

An Kungfu Family History and Lineage

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An Wushu 1st Generation: An Li Rui

The first member of the An family to adopt martial arts as a way of life was named An Li Rui. An Li Rui was born in the second half of the Qing dynasty in He Bei province, in a town named Tang Shan. Around the age of 6 he became very interested in Chinese Kung Fu, so his parents decided to find a teacher for him. It so happened that at this time a monk of the Song Shan Shaolin temple was living and teaching in Tang Shan. During his time at the temple this monk had achieved a famously high level of Kung Fu as well as developing a strong sense of discipline, and this made him the perfect teacher for the young An Li Rui. An Li Rui studied both Shaolin Quan and Liu He Quan daily with this monk for no less than 17 years. He showed brilliant commitment to his training, and during this time his improvement was vast; after this time he was reputed to have truly perfected the use of the broadsword and staff.

When An Li Rui was 24 years old, a close friend introduced him to the local head of police. His training spoke for itself, and he was quickly employed in chasing down criminals and keeping order, where his combat skills had obvious applications. He took the responsibility

this employment gave him very seriously, not stopping until each assignment was successfully resolved. His fantastic work ethic resulted in him becoming a senior member of police, personally responsible for two nearby towns Feng Run and Yu Tian, when he was only in his 30's.

As the Qing dynasty came to an end the whole of China fell into confusion, and criminal organisations at large flourished as various political battles ensued. Such organisations often succeeded in perverting the course of justice with bribes and threats, but An Li Rui was a just man, and dealt harshly with such incidents within his area. As such, local criminals and corrupt officials came to fear his righteous judgement.

In one such case, An Li Rui with 4 of his officers routed a group of 20 bandits from their hideout, killing 6 and taking the remainder into custody. Though the capture was bloody, the 5 police officers all returned safely, with their heads held high. This act of bravery moved the head of the Tang Shan government to bestow a substantial reward on An Li Rui for his efforts, and to promote him to deputy of the Tang Shan central police force.

An Li Rui's tremendous peacekeeping efforts over many years served to scare the majority of criminals away from the Tang Shan area, so the local populace really began to feel safe. His service to the locals was greatly respected, and as his fame increased, so did public awareness of his mastery of Kung Fu. As his reputation grew, so it came to be that anyone in Tang Shan with the slightest interest in studying martial arts turned to him as their master. In teaching he followed his own teacher's example in treating each of his students with respect; he did not select his students based on wealth or status, judging only by their commitment to training and love of Chinese Kung Fu. Perhaps surprisingly for the era, and though his students were many, he was happy to divulge all of the secrets of his skills and methods to his students as they each individually progressed.

When he was around 40 years old many foreign countries began to establish centres of economic and political power in China, capitalising on the turmoil created by the struggles between the numerous warlords and their armies. This new 'development' in china did not sit well with An Li Rui, and he became increasingly dissatisfied with the local government. Eventually they threatened An Li Rui with dismissal should he speak out publicly against their actions for fear of the influence he held over much of the local population. Not one to be bullied, he decided to leave his post and his title on his own terms, taking his students and his reputation for honesty with him to set up a business escorting merchants and aristocracy in

and around Tang Shan. Though he worked very hard to establish his business, his heart was still dedicated to Wushu, and he continued daily to hone his skills and teach his students.

His strong sense of justice and his long years making friends and acquaintances in and around Tang Shan led him, when he was around 50 years old, to create an association devoted to helping local society, called 'The Tang Shan Wushu Alliance'. The members would volunteer to protect local teachers and children, the old and the young, and would bring vigilante justice to the door of anyone who presumed to bully the weak or cause trouble. The association was devoted purely to fairness and peace, outside the realm of government politics and the power struggles of greedy warlords. They simply did whatever was needed to help the people.

An Li Rui's martial arts lived on through his students, and his peaceful ideals through his organisation, for many years after he passed away. It is safe to say his work throughout his life made this period one to be proud of for the people of Tang Shan.

An Wushu 2nd Generation: An Ji Hai

An Ji Hai was born towards the close of the Qing dynasty in Tang Shan. When he was just 6 years old his father decided it was time to begin teaching him the family Shaolin Quan and Liu He Quan. He showed a talent for martial arts immediately, so his father pushed him and pushed him until by the age of 16 An Ji Hai had already mastered everything his father could teach him. This included how to teach in itself, and by 16 he was already helping his father instruct his students every day.

When he was 20 years old, An Ji Hai decided Tang Shan was not where he would spend his future, and so he moved to Tian Jin in search of a career and, perhaps even more importantly, new styles of Kung Fu. With his faultless discipline he quickly managed to secure himself a job training as a chef in the French embassy, and over the course of several years he worked his way up to become the head chef. Though his ascent to this position commanded much of his attention, he still continued to practise daily the Kung Fu his father had taught him. But having reached this peak in his career, he began to turn his focus back to his studies. With a view to making a first contact with the martial artists of Tian Jin, he entered into the city Wushu association's yearly public examinations. The association staged these exams with a

view to rooting out local talent, and they judged the overall level of entrants in a variety of ways. Successful candidates would have achieved near perfection in the forms of their chosen style through years of focused practice; the speed, power and precision of their movements clearly distinguishing them from the common practitioner. But Chinese Kung Fu is not merely stances and shapes, and candidates were required to demonstrate a genuine understanding of their learning, by both applying their skills in controlled combat and demonstrating a deep cultural and historical knowledge. An Ji Hai had devoted the whole of his childhood to Wushu, and had never lost sight of his passion throughout the development of his career, and as such he excelled in his examination. As a result of this, he was awarded the position of head coach for the Tang Gu area school. This appointment marked the real beginning of his teaching career.

Following after his father, An Ji Hai was of a particularly honest and upstanding character. He engaged whole-heartedly in each of his relationships, both social and official, and he invested lots of his time making close ties with most if not all of the great masters living in Tianjin at the time. He would often visit these teachers to discuss matters of traditional Wushu, taking the opportunity to share and critique each other's skills with the intention of mutual improvement. This period thus saw him come into contact with many new martial arts. The converse result of this socialising was that more and more ordinary people were coming to hear of An Ji Hai and his skills throughout Tian Jin, though he always strived to remain humble.

An Ji Hai's thirst for learning was exceptional, and over the years he became a disciple of many of the masters he had befriended. His first thought was to expand upon the Shaolin Quan his father had taught him as a child, and so he studied the Jin Gang Luo Han Quan style under Master Li Rong Jia. He then introduced Baji Quan into his family system, studying with one of the great Master Liu Da Jia Zi's senior students, Wang Jing Po, who had originally studied in Cang Zhou. But his interests were broad, and he soon turned to studying internal martial arts. He began with Xing Yi Quan which he learned from Liu Yun Ji, a disciple of the famous Li Cun Yi. He first came into contact with the man that would teach him Bagua Zhang when he saw Gao Yi Sheng practising with his then modest following of students, and having discovered he was practising a style of his own creation he rather arrogantly challenged him to actually apply these movements. Gao Yi Sheng of course did so, and embarrassed An Ji Hai. A few months later, Gao Yi Sheng happened upon An Ji Hai teaching, and was pushed into rage when he realised the man that had previously doubted him,

showing great disrespect, and who had even maybe intended to embarrass him despite his recent arrival in Tian Jin, was a teacher in his own right, and ought to know better. Turning on his heel to leave, An Ji Hai grabbed at his sleeve, fell to his knees and asked for his forgiveness. He confessed his arrogance, and utterly changed tack, asking Gao Yi Sheng to be his teacher. Only after explaining much of his life, and demonstrating his dedication to his previous masters and Kung Fu did Gao Yi Sheng relent, and accept him to be his student. Over the years, and despite their initial differences, An Ji Hai became one of Gao Yi Sheng's most valued students. Gao Yi Sheng was a student of Cheng Ting Hua, who himself studied under Dong Hai Chuan, the founder of Bagua Zhang. An Ji Hai learnt both the original 'Xian Tian' Bagua Zhang in only its 3rd generation, as well as 'Hou Tian' Bagua Zhang, the brainchild of Gao Yi Sheng himself, and that development which he had originally intended to dismiss as not useful. He completed his assimilation of traditional internal martial arts with an old style of Wudang Taiji, which he learnt from one of his fellow Bagua Zhang students named Qu Ke Zhang who was a Taoist of the Jing Yi Guan temple in Tian Jin.

