

Tai Chi
Chuan

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2009

Yi Jun
T H E B A L A N C E O F N A T U R E

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B A L A N C E
o f
N A T U R E

The Journal of the International Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan Association



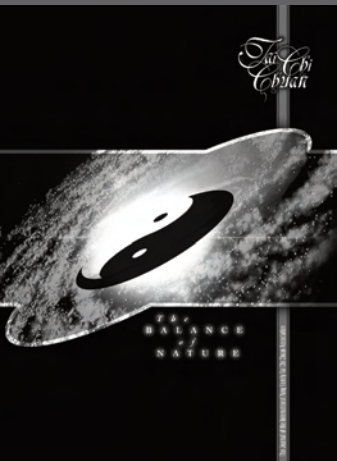
2009 marks the 10th Anniversary of our Association! In celebrating this important milestone I want to look back and tell you why we created the Association and what the purpose of our work is.

Eighteen years ago I began travelling with my Grandfather internationally to teach Traditional Yang Family Style Taijiquan. As we worked together we had one feeling: when we taught seminars many people would come together to study but when we finished teaching everyone would go back home and we would lose contact with them. We felt as if the students we had met were like grains of sand slipping through our fingers. Everyone would go back to their individual practice and we had no unified feeling. One point about Taijiquan is that we want to have unified energy. When the energy is unified it becomes strong; my Grandfather and I wanted to keep everyone working together and improving, becoming like one big family. Even though we were not always together, we wanted to continue to work towards one purpose.

Our purpose in forming the Association was to spread the benefits of our practice. Those who practice and teach Taijiquan are well aware of the many benefits of daily practice. From many directions: for improving health, to balance the mind, we know that Taijiquan is

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good for the people. We want to share this Art, not just in a small group, all over the world people can benefit from this practice. This is the reason we work together. This is who we are: we study, practice and teach Taijiquan, sharing with everybody.

Our mission is to make Taijiquan widely available so more people can join the practice. We created the Association to bring Traditional Yang Family Taijiquan practitioners together to promote a system that would bring our family's standard of practice to a worldwide audience. As my Grandfather and I travelled, we were not only teaching students, but also looking for those people who might become teachers. We hoped to bring these people along and help them with the transition from learning to teaching Taijiquan. We weren't sure if this could be done. Looking back on the past 10 years, this is the most important development in the Association. By creating the ranking system to evaluate and promote Taiji skills, we now have a solid corps of skilled instructors. We are developing a program to continue to train more teachers and help them become certified instructors.

We started in 1999 with only a few Centers and 300 members. In the past 10 years more than 6,000 people have joined the Association and we currently have over 2,000 active members. What is most important is that over the years I have seen the friendship grow between our Directors, instructors and their students and we really are like brothers and sisters in one big family. Our Directors travel to other Centers to teach. This is a wonderful thing that they can share their experience with others. When we are united we are strong, when we work in one direction we can succeed. My Grandfather feels very deeply about this. Our work is not only for the propagation of Traditional Yang Style. In China we often say that, "under heaven all Taijiquan practitioners are one big family". Naturally, we started

by focusing on our family style but our dream is to help all styles of Taijiquan to spread and help the people of the world.

Looking ahead, we want to continue to develop Yang Style, but also to bring all styles of Taijiquan together to create a University of Taijiquan without walls. We want to share our organizational experience with the other families of Taijiquan. Our International Symposium on Taijiquan this summer is an important first step in this direction. It is my deep hope that you will participate in this important event and that your practice will benefit from the sharing of knowledge between Taijiquan styles. We want people to know that Taijiquan is not just Yang or Chen Style but there are different traditions and flavors of practice.

Our Association is continuing to develop and as we become more mature our programs will reflect this growth process. We now have 30 Centers in 12 countries. More significantly, we have certified instructors and many more study groups in other countries as well. If we want more people to benefit from Taijiquan practice, we need more people to teach it. Our goal is to train more teachers who can skillfully share their knowledge in many, many places, not only where we have created Centers. From a small start 10 years ago, this is where we are today and we have more programs and plans for the future!

In closing, allow me to personally thank each and every one of you for your support over the years. Often, when I travel the world to teach, I see familiar faces year after year at the Seminars and without this continuing interest in our work, the Association would not be as strong as it is today. My life is very different now from when I first arrived here from China ten years ago. On behalf of my family, your support has made our dreams come true, and I thank you from the bottom of my heart!

Tai Chi Chuan

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Master Profile: Sun Yongtian

By Sun Yongtian,
as told to Dave Barrett
Translated by Mui Gek Chan

I was born in 1948. Since my youth, I was always interested in the martial arts. I practiced many types of martial arts, including long fist and tang fist. In the 1970's, I was successful in many of the martial arts competitions I entered. In May of 1982, under the recommendation of Zhang Yongan, I met my teacher Sun Jianyun for the first time. Frankly speaking, although I had learned martial arts since I was young, I had no knowledge of Taijiquan.

When I first met Sun Jianyun, we hit it off just like old friends. She vividly described the history of Sun style Taijiquan - how her father Sun Lutang (1861-1932), developed Sun style Taijiquan, and many exciting stories about his skills. For example, "A famous Japanese martial artist was so determined to test Sun's skills that he convinced the Emperor of Japan to send him to China to fight Sun. In 1921, the Japanese martial artist came to visit Sun and, speaking through an interpreter said, 'I heard that you practice a Chinese martial art method which uses soft to overcome hard. Well, I am hard! How do you want to fight me? I will fight with any rules or any weapons.' Sun turned to the interpreter and said, 'Since he is a guest in our country, I will let him decide.' The Japanese challenger said, 'I am going to use hard strength to take your arm in a lock and break it. Let's see if you

can use your soft energy to overcome that!' Sun, who at 5'7" barely came to the Japanese man's shoulder, was willing to give it a try. Concerned that Sun could simply move his feet and get away from the lock the challenger said, 'I want you to overcome this technique without running around.' Sun said, 'I can accommodate you.' Sun had the spectators move all of the furniture aside and cleared a space on the floor. He said, 'I will lie on the floor, your students can hold my feet, and you can apply your technique. I'll even put my other arm behind my back.' Sun laid on the floor and the Japanese martial artist took hold of his arm. The interpreter counted, 'One, two, three!' At the count of three Sun quickly pulled his free arm from behind his back and applied a point strike to his opponent's stomach. This point strike caused the Japanese challenger to lose his grip on Sun's other arm and Sun hopped up. The opponent was not so easily put off and followed Sun. Sun struck a few points on his opponent's body and threw him into a bookcase. The interpreter shouted, "You've hurt him!" Sun said, 'He'll be all right. Tell him when he catches his breath we can try it again.' His opponent, admitting defeat, refused to try again." This was something I had not known and Taijiquan became deeply ingrained in me. From then on, Sun style Taijiquan became a part of my life and changed the way I value life.



