

Cheng Man-ching Is Dead at 73; Calligrapher, Painter and Poet

By ALDEN WHITMAN

Cheng Man-ching, a Chinese painter, calligrapher and poet, died March 26 in Taipei, Taiwan, according to word received here yesterday. Mr. Cheng, who was also a grand master of Tai Chi Chuan, the ancient Chinese system of exercises practiced for health and as a martial art, was 73 years old.

Best known in the West as a painter and calligrapher, Mr. Cheng visited New York in 1968 for an exhibition of his work at the FAR Gallery. The show displayed his watercolors, which were said then to "bear the fragrance of sweet memory and the stamp of an incisive, masterly technique."

One of the paintings that caught the eye of critics was a 12-foot-long scroll called "Ten Miles of Lotus Fragrance."

Demonstration Given

Mr. Cheng showed a visitor then how he executed a painting on a piece of paper. "Brush held vertically in hand, dipped in inky paint," the visitor reported, adding:

"The rendering of plants and flowers begins. Short, brisk strokes. A moment's hesitation—the hand hovers over the paper with the evanescent tension that one observes just before the karate expert's lethal blow."

Mr. Cheng's most recent show here was at the Hudson River Museum in Yonkers in 1973. While Mr. Cheng was here, in 1968, he also gave a demonstration in Tai Chi Chuan at the United Nations.

Among other notable exhibitions of Mr. Cheng's works in the West was one in Paris in 1964 at the Musée Cernuschi, the first such exhibition in 50 years in the institution's Eastern arts division.

Mr. Cheng was born in 1902. In his teens he was invited to teach at the College of Fine Arts in Peking. He was also appointed professor of poetry at Yue Wen University.

An attack of tuberculosis turned Mr. Cheng's attention to



Cheng Man-ching

Tai Cni Chuan, which he credited with restoring his health. He continued his study of the discipline, becoming head of the Yang school of Tai Chi Chuan. He later taught it at the Whampoa Military Academy under the Chinese Republic, of which he was a Senator to his death.

Doctor to Chiang

Among Mr. Cheng's other skills was that of traditional Chinese medicine, and at one time he was director of the Chinese Medical Association. With the collapse of Nationalist China after World War II, Mr. Cheng escaped to Taiwan, where he continued to practice medicine. Friends reported that Chiang-Kai-shek, the Nationalist strongman, was among his patients.

In recent years Mr. Cheng instructed Americans in the works of Lao-tzu and Confucius.

Mr. Cheng leaves his wife, Ting Wei-chuang, and five children, Marina, Katy, Eilen, Patrick and Wayne.

There will be a funeral in Taipei April 24 and a memorial service at the Chinese Cultural Center here later.