In his middle age, he became an increasingly prominent member of Tian Jin martial arts circles. As the outbreak of the second Sino-Japanese War brought chaos to Tian Jin, An Ji Hai allied himself with another 7 famous masters, who became known as 'Da Ba Yi'. In 1941 this brotherhood created a Tian Jin branch of the Zhong Hua Wushu Xue Hui, a national organisation of patriotic martial artists, and called out to their students and the general population to sign up. Under the instruction of Da Ba Yi, many of this organisation's members performed various errands to help the government where it lacked the necessary man power, for example collecting spare or old clothing to send to the frontline, or in the case of martial artists, volunteering to help train new soldiers. The organisations extensive training grounds and schools were also given over to use in housing the severely wounded that lacked the means to return to their home province. Ultimately they aimed to help their government repel the invading force at any cost, and help those members of society in need. Their efforts certainly contributed hugely to the eventual expulsion of the Japanese and the protection of one of China's most important cities.

As An Ji Hai's grasp of internal martial arts became more and more profound, he made extensive studies of the meridians and pressure points. Joining his discoveries with his previous experience, he came to possess a comprehensive understanding of how to reinvigorate the flow of energy through the body, plus knowledge of how to disrupt it in combat. One of his senior students once expressed doubt that his master could really use

pressure point fighting on men like him, as he was very thickly muscled. An Ji Hai first just offered his assurance, but when his student still seemed a little dubious, he reluctantly demonstrated. He allowed his student to prepare (tense or relax his muscles as he liked) and then stabbed into the front of his body with his fingers. The disbelieving student at once began to seize up, and soon collapsed onto the sofa, eyes rolled upwards and struggling for breath. An Ji Hai then quickly lay a towel soaked in hot water over his students back, and at once began to strike certain points on his back and massage the seizure out of his muscles, so that after a few moments he was again free to breathe and move. Due to the danger inherent in these methods, An Ji Hai was loath to teach them in public view, so he summarised the whole of the training methods and techniques in a small book, which he entrusted to his son and later to his more trusted students.

Like his father before him, An Ji Hai continued to study and teach to the last. He spent much of his later life researching traditional Chinese medicine and Taoism, coming to possess a very deep awareness of the human body and mind. This coupled with many years of meditation and Qi Gong practise led him to live a very long and healthy life. One such example of his mastery of Qi Gong is recollected with both admiration and confusion by his grandson An De Sheng. In his old age, An Ji Hai would rise early each morning, wash his face, and then hang the damp towel up to dry. He would then proceed to relax and loosen his joints and muscles (the young An De Sheng observing a strange clicking sound that seemed to emanate from all throughout his arms, not just the joints) before focusing his Yi and Qi upon the towel; he would then move the towel back and forth just with slow movements of his hand, though over a metre distant from it. In his later life he certainly became very closely connected to nature. He recorded each of his methods and discoveries in meticulous detail, and though much of his wisdom unfortunately did not survive the Cultural Revolution, he still left a priceless contribution to posterity.

An Wushu 3rd generation: An Shu Bao

An Shu Bao was born in the 11th year after the birth of the Republic of China. When he was just 5 years old, his father started to teach him the family Baji, Shaolin and Liu He Quan, and at around 10 years old he started to learn the family internal martial arts. His will was very strong, and he trained with such focus that at 20 years old he had already completed learning all of the An Wushu styles and methods.

His personality was very direct, and as a young man he most enjoyed practising Xing Yi and Baji, with their methods of sending power straight into an opponent and their hard Qi Gong exercises for hardening the body. He became somewhat obsessed with Baji style kung Fu, and thought that his family system did not feature enough. As such, he sought out more himself, coming to learn 'Meng Cun' Baji from a fellow Kung Fu student in his early 20's.

He applied himself to furthering his kung Fu skills with incredible determination. He once came across one Master Tang Yu Kun practising Bear style Xing Yi Quan, and became fascinated by it. He at once approached him to try to learn these movements, but was turned away; Tan Yu Kun simply said 'I am very sorry, but I don't know any bear style Xing Yi'. Determined as An Shu Bao was to learn, he resolved to wake up very early each morning, and go to Tang Yu Kun's home to empty and clean his chamber pot before he woke. As he left, he would say 'Good bye, master', hoping to eventually earn some tuition for his commitment. 1 week, then 1 month passed, and still he had not won himself the bear style kung Fu. But his will remained strong; he persevered until, after more than a year, Tang Yu Kun finally relented. The Xing Yi master still stubbornly refused to admit knowledge of any bear style, and offered a 'different' technique as recompense, swiftly applying this technique to throw An Shu Bao to the floor. Having finally won his reward, he thanked the master and went back to his training.

An Shu Bao finished studying at school when he was 17, and found a job at the Tian Jin railway station. At the same time he helped his father with his teaching at the Tang Gu area martial arts school. When not working, he often trained with the other students in the local training ground. One time another student he was drilling joint locking with, having already successfully applied his technique and pinned An Shu Bao to the ground, proceeded to follow through with a strike, hardly checking his power at all. Getting hurt under the control of another really damaged An Shu Bao's self-respect, and he resolved to become the perfect fighter; no one would hurt him again. With this in mind, he focused for 4 years on making his body invincible. Every day he spent long hours throwing his body into trees and striking concrete pillars. He couldn't tolerate weakness anywhere; he even strengthened his fingers to the point where he could drive them inches into iron sands, where the strike of most martial artists would hardly move the upper grains. During this period, though he still worked daily, he made no contact with other students. He would only be happy to go back into the public arena once his goal was achieved.

[NB:// The strength of his fingers was witnessed first-hand by one foreign student of An Jian Qiu who was kindly invited to visit An Shu Bao in 2006, when, at the age of 89, he still proudly made glasses jump off of the surface of his hard wood table simply by stabbing his fingertips straight into the surface.]

He was never quite content with his level, and although after 2 years he had already made exceptional improvement, it was not enough for his own standards. The moment for his emergence back into the public eye came when a new teacher Gai Dong Wa arrived in Tian Jin, claiming that not one of the masters in Tian Jin had the skills to fight him. Many masters of course resolved to chase him from Tian Jin by beating him in combat, but having watched his movements they realised his skill really was very impressive, and so this outsider very quickly rose to prominence as the masters of Tian Jin withdrew their challenges. However, An Shu Bao thought his own improvement was already enough to beat this overconfident young man and so fearlessly challenged him to a fight. When they met at the training ground, they decided it would be better to face off at the local graveyard 3 days later, knowing it would be much quieter. However, word spread, and when they came to have their fight a huge crowd of the local students and their masters had gathered to watch. Gai Dong Wa's level may have been very impressive, but An Shu Bao only needed to strike once into his chest with his knife-like fingers to end the fight. As his opponent recoiled from the blow, An Shu Bao struck down into his neck and threw him to the floor. When the challenger failed to rise, his reputation in Tian Jin was already finished. 2 days later he left the city, without a word to the students he was leaving behind. Of course those that had watched the fight now knew that An Shu Bao had not wasted the 4 years he had been away from the public training ground, though they told him that now he could not possibly return to his solitary training; he ought to return to teaching.

