

# Introduction to Tien Shan Pai

Celestial Mountain Style Kung Fu

天山派



Grandmaster  
Huang, Chien-Liang  
and  
Shi-Fu Ian Chisholm

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**Tien Shan Pai**  
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by  
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Softcover ISBN 978-1-938585-03-6  
Hardcover ISBN 978-1-938585-04-3  
LCCN 2012020778  
Printed in the United States of America

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**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Huang, Jianliang.  
Introduction to tien shan pai : celestial mountain style kung fu/ by Grandmaster Huang, Chien-Liang and Shi-fu Ian Chisholm.  
p. cm.  
ISBN 978-1-938585-04-3 (hardcover) -- ISBN 978-1-938585-03-6 (softcover)  
1. Kung fu. I. Chisholm, Ian. II. Title.  
GV1114.7.H83 2012  
796.815'9--dc23

2012020778

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## Dedication

This book is dedicated to my Shi-Ye, Wang, Chueh-Jen,  
63rd Generation Tien Shan Pai Grandmaster.

Respectfully,  
Huang, Chien-Liang  
64th Generation Tien Shan Pai Grandmaster





## Introduction to Tien Shan Pai (天山派)

When my Shi-Ye (師爺)<sup>1</sup>, Tien Shan Pai (天山派) 63rd Generation Grandmaster Wang Chueh-Jen (王珪鑫), accepted me as his formal disciple in 1981, he gave me the Dao (道) name, Chien-Liang (乾量). At that time I felt very honored, but also apprehensive, because my Shi-Ye was very particular about choosing formal disciples. Therefore, I felt unsure about what to expect. Other advanced students, after learning certain required curriculum components, had been recognized by my Shi-Ye as disciples. However, they did not go through a formal ceremony in recognition of their status.

Since becoming the Tien Shan Pai 64<sup>th</sup> Generation disciple, I have felt tremendous pressure and a great burden to learn as much as I possibly could. In this manner, I felt I would be able to successfully pass the torch of Tien Shan Pai to future generations.

In 1981, when my Shi-Ye came to the United States for the first time, he stayed with my family and me in Cincinnati, Ohio for three months. On his second visit, around 1982, he stayed with my classmate, Master Tony Lin. When he visited for the third time, around 1985, my Shi-Ye spent time with my classmate, Grandmaster C.C. Liu, at his school, and then came to stay with me. At that time, however, I lived in a small apartment with my wife and two sons, and had insufficient room to accommodate my Shi-Ye comfortably. Therefore, for a few months, he spent his nights at my disciple's house, and his days in my school. During these months, I spent an average of ten hours a day with my Shi-Ye. His final visit to the United States would come in 1989, for the Sixth World Kuoshu Tournament in Las Vegas, Nevada.

My goal in writing this book reflects what I have strived to do continuously for many years - promote Tien Shan Pai. It is intended to be an introduction to the style, and provide people with an overview about what the style has to offer. It is not, however, intended to share all elements of the discipline. Some information has traditionally been reserved only for formal disciples, and will continue to be.

<sup>1</sup>In traditional northern Chinese martial arts styles, the term "Shi-Ye" was favored when referring to one's teacher. The more common "Shi-Fu" was used by northern style practitioners to refer to another teacher or monk. "Shi-Fu" was also used more commonly among southern style practitioners, according to Master Wang.

I would like to thank my students and friends who have helped me write this book, particularly my disciple, Ian Chisholm, whose Dao name is Yuan Wu (元武). My disciple Dr. Wayne Hunt, also known as Yuan Kuo (元國), took the photographs that accompany the text, and my grand student, Micah Collins, helped design the cover of the book, which features a painting done by my Shi-Ye. Ms. Shelly Neill designed the final layout of this work. I would also like to thank Grandmaster Chang, Fu-Chen (張福城), Jan Staples, and Katherine Chen for their valuable contributions to this project. Finally, my thanks go to Mr. David Cater, the editor of *Inside Kung-Fu* magazine, who encouraged me to write this book.

- Tien Shan Pai 64<sup>th</sup> Generation Grandmaster Huang, Chien-Liang (黃乾量)



## History of Tien Shan Pai

Many martial arts origin stories have traditionally been a combination of verifiable history and enigmatic legend, and the system known as Tien Shan Pai (天山派) is no exception. As with many great cultural treasures, its roots were originally expressed through the traditions of oral history. As a result, most definitive evidence of the style's history and development is unclear, and its account of origin has been subjected to a certain degree of variation over many years. From one generation to the next, however, a consistent story of the style's legendary beginnings has been related time and again.

