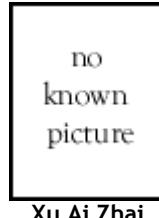


## **Zi Ran Men Background & History – The Essence of Fighting Technique**

**By Master Liu Deming – Zi Ran Men Kung Fu School, Melbourne Australia**

This article aims to provide a context regarding Zi Ran Qigong, and is an introduction of Zi Ran Men or 'Nature Boxing' philosophy and its fighting technique.

### **Zi Ran Men Lineage**



Du Xin Wu



Wan Lai Sheng



Hong Zheng Fu



Liu Deming

Still relatively unknown in the west, Zi Ran Men or 'Nature Boxing' is one of the most highly respected kung fu styles in China. It combines the essence of fighting technique, Qigong and Taoist philosophy, stripping away unnecessary material and developing only the "core" of Martial Arts. Its lineage holders include two of the all time greatest Chinese Martial Art Master's Du Xin Wu and Wan Lai Shen.

The head of Zi Ran Men Kung Fu School in Australia is Master Liu Deming. Master Liu Deming began his training at the age of eight when he was selected to be one of only eight students to be trained in the art of Liu He Zi Ran Men Kung Fu. Through hard, vigorous and dedicated training he developed the Martial Art skill and discipline to become the Fujian Provincial Champion, graduate from the

prestigious Beijing Sports University and trained and taught at the famous Shaolin Temple. He is also the disciple of the fourth generation of Zi Ran Men, Master Hong Zheng Fu. Master Liu is the 5th generation inheritor of the Liu He Zi Ran Men lineage. He began his study of martial arts at the age of eight with Master Hong Zheng Fu and legendary Grandmaster Wan Lai Sheng.

After graduating from Beijing University of Physical Education, Master Liu accepted a teaching post at the famous Shaolin Temple. Subsequently, he spent 12 years teaching at the Fujian Institute Of Physical Education. He has lived, taught and trained in Melbourne, Australia since 1992.

Master Liu has studied both the internal and external styles of Gong Fu (*Kung Fu*) for over 30 years. He has been a successful competitor and coach at local and national level. He understands that there are many levels of interest and commitment in the martial arts, from relaxation, fitness and self defence, through to training for competition and beyond this, into the life long search and commitment for martial art excellence. Master Liu actively caters to all levels of interest within his open and relaxed teaching style.

Grandmaster Hong Zheng Fu was born in Anfi province in 1923. He studied Luo Han boxing in his teens, before meeting Wan Lai Shen in Fujian in the early 1930's. He and Wan would develop a lifelong friendship and love of the Martial Arts that would last for over fifty years.

By the mid 1960's, Master Hong had become a Professor, Fujian Team Coach and Dean of sports at Fujian Physical Education Institute. He had already trained many National and International Champions. Master Hong's students had become masters and teachers in their own right, eventually also producing many champions. Master Hong was recognized as the premier Martial Artist in Fujian province, accepting a post as Assistant Chairman of Fujian Martial Arts Organization. In 1992 he would inherit the Liu He Zi Ran Men lineage from Wan Lai Shen.

Master Liu was also taught by his Grandmaster, one of the all time greatest Chinese Martial Artists Wan Lai Shen. Grandmaster Wan Lai Shen is one of the legendary figures of Chinese wushu. Born in 1903 in Wuchang city, Hubei, Wan began his study of the martial arts at the age of seventeen, learning Shaolin Liu He Boxing from Master Zhou Xin Zou. Looking to increase his skill and knowledge, Wan studied with just about every master he could find in the Beijing area. After graduating from Beijing Agricultural University, he was sent on recommendation by his Master Zhou Xin zhou to see Master Du Xin Wu, holder of the Zi Ran Men lineage and was accepted as his disciple. Wan finally mastered the theories and practice of the Zi Ran Men School after seven years of concentrated study. Still hungry for knowledge, Wan absorbed the teachings of Xing Yi, Ba Gua, Luohan Boxing, Wudang Tai Chi, Monkey style and Shaolin Luo Han Fist from Liu Ba Chuan, Wang Xian Zhi, Wang Rong Biao, Ancestor Liu' and many others.

Master Liu would like to take this opportunity to share some thoughts on Liu He Zi Ran Men and its Qigong.