He quickly rose to fame after his victory, both for his awe inspiring skills and for the good he had done in saving the reputation of martial arts in Tian Jin. Knowing that he had now truly returned to public life, he started addressing some of the problems he had ignored as irrelevant to his single minded training. He took the time to go to the school of any student that had caused trouble for his family and friends during these 4 years, to ensure that there would be no problem in the future and that mutual respect could now exist between them. Of course these students happily bowed to the wish of their senior Kung Fu brother, and often requested that he return to their school to teach in the future. Only 2 schools would not apologise for their wrongdoing, and rubbished his new fame as exaggerated if not untrue. He

was of course happy to defend his reputation, and so fought with the masters of each school, both in the same day, to ensure they would not offer any further insult to the An family in the future.

Having at last cleared the names of his family and friends, he turned to teaching. He was gladly welcomed by the 13th Tian Jin Kung Fu School who appointed him head coach, as his father had been before him in the Tang Gu area.

After this time, An Shu Bao and one of his Kung Fu brothers decided to develop their own drunken style Kung Fu. They did this first by simply observing their own response to alcohol and considering which methods of fighting were likely to be useful to them in this state and later by comparing their interpretation to other existing styles in order to criticise and improve on their own instincts. An Shu Bao greatly enjoyed this process of creation, and soon turned to make his own Ruan Quan ('soft fist'). In typical manner, he first resorted to introspection. He considered how his own body felt after extended meditation and stretching, when he was most relaxed, and then which of his arsenal of techniques he might be able to use in combat in such a state, or how various skills might need to be changed to be usable. At the other end of the spectrum he developed the An Wushu Qi Zhuang, being a system of techniques applying hard Qigong to fighting. An Shu Bao thought hardening the body was of vital importance to martial artists, but wanted to develop techniques to do so that were not too far removed from the realities of fighting, and as such each of the movements have direct applications in combat.

When he was around 30 years old (at the time of the war) he once helped shield a wounded soldier from the Japanese military police presence in Tian Jin and transfer him to one of his friends' homes with a view to moving him to safety in another province. But after the soldier had been saved, the Japanese discovered An Shu Bao's role in the escape, and so arrested him. The Japanese then proceeded to torture An Shu Bao extensively to try to wring the location of the soldier from him, but throughout the ordeal he continually denied any knowledge of the soldier or his escape, even though he frequently lost consciousness as his body struggled to endure the pain. Luckily the leader of the Central Wushu Association of Tianjin quickly approached the Japanese authorities, and personally assured them that An Shu Bao could not possibly have had the slightest part in the soldier's escape. Unfortunately, he was not taken at his word, and besides his appeals it took huge amounts of money to finally guarantee An Shu Bao's release. Luckily, thanks to his friend's early intervention, An Shu Bao only remained

imprisoned for just over a week, though of course the experience lived with him for the remainder of his life.

Having been released, he approached his elders in the martial arts community, including his father, to request their permission to join with a group of 8 other like-minded young martial artists to create a group, as his father and Kung Fu brothers had before them, to do good. This group was named 'Xiao Jiu Yi', in the same vein as 'Da Ba Yi'. This idea was very well received, and was seen as the perfect way to focus and direct the efforts of the new generation.

Before the Chinese communist revolution, the Dezhou railway station was owned by the Tianjin government, and so the Tianjin authorities were at leisure to instruct An Shu Bao to move to work in Dezhou as they required of him, which they did around the year 1948. He thus took his wife and children and moved to Dezhou, where he lived for over 10 years. During this time, he started to gather an extensive local student base, many of whom taught their own students as their level increased and they became older. As such, almost all of the Xing Yi, Baji, and Bagua practised in Dezhou today is descended from An Shu Bao. Towards the end of the 50's, he returned to Tianjin railway station, where he remained until his retirement.

Throughout his life, people from many different parts of China came to visit and honour An Shu Bao, even if not hoping to become his student, just out of respect for his incredible hard work and achievement. The characteristics he was best known for were his Fajin (ability to send his power into his opponents), lightning fast speed, and his hard Qigong training. He achieved a truly incomparable level in these three aspects of his Wushu, and they formed the main focus of his teaching. An Shu Bao was an incredibly serious teacher, even more so than his father before him, as he took his discipline and mind set from his own training into his teaching. This remained true even when he was teaching huge numbers of students, the number of whom exceeded 1000 towards the end of his life. During the 80's the Central Chinese Wushu Association honoured An Shu Bao as having attained excellence in teaching, which was reported in the newspapers in Tianjin with great pride.

An Shu Bao's personal contribution to both promoting and developing traditional Kung Fu was extensive, and as such he is fondly remembered by many. His honesty and integrity commanded respect from his peers, in whatever circumstances they should meet him, and his phenomenal dedication to his own training inspired a generation of students. The additions he

made to his family style were many, and his fighting methods will always be a prized component of An Wushu.

An Wushu 4th Generation: An De Sheng

An De Sheng was born in Dezhou, during his father An Shu Bao's employment at the Dezhou railway station. At the age of 6 his father began to teach him Shaolin and Liu He Quan, as was now the family tradition. At 10 years old, he moved back to Tian Jin with his father, where he moved on to learn Bajì Quan. At the age of 12 he started to learn traditional Chinese wrestling with one of his father's close friends in parallel with his Kung Fu studies. Around the age of 16 he had completed his Bajì Quan studies, and so began to learn the family internal martial arts; Xing Yi Quan, Bagua Zhang and Taiji Quan. He studied incredibly hard, and at the age of 20 had completed his studies.

As a teenager An De Sheng lived in the Zhong Shan Men area of Tian Jin, which had a population of more than 100, 000. He and 4 of his friends all practised Kung Fu very well despite their young age, and would often be seen wrestling and sparring with one another about the area. The other youths in the area very quickly learned that they were outmatched by these 5 young practitioners; previously arrogant fighters quickly changing tack and asking to train with them. This made An De Sheng's seniors very proud of the group, and they were fondly given the nickname 'The Zhong Shan Men 5 Tigers'.

The Cultural Revolution started when An De Sheng was 20 years old, and due to the change of national policy he found himself moving to Dong Bei with many other young men. He lived in a variety of different villages and towns sprawled about the borders of Chinese Mongolia over the next 20 years of his life. The newcomers being so young, the local Mongolians often bullied them, and so An De Sheng found himself defending his friends almost daily. One such case was when a particularly strong man was picking on one of An De Sheng's friends, where he was of course moved to intervene. Though his opponent had a weight and strength advantage, An De Sheng's superior wrestling skills meant the conflict could not be resolved. Eventually, An De Sheng invited his increasingly irritated opponent to really fight, as opposed to just wrestle, and he agreed. An De Sheng then attacked the Mongolian at once, using Xing Yi techniques, and almost killed him. Seeing their friend

thrown to the floor, gurgling, the locals quickly closed about An De Sheng in a frenzy, almost prepared to kill him. The intensity of their response was later explained when An De Sheng found out that the Mongolian was the nephew of the village mayor. It was only the timely intervention of head of the police (who was also of the Han ethnicity, like An De Sheng), that saved him. Observing the danger of the situation, the policeman immediately took An De Sheng into custody, angering the locals intensely. They demanded An De Sheng be handed to them, but the police were quite rightly enforcing the law; they insisted they would deal with the incident, and they did not release him. Unfortunately, the law demanded An De Sheng pay a huge amount of money to the man he had struck down (a fine plus the man's hospital fees), a debt that took over 2 years for An De Sheng to pay off.

Another time An De Sheng came into conflict with his town's wrestling champion who, having fought 3 Han Chinese at once, claimed that the Han ethnicity was weak and could not fight a strong Mongolian like himself. An De Sheng of course could not bear this insult, and so sought out this wrestler to challenge him. An De Sheng at this time was hardly more than 60 kg, and so when he came to face this wrestler of around 90 kg, he realised he would have his work cut out for him. But his skill was superior, and he managed to cope with each of the champions attempts to trip him; even when he was lifted clean off the ground, his balance was sufficient to land him safely on his feet. Confident that the variety of his skills exceeded those of the Mongolian, An De Sheng at last invited the wrestler to continue the fight with more open rules. The champion agreed that they could use whatever skill they wanted to, confident that he could deal with anything An De Sheng would try to apply. However, the next time the wrestler tried to grab him An De Sheng immediately wrapped his arms tight around the wrestler's wrist and twisted sharply to break, ending the fight at once. This champion wrestler was sadly unaware of the years An De Sheng had been practising Bajiquan and the speed and power his apparently small body could generate. A week later, An De Sheng was greatly surprised to see this champion, with his arm now in a sling, still carrying 3 sacks of potatoes on 1 shoulder where normal people usually just take 1 over both shoulders. But An De Sheng at last knew that he had earned his opponents respect when the man turned to him and stubbornly joked 'Han Chinese are so weak!', in spite of his injury.