It is believed that the style of Tien Shan Pai originated in the Xin Jiang province (新疆省) of northwestern China among the mountainous terrain that dominates the region. Translated literally as "Heaven's Mountains" or "Celestial Mountains," the Tien Shan (天山) mountain range consists of steep, often snow-covered peaks, which descend sharply to fertile green plains frequently used by herdsman as grazing pastures for their animals. While the valleys and rolling hills below these mountains have provided adequate sustenance for the inhabitants below, the mountains exist in sharp contrast, covering over seven thousand square kilometers and including nearly eight thousand glaciers. Due to their harsh nature, several of these peaks remain unexplored to this day. It is said that, within this forbidding terrain, Tien Shan Pai was born.

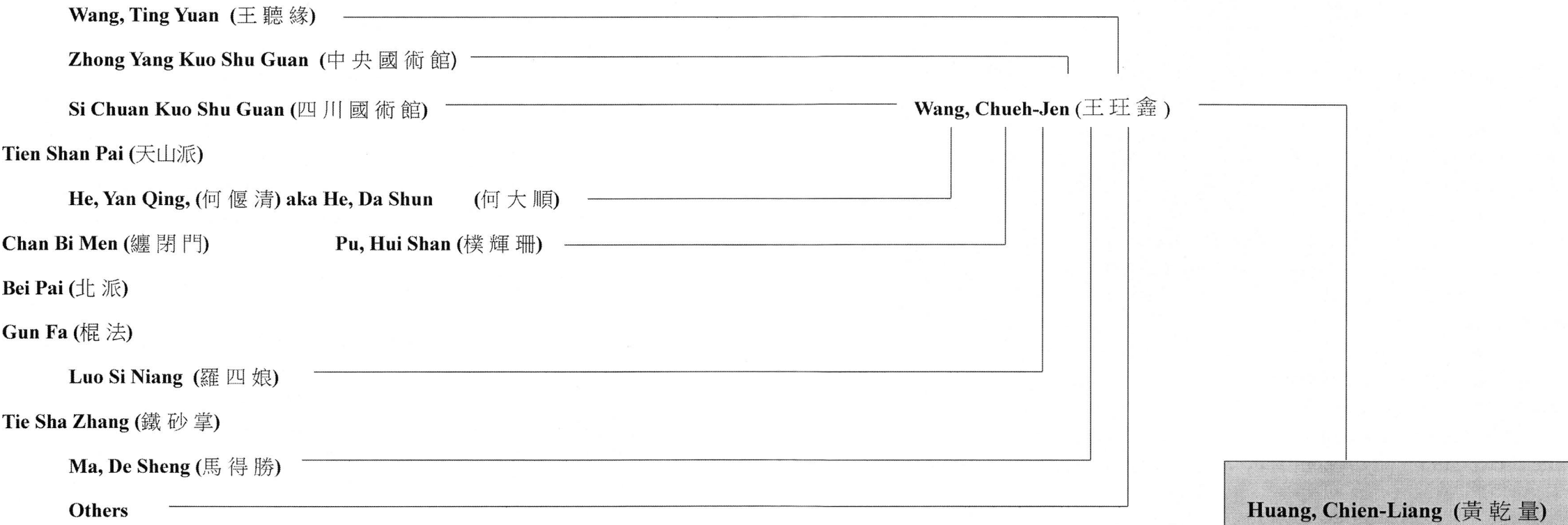
The following explanation reflects the story of Tien Shan Pai as told to my Shi-Ye (師爺), 63rd Generation Grandmaster Wang, Chueh-Jen (王珪鑫) by his Shi-Ye, 62nd Generation Grandmaster He, Da-Shun (何大順), also known as He, Yan Qing (何偃清). As Grandmaster Wang emphasized the value of practice over discussion, he spoke little to his students of history or philosophy. Even when I inquired of my Shi-Ye as to the age of the style, he was unable to provide a definitive answer. He maintained that history was secondary in importance to the real value of the martial arts, which was to practice in order to develop a mature understanding of the system's principles. The following "origin story," however, he relayed to me, just as it had been told to him many years earlier by his own Shi-Ye.

