britain (6).



Boxers in the Boxer Rebellion

Ongoing draughts, floods, and extreme poverty in the local region would yet again accelerate a grass roots uprising in Shandong in the summer of 1900 called The Boxer Rebellion. It was led by Zhu Hongde of The Yihequan Society focused on resisting foreign influence and riding China of the “foreign devils” - including anyone who supported them. The rebellion included many other regional counterparts and societies such as Zhang Dechang in Hebei, the Big Sword Society, the Plum Flower Boxers society, and the Baguadao Society.



Boxers in the Boxer Rebellion

The movement spread violence across Shandong province, destroying foreign property and attacking Christian missionaries. Gaining momentum, it moved further north into the countryside of Tianjin and Beijing in which “boxers” burned churches, killed Christians, and intimidated Chinese officials. Eventually the movement gained the support of Empress Dowager Cixi who issued an Imperial Decree declaring war on the foreign invading powers. This resulted in the retaliatory Eight-Nation Alliance organizing 45,000 troops to counter the rebellion. Ultimately the “Boxers” and the Qing army were defeated with great losses inflicted across North China as the “Alliance” looted, pillaged and killed recklessly.

After World War One (1914-1918), Germany lost control of the Shandong Peninsula to Japan via-vi the Treaty of Versailles. Rather than being returned to China the controversy spurred the May 4th movement in 1919. What started with students protesting in Beijing eventually morphed into mass working class strikes in Shanghai at a scale so unprecedented that it crippled the Chinese economy. In 1922 control over the Shandong Peninsula eventually reverted back to China.



Revolutionary Army and Wuchang Uprising, Battle of Yangxia 1912

Disillusionment with the Qing monarchy after the First Sino-Japanese War and other controversies like the Treaty of Versailles and the failed nationalization of the railway led to the emergence of numerous revolutionary groups. One of these was the Tongmeihui led by Sun Yat-sen and Song Jiaoren whose ideology influenced the New Army. This led to an armed rebellion against the ruling Qing dynasty on Oct. 10, 1911 called the Wuchang Uprising and ultimately the Xinhai Revolution which overthrew China's last imperial dynasty. Sun Yat-sen was sworn in as the first President in 1912 declaring the founding of the Republic of China.

Yuan Shikai was a highly a decorated military official who built up the Beiyang army under the Qing government and previously served as the Governor of Shandong. Under his leadership he negotiated the transition and abdication of the Qing throne which led to his negotiation for presidency of the Republic of China. Far from being fully united, instability ensued in China and the Warlord Era dominated the landscape from 1916 to 1928. Control was divided between former military factions of the Beiyang Army and other regional groups.

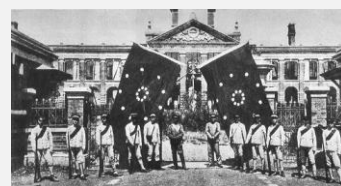
Following the death of Yuan Shikai, initial control of North East China and Shandong went to the Zhili Clique of warlords. After the Second Zhili-Fengtian War in 1924, control went to the Fengtian Clique (the most powerful coalition) run by Zhang Zongcang who was a military general of Shandong. Later, in the wake of the Northern Expedition led by Chiang Kai-shek (1926-1928), Zhang was ousted and succeed by Han Fujun who ultimately aligned with Chiang Kai-shek. In Shandong, Lu Zhennian (nicknamed the “King of Shandong East”) was also ousted, and Shandong would become united under one front.

In 1931, an increasingly militaristic Empire of Japan staged the Mukden Incident near Shenyang as a pretext to invading Manchuria again. Skirmishes ensued and tensions grew over the next six years eventually resulting in the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937. The beginning of the war was attributed to the Marco Polo Bridge Incident (July 7, 1937) after which Japan secured a number of critical victories capturing Beijing, Shanghai, and the Chinese capital of Nanjing in 1937. The Nanjing Massacre lasted six weeks and estimates put the number of deaths upwards of 300,000 with at least 20,000 rapes. Japan increasingly exploited China’s internal divisions and over the next seven years extended its offensive deep into the Chinese interior occupying Guangxi.