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Sun Lutang's daughter, Sun Jianyun was born in Beijing, in 1914. Their ancestral home was in Wangdu, Hebei Province. She was a famous martial arts expert in China, lineage bearer and 2nd generation descendent of Sun style Taijiquan, one of China's top ten martial arts masters, vice-chairman of Beijing Wushu Association, director of Beijing Xingyiquan Institute, and director of Beijing Sun Style Taijiquan Institute. When Sun Jianyun was young, she received tutelage at home, was skilled both intellectually and in the martial arts, and deeply understood the essence of Xingyi, Bagua, and Taijiquan. In her youth, she studied calligraphy and wrote poetry. Later, she went to Beijing Huabei Arts Academy and studied Chinese painting, specializing in landscapes and portraits of women. She had exquisite brush techniques and was then one of the top four up and coming artists.

As I gained more exposure and understanding, along with Teacher Sun's magnetic personality, I found myself drawn to Taijiquan. Teacher Sun had a wide and deep knowledge, an open mind, great inner qualities and a high level of martial arts skill. Teacher Sun had great character and virtue, and taught us how to practice martial arts in society. That is, being morally upright and righteous. She often encouraged us to practice the form, cultivate our health and to have an open mind.

I was deeply affected by her words and manner, and as a result, I diligently studied Taijiquan so as to continue and spread Sun style Taijiquan. At the same time, at work as well as in my social life, it also affected the people around me.

Sun Lutang created his style by combining Xingyi, Bagua, and Taijiquan into a unique martial art. It is one of the five main styles of Taijiquan in China, namely, Chen, Yang, Sun, Wu, and Wu/Hao. Sun Lutang learned Taijiquan from Hao Weizhen. Sun was able to attain a high level of skill, and achieved a deep understanding. Under Hao Weizhen's tutelage, Sun Lutang was able to master the essence of Wu/Hao style Taijiquan. As a result, he developed the three-in-one, Sun style Taijiquan. He combined features from the two other "internal" martial arts styles: utilizing Xingyiquan's approach of combining internal and external into one and Baguaquan's emphasis on combining movement and stillness into one to create his style of Taijiquan.

Sun style features a high stance and is a lively, open/close Taijiquan, with a lot of movements and many self-defense mechanisms. The foot work advances and retreats naturally, the torso

position is upright, the best angle for learning purposes, and is easy on knees. Sun style is like moving clouds and flowing water, continuous without interruption, advancing and retreating connected, the movements are agile, circular, lively and compact. When advancing or retreating, every turn of the body has an opening/closing method that is connected. In addition, it is good for health purposes. As a result, Sun style, along with the other methods of Taijiquan, is known to the Chinese people as being beneficial for health and longevity, good for the young as well as the old.

In Sun style Taijiquan, whether advancing or retreating, the body needs to be centered, head suspended, chest loosened, and at all times one must be calm, comfortable, and relaxed. Like flowing water and falling leaves, the motions need to be flowing and coordinated. When moving, there is no bobbing up and down, or swaying left and right, but, with lively steps causing the center to be continuously stable and yet be in motion. One must pay attention to the merging of the three: Xingyi, Bagua, and Taijiquan. However, the forms must originate from Taijiquan's special qualities, as we do not show the specific energies of Xingyi and Bagua's movements. To show Sun style Taijiquan's flavor, the movements need to be accurate, relaxed, supple, connected, and the mind needs to be calm.

In 1993, at the martial arts conference held at the Beijing Xijiao Longquan Hotel, Wu Bin, president of the Beijing Wushu Institute, suggested to Teacher Sun that she look for a successor. Later, Teacher Sun told me that she wanted me to be the lineage bearer and 3rd generation exemplar of Sun style Taijiquan. I was deeply moved by her gesture, but was hesitant to accept the offer. But, after two years with no one raising any objections, I reluctantly accepted the honor. From that point on, I have worked tirelessly to continue and promote Sun style Taijiquan.

Unfortunately, in October of 2003, Teacher Sun Jianyun passed away. She left a will stating that Sun Yongtian (same last name, but of different family) is the sole successor to her. Witnesses to her will included her cousin, Zhang Wenyi, disciples: Dai Jianying, Zhang Maoqing, and her brother's granddaughter, Sun Qi. ☯

(Sun Yongtian is chairman of the board of a state-owned automotive sales and service company. He is the vice-chairman of Beijing Wushu Association, and the director of the Sun Style Taijiquan Research Institute.)

1 Sun, Lutang, *A Study of Taijiquan*, translated by Tim Cartmell, Berkley, Ca., North Atlantic Books 2003, pgs.29-30

Theoretical Sources for Taiji Philosophy

General Surveys of Chinese Philosophy:

By Audi Peal

Needham, Joseph. Science and Civilization in China, Vol 2, History of Scientific Thought.

Cambridge University Press. 1956.

This is the second volume in a series describing the history of science and civilization in China in great detail. This particular volume gives excellent summaries of many of the “classical” schools of Chinese thought that had emerged by the end of the Warring States period, including: Confucians (Ru Jia), Taoists (Dao Jia), Mohists (Mo Jia), Logicians (Ming Jia), Legalists (Fa Jia), and Naturalists (Yin-Yang Jia). It also gives excellent descriptions of Neo Confucian (Li Jia). The summaries include strategic quotes from original sources to give a direct and unfiltered understanding of the material. Anyone interested in the fundamentals of traditional Chinese philosophy would do well to begin here.

De Bary, Theodore and Bloom, Irene. Sources of Chinese Tradition from Earliest Times to 1600.