But perhaps the most dangerous experience of An De Sheng's life occurred when he was 21 years old. The youth of his town were very excited at this time to hear that a small team would be bringing a projector to a nearby town hall to play some films for the locals. The remoteness of the town meant that such teams might come only once a year, and so this was a

very exciting opportunity for the young An De Sheng and his friends. But when it came to the day, An De Sheng was delayed at work, and was unable to set out for the town hall amongst his friends. When he at last was allowed to go, he was worried that the film was soon to start, and he would miss the event entirely. As such, instead of following the tortuous road that his friends had taken to the town hall, he resolved to run directly over the two intervening hills to save time. Getting to the film was so important to An De Sheng that he did not pause to consider that the sun would soon disappear entirely below the horizon, and as he started up out of the valley into the trees of the second hill, he suddenly realised that he could barely see his feet. As he looked around to try to reorient himself, he was suddenly stopped in his tracks by two green eyes considering him from the shadows, and saw the silhouette of a wolf sat lazily on the footpath. Though it was common knowledge that wolves roamed the mountains in Dong Bei, An De Sheng was greatly surprised to find one in the foothills so near civilisation. At any rate, he hugely regretted his carelessness for not having taken a stick or something to defend himself. The best he could do was drop to his haunches and grab 2 handfuls of dirt and stones, in the hope it might turn out useful. The wolf immediately sprang to its feet at An De Sheng's sudden movement, hackles raised. They both stood staring at one another, An De Sheng's cold sweat dripping down his face as the tension grew unbearable. The wolf meandered back and forth, imperceptibly closing the distance as An De Sheng kept slowly turning to keep the wolf in front of him. But once the wolf got to about 6 metres away, An De Sheng realised just how close it was. The wolf suddenly sprang in for the kill, darting first to one side to confuse An De Sheng, and then leaping up towards his throat as soon as its feet touched down. An De Sheng had no time to think, and he hardly darted his head out of the wolf's path before it had landed behind him and leapt at his throat again. As An De Sheng turned and saw the wolf coming up towards him, his natural response was to dart his head to the side and offer his elbow in its place, striking hard into the animal's jaw and neck. Needless to say, this caught the predator unawares, and the animal crumpled in mid-air, spinning from the force of the impact to land on its side, yelping miserably. An De Sheng immediately stepped towards the beast to deliver a hard kick into its ribs, but it had got to its feet impossibly quickly upon his approach, and so the kick only connected with the top of its back leg. However the kick was delivered with brutal force, and so, rendered unable to dart about its opponent, the wolf limped off into the trees. The adrenaline pushed An De Sheng to pursue the injured wolf into the trees, but he quickly came to his senses, realising he might put himself in further danger by walking deeper into the trees. As he relaxed a little, he realised that his fists were still clenched around the mud and stones he had grabbed. He

quickly availed himself of a long hard stick, and then hurried on, eager to complete his 'shortcut'. He finally arrived half way through the film, and had sweat so profusely in the encounter that his friends all thought he must have fallen into a stream. His Kung Fu training clearly played a vital part in this life or death situation; his body being gradually conditioned throughout his childhood to react in a useful way to danger, where it is highly doubtful that most common people could effectively fight a wolf.

At the age of 30, having already long settled into life in the north-east, An De Sheng started to teach Chinese and sports to high school students in the city of Hulun Buir, amongst the grasslands of Chinese Mongolia. He taught for 10 years, until he returned to Tian Jin in his 40's. He was very much appreciated by the locals, always teaching very carefully and seriously despite the area's remoteness, and therefore typical lax approach of officials. He also looked after these students like a father, for example when some of his female students told him they would have to stop coming to class as they were being harassed when journeying to and from class, An De Sheng personally walked them home for many weeks until the police had apprehended the young men involved. A second case was when a group of 7 men once interrupted his class to try to take one of the girls outside to talk, as one amongst their group had taken a fancy to her. The girl was evidently not interested, and An De Sheng immediately told the men to leave. When their group leader said to An De Sheng that if he intervened, him and his friends would happily use force, An De Sheng realised they could not be reasoned with, and so he taught the young men a lesson, fighting all 7 of them out of the classroom. Afterwards, the other teachers called the police, and the men were taken away. However, in the near future these young men, feeling great anger towards An De Sheng for disobeying them, plotted to destroy his home, and hurt his family, by letting off explosives around the outside of his home. This plot was luckily revealed to An De Sheng and the police by an older brother of one of the members who heard his sibling discussing the details of the plan with one of his friends. When the police went to the house of the group leader, they found that he had already laid hands on a dangerous amount of dynamite, and so he was immediately detained along with the rest of the conspirators. However, the parents of these young men pleaded with An De Sheng to have him allow their children to be tried sympathetically, fearing what a long stay in prison would do to them all. They assured An De Sheng that it was just their children's youth that made them make such a stupid decision in their anger, and An De Sheng being a forgiving man finally agreed despite the awful shock the event had given his family. The parents, after the youth's short detention, dragged them to

An De Sheng's house and forced them to kneel and sincerely apologise for their actions. Many of An De Sheng's students in this remote location had little respect for their school, but they certainly held their teacher An De Sheng in a special kind of awe.

During his 20 years in Dong Bei, An De Sheng continued to teach and practise daily. Living away from his father and the Tian Jin martial arts community, he would take any opportunity to return home and practise with his family. He was only permitted to return home sparingly, and so these visits were barely a rest for him, as he strived to learn and improve as quickly as possible, and pose questions to his incredibly learned and experienced father. He would return to Dong Bei with his new studies in mind, and work at mastering them and accommodating the principles and techniques into his reactions. At this point, he would then spread these skills to his numerous students. He also researched any martial arts he could come in contact with, and was eager to train with any practitioners that came his way; both to learn from them as well as to spread his family's style. His friendly and outgoing approach to his martial arts made him a very likeable member of the community, wherever he lived.

An De Sheng finally returned to Tian Jin in 1988, where he consolidated much of his learning under his father's supervision, as well as training with his family and childhood friends. However he only remained for 1 year, despite intending to stay longer. During this year, he helped his father with his teaching, making his father very proud because he had attained such a good level whilst training away from his family and his father's explicit guidance. But unfortunately An De Sheng had problems trying to arrange a residence permit for Tian Jin, and so had to return to his town of birth; Dezhou.

After arrival in Dezhou, he found a job with a local company to smooth over his family's settling in to this new environment and trained daily by himself. But many people wanted to study with him, being An Shu Bao's son, so 3 years after his arrival, in 1992, he began to start formally teaching students in the People's Park, near his home (where the An Wushu International Martial Arts School is now located). His intention was to teach his family style, as it had been taught to him, by allowing his dedicated students to progress through each of the martial arts as the children of the An family have always done. He also felt it very natural to bring back his family's martial arts to Dezhou where his father had once taught before him.

In 1995, some of his senior students from Zhe Jiang province invited their teacher to come back with them to their own province and open a martial arts school, knowing that their home had no teachers with An De Sheng's level and breadth of knowledge. He taught there for 3

years, and as a newcomer was once again doubted and challenged by many of the locals. But he had unshaking confidence in his ability and his family style's integrity, and so, if a little reluctantly, he easily dealt with each case as it came. Some of these challenges were quite dangerous, for example one local asked how An De Sheng's Kung Fu teaches people to respond to 'this', at once trying to shove An De Sheng, despite the fact that he was at the time sat down relaxing. He of course barely had time to respond, and was surprised by what was a very impolite gesture to a teacher. But despite the many initial doubts, at last the area came to respect An De Sheng's martial arts.