In 1941 Japan attacked Pearly Harbor and fighting further intensified on the mainland with Japan invading Henan and Chansha, as well as occupying Hong Kong. Failing to surrender, China launched large counter offenses in South China repulsing the failed Japanese invasion of Hunan, while also re-capturing occupied regions of Guangxi. Following the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (Aug. 9, 1945), Japan surrendered on September 2, 1945. Even though China suffered devastating war-related deaths and famine totaling upwards of 20 million people, the Chinese Civil War resumed in 1946. Ultimately the Chinese Communist Party defeated the Guomindang and established the People's Republic of China in 1949.



Sun Yat-sen 1912



Establishment of the Republic of China, 1912



Jiang Jie Shi 1928



Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall



People's Liberation Army, Nanjing Road 1949

ONE FAMILY

Wang Lang
王朗

Sheng Xiao Dao Ren
生肖道人

Li San Jian
李三简 (c.1821)

Wang Rong Sheng
王荣生 (c.1854)

Fan Xu Dong
范旭东 (c.1841)

Luo Guang Yu
罗光玉 (1888-1944)

Lin Bo Yan Zhao Zhi Min
林伯炎 赵志民
(1903-1990) (1901-2002)

Xu Jin Ge Li Jin Rong
徐晋阁 李锦荣
(1949-) (1947-)

Kai Uwe Pel
裴凯
(1964-)



Shanghai Bund, around 1920



Jiujiang Road, Shanghai, 1920

2. Praying Mantis Kung Fu in the Imperial Era

The legendary origins of Praying Mantis Kung Fu date back 400 years to the founder Wang Lang, but its story does not catch up with recorded history until the early 19th century starting with Li San Jian (c. 1821) on the Shandong Peninsula. Set against a backdrop of continues states of upheaval, famine, banditry, rebellion, revolution, violence, and near chaos, it is a remarkable testament to the spirit of the venerable masters that Praying Mantis martial traditions continued to not only survive but thrive.

Li Sanjian was born in 1821 and learned Mantis Boxing from the monk Sheng Xiao. Sheng Xiao Dao Ren was a legendary Daoist monk in a temple in the Laoshan Mountains. When Li retired from his life as a caravan guard, it is said that he visited the school of Wang Rongsheng (c. 1854- 1926) and made it be known that he did not think highly of Wang's skills. At that time Wang was already an accomplished fighter in the style of Long Fist boxing. In an open challenge match Li Sanjian defeated Wang and then accepted him as his full-time disciple. Wang went on to study with Li for an uncertain number of years before reopening his school and integrating his Long Fist boxing into the Mantis curriculum. Examples of the some of the hand sets added to the Mantis boxing included Cha Chui, Si Lu Beng Da and Hei Hu Jiao Cha.

Wang Rongsheng's most famous student was Fan Xudong. Fan was a large powerful man with gifted abilities and a reputation as a highly skilled fighter. He was reputed to have taken on all challengers, including having participated in a Siberian free fighting competition going undefeated. This led to his nickname, the 'King of Mantis Boxing' (Tanglang Wang). Fan also famously worked on a kung fu manuscript called the Shaolin Yibo Zhen Zhuan. In it he detailed the link to Shaolin boxing including the Eighteen Luohan Qigong and Iron Palm skills (tie sha zhang). Fan opened his kung fu school in the early 1900's in Yantai and would go on to produce nine major disciples including Gou Jialu, Yang Weixin, Lin Jingshan, Luo Guangyu, Xiao Shubin, Zhang Youde, Liu Yongchang, Zhao Liangfu and Wang Chuanyi (grandson of Wang Yunsheng). Luo Guangyu was the 4th disciple under Fan.

Luo in his early years grew up in Penglai and would eventually make his way to the nearby city of Yantai where he was accepted as a closed-door disciple under Fan Xudong. Luo studied diligently under Fan for more than 15 years developing formidable martial prowess and legendary iron palm skill. At the age of 31 Luo travelled to Shanghai with his kung fu brother Yang Weixin, where he represented the martial tradition of Seven Star Praying Mantis Kung Fu on the national stage of Jingwu.

3. Shanghai Jingwu in the Early Years

Shanghai at the turn of the century was the largest treaty port in China characterized by foreign concessions and bustling trade. The International Settlement, dominated by the British, American's, French, and Germans was wholly foreign-controlled and no Chinese residing in the International Settlement were permitted to join the council (until 1928). The Bund was the centerpiece of the settlement fronting the Huangpu River with imposing European styled trading houses, financial institutions and ultra

modern hotels. Foreign nationals enjoyed extraterritoriality and were not subject to Chinese law as the concessions were policed by their own troops.