Columbia University Press, 1999, 2nd Ed.

This is volume one of a comprehensive series on Chinese Philosophy. As the title states, it starts from the beginnings of Chinese history and concludes in 1600. The book goes into great depth on the development and history of Chinese philosophy, treating it as an organic whole that has developed and changed over the years. The vast majority of significant Chinese philosophers and the classical canon are discussed. Anyone with a strong interest in philosophy and wanting to know in depth about Chinese philosophy and its developments would be well served by this work.

Original Source Materials on the Web:

Zhou Dunyi's "Explanation of the Taiji Diagram" (Taijitu Shuo).

➤ <http://www2.kenyon.edu/Depts/Religion/Fac/Adler/Writings/Chou.htm>

This website has both translations and commentary on what is one of the foundational texts of the Neo-Confucians and was standard reading for all educated Chinese for more than half a millennium. It is also arguably the source of what the Taiji Classics mean when they discuss the philosophical terms Taiji, Wuji, Yin, Yang, stillness, movement, and their attributes. This is a short document and well worth a read.

Zhou Dunyi's "Explanation of the Taiji Diagram" (Taijitu Shuo) with commentary by Zhu Xi.

➤ <http://www2.kenyon.edu/Depts/Religion/Fac/Adler/Writings/TJTS-Zhu.pdf>

This is the same as the preceding, except that it contains commentary by the Song Dynasty philosopher Zhu Xi, who was pivotal in defining and interpreting the works we know as the Confucian canon.

➤ <http://www2.kenyon.edu/Depts/Religion/Fac/Adler/Writings/Spirituality.htm>

This website, which is related to the two preceding ones, gives interesting background, as well as citations to source documents, on the Neo-Confucian

view of many terms important to Taiji practitioners, such jing (essence), qi, and shen (spirit).

Laozi's Daodejing (Also spelled as Tao Te Ching).

➤ <http://www.sacred-texts.com/tao/taote.htm>

This is one of the foundational texts of Daoism and one of the most translated works written in Chinese. The style of writing, while quite profound, is still poetic and quite readable. Important themes for the Taiji practitioner are: soft overcoming hard, the value of emptiness, and achieving everything necessary by doing nothing (wuwei). This is a relatively short read of 81 short sections or chapters. As of January 4, 2009, Wikipedia also has a good summary of the themes in this work at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daodejing>

Sunzi's Art of War (Bingfa).

➤ [http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Art_of_War_\(Sun\)](http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Art_of_War_(Sun))

Sunzi (also spelled as Sun-Tzu) is one of the best known militarists of the Warring States period. His work retains immense popularity and has even begun to influence many corporate boardrooms. The theme of the book is the tactics and strategies needed to wage war successfully. In thirteen short chapters, Sunzi's work describes how to tackle confrontation. Of particular interest for Taiji practitioners are chapters 4, 5, and 6, which explain the concepts of “winning with ease,” energy (shi), and empty and full (xu shi). ☯

T h e B A L A N C E o f N A T U R E

Basic Principles and Features of Taiji Quan

By Lu Shengli

English translation by Zhang Yun

The central principle of Taiji Quan derives from one of the most fundamental concepts in traditional Chinese culture. The concept first appeared in *Yi Jing (I Ching)*, the book written about 1000 BC that delineates the laws of universal change; the *yi* in the title means “changing”. A famous line in *Yi Jing* asserts, “There is *Taiji* in *yi*, the laws of change, and *liangyi* is generated from it. *Liangyi*, in turn, generates *sixiang* and *sixiang* generates *Bagua*.” Also stated is the principle that “one *yin* and one *yang* united comprise Dao.” Here the term Dao is synonymous with *Taiji*.

Yi Jing played a central role in the development of Chinese philosophy. Its profound ideas were seized upon by such renowned thinkers as Kongzi (Confucius) who formulated Confucianism, and Laozi, who originated the tenets of Daoism. The influence of *Yi Jing* has permeated every aspect of traditional Chinese culture.

Laozi, for example, said that *wuji*, meaning the “state of nothingness or non-being,” is the beginning state of the universe; and that *you* or *Taiji*, which means “having” or “being”, is the mother of all things. He posited that everything in the universe is generated from *you*, and that *you* is generated from *wu*. “I do not know the name for the mother of all things,” he said, “so I just call it Dao.” “All things,” he declared, “convey *yin* and hold *yang*.”

In the millennium that followed the founding of Daoism by Laozi, the *Taiji* principle was further refined, eventually reaching maturity with the contributions of Chen Tuan and successive generations of his students. Chen Tuan (?-989), a famous scholar and Daoist priest, devoted his life to the study and research of *Yi Jing*, the philosophies of Laozi, and the health practices of

qigong. His thinking may also have pre-figured the martial arts, and the followers of some styles claim him as their founder. The diagram of *Taiji* has been purported either to have been invented by him or to have been passed down by him. Many of his writings had a profound influence on Chinese culture. His article “Xian Tian Tu” or “The Pre-birth Diagram” included a depiction of the basic *qigong* practice principle.

In accordance with Chen’s central ideas, the famous scholar Zhou Dunyi, Chen’s third-generation disciple, wrote a famous article called “Taiji Tu Shuo” or “The Explanation of the *Taiji* Diagram,” in which the *Taiji* principle as we know it today is described systematically and completely. This work includes the *Taiji* diagram first presented by Chen Tuan but explicates the illustration differently. Later, the famous Song Dynasty philosopher Zhu Xi provided annotations and explanations for Zhou’s article. Together these writings elucidated the standard definition of the *Taiji* principle and formed the foundation of the Daoist worldview.

Taiji Quan is based on the *taiji* principle that expresses the traditional Chinese view of the origin of the universe. *Tai* means “immense” or “great”; *ji* means “extreme” or “limit. The term “*Taiji*” thus describes a great principle that applies to everything. In traditional Chinese culture, *Taiji* is the same as Dao; both refer to the basic, all-encompassing natural law of the universe. All things must be in harmony with Dao in order to prosper or function well. The *taiji* principle is expressed in all aspects of traditional Chinese culture.

