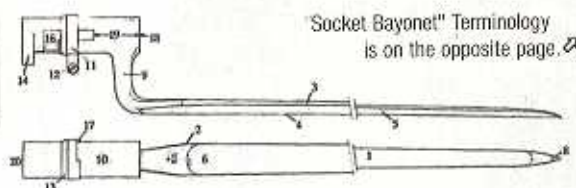
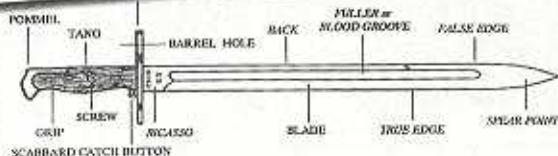


# Xingyi BAYONET

By Dennis Rovere (photos by Rick Strang)



## "Ready ... with rifle ... thrust!"

Although the air was chilly, sweat poured from the instructor candidates. The otherwise calm morning was broken by the shout of orders and clash of wood and steel. Forging body and spirit, each trainee focused his energy on the task at hand – maximizing his proficiency in close combat. This proficiency was vital for adapting traditional martial arts and the strategy of Sun Tzu to 20th century warfare. In this particular unit of the Chinese army, the traditional martial art of choice was Xingyi quan.

1. Thrusting techniques.
2. "Floating" or "flowing" techniques (i.e., continuous movement).
3. Two-man (prearranged) attack and defense exercises.
4. Free-style two-man training (i.e., free-fighting/weapons sparring).

## Modern Transformation

Known primarily as an unarmed combat system, Xingyi also utilizes a range of traditional weapons. For the Chinese infantryman, one of the primary weapons of defense is his rifle and bayonet. Drawing upon combat-proven techniques from the Xingyi spear, some units transformed this "archaic" weapon into use with its modern military counterpart.

In the Chinese army, Xingyi rifle and bayonet training was broken down into four distinct yet interrelated stages or phases (military Xingyi "empty hand" training was taught in only three stages). Each stage is progressive with one level of technique developing from or building upon techniques learned in previous stages. In order of training these stages are:

## Attack Only

Stage one consists of blocking and thrusting techniques that only involve forward movement. No backward or withdrawing steps are either taught or allowed. This "attack only" mentality or approach to training instills in the new recruit the goal of "killing the enemy."

In combat training of this type, a distinction is made between the terms "withdrawing" and "retreating." Superficially both are simply seen as "pulling back." However, withdrawing connotes (at least in this context) moving from one position of strength to another position of strength. The purpose of these actions is to draw in the opponent and trap him for the counterattack. Retreat on the other hand implies the loss of your advantage in



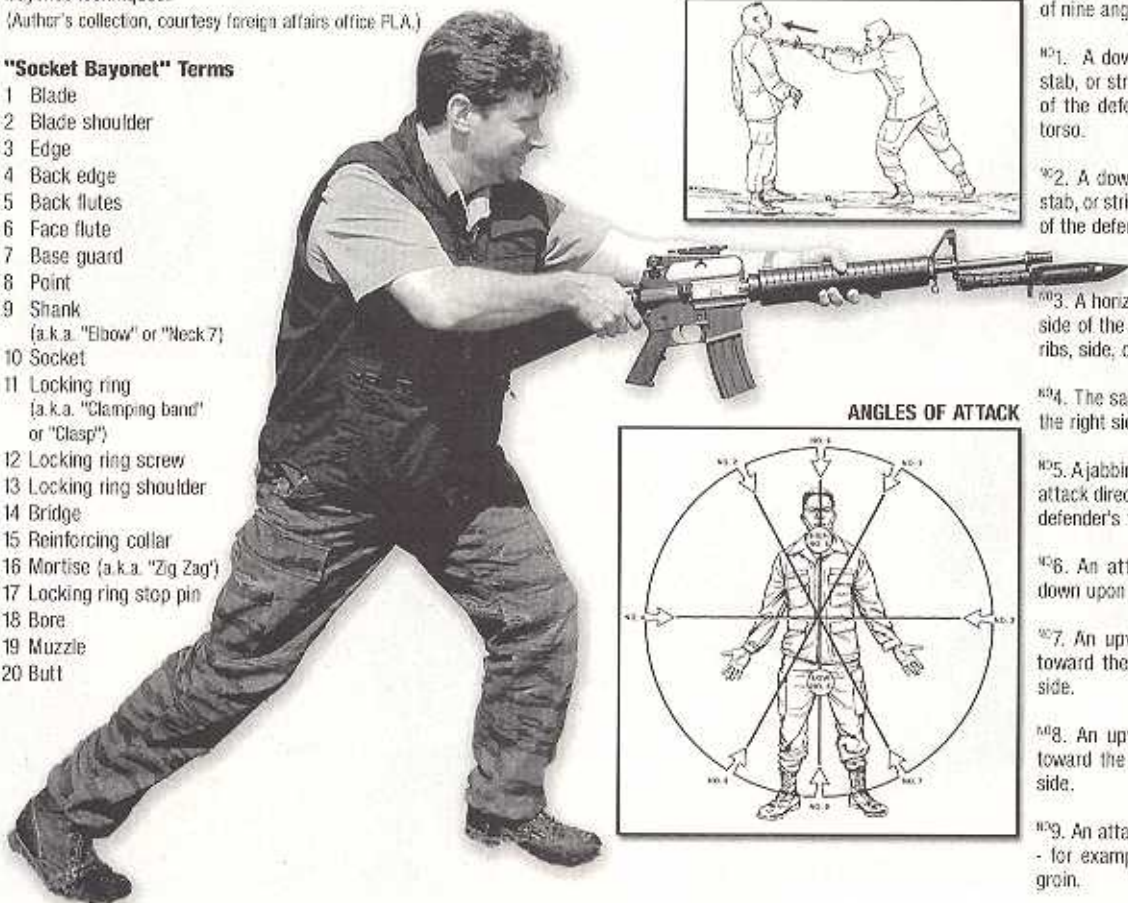
#### Historic Photos:

People's Liberation Army soldiers training against Western style rifle and bayonet techniques.

(Author's collection, courtesy foreign affairs office PLA.)

#### "Socket Bayonet" Terms

- 1 Blade
- 2 Blade shoulder
- 3 Edge
- 4 Back edge
- 5 Back flutes
- 6 Face flute
- 7 Base guard
- 8 Point
- 9 Shank  
(a.k.a. "Elbow" or "Neck")
- 10 Socket
- 11 Locking ring  
(a.k.a. "Clamping band" or "Clasp")
- 12 Locking ring screw
- 13 Locking ring shoulder
- 14 Bridge
- 15 Reinforcing collar
- 16 Mortise (a.k.a. "Zig Zag")
- 17 Locking ring stop pin
- 18 Bore
- 19 Muzzle
- 20 Butt



Deep lunge favored by Western military forces.



#### ANGLES OF ATTACK

As indicated by western military theory, can be directed along one of nine angles of attack.

<sup>NO1</sup>. A downward diagonal slash, stab, or strike toward the left side of the defender's head, neck, or torso.

<sup>NO2</sup>. A downward diagonal slash, stab, or strike toward the right side of the defender.

<sup>NO3</sup>. A horizontal attack to the left side of the defender's torso in the ribs, side, or hip region.

<sup>NO4</sup>. The same as <sup>NO3</sup> angle, but to the right side.

<sup>NO5</sup>. A jabbing, lunging, or punching attack directed straight toward the defender's front.

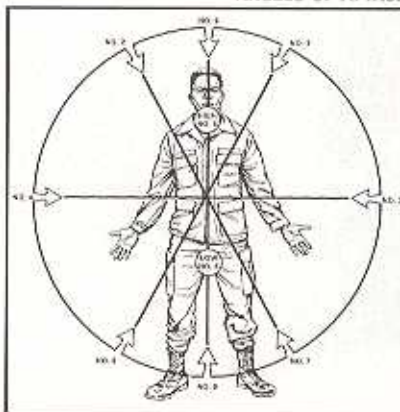
<sup>NO6</sup>. An attack directed straight down upon the defender.

<sup>NO7</sup>. An upward diagonal attack toward the defender's lower-left side.

<sup>NO8</sup>. An upward diagonal attack toward the defender's lower-right side.

<sup>NO9</sup>. An attack directed straight up - for example, to the defender's groin.

#### ANGLES OF ATTACK



the fight and a need for you to escape. Retreat, at least in this context, is usually more disorganized and done without adequate protection.

Stage one also effectively teaches you how to close distance and move inside the opponent's range of motion — a tactic especially useful against another long weapon such as an infantry officer's sword or sabre. In fact, the Chinese found Xingyi particularly effective in countering the rifle/bayonet and sword techniques taught to the Japanese army prior to and during World War II.