A large industrial workforce grew around the concessions as local Chinese were employed as a serving class and expendable labour force in new factories. The disjointed concessionary jurisdictions together with large merchant trading volumes and influx of local migrants created the perfect conditions for organized crime to flourish. A number of Shanghai gangs (Triad) emerged and ran the 'Chinese' side of Shanghai including Du Yesheng (Green Gang) and Charlie Soong - who had close ties to the American Chinese community.

The Green Gang under Du was the most prominent and controlled the majority of criminal activities in Shanghai engaging in opium trade, extortion, gambling, and prostitution. The Green Gang had the full support of local warlords and was also a major financial supporter of Chiang Kai-shek, who became acquainted with the gang when he lived in Shanghai from 1915 to 1923. Charlie Soong also funded Sun Yat-sen's campaigns, even installing one of his daughters as his secretary. Both of Charlie Soong's daughters would famously go on to marry Sun Yat-sen and Chiang Kaishek (Jiang Jieshi).

Around this time the Imperial Era was coming to an end. In 1910 Tianjin born martial artist Huo Yuanjia came to Shanghai under the advocacy of Chen Qimei to form the Jingwu Calisthenics Association. With a vision to re-build national spirit it would promote traditional Chinese martial arts in a unifying nationalist context. To do this it sought to change the traditional system of masters teaching small numbers of disciples which kept the number of good fighters small and the knowledge limited.

Chen Qimei (1878-1916) was considered one of the founding fathers of the Republic of China, born into one of the four most powerful and influential families in China at the time (Chen family, Chiang family, Soon family, Kong family). He was a revolutionary activist, an active member of the Tongmeihui, a close political ally of Sun Yat-sen, early mentor of Chiang Kai-sek, a key figure in the Green Gang, and a military governor of Shanghai. His joint formation of the Chinese Revolutionary Party together with Sun yat-sen would later go on to become the Guo Min Dang (Kuomintang).

Huo Yuanjia was from a prominent boxing family that practiced Mizongyi. Under the tutelage of his father, Huo became a talented martial artist and a fierce fighter with a reputation for never backing down from a challenge. Huo had a benefactor Song who he had worked for in Tianjin and the two of them would collaborate with Chen embarking on the vision of opening a national academy of marital arts.

According to Chen Tiesheng in the Jingwu Annals (1919), Huo attended an open "leitai" challenge match held in Shanghai in 1910. There were a number of foreign participants that Huo was intent on making an example of but they backed out last minute. Huo reluctantly fought the local challengers and went undefeated. This boosted his reputation in the run up to opening of Jingwu. Unfortunately, Huo also suffered from a chronic liver condition and unexpectedly fell ill passing away shortly after arriving in Shanghai.



Du Yesheng



Huo Yuan Jia

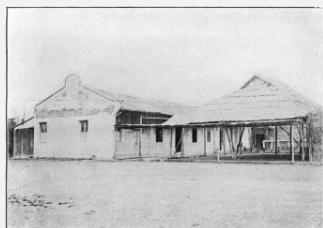


Chen Qimei



Shanghai Jingwu Calisthenics Association, first location 1910

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Jingwu 2nd location 1912



Jingwu Instructors 1912: Li Jianmin, Zhao Hanjie, Zhang Fuyou, Zhao Lianhe



Example diploma of Jingwu martial arts program



First Jingwu advanced graduating student 1916

His students, Chen Lu Weichang, Chen Gongzhe, Li Huisheng, Liu Yichen, Yao Chanbo, Qiu Liang, and Ning Zhuting inherited the school located in the Wang Family Neighborhood of Shanghai's Zhabei District. Huo's students struggled to make the school a go as they were inexperienced and lacked funding. The dilapidated state of the school was described by Chen Teisheng a "desolate monastery," scantily decorated with "an iron halberd, a spear without any horsehair, a three-footed wooden stool, some planks for instructors to sleep on, and a few stoves for brewing tea." (10)

Somehow Huo's students managed to persevere and through a bit of luck landed financial support from a prominent local merchant by the name of Yuan Hengzhi who took great interest in martial arts. Jingwu moved to a new location in the same neighborhood and built out a new curriculum. From humble beginnings it slowly built up its platform and earned a reputation. Starting from a single department with only two teachers (Liu Zhensheng and Zhao Hanjie) and a hand full of students in 1911, it grew over the next decade morphing into a large organizational structure with over 1000 student enrollments and multiple departments that included ~30 martial arts instructors, 36 senior administrative staff, 11 army drill staff, and 46 additional support and programming staff by 1919 (7).