According to the *taiji* concept, the world started from *wuji*, a state of nothingness or non-being, or a homogeneous

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skill.*

mixture of all things sometimes likened to a cloud. *Wuji* describes the universe in its most primal form, before there was any differentiation of matter. When the universe began to emerge from the *wuji* state, *yin qi* (*yin* energy) and *yang qi* (*yang* energy) were created and became differentiated. The *yang qi*, which was light in weight, rose up to form the sky; and the *yin qi*, which was heavy, sank down to form the earth. With the differentiation of *yin* and *yang*, the life of the universe started from this new state called *taiji*. *Taiji* state is source of all things, so sometimes people like to say *taiji* is mother of all things. The *taiji* principle became the most important concept in ancient Chinese cosmology.

In the *taiji* state, *yin* and *yang* do not exist as separate entities. Although they can be conceptually distinguished, each contains the other and cannot be considered alone. In the next emergent state called *liangyi* or the “two appearances,” *yin* and *yang* become distinct and separate entities. Each can be independently considered in terms of its unique qualities. *Liangyi* gives rise to the state of *sixiang* or the “four shapes”; and *sixiang*, in turn, generates *Bagua* or the eight trigrams.” The eight trigrams can be combined to form sixty-four *gua* or hexagrams, and in this manner the universe evolves from the simplest beginning to a complex of myriad forms. Everything is created from the emergence and changing energies of *yin* and *yang*. This is the key principle of *taiji*.

In traditional Chinese philosophy, *yin* and *yang* describe opposing qualities or concepts, but these qualities also support each other. Each exists because the other exists; the existence of one necessarily implies the existence of the other. *Yin* and *yang* complement each other, and each is capable of changing its state and emerging as the other. Although used as abstract concepts, *yin* and *yang* can also be applied to the description of concrete objects.

The usual attributes of *yin* include soft, quiet, passive, obedient, receptive, restorative, substantial, internal, and beneath. In the physical world, *yin* is associated with the

earth, moon, darkness, cold, and femaleness. The usual attributes of *yang* include hard, moving, initiating, guiding, giving, releasing, insubstantial, external, and above. In the physical world, *yang* is associated with the sky, sun, heat, light, and maleness.

In Taiji Quan practice, the concepts of *yin* and *yang* are used ubiquitously in the description of techniques. The back of the body, for example, is *yin* and the front is *yang*; the lower part of the body is *yin* and the upper part is *yang*. When a palm faces the body, it is called a *yin* palm; when it faces away from the body, it is called a *yang* palm. The leg that supports the weight of the body is called *yin*; the unweighted leg is called *yang*. Soft movement is *yin* and hard movement is *yang*. Defense is *yin* and offense is *yang*. It is commonly said that Taiji Quan is about *yin* and *yang*.

Taiji Quan was clearly derived from the *taiji* principle in traditional philosophy. In the most famous and important Taiji Quan classic, the first sentences state: “*Taiji*, born of *wuji*, is the potential for either *dong* (movement) or *jing* (stillness), the potential for a state of being that is either dynamic or static. It is the mother or the source of *yin* and *yang*.” This passage describes the basic concept of *taiji* and signals that a martial art bearing its name must follow its principles. It also defines the principle of Taiji Quan. It is very important to keep the *taiji* principle in mind at all times while training and to apply it devotedly in practice. If an action does not obey the *taiji* principle, then it is not a Taiji Quan skill.

The main ideas encompassed by the *taiji* principle and explained in Zhou Dunyi’s article, “Explanation of the Taiji Diagram,” are:

Wuji becomes *taiji*. This is called Dao, the fundamental, universal law of nature. Dao is invisible and controls every aspect of the universe.

The two basic attributes in Dao are *dong* (movement) and *jing* (stillness). *Dong*’s attribute is *yang* and *jing*’s attribute is *yin*. *Yin* and *yang*, as carriers of Dao called *qi*, make Dao manifest. This is expressed in the classics as

Because everything in Taiji Quan derives from the change, conversion, and development of yin and yang, an understanding of the principle and practice of yin and yang is clearly vital to your training.

“one *yin* and one *yang* together are Dao.” *Yin* and *yang* must be attached to *qi* before Dao can be made visible and applied.

In *liangyi*, *yin* and *yang* separate. Movement generates *yang*; but when movement reaches its limit, stillness arises. Stillness generates *yin*. When stillness reaches its limit, movement is reborn. Movement, thus, is the root of stillness and stillness the root of movement. This does not mean, however, that movement and stillness are the beginning or the end of each other. There is no beginning and end. The life of the universe proceeds in never-ending cycles.

In *taiji*, *yin* exists because *yang* exists, and *yang* exists because *yin* exists. *Yin* and *yang* support each other and can transmute into each other. *Yang qi* generates maleness, and *yin qi* generates femaleness. These two basic *qi* are expressions of the law of nature and create all things.

Yang contains some *yin*, and *yin* contains some *yang*.

Everything is generated from *yin* and *yang*. They give birth to endless change and development. All change follows the basic principle of Dao and Taiji.

Taiji or Dao is the fundamental principle. It encompasses the whole universe yet is small enough to reside in the tiniest fragments of matter. It dwells in everything and extends everywhere. The starting point for this principle is the concept of “*wu zhong sheng you*,” which holds that “being” or “having” comes from “non-being” or “not having”.

As *taiji* is born from *wuji* and is the source of *yin* and *yang*, there should be no intention or movement as you begin your Taiji Quan practice. This condition reflects the original *wuji* state. When an attack comes and you start to react, you enter the *taiji* state in which *yin* and *yang* are generated according to your opponent’s movements. Because all skills follow the *yin-yang* principle, it is sometimes said that Taiji Quan is the practice of *yin* and *yang* skills. Because everything in Taiji Quan derives from the change, conversion, and development of *yin* and *yang*, an understanding of the principle and practice of *yin* and *yang* is clearly vital to your training.

The most important thing to understand in your training is the relationship between dynamic and static states, between movement and stillness. Change is a permanent state, but stillness must always be maintained internally. Stillness is a temporary state, but the tendency for change must always be kept alive within. The existence of each state always implies the existence of the other. This is a very difficult point to understand and distinguishes Taiji Quan from all other martial art styles. Other styles apply

yin and *yang* as separate concepts and express the *liangyi* state. It is intuitively easier to understand dynamic and static states as separate and distinct than it is to conceive of them together as a single potential for both movement and stillness.