*A young herdsman who lived in a village at the base of the mountains was engaged in a search for stray animals, and wandered far from territory that looked familiar to him. As the grassy plains began to yield to alpine forests, the boy realized he was lost, but eventually came upon an old man with a long, white beard. As the elderly man drew near, the boy asked him for directions back to the village. Upon his return, the boy described the encounter to his mother, who informed him that he must have spoken with Tian Shan Lao Ren (天山老人), a man renowned in the area for his martial prowess. With his mother's encouragement, the boy struck out from the village once again, in the hopes of locating the man and learning martial arts under his guidance.*

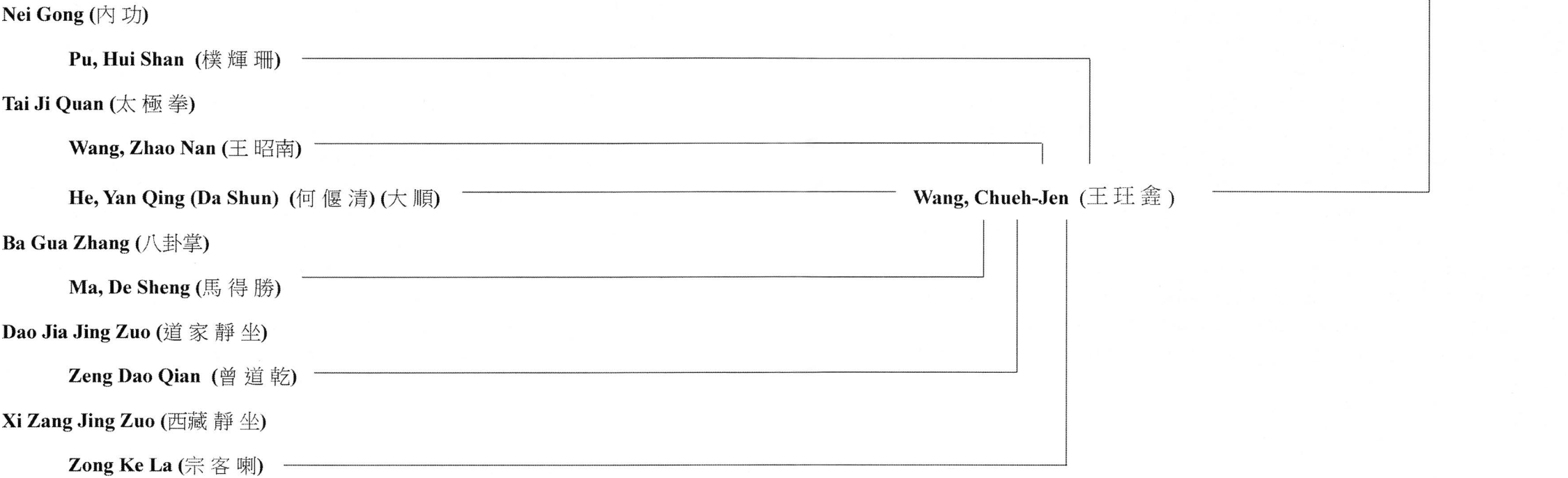
*Journeying deep into the surrounding mountains, the boy continued his quest, but failed to find the man or his fabled temple before nearly reaching the point of exhaustion. Kneeling beside a mountain stream in an effort to quench his thirst, the boy was taken aback at the sight of a temple hidden among snow-covered peaks reflected in the clear water. Inspired to continue his search, the boy rose and trekked even deeper into the mountainous terrain. After a long and arduous journey, the boy finally came upon the temple he sought. However, his efforts seemed all for naught, when the very man he had so desperately searched for refused to accept the boy as a disciple. Temple law forbade its residents from imparting their skills to outsiders, so they ordered the boy to return to his village. Undaunted, and perhaps strengthened in his resolve after such a difficult passage into the mountains, the boy ignored the order, and instead, knelt in the snow before the temple doors.*

*Determined to prove his strength of character, the boy remained there throughout the night, but he eventually succumbed to the harsh elements and fell into a state of unconsciousness. Those who lived at the temple came upon the boy in the morning, kneeling and frozen in the snow, and mercifully decided to bring him into the temple in an effort to revive him. When they lifted him from the icy ground, however, the skin from his knees tore away, remaining frozen to the earth. Sensing the boy's resolve, Tien Shan Lao Ren himself named the boy Hong Yun (紅雲) or "Red Cloud" in light of the red mist which swirled and rose above the bloody flesh of his knees. Hong Yun lived at the temple until he was an adult, all the while practicing the martial skills taught to him. Eventually he departed, returning to the villages far below, where he began sharing his newfound knowledge and skills with dedicated students. In this regard, Hong Yun Zu Shi (紅雲祖師) is considered the founder of the Tien Shan Pai system.*

External Styles (外家)



Internal Styles (內家)