## Deny the Enemy

Stage two teaches both forward (advancing) and backward (withdrawing) movements. Here the strategy of combat is developed. Emphasis is placed upon linking actions, combinations of techniques, and level changes that, as the Chinese say, "Deny the enemy an avenue of escape."

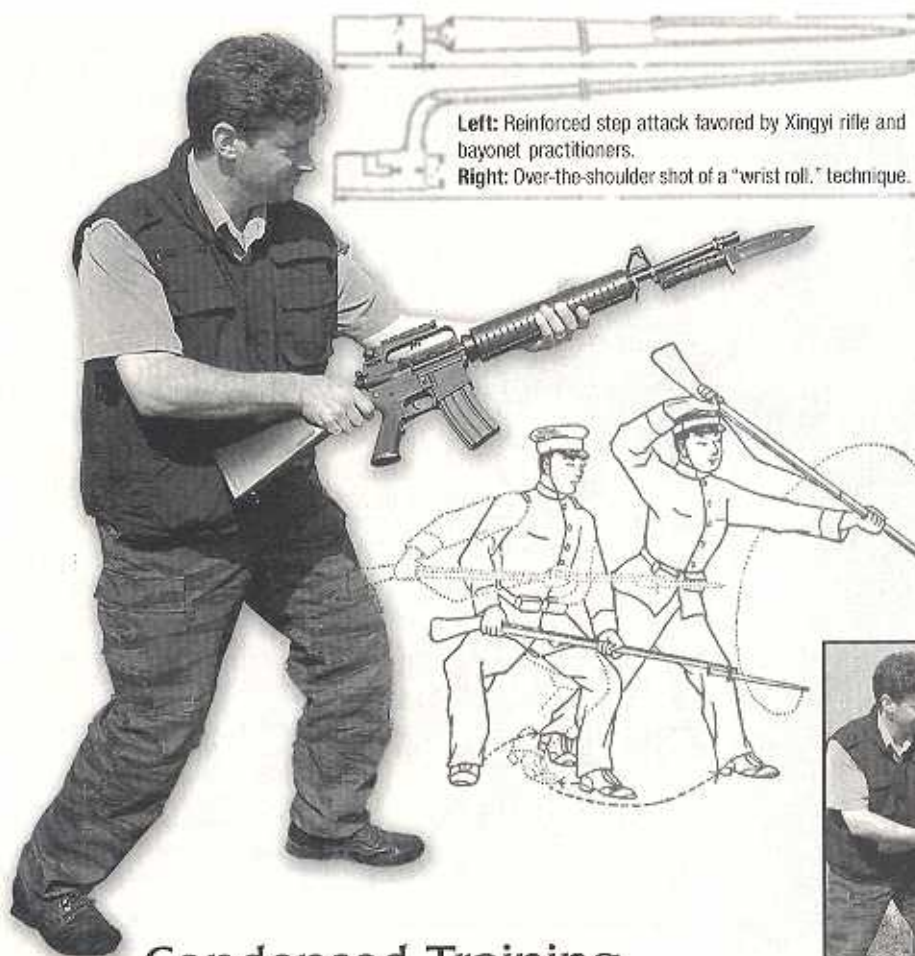
Stage three and stage four both utilize a wooden rifle in training. Additionally, stage four (and portions of stage three) incorporates chest protectors, facemasks, and gloves — similar in appearance to kendo armor.

As a sidenote, in the late 1970s I observed a group of Taiwanese soldiers performing basic rifle and bayonet exercises. All were dressed in green combat fatigues/Battle Dress Uniforms and wore kendo-style face and upper chest armour, complete with extra padding over the heart. The training I observed resembled more Japanese *jukendo* (sport rifle and bayonet fighting) than methods that would be employed in Xingyi style combat. Emphasizing only straight thrusts and simple blocks, the training was conducted on the parade ground. Given that the Taiwanese were, at this time, heavily under the influence of the US military, I would assume (but did not observe) that they also practiced standard methods of rifle and bayonet combat — including the obstacle course and attacking practice dummies.

Exercises in stage three are designed to develop hand-eye coordination. Soldiers perfect angles of attack (i.e., how to create an opening or exploit an opening) as well as angles of defense (i.e., how to place your weapon and body to maximize mechanical advantage). Practitioners in this third stage follow prearranged patterns and often — at least initially — counting in unison sets the timing for each exercise.