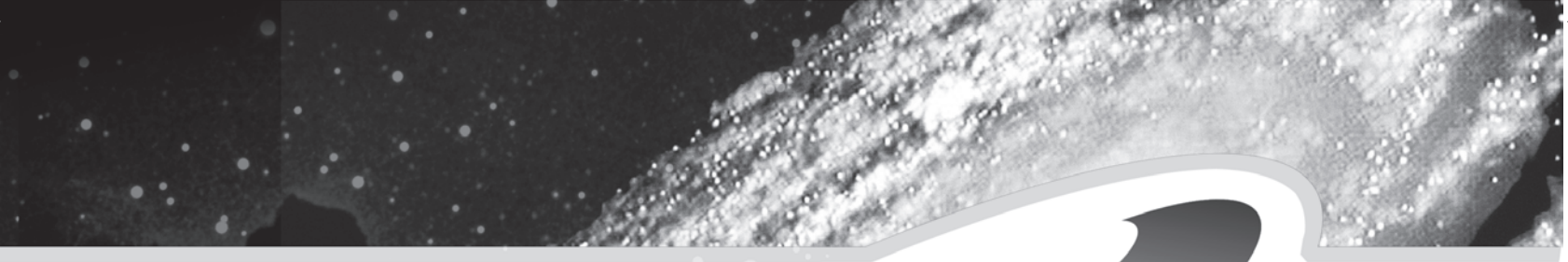
The integration of *yin* and *yang* is often called “keeping the center.” The usual term for this in Taiji Quan is *zhong ji* or central limit. It is also referred to as *xuan*, which means “mystery” or “darkness.” *Xuan* is described in a famous passage as “the mystery that can be either *yin* or *yang* or neither *yin* nor *yang*. Mystery upon mystery, it is the doorway leading to the refined understanding of all concepts.”

The most important thing to understand in your training is the relationship between dynamic and static states, between movement and stillness.

Since Taiji Quan is founded on the principle of *taiji*, this principle must infuse your practice at all times. All discussions and expressions of *taiji* should include an understanding of *yin* and *yang*. In Taiji Quan practice, *yin* is expressed in responses that are soft, substantial, still, passive, and that yield to the opponent; *yang* is expressed in responses that are hard, insubstantial, moving, active, and that lead or direct the opponent. Defense skills are usually characterized as *yin* because they are receptive or passive; offensive skills are usually characterized as *yang* because they initiate action. It is important to remember that in Taiji Quan all action and reaction must be consistent with the *yin-yang* principle as expressed in the *Taiji* circle. Inside this circle, *yin* and *yang* are in a state of continuous change and mutual support.

You must always be aware of the opportunity or potential for either movement or stillness. This requires that you avoid all pre-conceived notions or plans for what to do next. Every action must be based solely on your feeling at the moment. In push hands, for example, when you touch your opponent you should maintain *wuji* by not planning your response. When you receive information from touching your opponent, you enter *taiji* by either attacking (which expresses movement) or defending (which expresses stillness). Your choice should depend only on your feeling. Keep in mind that your attack also encompasses your defense; and your defense contains within it your next attack.

In most martial arts, whether simple or complex, the techniques used in practice and fighting are the same. The purpose of practice is to be able to apply these techniques directly in fighting. Taiji Quan practice is different in that it focuses on the expression of the *taiji* principle. The skills practiced are designed to illustrate this principle and to help students develop responses that apply the principle correctly. There is no training of preset sequences of movement that can be repeated directly in fighting situations. Rather, the skills are applied solely in response



to the student's immediate feelings during a fight. This is a specialized ability developed only in Taiji Quan training, which is said to have no techniques; movement itself is the method.

Another distinction between Taiji Quan and the other martial arts is that in the latter, offensive and defensive skills are practiced and applied separately. Even if they are performed simultaneously, they are experienced internally as separate. This method expresses the *liangyi* state, and the skills developed are *liangyi* skills. In Taiji Quan skills, *yin* and *yang* are inextricably bound together, with each one generating the other.

In Taiji Quan practice, internal training is emphasized much more than external training. All physical movement should occur naturally without conscious intent or a sense of restriction. It should start from a state of nothingness or insubstantiality that nevertheless has limitless potential. This method proceeds from *wuji* to *taiji*. In Taiji Quan practice, the mind and heart should be quiet, reflecting stillness, but this stillness is not synonymous with an absence of movement. There is movement inside stillness and it can be initiated by the slightest touch.

Although Taiji Quan practice involves constant change expressed as movement, this movement does not imply the absence of stillness. There is stillness inside movement so that an inner sense of calm and quiet can be maintained even during the most vigorous activity. This is referred to as *bao yuan shou yi* or maintaining the original *shen*, *yi*, and *qi* and keeping the focus on Dao. The key to Taiji Quan is the interacting potential of movement and stillness.

Given that *yin* and *yang* skills contain each other and can be transformed seamlessly from one to the other, it is always the case that during an attack, whenever the defense component becomes greater than the offense component, the movement is changed from an attack to a defense. A defensive movement can be changed to an attack in a similar manner. This gradual exchange of attack and defense is called *zhuan hua*, and it should occur as a smooth and slow dissolution of one into the other. *Zhuan hua* also occurs when *yin* converts to *yang* and *yang* converts to *yin*.

In *taiji*, *yin* and *yang* are always in balance. It is not possible to shift abruptly from one to the other like a digital switch. Such a dichotomous change is called *cha yi*, and it illustrates the way *yin* and *yang* are usually understood and applied in martial arts other than Taiji Quan. When *yin* and *yang* are applied in Taiji Quan, *zhuan hua* is the more descriptive concept and one of most important to understand. The contrast between *zhuan hua* and *cha yi* is another key difference between Taiji Quan and other martial arts.

The key to Taiji Quan is the interacting potential of movement and stillness.

When the *taiji* principle and its related concepts are applied to fighting situations, the basic fighting principle of Taiji Quan emerges. This principle holds that one must use the most efficient way to win a fight. It shapes the training method of Taiji Quan and differentiates Taiji Quan from other martial arts.