Due to a change in his job, he returned to Dezhou in 1998, and up until the present day, An De Sheng has taught Kung Fu each morning in the People's Park. The total number of students that have contacted An De Sheng throughout this period has been huge. Despite the widespread decline in interest for traditional Chinese culture amongst young men, they still must respect the skill of a true master when they see it. His habit is, and always has been, to train with his students each morning, continuing to work at his Baji Quan basics, practise Taiji forms, and walk his Bagua forms. Having retired in 2010, An De Sheng's focus is now solely upon Wushu, and he continues to help his students improve while improving himself, despite having reached 60 years of age. In the summer of 2012 he opened a school with his son An Jian Qiu in the People's Park around which to base his family's martial arts for the future, where before they just taught their students in public space. Now having established his family martial arts in Dezhou, An De Sheng's plan is just to continue to follow his heart, practising Kung Fu and spread his wisdom and experience to all interested parties, making him a revered member of the martial arts community in Dezhou.

An Wushu 5th Generation: An Jian Qiu

An Jian Qiu was born in 1981 in Chinese Mongolia. At the age of 6 his father started to teach him basics: stretching, kicking, stances and striking. At the age of 8, having moved to Tian Jin, he started to learn Shaolin, Liu He, and Baji Quan. The following year, he moved to Dezhou in Shan Dong province with his family, and at 9 years old his father had him focus his training solely on Baji Quan, studying many style specific basics and weapon forms. While attending school in Dezhou, he continued to train in the evenings, with his 2 sisters and many other local children, and despite the huge work load managed to finish studying all of

the family's external Kung Fu styles and skills by the age of 16. At this age, he was faced with 2 decisions. Continue on to high school and study over 10 hours every day, and thus effectively drop his Kung Fu practise, or he could leave school and just focus on improving his Wushu, in the footsteps of his family before him. He talked with his father for a long time, who told him that he must be responsible for his own actions, but he of course would be delighted if his son chose to follow in the family tradition and continue on to live the life of a Wushu master. At last, An Jian Qiu decided to abandon his studies, and go with his father to focus on training in his father's new school in Wen Zhou city in Zhe Jian province. Here, he helped his father teaching, and started to learn internal martial arts, starting with Xing Yi Quan, then Bagua Zhang, and finally Taiji. As he was focusing every day on Wushu, An Jian Qiu completed his learning by the age of 19, and started to practise sparring every day to develop his ability to apply his skills. His traditional fighting practise was complemented by sparring with one of An De Sheng's students who had previously learnt San Da in the army, who was of course happy to teach the eager young An Jian Qiu

The 3 years that An Jian Qiu lived in Zhe Jian province were very important for his development, both because his skills rapidly improved and because he learnt how to teach while working closely with his father every day. In this time An Jian Qiu spent a lot of time introspecting and trying to discover the root principles of each style and movement, resulting in greater understanding of what he had learnt. This habit made his father very proud, as he saw his son becoming a more critical and intelligent mind regarding fight skills and traditional Chinese Kung Fu.

At the age of 19 An Jian Qiu returned to Dezhou with his father. His father, having finished dealing with the problem that had drawn him back to Dezhou, once again had the time to accept students. This was lucky for a small group of South Koreans that were living in Dezhou at the time who were hoping to study traditional Chinese martial arts, and who managed to secure near personal classes with An De Sheng while he was not yet widely known to have returned to Dezhou. Through helping his father teach An Jian Qiu had the perfect opportunity to learn how to teach individuals or small groups efficiently, the way he himself had been taught as a child. When not helping his father to teach, An Jian Qiu would read many books about internal martial arts in pursuit of a still more comprehensive understanding of this more elusive side of Kung Fu, whilst of course continuing to practise daily.

One of the South Koreans practising with An Jian Qiu and his father was a member of one of his own countries' provincial San Da team, and had previously placed 2nd in a provincial tournament. As such, An Jian Qiu leapt upon the opportunity to expand his knowledge base of San Da-specific techniques and principles by often sparring with him, and they soon became good friends. This same student was a huge fan of Bruce Lee, as of course was the young An Jian Qiu, and was hoping to become a Wushu film actor in the future, following in his idol's footsteps. At this point, An Jian Qiu considered his own skill level, and how performances of his Baji forms would wow audiences, and thought that this career would also be perfect for him. In the autumn of 2001 this South Korean moved to Beijing to study at the Beijing Sport University, where he continued to practise Baji and San Da. Many of his classmates became interested when they saw him practising the An Wushu Baji Quan, and pressed this South Korean to invite An Jian Qiu to come to Beijing and teach. An Jian Qiu was very excited by this proposition, as it would give him a chance to come into contact with many more styles of Wushu than Dezhou had to offer, and so would aid in his personal development. He also thought to potentially take part in some drama classes, as well as try to make contacts with the relevant professionals and see if he could find a part in a film. So he decided to leave Dezhou, and started to teach foreigners at the University from Friday to Sunday, and lived in Lang Fang, a small town just outside the capital, from Monday to Thursday.

In Lang Fang An Jian Qiu lived with one of his grandfather's senior students, a close friend to his father An De Sheng. His 'Uncle's name is Shi Sen Lin, and as a child he had been a member of the 'Song Shan Men 5 Tigers' along with An De Sheng. Upon his arrival in Lang Fang, Shi Sen Lin had established his own Kung Fu school where he was quickly recognised as a very knowledgeable and respected master of Kung Fu. Shi Sen Lin had practised many different forms and movements of Bagua Zhang outside of what he had learnt from An Jian Qiu's grandfather An Shu Bao, and so this is what he focused on teaching An Jian Qiu during his stay. The help and direction Shi Sen Lin gave to him was of vital significance to An Jian Qiu's martial arts life, and it was in this time that An Jian Qiu really came to love Bagua Zhang. An Jian Qiu spent a year in this way, teaching for 3 days each week, and training intensely for the rest of the week under strict guidance of the sort his father had provided him with in Dezhou.

Shi Sen Lin has also spent much of his life learning about and practising Buddhism, and introduced many of the methods and core principles to the young An Jian Qiu. An Jian Qiu,

with the benefit of hindsight, is sure that many of the Buddhist methods for meditation made a huge contribution to the improvements he made in practising internal martial arts, for controlling his Yi and Qi and aiding in his focus to improve his Bagua Zhang. His mastery of Bagua Zhang and meditation, when added to the ease with which he could generate power and speed developed when practising Baji, meant that during this year An Jian Qiu began to find a feeling of absolute control in his mind and his body. This was a very exciting time for An Jian Qiu, as much of the advice and wisdom that his grandfather and father had endowed him with began to clarify; the borders between the principles of different styles of martial arts faded away to reveal more fundamental principles which unite Wushu. This process allowed him to join the individual components of his learning together with progressively less effort, whether in fluidly switching to a more fitting technique in combat, or by involving his Yi, rather than just brute force, in the generation of power.

In pursuit of deeper connections and further consolidation, An Jian Qiu started to wake up in the middle of the night to practise his Xing Yi and Baji Quan forms in a new manner. He would join his established feeling of fast, hard, and powerful movements to the feeling of his now especially quiet mind by standing in the familiar stances of the Xing Yi and Baji forms for extended periods of time, exploring and examining the feelings inside his body before unleashing his power and moving on to the next movement. In this way he could spend a whole day just practising the movements of one form, slowly and carefully, examining every minute detail. Another habit for An Jian Qiu at this time was to spend a whole day focusing on the mastery of just one movement. He would consider each component of the skill in turn, perfecting the sending of power, increasing the speed of the movement and truly integrating the feeling of the movement into his body to make it natural. At this time, he was really obsessed with perfection, and it was only this that motivated him to persevere despite utterly exhausting his body every day. Though he had of course been training very hard for the best part of his life, this year in Lang Fang saw a real breakthrough for An Jian Qiu, in his understanding of martial arts.