The "free fighting" of stage four is not simply a "pugil stick slug fest" (as is much of Western rifle and bayonet fighting). The wooden rifles are not padded (except for a light covering on the tip) and fighting is designed to develop the recruit's ability to deliver a quick succession of crippling blows — including slashes, thrusts and strikes. Each individual's performance in this stage is scored and evaluated.





**Left:** Reinforced step attack favored by Xingyi rifle and bayonet practitioners.  
**Right:** Over-the-shoulder shot of a "wrist roll" technique.



**Left:** Xingyi Fist & Weapon Instruction  
 (Drawing courtesy of the English edition published by Rovers Consultants International Inc.)

**Bottom:** Defender rolls wrist to control attacker's thrust.



## Condensed Training

Because this type of training has to be accomplished in a short period of time, not all of the spear/bayonet techniques can be taught. Although all of the 12 animal forms have corresponding spear techniques, the Chinese army units using Xingyi tended to concentrate only on those methods directly relating to the "five fists" and "linking form."

## Comparing Basics

The adaptation of empty hand fighting systems for use in rifle and bayonet training is not unique to China. If we look at several US and Canadian military manuals from after World War I (circa 1918), we can see attempts to relate bayonet fighting with the techniques and movements of Western style boxing. While some parallel could be drawn between Western and Chinese approaches to the task, it is easy to see that any comparison would be superficial. Besides the use of "staged training" and forms, the actual Xingyi rifle and bayonet techniques differ significantly from modern Western equivalents of the time. This is immediately apparent even in the most basic stepping and thrusting movements.

Western style bayonet fighting traditionally teaches soldiers to lunge when executing either long or short thrusts [see page 45]. Often, to gain greater reach, the heel of the rear foot will even leave the ground. Resembling a fencer's lunge, this technique does enable the soldier to obtain a good reach. Its downfall, however, lies in the fact that — unlike sport fencing — close combat does not occur on a dry, flat surface. Field

conditions in war are "less than ideal." Controlled attack and recovery in real-life settings (e.g., mud, gravel, deep brush, ice, debris, etc.) becomes extremely difficult from a deep lunge position. (Chinese soldiers of the PLA still practice bayonet sparring on uneven terrain; elevated narrow bridges; and in all sorts of weather and ground conditions.)

In contrast, Xingyi rifle and bayonet methods have no lunge. Like their unarmed counterparts, armed Xingyi exponents always use a reinforcing step when thrusting [see above]. Such movement accomplishes four goals:

1. It provides stability and maneuverability.
2. It allows the weight of the body/momentum to be transferred through the rifle and into the target.
3. It avoids the over-extension and resulting exposure created by the deep lunge.
4. It assists in disrupting the enemy's range of attack.





#### ↑ "Knock" & Counterattack:

1) Opponent lunges. Defender blocks attack by using a "knocking" action.

2) Defender steps in and counters with a butt stroke (disengaging weapons allows the opponent the opportunity to withdraw his weapon).

3) Opponent counters butt stroke with thrust to throat or armpit.



#### Vertical Sweeping Action. (Ti Guai Lei):

1) Opponent lunges. Counter by using a vertical, circular action to carry his weapon past your body.



2) Counter slash by dropping your bayonet straight down into his face.



3) Follow up slash with a thrust to the mid-section.



## Rolling the Wrist

When performing either blocks or short thrusts, Xingyi emphasizes rolling the wrist of the lead hand – an action similar to the fist rotation in *ts'uan*. Rolling the hand in this manner increases your leverage by bringing your elbows closer to your body. This in turn can be used to control the movement and position of your opponent's weapon [see p.46 "wrist roll"]. In contrast to this, the Western trained exponent is simply taught to "knock" the enemy's weapon out of the way and execute a counterattack before he has an opportunity to recover [see above].

While "knocking" does move the enemy's weapon out of the way, it does not control his weapon's rate or position of recovery prior to your counterattack. ("Knocking" also prevents you from "feeling" your opponent's reaction.) In Xingyi, weapons in contact tend to remain in contact. This allows you to accurately gauge your opponent's movement/resistance – much in the same manner as the *t'ai shou* exercise of *t'ai chi ch'uan*.