Although the physical movements of Taiji Quan are similar to those used in other martial arts, they arise from internal events rather than from observable events. In most martial arts, the goal is to increase power; in Taiji Quan you should constantly be asking yourself how to reduce your force and still win. The goal is to achieve maximum efficiency and the appearance of "small force." If the goal is reached, a less physically powerful person can defeat a more powerful opponent. To attain this result, a specific method of practice is needed.

Taiji Quan strategies for achieving the highest efficiency in fighting include: borrowing force from your opponent and turning the force back against him; luring your opponent to move in for an attack and then pulling back into emptiness; and using four ounces to defend against a thousand pounds. The basic skills used are: *zhan* which means "to stick to and bounce up"; *nian* which means "to adhere to"; *lian* which means "to link"; and *sui* which means "to follow." All the techniques of Taiji Quan are based on these four skills, and sensitivity is a prerequisite for developing each of them. Sensitivity allows you to apprehend your opponent's plans and capacities as well as to understand your own.

The highest level of achievement in Taiji Quan training is the ability to "use four ounces to beat a thousand pounds." As this adage suggests, if you are exerting 100 units of force to beat 200 units, you are already in the right mode of practice and further practice will improve your skill. To become more efficient, you must borrow force from your opponent. This, in turn, requires that you induce him to commit himself to an attack and then follow his movement until you sense a vulnerability in his offense. You must, in other words, "lure him into emptiness" by yielding and following. To do this, you need a well-developed sense of timing and direction. This in turn depends on your ability to identify and locate *yin* and *yang* and to understand *jin* or internal force. All of this is possible only if you develop your sensitivity so that you are able to know yourself and your opponent. ☯

(From *Combat Techniques of Taiji, Xingyi, and Bagua* by Lu Shengli, English translation by Zhang Yun, published by North Atlantic Books, copyright © 2006 by Lu Shengli. Pgs.64 -73 Reprinted by permission of publisher.)



Tai Chi and Multiple Sclerosis Restoring a Sense of Balance and Strength



By Karen Thaxton

I have MS (multiple sclerosis), which has negatively affected my sense of balance and control of my right leg. However, I now regularly practice Tai Chi, and Tai Chi has at least partially restored my sense of balance, control of my right leg, and self-confidence.

When I was finally diagnosed with MS nearly ten years ago, I had already realized that something was wrong. My body, which had done nearly everything I'd ever wanted it to do for so many years, now was not nearly so obedient. My right leg wouldn't function properly, preventing me from running 10K's or even a few steps. When I was tired, the foot would flop and drag, so that even walking became a chore, leading to stumbling and lurching—at times I looked like I was drunk. Worse, my sense of balance was rapidly fading, leaving me to fall if I tilted a few degrees from the perpendicular. I experienced several bad falls, both at home and outdoors while hiking. I couldn't even shower without holding onto the shower wall for balance. The actual diagnosis of MS led initially to a real sense of betrayal, in addition to outrage and helplessness. I didn't look old or weak, but I moved as though I were both elderly and weak. I felt that my horizons were becoming prematurely limited, and I lost my self-confidence as well.

Two years ago I decided it was up to me to stop, or at least delay, the impact of MS on my body, since there is no cure. While one can't control the progression of MS, I figured that there must be something I could do to regain or compensate for some of the abilities I had lost. I tried yoga—that was out, because of my balance problems. I tried Pilates—that was great for core strength, but I couldn't control my right leg in the mat exercises. I tried the treadmill and some other machines—they didn't address balance, although they did help with endurance.

Finally I enrolled in Dave Barrett's Tai Chi class, only because there wasn't anything else available at that hour. Although I had tried Tai Chi several times before, it always seemed more like a dance class than anything else. Dave's class was a revelation. It was a tough discipline, a form of meditation, and a real workout from the first day. My legs ached. I could neither Row the Boat nor do the Cat Walk. I couldn't even do a proper bow stance. There was no way I could transfer weight smoothly from one leg to another. For someone who had practiced karate (and ballet, running and aerobic dance, etc.), this inability to reach perfection in a seemingly simple discipline was a surprise. My competitive nature took over—there was no way I was not going to be able to master Tai Chi. But I still had to start by "mastering" the bow stance without wobbling.

Tai Chi is not easy. But by concentrating on the mechanics of Tai Chi, first practicing the postures, and then very gradually being able to string them together into the long form, I was also slowly improving both my balance and my leg strength, although I didn't realize it at the beginning. I know that "Life is short, Tai Chi is long", but consistent Tai Chi practice has already led to major benefits for me. Incidentally, not all benefits are physical—just being in a class with other motivated students, realizing they are supportive and non-competitive, has been a morale booster as well.

Until reading Holly Sweeney-Hillman's commentary on "The Nature of Balance and the Practice of Tai Chi Chuan", I had not thought about the actual progression of the improvement I experienced as a result of Tai Chi. Specifically, her reference to the three interrelated types of balance (static, dynamic and adaptive) describes the sequence that I seem to have followed, although I hadn't analyzed it at the time.

My static balance improvement became noticeable when I slowly began to "master" the

bow stance. Initially I had to look down at my feet to be able to tell where they were, and I couldn't hold the bow stance for very long without tilting or wobbling. As my leg strength improved, however, so did my balance. Rowing the Boat was extremely difficult for me when my right foot was leading, and it took a year until I was able to row with some degree of control. Other postures became steadier, too, including White Crane Spreads its Wings, Single Whip, and Needle at Sea Bottom. Once I attained the postures, I could hold them steadily and concentrate on form.

Next came various transition movements and the Cat Walk (dynamic balance), at which I'm still making progress. At first I could not move from one leg to another in a cat-like manner. And moving into postures such as High Pat the Horse felt awkward. It took nearly a year and a half for me to understand the principle of weight transfer, and then to internalize Dave's voice coaching "heel, to ball, to toe" or "weight over the bubbling well point". (And it takes a patient Tai Chi instructor to let this understanding slowly evolve on the part of his students.) After two years, I'm at the point where I can often perform the Cat Walk, although looking like a clumsy cat much of the time. Because I do understand the principle of the various transition movements, I can now concentrate on achieving them smoothly. I had to think deliberately about when and how to transfer weight before I could do it without lurching, or without always thinking about it.

