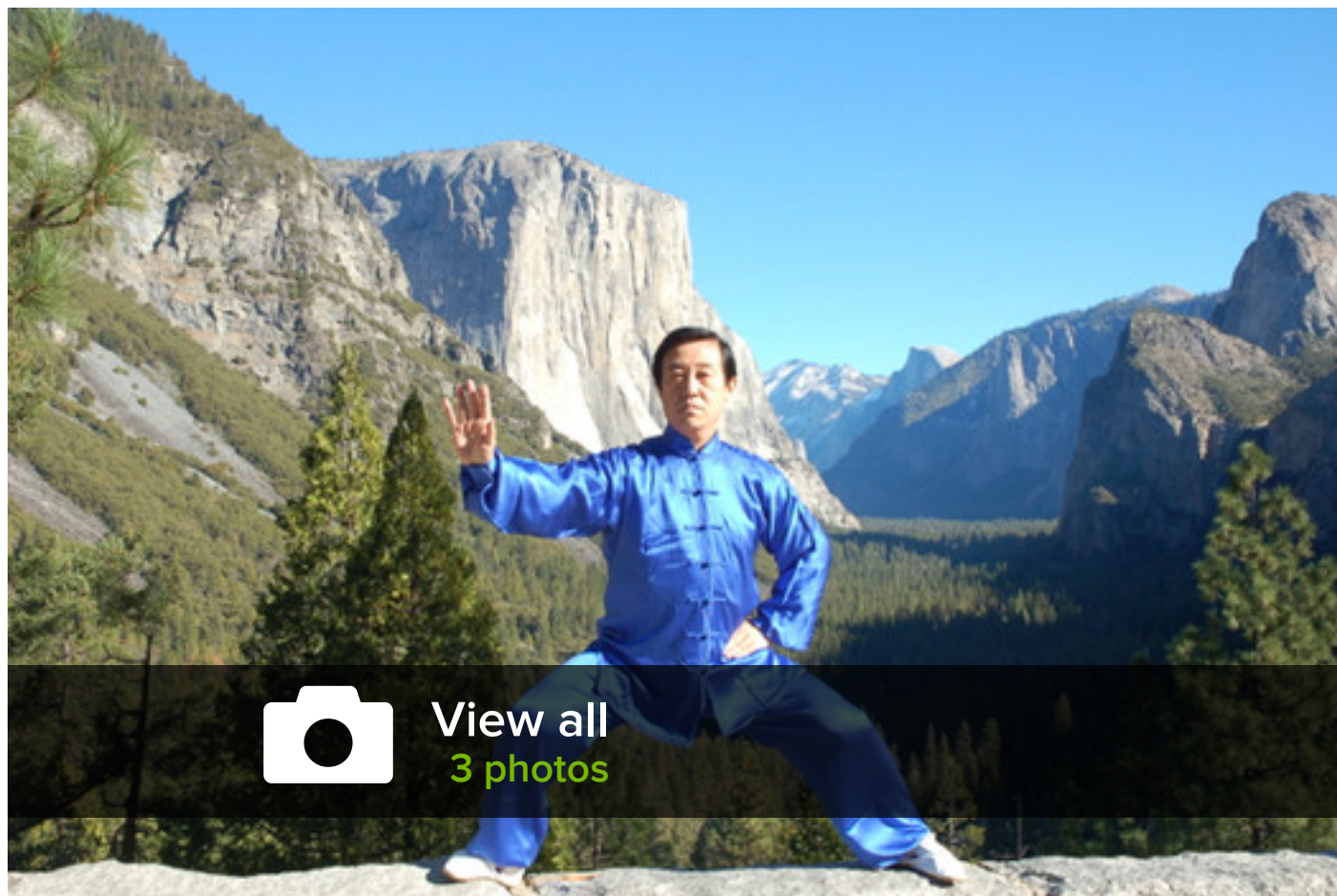


Grandmaster Chen Zhenglei: a new 9th Duan Tai Chi master

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Grandmaster Chen Zhenglei

Dr. Shin Li

A few days ago, Chinese Wushu Association announced that Grandmaster Chen Zhenglei now has been certified as a [Tai Chi](#) master at the 9th Duan. This is important news for the Tai Chi community.



Dr, Shin Lin

In Chinese, nine is a prominent number. During the thousands-year-long dynasty era, the highest rank officials were called the ninth level (Jiu Pin). When the Chinese Martial Art Association established a ranking system to raise Wushu's standards, naturally it adopted a 1 – 9 Duan Wei (Level) system with the 9th Duan Wei (or Duan) as the highest. The original [Martial Arts](#) Duan Wei system was put in place in December 1998. In recent years, the Chinese Wushu Association spent much effort enhancing the old system and making it more strict. The Association published the new system in June last year and even has a dedicated website <http://dw.wushu.com.cn/index.asp> for it. The good news is that foreign nationals can apply for the Duan Wei certification (see the link <http://dw.wushu.com.cn/NewsView.asp?ID=233> for details). The Association also has new emblems made for each Duan Wei. The Gold Dragon Emblem is for the 9th Duan.

The Duan Wei system is sub-divided into three categories: Elementary Duan Wei: One through Three; Intermediate Duan Wei: Four through Six; Advanced Duan Wei: Seven through Nine. For the Elementary Duan Wei and Intermediate Duan Wei, tests are required. Often times, practitioners need to score high in tournaments to qualify for a rank promotion. For the Advanced Duan Wei, practitioners need to have publication and/or research and exhibit significant contribution in promoting the art. There are also waiting times required between each Duan, for example, one has to wait at least six years before being eligible to apply for a rank promotion from the 6th Level to the 7th Level. With that, most masters who earn the highest honor of the 9th Duan have at least 50 years of experience in practicing the art and most of them earn their title in their 70's or later.

As of now, not many 9th Duan Wei's have been awarded. It seems that there are even fewer Tai Chi masters bestowed with this honor in comparison to the hard style martial arts and modern Wushu. From

my research, Grandmasters Yang Zen Duo, Men Hui Feng, Kan Giu Xiang, and Chen Xiaowang are the 9th Duan holders, plus the late Grandmaster Feng Zhiqiang.

Grandmaster Chen Zhenglei, 63, is an 11th Chen Style Family Tai Chi Lineage Holder. He was voted as one of the Top Ten Martial Art Masters in China. He has authored a complete series of Chen Style Tai Chi books and DVDs covering all traditional Chen Style Tai Chi forms and its weapons. He has also written many important Tai Chi articles and books to explain Tai Chi theory, fundamentals and its relationship with the Chinese meridian system. He taught Tai Chi to tens of thousands of people around the world. Last year, he received the prestigious award of Cambridge List of the Most Distinguished Chinese People in the World along with Nobel Prize Laureate of Physics Sir Charles Kuen Kao and a few other most prominent Chinese in the world. He is probably the youngest Tai Chi master ever to earn the 9th Duan Wei. Once again, we congratulate Grandmaster Chen for this special recognition as a 9th Duan master. We are equally excited to see that the Tai Chi community has won another honor.

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Violet Li

Tai Chi Examiner