In the autumn of 2002 An Jian Qiu decided that he wanted to move away from his teaching in Beijing and expand his own knowledge, particularly of fighting techniques. As such, An Jian Qiu joined the Tian Jin Police force San Da team. Where before San Da had been just one component of his training An Jian Qiu now wanted to focus specifically on mastering this Chinese fighting style. He trained daily for a total of 5 months with the team, and needless to say his reactions and control of distance in combat were improved greatly by sparring with

these more experienced fighters. The coaches at the team of course had lots of experience teaching their art, and so could offer more technical advice to him than the practitioners he had been occasionally sparring with in the past. But despite the huge improvements he made, An Jian Qiu could not envision himself progressing like he intended to while he remained in the team, and so he returned to Lang Fang to continue his traditional studies alongside San Da and fitness training by himself. He stayed for a period of about 6 months with his Uncle, all the while focusing on blending his newly acquired fight skills with the instincts that years of traditional Kung Fu training had given him. At last he had succeeded in greatly improving the efficiency with which he could apply traditional techniques, as well as incorporating many key aspects of his traditional training, such as power generation and rooting the body into the ground, into his San Da.

Once happy with his progress An Jian Qiu applied to join the He Bei provincial San Da team, knowing that training with fighters who competed at a country wide and even international level would be a very effective way to continue to improve his skills. Of course places in a provincial team in China are coveted by huge numbers of young practitioners, and the head coach was reluctant to give An Jian Qiu the opportunity with only 5 months serious training behind him. However, An Jian Qiu's performance in sparring was sufficiently impressive to sway the coach, who at last allowed An Jian Qiu to join. Though he could not deny that An Jian Qiu was an effective fighter, the head coach was greatly surprised by the non-standard manner with which An Jian Qiu had mixed traditional skills into his fighting. Having been gifted with such a fantastic chance to improve, An Jian Qiu trained hard. Each morning the whole team would run 10 kilometres before breakfast, and then throughout the day they would practise a further 7 hours, working on specific skills, their strength and fitness, as well as sparring every day. The team members were permitted to rest after dinner, but An Jian Qiu, along with some of the more dedicated team members, would continue to practise for up to another 2 hours, simply because he was intent on immediate improvement. He would typically select just one small group of movements and repeat them over and over again, as he had practised before in Lang Fang. This extra training was also in part motivated by the fact that An Jian Qiu was comparing his level to 18 and 19 year olds that had already spent much of their life focusing on their future career in San Da, all of whom An Jian Qiu intended to exceed. Though he was of course very much focused on San Da, An Jian Qiu did not lose sight of his traditional skills, and when resting he would often contemplate at what time and place he could apply his traditional learning in combat were he outside the ring.

These contemplations were guided and informed by ever improving reactions, and a greater comfort when under the pressure of a fight situation, which his San Da training nurtured.

After 3 months of this training, An Jian Qiu had already become a dangerously effective fighter. By this time the speed of his dodging and movement in the ring were at last comparable to the other long term team members, and so the power he had developed in his Baji Quan practise was becoming increasingly effective as his team mates failed to evade his blows. An Jian Qiu was anyway a difficult opponent to adapt to, where for example his Xing Yi training had taught him to step in while dodging to simultaneously land a counter-strike. This particular habit occasionally left his opponents fearful to punch at all, and they instead just aimed to keep their distance and throw kicks. In fact, many of the fighters of An Jian Qiu's weight class would be reluctant to spar with him at all, and so he would find himself facing up to men as much as 10kg heavier than him for wrestling practise, putting him at an almost insurmountable disadvantage.

An Jian Qiu's effective if not standard method of fighting unfortunately left his coach at a loss. In his eyes, many of An Jian Qiu's choices in sparring were 'wrong', and so some tension developed as he got the impression An Jian Qiu thought he didn't need expert instruction. But this was not the case. Rather, An Jian Qiu's goal was to study modern fight methods as best he could, and then proceed to assimilate them into the already vast body of his traditional training; he of course could not ignore the many effective methods and principles his family had bestowed upon him simply to impress his coach. But unfortunately this misunderstanding led to An Jian Qiu's team mates being given priority over him when spaces appeared in the provinces 'first' team.

As An Jian Qiu's skill level increased, he thought again about finding a part in a film in order to gain public recognition for his personal achievements as well as publicising Chinese Kung Fu, as his idol Bruce Lee had done before him. He considered San Da as the ideal route to his dream; if he could compete at a national or international level and become a famous member of the national martial arts community, then it would be an easy transition into film and the public eye. So he realised he just had to continue to improve to the point that his coach could not possibly deny him promotion to the competition team. With his goal now seemingly in reach, An Jian Qiu put his health out of his mind and trained as hard as he possibly could. When faced by severe pains, he simply ignored them as surmountable failures of his body, and applied his willpower to allow him to continue. But continuing to practise without rest

meant that by the 5th month of his training severe pains had turned into long term injuries, particularly in his elbows, which he had previously damaged when practising his grandfather's drunken fist, as well as his wrists and knees. But despite this, he continued to make huge improvements week by week, so he persevered. It was only at the end of his 6th month training at the team that his injuries became nearly crippling, and when he was unable to walk after sparring his teammates at last carried him to the hospital, though even now against his will. He was immediately informed by the doctors that his fight life was over, though An Jian Qiu still assured himself he would be able to return to practise soon after leaving the hospital. But after 2 weeks of minimal improvement and a long talk with his coach, An Jian Qiu finally realised that the intensity of his training had all but destroyed his body, and he at last gave up his dream of becoming a champion fighter.

After 4 months resting completely, An Jian Qiu could think about working again, and so he accepted a position as head coach in the Yue Fei Wushu school in Lang Fang where his close friend was head master. This school was one in which students lived and ate, studying normal subjects throughout the day, and practising Kung Fu the rest of the time: mornings, evenings, weekends and school holidays. The 3 years An Jian Qiu taught at the school were very important for him; most notably, moving the focus from himself to his teaching allowed his broken body the time it needed to recover. The structure of his timetable allowed him the opportunity to spend many hours practising Qi Gong and meditation throughout his recovery, and to continue to read further into Buddhism and internal martial arts. He once again contemplated the root principles that might unite all of the styles that he had come into contact with, and in time came to realise that the ultimate goals of Xing Yi Quan, Bagua Zhang and Taiji are all the same; joining your body and mind to nature. Perhaps most importantly he came to accept that his previous dogged attempts to improve his fighting ability were all in pursuit of only a subset of the skills a martial artist should aim master, and he resolved to ensure his students would not make the same mistakes that he had.

In the Autumn of 2003, An Jian Qiu thought that his body had recovered sufficiently to practise forms again, though of course fighting was still not possible. In October of this year, An Jian Qiu discovered there was to be a national Xing Yi Quan competition in Beijing. With just 2 months to prepare, and sure that his body really was ready to start to practise again, he decided that he would join the competition, being declared qualified to enter by the Lang Fang Wushu association. In the past he had placed first in a Baji Quan competition for Lang Fang City, and also in a Bagua Zhang competition for the whole of Beijing, so he was eager

to test himself at a higher level. From the day of his entry into the competition, he recovered his training habit from 2 years before, waking at midnight to start the days training. Though he still had to teach during the day, any spare moment was spent practising his Xing Yi; he even focused on entirely controlling his body with his Yi for simple everyday movements like picking up a cup of water. For all his hard work he placed first in this competition, out of the whole of China's traditional Xing Yi Quan practitioners. He immediately contacted his father, who was of course incredibly proud, having not had a chance to join a competition in his own youth, and so was happy that An Jian Qiu could fulfil this desire and bring respect to his family's Kung Fu. Of course Jian Qiu was overjoyed himself; having practised for a total of 17 years, this win was a huge affirmation of the worth of his hard work.