## Ti Guai Lei 鐵拐子

Western soldiers are taught to use the butt of their rifles to stroke or smash their opponent. This is a totally offensive technique similar to a punch or elbow strike. Xingyi, on the other hand, does not employ this in its repertoire of techniques.

By this I do not insinuate that the Chinese would never use a "butt stroke." In combat you have to exploit every opportunity presented to you. However, one of the primary strategies of Xingyi is to always try to move from one position of protection to another position of protection. Understanding this, the idea of lifting the shoulder and thereby exposing your side and armpit in order to strike becomes a "less than desirable" option.

Although the so-called *ti guai lei* [p.46 Xingyi illustration] posture superficially resembles a "butt stroke," it is neither executed nor employed in the same manner [this technique, called *ti guai lei* by Huang Po-Nien, and others], takes its name from the crippled member of the eight immortals in Chinese mythology. The back and forth deflecting action in this maneuver is reminiscent of the motion of the single crutch he uses in walking.

Xingyi-trained soldiers prefer instead to use the cutting edge and point of the bayonet (even in close quarters) as their primary killing weapon. With this strategy in mind, *ti guai lei* becomes a "means to an end." With it, you are able to redirect your opponent's weapon past your body while simultaneously setting him up for a killing blow – all in one continuous movement.

Although *ti guai lei* is not limited by distance (i.e., it can be used in extreme close quarters as well as against longer range attacks), it is usually employed in only two instances:

[\* see Huang Po-Nien, *Hsing-I Fist and Weapon Instruction*, Complete English translation by Chow Hon Huen; edited by Dennis Rovere, Rovere Consultant International Inc.]





**Cutting the joints immediately incapacitates or cripples the opponent!**



#### Opponent Charges: Vertical Sweeping Action. (Ti Guai Lei).

- 1) Opponent charges. Counter with a vertical movement to carry his weapon past your body.
- 2) Continue the turning action with your hip/waist and strike your opponent with your rifle butt.
- 3) Retract your weapon and finish with a slash or thrust to your opponent's throat/face.

1. Your opponent executes a thrust. The vertical motion of your rifle butt carries the attacker's blade past your body. You immediately follow up with a downward slash and thrust.

(p.47 Vertical Sweeping Action; *Ti Guai Lei*)

2. Your opponent charges. Again, the vertical motion moves his weapon past you. You immediately follow up with a strike using the butt of your rifle coupled with a hip/waist turn. Next, you deliver the finishing moves – a slash and thrust in quick succession. (Above: Vertical Sweeping Action; *Ti Guai Lei*)

## Joint Attacks

Another Xingyi bayonet tactic involves stabbing joints. Joints are considered primary targets for bayonet thrusting attacks for several reasons.

1. Cutting the joints immediately incapacitates or cripples the opponent – as well as shocking his system.
2. Joints are connectors (e.g., shoulder; groin/hip areas) that provide mobility to the limbs. Because they have to be free to do their "job" they tend not to be covered by protective gear or clothing.
3. The range of motion of joints is less than that of the corresponding limbs. Because they are more stationary, they tend to be easier targets.

Recognizing the vulnerability of the joints, Xingyi utilizes what is known as circular *wiping motions* for blocking, deflecting and countering attacks to these areas.

When I began my Xingyi training in the early 1970's, I was curious as to what advantage this style had over other Chinese martial arts. My teacher Col. Chang Hsiang Wu [who taught military strategy and Xingyi at the Central Military Academy at Nanjing] explained that Xingyi took advantage of a "uniform and progressive" approach to training. Other than knowing clearly the characteristics of each weapon

(e.g., blades cut), there is very little difference in application of the techniques from empty hand to armed combat. In fact, a practitioner viewing "armed" Xingyi in action could easily determine which fist form each weapon technique was derived from or related to. This clarity means that any student learning the system can progress from unarmed to armed fighting with the minimum of difficulty. Anytime, however, you see "so-called" Xingyi weapons forms – whether they are sword, bayonet, baton, etc., that seem too far removed from the simple, straightforward methods of the unarmed fists, then you are not seeing "real Xingyi." Proper Xingyi should teach the student how to maximize efficiency when employing any weapon.

The fighting had been incessant and the enemy unrelenting. In preparation for the final attack the soldier chambers a last round into his rifle and fixes his bayonet. As he hears the shouts to advance, he remembers an otherwise calm morning long ago and the sound of clashing wood and steel. ☉

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