Zhao Lianhe was one of the earliest and longest serving teachers within the Jingwu organization first arriving in 1911. Originally from Hebei province, he was a master of the Shaolin based Er Lang Men system. Zhao was instrumental in establishing the program curriculum that included ten basic Jingwu forms. Primarily derived from his own system these sets included:

1. Tantai 潭腿
2. Gongli Boxing 工力拳
3. Articulated Boxing 節拳
4. Two-Person Tantai 接潭腰
5. Eight-Trigrams Saber 八卦刀
6. Fifth Tiger's Spear 五虎槍
7. Large-Scale Fight 大戰拳
8. Trapping Boxing 套拳
9. Shepherd's Staff 羣羊棍
10. Single Saber Versus Spear 單刀串槍



Tantai in a concise series of photographs (one of four parts [showing lines 8-12])

The curriculum for student enrollments was designed around three levels of training for a total of six years. In the first two years of training students focused on learning the 10 basic Jingwu forms and were awarded a beginner-level diploma. In the next two years students increasingly focused on learning a single kung fu style while further refining Jingwu basics and graduating with an intermediate level diploma. After completing a total of six years of training students were awarded advanced-level certification.

At the discretion of the teacher and Jingwu leadership a student would later be eligible to begin teaching as a designated instructor. An important aspect of this qualification required that instructors had a fluent understanding of the Jingwu purpose, possessed upright character, and the ability to perform their teaching jobs at the highest level. Not everyone who graduated would be selected, and those who were had the opportunity to travel and teach at new branch locations.

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In 1915 a typhoon destroyed the Zhabei branch blowing off the roof and tearing up the flooring of the wooden structure (7). This was the catalyst for construction of a new building completed in March 1916 at the new location of North Sichuan Road near the Hongkou Market District. It also changed its name to the Jingwu Athletics Association and new enrollment quickly increased.

Programming was further expanded to include new teachers and new departments such as Army Drilling, Literary Studies, and Recreational Activities. In the Autumn of 1916 through the Commercial Press it published the first manuals including Tantui (along with a Tantui wall-hanging), Fifth Tiger's Spear, Damo Sword, Cooperative Fight, and Practical Staff Methods. (7)

In 1918 Jingwu further expanded its footprint southward establishing the Hankou and Guangzhou branches. It sent senior martial art instructors Ye Fengqi and Yang Chenlun from Shanghai to Guangzhou to head up martial arts instruction. That same year they invited one of the most talented students of Huo Yuanjia, Lu Weicheng to be the lead instructor in Shanghai.

In 1919 Jingwu established three additional branch locations in Shanghai. One in the North Gate Area of Shanghai (on North Sichuan Road and Chongming Road), a second on the south side borrowing space from the public affairs of Shanghai City Coal, and a third location in the Shandong Guild Hall on Luban Road in the French Concession. Later that year Shanghai Jingwu sent five senior representatives (Chen Gongzhe, Li Huisheng, Luo Xiaobao, Chen Shizhao and Ye Shutian) to Southeast Asia to expand overseas activities in Vietnam, Malaysia and Singapore.

4. Luo Guangyu in the 20th Century

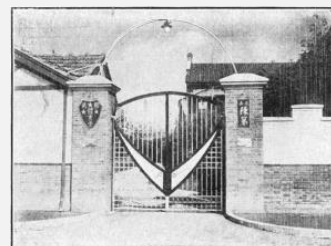
With growing student enrollment, an expanding geographic footprint and a desire to further diversify its martial arts training program, Jingwu leadership knew it needed to recruit additional teaching staff. In 1919 they invited Fan Xudong (Praying Mantis Kung Fu) and Chen Zizheng (Eagle Claw Kung Fu) to teach. Fan declined the offer as he was nearing 60 years of age and already running a successful kung fu school and merchants business in Yantai. Instead, Fan offered to send two of his top disciples Yang Weixin (YWX) and Luo Guangyu (LGY). Under Fan's blessing the two men were assigned the responsibility of representing their Praying Mantis kung fu style on the national stage of Shanghai Jingwu.