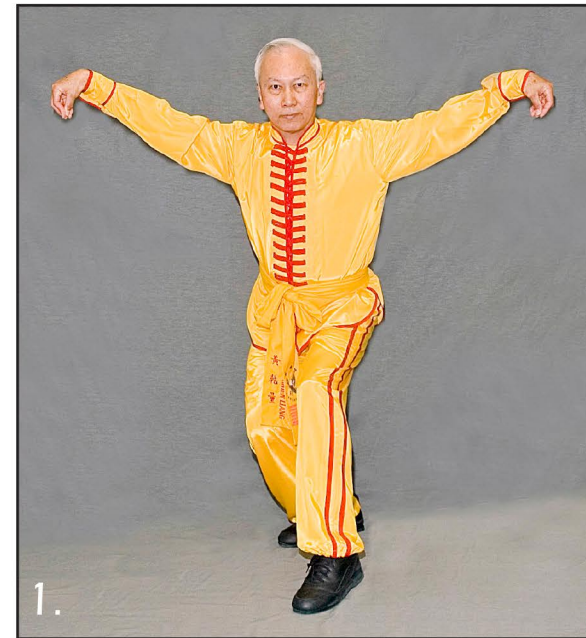


### Characteristics of Tien Shan Pai

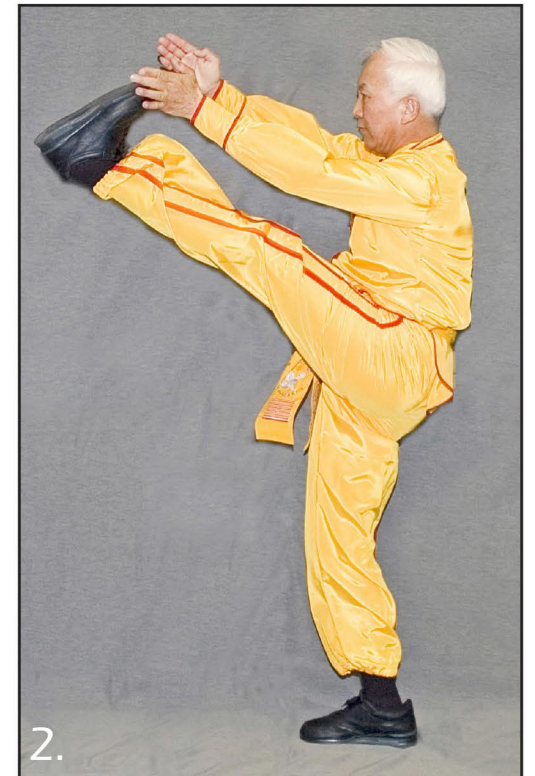
The characteristics of Tien Shan Pai (天山派) reflect its northern Chinese origins and development. Low stances, techniques that feature long reach, and high kicks executed in rapid combinations are all employed within the system's forms. Two-person sets, weapon forms, and empty hand forms such as Mei Hua Quan (梅花拳) or Plum Flower Fist, Yuan Yang Pu (鴛鴦譜) or Mandarin Duck, and Xiao Hong Quan (小紅拳) or Little Red Boxer, all teach the practitioner to use full range of motion and deliver smoothness of force in technique. These forms also contain a feature known as yin shou (音手), which literally translates as “sound hand.”

Seen in many styles, yin shou refers to the rhythmic slaps and thuds produced during forms practice as the hands and feet strike the floor, the practitioner's body, and each other. When performed correctly, the result is a precise, crisp rhythm that demonstrates techniques' power while also conditioning the body for contact. Forms also provide a means to develop the footwork that is so crucial to Tien Shan Pai. The style emphasizes approaching from the side, using angular stepping, rather than only utilizing straight-line attacks. In this manner, the Tien Shan Pai fighter is able to evade attack, or seemingly disappear, only to reappear next to, or even behind his opponent to launch a counter-attack. Thus, this attribute of the style is known as “mi zong bu” (迷踪步), or “lost step” footwork. This footwork is also trained through the practice of “san da” (散打) or “one-step fighting,” which teaches a core of ten fighting techniques, later developed through more of a free-fighting approach.

Tien Shan Pai is also a diverse, complete system rather than an eclectic collection of techniques. In a letter to me, Supreme Master Wang once referred to qin na (擒拿), nei gong (內功), and fighting as the “three treasures” of Tien Shan Pai. Additionally, martial qi gong (武術氣功), shuai jiao (摔角), qin na (擒拿) and power training for combat, such as tie sha zhang (鐵砂掌), or iron palm, and cao long zhuang (草龍樁), or grass dragon pole, are all also significant components of Tien Shan Pai training. Each of these attributes will be discussed in further detail later in this book.



1. A posture from Mei Hua Quan.



2. The sound produced by the foot striking the hands is known as “yin shou.”



3. Yielding to an opponent's strike and preparing to attack from the side.