Finally I progressed to adaptive balance skills, and some of this I attribute again to Dave's voice. For example, I have been working with a personal trainer to increase overall strength, balance and flexibility. Initially, I could not do lunges at all. As my Tai Chi skills increased, so did my ability to reach a lunge position and hold it. Only two months ago I finally was able to begin the challenge of taking lunge-steps the entire length of the gym floor. However, the lunges were wobbly and I wasn't able to transfer weight smoothly until that internalized voice talking about "heel, to ball, to toe" and "bubbling well point," helped guide those lunges. Now I can lunge-step across the entire floor without even thinking about it.

Further examples of adaptive balance include my new-found ability to descend flights of stairs without clutching the railing (although I do need to keep in contact with the railing to know which way is up). This is weight-shifting at its best for

me, especially since now I can descend the stairs of the Paris metro without panic. I can stand in the shower and move to reach the soap or shampoo without holding on to the wall. When I walked in Portland's recent snow, I was able to weight-shift gradually from one foot to another without falling once. And I can walk across the living room floor, full coffee cup in hand, without spilling one drop.

All of these are skills that I'd never had to think about in the past. But the Tai Chi principles I've learned in class, and have at least partially internalized, are now guiding me in everyday movements, those very movements I'd NEVER had to think about before. In new situations (as in walking on wet leaves), I sometimes need to concentrate on weight shifting, but there are times when I realize that I haven't even thought about a new task requiring balance yet have performed it successfully.

I have just reread the first paragraph of Holly Sweeney-Hillman's paper, and I feel it could have been written about me. Initially I had to invest "great effort, concentration and practice in learning uprightiness" during Tai Chi practice and in small tasks, but my balance and ability to function have noticeably improved and are continuing to improve, even though my MS has not diminished. I have regained my confidence in my own body, and I relish new tasks and adventures. My personal trainer has noticed the improvement in strength and balance and is constantly coming up with new exercises for me to perform, none of which I would ever have thought about attempting before I began Tai Chi practice. And, finally, my neurologist has noticed such an improvement that he is now recommending Tai Chi to some of his other MS patients.

Tai Chi is not a cure for MS (there is no cure for MS), but faithful Tai Chi practice can definitely lead to an improvement in both balance and leg strength, which in turn leads to a noticeable improvement in physical skills, everyday functioning, and morale and self-confidence. I may never be able to do Right or Left Separation kicks, but I'm able to be a Golden Rooster standing on my left leg, and almost a Golden Rooster standing on my right leg. I urge others with balance problems to begin to practice Tai Chi. And don't give up—it takes quite a while to see improvement, but you will be surprised and pleased with these vital skills that you can relearn. ☯



By Helen Smeja, M.D.
Montreal Yang Chengfu
Tai Chi Chuan Center

Tai Chi Chuan Wen Da

*Questions on Tai Chi Chuan answered
by Master Yang Jun*

This is a collection of questions that came up during Yang Laoshi's 2008 Seminar in Montreal. Working from my notes, and with the help of my fellow students, here are the Master's answers.

How should we shift weight from one leg to another?

The weight shift onto the other foot occurs from heel to ball to toe. The step should be even and smooth and one shouldn't put too much weight on the foot. It should feel like you are walking on thin ice. The shift of weight should be gradual as you switch your center from one leg to the other and the weight should end up centered on the bubbling well of the foot.

What is the bubbling well?



The "bubbling well" is an acupuncture point on the sole of your foot, near the base of the ball of your foot, towards the midline (near the apex of the "V" of the ball of your foot). It is the place of your foot where you generally want to feel your weight centered throughout the form (except during some transitions where your weight temporarily shifts to the edge of your foot).

Where should we be looking when we are doing the form?

Looking is connected with the spirit and much of the spirit is expressed through the eyes; we say that the eyes are the window of the heart. Generally speaking, when doing the form, we are looking straight forward. We follow the main arm direction and follow the meaning of the movement.

What should we be thinking when we are doing the form?

At first, you will need to think of how to do the

movements. As a second step, when you are practicing alone, you can imagine you are practicing with an opponent. At the next step, you no longer need to think about an opponent. In fact, you should not be thinking of any one thing in particular. You want your mind to be centered, and if you think about one thing, you will think about it too much. You want to keep your mind calm and centered.

Sometimes when I practice Tai Chi my hands shake. Why is that?

There are a couple of reasons. One could be that you are nervous. In that case, it is important to work on calming your mind and centering yourself. Another reason could be that you are sending out too much energy, that is, you are too stiff. In that case, you need to relax more when you are practicing.

How should we be breathing when we do the form?

While practicing the hand form, your breathing should be quiet, calm, slow and at an even pace. Performing the form in slow motion helps build a foundation and calm, slow breathing helps to store energy. When breathing, you inhale through the nose and exhale through the nose and you should make no sound. The mouth is closed, but not too tightly. Generally, the feeling of the breathing should feel natural during the form. Later, one should coordinate the breath with the movements, but the best time to work on this is when you are practicing the form on your own (i.e. when you don't also have to coordinate your movements with a larger group.). When you are breathing in, you are

太極拳問答



太極拳問答

storing energy and when you are breathing out, you are releasing energy.

When one practices explosive energy (Fa Jin), certain movements are practiced fast and you need to make the correct sound for the particular movement. Some movements require longer energy release and others, a shorter energy release.

What kind of advice would you give to someone who has been practicing the form for three years, is comfortable with the sequence, has some understanding of the ten principles, and yet does not “feel” anything when doing the form?

I would advise to start to pay more attention to the “empty/full” of each posture throughout the form. By becoming aware and paying more attention to the opening/closing or yin/yang change of each posture as you go through the form, you will gradually start to feel a wave-like sensation as you move through the form and this will make your practice much more enjoyable.

Can you clarify the concept of empty/full?

Determining whether something is empty or full depends on whether you are talking about energy or weight (you cannot mix the two). It is more precise to speak about the yin/yang being clear. In that case, we are talking more about energy than weight. When you are up against an opponent, your goal is to make your opponent’s yin/yang or empty/ full confused. If you can keep changing your yin/yang, you can stay alive. If you keep changing, your empty/full will be clear.

How fast should we do the weapons forms?