At the time of relocating to Shanghai, Yang and Luo were 39 and 31 years of age respectively, and would face many challenges associated with living and working in a large modern city. Shanghai in the 1920's was an enigma representing the very best and very worst in human tendencies. Referred to as The Paris of the East and the New York of the West," it reflected the very best in human industriousness and creativity boasting modern infrastructure, booming trade and a bustling arts and entertainment scene. Less flatteringly it was also known as the "Whore of the Orient" reflecting the worst in human indulgences, perversions, tyranny and segregation.

Jingwu was already a large organization with a diverse range of people and personalities that included highly structured reporting lines. At its core included



Jingwu main location, 1916



Jingwu Main Gate 1916



Members of Martial Arts Department 1916



Master Luo Guangyu, 1919

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Training hall of the main branch where Luo taught and trained



Hongkou Market District



Shandong Guild Hall



Shandong Guild Hall

almost 30 martial arts instructors, many of them hailing from different regions, representing different fighting styles, and speaking different dialects. Although an important aspect of the organization was to promote unity amongst its teaching staff, arguments and conflict was an inevitable and common everyday occurrence. Jingwu martial culture was also unique in that it promoted an open and transparent platform with a fixed junior syllabus and structured oversight from department heads. This was in stark contrast to the 'old secretive' ways of one-on-one teaching. Anyone who was unable to adapt to this modern setting would struggle.

As a center of excellence Jingwu offered many opportunities and resources to those who proved adaptable. Surrounded by an elite group of martial artists, Yang and Luo had the opportunity to further expand their knowledge base and improve their skills amongst the best of the best. Some of those instructors included Zhao Lianhe, Huo Dongge, Liu Zhixiang, Sun Zhanxuan, Sun Yufeng, Li Huiting, and Chen Zizheng. Dedicated resources in the form of training facilities, equipment, sleeping quarters, schedule planning, meals and medical doctors provided them with the optimum conditions for teaching and training. Ambitious leadership and a diverse group of accomplished academics from other departments also granted new opportunities in learning and personal growth.

At the time of arriving in Shanghai there was already a large cohort of students on the instructors track numbering well over one hundred. The single largest cohort of aspiring instructors were from Guangdong province numbering over sixty. Shandong was the second largest with over twenty students. Undoubtedly this would have offered Yang and Luo a level of familiarity and ample social time to mingle with people who were from the same province and who spoke same dialect. In future years more students from Shandong would arrive including Wang Chuanyi - grandson of Wang Yunsheng - who travelled to Shanghai at the age of 23 (1923) to continue his studies.

In the first year of teaching Luo was assigned to the main Jingwu branch on North Sichuan Road. This was dedicated to teaching students on the instructors track in the style of Praying Mantis Kung Fu. Yang was assigned to the Hongkou Market District and the Shandong Guild Hall. These branches were newly expanded to take on new student enrollment. The history and story of the Shandong Guild Hall is interesting in that it offers insight into the seemingly unlikely connection between Jingwu and collaboration with the geographically distant Fan Xudong.

The original Shandong Liaodong Guild Association was historically the oldest and largest inter-port trade and commerce association in Shanghai first established in 1664. After the First Sino Japanese War, trade between Shandong and Korea dropped off and so Shandong turned to Shanghai as a key market for exporting soybean, cooking oil and peanuts into. The Shandong magistrate Lu Haihuan hailing from Donglai (Shandong) was sent to Shanghai as the Minister of Commerce in 1901. Together with the Shanghai magistrate Wang Maokun - who was a native of Licheng (Shandong) - established the Shandong Guild Association in 1901.

Its new building was completed in 1906 on Lu Ban Lu and Chong Qing Lu which included construction of the Luban Temple. The location would eventually become part of the greater French Concession area in 1914. Noteworthy here is that the town of Donglai (in which Lu Haihuan hails from) directly neighbors Penglai and Yantai.

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Moreover Donglai was the name in ancient times referencing the greater Yantai region. This geographic and historical link is a likely candidate for explaining the connection between Shanghai Jingwu and collaboration with Yantai native Fan Xudong.