In October 2004, the Yue Fei Wushu School received an invitation inviting representatives to take part in a nationwide competition for traditional Kung Fu to be held in Bao Ding city in He Bei province. An Jian Qiu, as head coach, was of course put forward to represent the school, and also to select which students would take part. As he was free to demonstrate any traditional style, he chose his Baji Quan. Because Baji was his most practised style, he told himself that he must get 1st place. With just one month to prepare, he focused huge amounts of his time each day on intelligently practising Baji hard Qigong and basics to improve his power whilst continuing to care for his injuries. Besides practising basics, he would practise his chosen form a minimum of 30 times daily. The competition went very smoothly, and he was gratefully acknowledged as a champion of Baji Quan throughout China, achieving first place. The greatest feeling was that the team members and friends of other competitors cheered him as he went to accept his medal, acknowledging the quality of his Kung Fu besides their own affiliations, simply out of respect for his personal achievement.

In late 2006 An Jian Qiu returned to Dezhou to help some of his father's students establish a new business. It took them roughly one year of devoted attention to have the company comfortably making money, in which they all had to effectively drop their training. During this period one of An Jian Qiu's friends living in Beijing, a Frenchman that had been studying at the Beijing Language and Culture University, had opened an MMA gym for the university students. Knowing that An Jian Qiu was a very skilful practitioner of martial arts, this Frenchman had been repeatedly inviting him to accept a position at the gym as assistant coach. Though he was of course happy to help his Kung Fu brothers with their company, An Jian Qiu was quite simply not achieving his personal goals by entirely dropping Wushu. So in

September 2007 he at last accepted his friend's offer and moved to Beijing, bringing his life back to centre on martial arts.

As an assistant coach at his friend's MMA gym An Jian Qiu would teach San Da classes and help with the Muay Thai and Boxing classes, where his well-developed feeling for fighting outweighed a potential lack of style specific experience. He was also of course the Gym's authority on traditional fighting and wrestling techniques, and he contributed to giving the fighters an especially broad variety of combat techniques by teaching what could only be called his very own 'Wushu', being an amalgamation of nearly 20 years personal experience. He was very glad to make contact with the fight skills of other countries through the gym and its members, giving him a valuable opportunity to appraise his own skills in the face of what other styles had to offer. But teaching a majority of foreign students also presented its own new challenges, as An Jian Qiu was obliged to speak English when explaining many complex concepts and methods in class. Realising that his English speaking level was limiting the precision with which he could communicate principles to foreigners, he made every effort to improve on it in his own time. In his 2 years working at the gym he taught in excess of 100 students, from a variety of different countries and cultures, and believes that he gave each of them a genuine insight into his family Wushu. Around this time An Jian Qiu finally abandoned his dream of becoming a film star, realising it to be ultimately selfish when compared to the huge contribution he could make to the lives and dreams of others if he instead continued to share his experience and knowledge by teaching.

In late 2009 An Jian Qiu returned to Dezhou in order to assist his father with his classes each morning, as well as start to teach local children and foreign students independently. Much of the Dezhou martial arts community knew An Jian Qiu for his successes in national competitions, and so were eager to have their children study with him. An Jian Qiu's intention in teaching has always been to divulge as much knowledge as his students are willing to absorb, teaching both San Da and traditional Kung Fu in tandem to try and instill a sensitivity for intrinsically useful training methods and skills. He would also focus on teaching the essence of Wushu to children, not emphasizing the faults of one style as opposed to another and instead encouraging them to search for something beneficial in any martial art they should make contact with in the future. This mentality is one that he himself adopts; even an established master can continue to learn and develop.

As the number of locals studying with An Jian Qiu and his father increased, and more and more foreign practitioners expressed an interest in coming to live in Dezhou to study with him, An Jian Qiu felt the need to establish his family name in a larger community, and so with his father he opened the An Wushu International Martial Arts School in the ‘Peoples Park’, Dezhou City. The intention is for the 6th generation of the An family Wushu to be created through this institute by teaching students from Dezhou, from other provinces, and ultimately from distant countries. An Jian Qiu hopes that, at last, practitioners across the world will come to appreciate what traditional Chinese Wushu really is as well as understand its place in modern society, all the while achieving great things for themselves through dedicated practise.

An Family Baji Quan Lineage

The An family’s first contact with Baji Quan was through one Wang Jing Po. Wang Jing Po had grown up in Cang Zhou in He Bei province, the city where Baji Quan was created, before moving to Tian Jin to teach in his own right in his middle age. The Baji Quan practised by Wang Jing Po was in only its fourth generation, descended directly from the style’s creator Wu Zhong through his daughter, Wu Rong, and then Wang Jing Po’s own master Liu Da Jia Zi. Liu Da Jia Zi was a very close student of Wu Rong, studying with her for many years, and his contributions to and refinements of the style were many. He taught Wang Jing Po ‘Yan Shan’ style Baji (named after a small town in Cang Zhou), as opposed to ‘Meng Cun’ Baji (which An Shu Bao also later added to his family’s Wushu).

At the time Wang Jing Po left for Tian Jin he had no family or friends to welcome him there, and so his students would often invite him to eat and stay with them. This habit continued amongst Wang Jing Po’s students as he made friends and became more famous, and as An Ji Hai settled in Tian Jin about 15 years later he similarly welcomed his master into his own home. As An Ji Hai was a chef, Wang Jing Po was especially inclined to stay at this particular student’s home, and they became very close. Of course, spending so much time with his teacher was a blessing for the young and highly motivated An Ji Hai, as Wang Jing Po had the time to teach him very carefully. At this time it was common practise for Kung Fu masters to teach their students incredibly strictly, expecting them to practise just 2 or 3 movements for a whole month before they might progress. Wang Jing Po was certainly

typical of the time, and he would respond very severely if his students made even minor mistakes after he had once told them where they had gone wrong. Wang Jing Po's inability to bear even the slightest mistake meant that An Ji Hai quickly developed an impeccable precision and refined level of skill. This period was gruelling work for An Ji Hai, and undoubtedly gave him the solid foundations that allowed him to accommodate for the many new styles he later encountered.

Over the years Wang Jing Po became especially close to An Ji Hai, even thinking of him as family, and he started to teach many of his classes in An Ji Hai's courtyard as he came to think of his student's home as his own. Wang Jing Po unfortunately died very young and childless, when in traditional Chinese Culture a man should be sent off by his son. So as the closest thing to family, An Ji Hai took the place at the front of the procession to bury Wang Jing Po, and then, amongst his fellow bereaved students, mourn the passing of a great master.

An Family Xing Yi Quan Lineage

It was Master Li Yun Ji's Xing Yi Quan that was the first incorporated into the An family Wushu, again by An Ji Hai. He taught 'Shen Xian' style Xing Yi, named after a small town in He Bei. Li Yun Ji's master, Li Cun Yi, was very famous throughout Tian Jin around the period of the Chinese revolution, and he remains an important figure in modern history for students of Xing Yi Quan. Li Cun Yi himself was a 3rd generation Xing Yi practitioner, having learnt from Liu Qi Lan who was a senior student of the creator of Xing Yi Quan, Li Ruo Neng. The name 'Xing' Yi Quan was actually a slight perversion of Li Ruo Neng's original 'Xin' Yi Quan which would crudely translate as 'Heart-Mind Fist', which is fitting nonetheless due to the aim in Xing Yi Quan of harmonising your body and mind through martial practise.

An Ji Hai first started to study with Liu Yun Ji in his 30's, and Xing Yi Quan was the first internal martial art he had contacted. Accordingly, Liu Yun Ji taught An Ji Hai just 3 standing meditations and the basic stepping movements of Xing Yi, which An Ji Hai practised for over 2 years before he was allowed to progress. Liu Yun Ji's teaching method was typical of Xing

Yi masters of the time, expecting students to dedicate hours each day to very simple and repetitive training in order to discover by themselves how to control their Yi and Qi.