### **Zi Ran Men**

Zi Ran Men (also called Liu He Zi Ran Men) is a comprehensive School of thought in Chinese Wu Shu (Martial Arts). Liu He Zi Ran Men Wu Shu is a superior and sophisticated form of internal Kung Fu which has broad and deep meaning. It follows the rule of nature and the Yin & Yang theory. Yin and Yang combine to cultivate every being in the natural world without being seen. It's just like life a cycle that keeps repeating it's self, there is no start or end.

The secret to the success of Zi Ran Men Kung Fu training can be found within its poem:

*There is no beginning or end of movements.  
There is no beginning or end of stillness.  
There is no beginning or end of change.*

*Actual attack is within a fake attack.*

*Movements are within stillness.*

Liu He Zi Ran Men is also based on ancient Chinese philosophy Taoism and Traditional Chinese Medicine theory. It has gathered the essence of all other schools of thought in Wu Shu and the essence of Qigong to form this outstanding and unique school of thought.

Zi Ran Men's training has two major components - physical training and Qigong. The training can not only enhance the spirit and mind but will also reinforce the sensitivity of the physical being. Through the training, one's movements will become nimble and agile. More importantly it improves the whole physical well being and Qi circulation. As we all know when the body is in harmony, one will naturally enjoy a long and healthy life.

### **Zi Ran Qigong**

In Zi Ran Men Kung Fu, Qigong has a leading role. Unlike other forms of Kung Fu it includes two parts of training: fitness and self-defense. These two components serve as one, with the aim to enhance a healthy mind and body.

Despite the Yin Yang theory and Taoist philosophy the most important philosophy behind the Natural Gate Kung Fu is called "1" & "0" (one and Zero) philosophy. When the shape of "1" is bent to make the two ends meet it forms shape "0". When the shape of "0" is extended to a straight line, it becomes the shape "1". In the application of Natural Gate Kung fu "1" represents external force and hardness, whereas "0" represents internal, meditation cultivation and softness.

Externally one should train his/her hands, eyes and body; internally one should train his/her essence, qi and shen. If the student only has external Kung Fu one will not be able to defeat a stronger enemy. If the student has only internal Qigong one has not got the Kung Fu.

In practicing Zi Ran Qigong, all movements and steps are in the Shape of "0". Its secret of success is that Yi (mind) leads Qi. Qi is the home, Qi reaches where Yi (mind) reaches. Yi also leads movements. Do not look for Qi. Do not use physical force to drive Yi. In movements, one must avoid being ostentatious, just take time to practice so that the movement will change from unnatural to natural.

### **Yin & Yang in Zi Ran Men Kung Fu**

To improve one's level of Zi Ran Men Kung Fu, one must understand the philosophies behind it, movement and stillness; fake attack and actual attack are just like Yin and Yang in the natural world. Ying and Yang is constantly in contradiction and also unification. It was said:

*"Yang is within Yin and Yin is within Yang. When Yin reaches the extreme it turns to Yang and vice versa".*

This applies directly to Zi Ran Men Kung Fu. When one can apply those theories in practice one will be able to successfully use natures Qi and combine movements and stillness, fake attack and actual attack, attack and defense, hardness and softness, freely move forward and move backwards in situations.

Zi Ran Men Kung Fu combines the forcefulness of Shaolin Kung Fu and the softness of Wudang Kung Fu. So it has the characteristics of hardness and softness, external and internal. It can be used to defend oneself or for the purpose of maintaining an excellent state of health and live a long and happy life.

### **The philosophy of Zi Ran Men fighting techniques**

All movements in Zi Ran Men are based upon the use of circular energy. The feet step continuously, alternating between full and empty. The hands move circularly, attack and defense are rolled together. A block becomes a strike and an evasive maneuver becomes an assault. Your movements are constantly flowing like water around an obstacle, your attack is like a tidal wave. To fight successfully, you need to relax yourself. Allow your body to move freely, naturally following your opponents movement. Don't be too aggressive, "let the rabbit into the trap". Attack with your whole body, hands, feet, elbows, knees, hips and head. Empty yourself and look for your opponent's emptiness, avoid his force, attack before he regroups. Zi Ran Men is renowned for its ability to give you superior freedom of movement and martial skill.