For older kung fu brother Yang Weixin, the culture shock of living in Shanghai together with the complexities of teaching within a large organizational structure like Jingwu was challenging. According to Huang Hanxun, Yang returned to Yantai just six months later where he continued teaching at Fan's school (8). Luo, the ten years younger and more evenly tempered of the two, proved resilient and adaptable. Surrounded by elite kung fu masters, Luo flourished in the competitive environment while taking on additional teaching responsibilities for the other two branch locations. Luo quickly earned a reputation for being dependable, trustworthy and of formidable martial prowess.

Luo was a highly motivated and disciplined individual known for running hard classes and always training in his off time. After classes when others took time to socialize, Luo chose to remain in the training hall putting in the work. Distractions and desires never derailed his spirit and he continued to cultivate his skills day in day out. Jingwu afforded Luo the optimum environment in which he could focus on teaching and training.

Every year the Jingwu organization hosted a graduation ceremony. Programming included the awarding of new certificates and martial performances. Martial art demonstrations put on by students and instructors alike included empty hand sets, weapons sets, two person sets and various other displays of skill and strength. During the 1919 graduation ceremony Luo was invited to demonstrate a number of single person and two-man sets. In preparation he performed (7):

- 1) Two person striking & pressing hands set (Luo with Ma Chengxin)
- 2) Two-Person Yan Qing empty hand set (Luo with Ma)
- 3) Two person sword vs. spear weapons set (Pu Kuoting with Luo)
- 4) Beng Bu empty hand set (Zhang Yanzhen)
- 5) Tray Versus Saber (Jin Guangyao with Ma Chengxin)

Over the next ten years Luo would go on to prove himself, gaining the trust of the senior leadership, taking on ever expanding responsibilities and growing the Praying Mantis Kung Fu program. Amongst his many accomplishments, Luo introduced the Fourteen Roads of Mantis Tantui set into the Jingwu curriculum and produced a number of outstanding students like Ma Chengxin and Lin Boyan in Shanghai. Ma was from Jiangsu and entered Jingwu in 1916 (7), while Lin hailed from Fujian arriving shortly there afterwards. Ma in the 1929 National Games held in Nanjing was listed as one of the most successful competitors in the open hand sparring division, while Lin was also noted as having a successful showing. Lin would go on to become Luo's most senior student in Shanghai, taking up position as a Jingwu instructor and eventually taking over the Praying Mantis program when Luo left.

In 1933 when the games were held in Shanghai, Ma took first place in open sparring and first place overall further propelling the reputation of his teacher. Wang Hongfan writes that during the award ceremonies Luo was invited by the organizers on stage to give a performance. In keeping with Luo's modest personality he chose to



Lu Guangyu, Chen Zizheng, Wu Jianquan, Zhao Lianhe



Luo Guangyu, Hai di qu bao



Luo Guangyu, Moon Crescent Lance



前表生先奕伯林師教會武精義蘭雲
Lin Boyan

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Luo Guangyu group photo
with Huang Hanxun



Zhao Zhimin



Lu Guangyu with sons



Chinese soldiers with big blade,
2nd Sino-Japanese War

demonstrate the 14th line of the 'Fourteen Roads of Mantis Tantui. Wang recalls that Luo was infamously conservative in his public demonstrations and only really ever performed Mantis Steals the Peach and the Tiger-Tail Three Section Staff.

In 1929, Jingwu leadership asked Luo to travel southward with the purpose of inspecting the quality of other Jingwu branches. Luo spent almost three years cumulatively in Guangzhou, Hankou, HK, Macau and parts of the Malay Archipelago undertaking the mission to ensure that teaching standards were on par with Shanghai. Upon returning to Shanghai in 1931, the Shanghai Incident broke out with Japan in January 28th, 1932, incurring catastrophe in the city and eventually leading to all out war in 1937.

It was around this time that the Hong Kong Jingwu branch sent a representative to Shanghai inviting Luo to teach in Hong Kong. Already familiar with his reputation they wanted Luo's expertise to further boost the quality of their program. Given the chaos and violence going on locally, Luo accepted and returned to Hong Kong in 1932. Within six months of teaching in HK, Luo coached the Jingwu students to victory at the First All-Hong Kong Forms Competition, and later won overall team championships at the 12th Guangdong Provincial Games.