Finally pleased with An Ji Hai's development, Liu Yun Ji began to teach him Wu Xing (5 shapes). He never once deviated from his impeccable standards, and so An Ji Hai had to practise these movements for hours each day for a total of 3 years before he could move on with his learning. As Liu Yun Ji's standards were repeatedly met by An Ji Hai, he began to divulge the 12 animal shapes of Shen Xian Xing Yi Quan, continuing on to teach Xiao Lian Huan and Da Lian Huan, 2 forms which link the foundations of Xing Yi Quan to the techniques of each animal. The final hand form he gave to his most committed students is called Za Shi Chui, and after this his students could progress to refine their fighting skills and develop their mind and body, as well as study the Xing Yi sword, staff and spear forms. When An Ji Hai finally completed his studies, learning how to apply this huge variety of movements, and could at last use them in sparring, he had already devoted more than 15 years of his life to Master Liu Yun Ji, making Liu Yun Ji an incredibly important tributary for the An family Wushu.

An Family Bagua Zhang Lineage

The An family was first introduced to Bagua Zhang by the famous master Gao Yi Sheng. He learnt Bagua from Cheng Ting Hua, a master of very high standing in the history of the style due to his very close relationship to his master Dong Hai Chuan, the creator of Bagua Zhang.

The inspiration for Dong Hai Chuan's creation came from Taoism; his goal was to fuse the principle of having 8 fundamental elements with traditional Chinese Wushu. The signature circle-walking of his Bagua Zhang was derived from the rituals Taoist doctors would perform when making medicines over a fire, where they would circle about the fire throughout the preparation. Many of the students of Dong Hai Chuan were themselves masters of various different styles that were excited to become a part of his invention in its infancy. As these masters studied and then passed Bagua Zhang on they of course made it their own, and so although Gao Yi Sheng's master had learnt from the creator of Bagua, his studies could already be identified as 'Cheng style' Bagua, no entirely unaltered form of the art having survived Dong Hai Chuan's passing.

But it was Gao Yi Sheng himself that made the most interesting contribution to Bagua Zhang, developing what he called Hou Tian, or 'post-natal' Bagua Zhang as separate to what his master had taught him, which he identified as Xian Tian (here simply meaning 'original') Bagua Zhang. Gao Yi Sheng was originally from He Bei, but later he moved to Beijing where he learnt the style. Having once mastered Bagua Zhang he returned to his home province to reflect on and practise what he had learnt and start to teach in his own right. He continued in this way until he was around 40, at which time he went to Shan Dong province to visit friends and travel amongst the mountains. While on his travels he met a certain Taoist named Song Yi Ren who he found practising up in the mountains in solitude. After introducing himself as a fellow martial artist, Gao Yi Sheng demonstrated his now perfected Bagua Zhang, but only to have the Taoist laugh at him. Gao Yi Sheng might have been left confused and offended had he not found Song Yi Ren to be a martial artist of the highest calibre, and he instead became his student. Over the course of several months Gao Yi Sheng learnt many skills and techniques with this Taoist, until at last Song Yi Ren claimed to have no more to teach him, and so sent him away that day with only a small book: the 'Zhou Ting Shu'. Gao Yi Sheng returned the next day and found his new teacher to be gone, and throughout the rest of his life he never met with him again.

When Gao Yi Sheng had studied and understood the book his master had left him, and felt he had mastered the new techniques he had been given, he set about fusing his new learning with his Xian Tian Bagua, creating the new style of Hou Tian Bagua. He returned home and began to teach his new style, and when he found it to be well received and saw his own level continuing to increase he decided to move to Tian Jin, thinking that he would make a unique and valuable addition to the multitude of Kung Fu masters already teaching there. When he first arrived he began teaching in the central plaza, amongst playing children as well as other serious martial arts practitioners. After only a short period many of the locals had realised that his skill was something special, and soon many of Tian Jin's well established masters were arriving to learn from him. As his reputation spread the number of people hoping to study with him exploded, but Gao Yi Sheng certainly knew the worth of his teaching and his training fee was a whole month's wages for common workers, and so unfortunately his students were effectively restricted to rich merchants and government workers.

One such government worker lucky enough to become a student of Gao Yi Sheng was An Ji Hai. When An Ji Hai first started to study Bagua he was already a very knowledgeable master of Kung Fu, but he respected the incredible achievements of Gao Yi Sheng, and over the

years he developed a very strong relationship with his master and became one of his most skilful students. As both Xian Tian and, particularly, Hou Tian Bagua were introduced to An Ji Hai so soon after their creation, the An family has a very intimate connection to this particular style of Kung Fu.

An Family Taiji Quan Lineage

The man that introduced Taiji to An Ji Hai was a close friend named Qu Ke Zhang. He was fondly referred to as Dao Ye in Kung Fu circles, ‘Dao’ meaning Taoist and ‘Ye’ simply being a polite form of address to elders.

Qu Ke Zhang was an orphan that grew up in Wu Qing, a town in Tian Jin, and was looked after as a child by an old eunuch that had been cast out of the imperial palace as the Qing dynasty fell. But when Qu Ke Zhang was only a young teenager his guardian passed away, so he went to the Jing Yi An temple in Tian Jin to study as a Taoist monk.

The head of the temple was known as Master Fang, and taught his students about culture and philosophy in tandem with internal qigong exercises for health and traditional martial arts. Qu Ke Zhang particularly enjoyed learning a very old style of Taiji that had been brought to the temple by Taoists from the Wudang mountains long before, and he excelled at the very intricate Taiji sword forms.

In this period the Jing Yi An temple was the largest Taoist temple in Tian Jin, and so during Qu Ke Zhang’s time there many great and venerable Taoists visited, some staying for months at a time. As was tradition, many of these spiritual leaders practised martial arts besides their studies, and so over the years Qu Ke Zhang had the opportunity to learn a number of different styles, as well as hear the wisdom of countless old masters, and so came to have a very well rounded understanding of Chinese Wushu. Sometime later, the son of the great master Cheng Ting Hua, Cheng You Long, began to visit Tian Jin to teach Bagua Zhang. Each time he stayed in Tian Jin Cheng You Long would live in the Jin Yi An temple, taking advantage of the serene environment to practise meditation and qigong. Qu Ke Zhang was of course incredibly honoured to have such a reputable master live in the same temple as him, and so took any opportunity to learn from him. As Cheng You Long continued to return to Tian Jin year after year, so Qu Ke Zhang’s Bagua Zhang became more and more impressive.

With Qu Ke Zhang's improvement came an even greater desire to learn, and so when the great master Gao Yi Sheng moved to teach in Tian Jin he leapt at the opportunity to become his student. It was as a student of Gao Yi Sheng that Qu Ke Zhang first met An Ji Hai, who came to be like a brother to him. Gao Yi Sheng thought that An Ji Hai's Xing Yi Quan was of a very high level, and that Qu Ke Zhang's Taiji was similarly impressive, so as they progressed in their studies he encouraged the two of them to share their knowledge with one another. He particularly urged Qu Ke Zhang to teach his beautiful sword forms, recognising a real talent in the young Taoist. Despite An Ji Hai's already broad experience, Qu Ke Zhang taught him just as he had learnt, giving him a variety of simple movements to be systematically repeated for hours on end until he achieved perfect precision and control of the weapon. Following his instruction to the letter, An Ji Hai gradually gained his expertise with the sword, and for the rest of his life it was by far his favourite weapon.

As a close friend, Qu Ke Zhang's influence on An Ji Hai went past martial arts, and he was responsible for introducing him to many important components of Chinese heritage such as: traditional Chinese medicine, Taoist internal Qigong and meditation, and ancient philosophy. As such Qu Ke Zhang gave many unique contributions to the An family through his rich friendship with An Ji Hai.