Luo resided in Hong Kong for approximately ten years building out the program and producing a number of outstanding students including the likes of Huang Hanxun, Huang Jinhong and Zhao Zhimin. Luo's reputation was so well known that even regional army divisions would invite him to teach bladed weapon techniques. In 1939 he was invited by the famous military general Li Zongren - then Head of the Guangxi Military - to take on a Chief Instructor posting teaching 'cold weapons' tactics. Luo declined but spent time instructing the Overseas Chinese Return-to-Enlist Corps in 1939, teaching practical techniques in the use of the big saber (9). Having witnessed the bloody fighting in Shanghai firsthand, Wang describes Luo developing a rudimentary big blade training set to help soldiers prepare.

Luo's top students within the military included its most senior leadership like Li Zongren who would go on to serve as the Vice-President and acting President of the Republic of China under the 1947 Constitution, and Bai Chongxi who would go on to become the 1st Minister of National Defense of the Republic of China (1946-1948). Others included

Perhaps lessor known was Luo's dedication to family. According to Huang, Luo was married at the age of 30 and at an unknown date brought his young bride to Shanghai. They would go on to have five children. In 1932 when Luo took up his posting at Hong Kong Jingwu he relocated his family so that they could be together. Family was very important to Luo and he always ensured that they travelled with him. Amongst Luo's many accomplishments, perhaps it was his commitment to the value of family that was most admirable.

When the Japanese War finally broke out in Hong Kong in 1941, it was impossible for Luo to continue teaching, and he returned to his hometown of Penglai. Luo fell ill and eventually passed in 1944 at the age of 56. In memory of his teacher, Wang Hong Fan in the Secrets of Mantis Boxing (1946) quotes a passage from the Confucian Book of Rites (Chapter 3), "The mountain has collapsed and now there is nothing for me to

look up to. The supporting beam is broken, the wise man is withered, and now there is no example for me to follow.” (11)

Master Luo’s top students over the years included:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Ma Chengxin of Jiangsu | 12. Qu Xinghan of Guangdong |
| 2. Lin Boyan of Fujian | 13. Guo Wu Hanchen of Guangdong |
| 3. Yu Lejiang of Shandong | 14. Zuchao of Guangdong |
| 5. Zou Xigong of Shandong | 15. Huang Jinhong of Guangdong |
| 6. Fan Yongzhen of Shandong | 16. Li Weiyi of Guangdong |
| 7. Cui Kuisan of Shandong | 17. Zhang Baohou of Shandong |
| 8. Cui Shouting of Shandong | 18. Li Guanlan of Guangdong |
| 9. Chen Zhenyi of Guangdong | 19. Chen Menghuan of Guangdong |
| 10. Huang Hanxun of Guangdong | 20. Pan Hongchang of Shandong |
| 11. Chi Lunzhi of Shandong | 21. Zhu Zhixiang of Guangdong |



Master Luo Guangyu
1888-1944

5. Concluding Remarks

The story of Luo Guangyu is an inspiring one. Born in the small town of Penglai, Luo was a simple family man of virtuous character, resilient spirit, balanced temperament, and formidable martial skill. From humble beginnings he made his way into discipleship under one of the most prominent kung fu family’s in Yantai, and eventually on to represent the style of Star Praying Mantis Kung Fu on the national stage of Shanghai Jingwu. Luo’s era was a tumultuous one in China’s modern history marked by continuous states of upheaval, famine, banditry, rebellion, revolution, violence, and near chaos. His commitment to leading an exemplary life and values of family, self cultivation, moral excellence, and the martial tradition of Seven Star Praying Mantis Kung Fu is a shining example for us all to follow.

Be kind, train hard!

Nathan Wright
Chief Instructor - Canada

Footnotes

1. China 2030: Building a Modern, Harmonious, and Creative High-Income Society, World Bank. Pg. 1
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Who We Are

We are a diverse group of people dedicated to the transmission and promotion of traditional Seven Star Praying Mantis Kung Fu (Qi Xing Tang Lang Quan). We represent the proud family lineage of Master Luo Guang Yu, who made the style famous in the Shanghai Jingwu Association in 1919. In 2019 we celebrated the 100-year centennial anniversary of Seven Star Mantis in Shanghai.

Contact Us: Luo Guang Yu Seven Star Mantis Kung Fu Club

Canada

Nathan Wright
Chief Instructor
nwright@luoguangyu.com
www.luoguangyu.com
Facebook @LuoGuangYu

New Zealand

Cameron Hirst
Chief Instructor
nz.7star@gmail.com



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