In competition, the sword form should be completed between 3 minutes and 30 seconds and 4 minutes. During self practice, it should generally be done in under 5 minutes (4 minutes is too fast). When you do the form, if your breath is too tight, it is too fast for you. However, you do require a certain amount of speed in order to make the tassel fly. The saber form should be done in less than 2 minutes. Generally, it is done in 1 minute 50 seconds. It can be finished in 1 minute 30 seconds to show a lot of strength.

When I practice the form three times in a row, during the third repetition it often happens to me that I forget where I am and I snap out of the flow of the form as I realize I am “lost”. Do you have some words of advice for me?

One can say that in the practice of taijiquan, the form is important, yet the form is also not important. It depends on the level at which you are training and your particular focus at a given time during your practice. Initially, the practice of taijiquan consisted more of the practice of individual movements. Over time, these movements were woven into a form.

When we begin our practice of taijiquan, the form is very important. Learning the different movements and their transitions, as well as the sequence, helps lay a foundation for our practice in various areas including concentration, balance, continuity and flow, and relaxation.

After you have become comfortable with the movements and the sequence, you will find yourself more focused on the energy flow. At this point, the form itself becomes less important. It is often after you have done the form a few times that you will start to feel more of the energy flow and it is cultivating this feeling that becomes more important. At this point, (particularly if you are practicing on your own!) you can nurture this feeling of energy flow and weave together your own set of movements as you enjoy and maintain your flow.

At the next level of your practice, harmony and the principles become the most important focus. The method to achieve this is relaxation. It is through this relaxation that we seek to expand the body, heart and mind and balance ourselves, our thoughts, our feelings, our relationships, our lives. Though we seek to be relaxed throughout the different stages of our training and practice, achieving this state of relaxation requires the foundation work (the form is important), energy and flow work and spirit work (the form is not important).

So when you find yourself getting “lost” during your third repetition, do not get frustrated, but embrace it and use it as an opportunity to work on your energy and flow. ☯



INTERNATIONAL TAI CHI CHUAN
SYMPOSIUM

Discover the Wisdom of the Masters



Sun Yongtian
Sun Style

Chen Zhenglei
Chen Style



Calling All Members!

Join the 5 Masters for A special Celebration of the 10th Anniversary of our Association

The 5 Masters of Traditional Tai Chi Chuan are uniting as one family for this reunion of our Association! Bringing together outstanding experts in Tai Chi practice and scientific research, this special event will enrich your knowledge of the Art and help you understand the many benefits of daily practice. Reunite with Tai Chi friends from the world over!

- 10th Anniversary Celebration Party
- Master classes in Tai Chi Chuan
- Presenting the latest in research and scientific evidence
- Grandmaster's performance showcase
- Low cost lodging and meals on Vanderbilt University campus
- Special 20% discount accorded to active members through March 31st.
- Group and family discounts available

Summary of Symposium Activities: July 5-10, 2009

Nearly all the activities of the Symposium take place on Vanderbilt University's welcoming campus. Some special events may be held nearby, with free transportation provided.

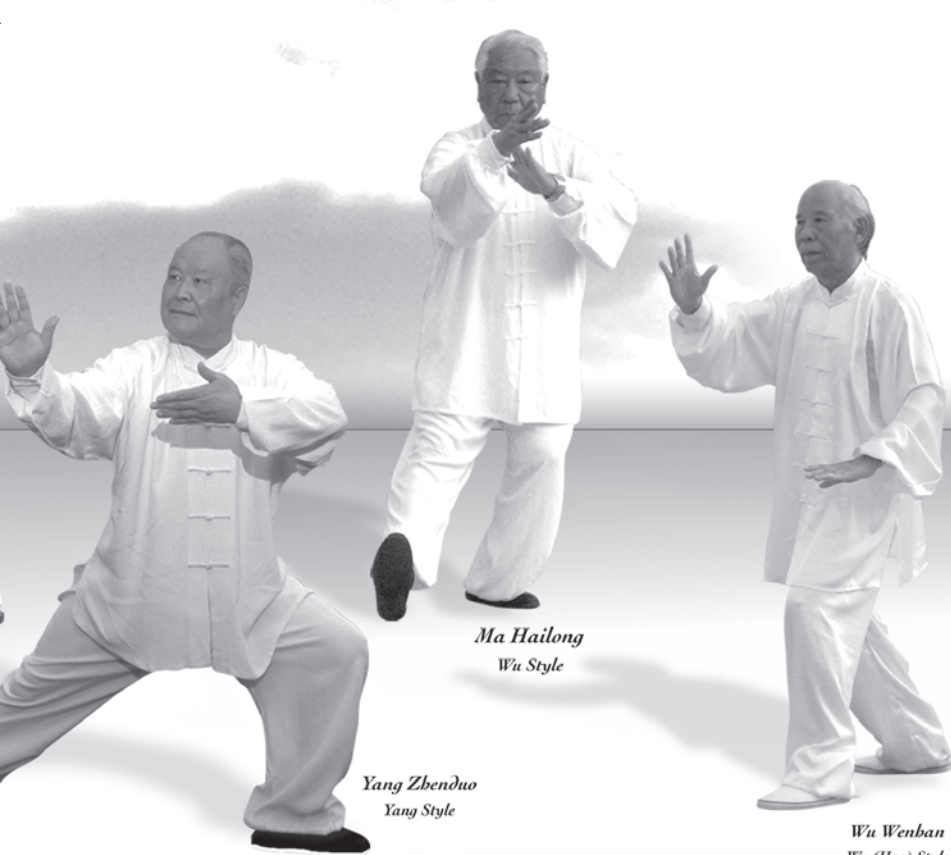
The Symposium's daily schedule consists of early morning group practices, breakfast, a keynote session by one of the Grandmasters, a morning session of concurrent workshops by two of the five Taijiquan Grandmasters, lunch and social time, an early afternoon session of presentations and lectures by leading medical and scientific researchers and academic experts, a mid afternoon session of concurrent workshops by the other two Taijiquan Grandmasters, dinner and social time, and an evening special event. Built into the schedule also are times for networking, shopping in our

special vendors' "Silk Road" area, and making friends. And of course we will find opportunities for touring Nashville and visiting the famous Music Row.

The Grandmasters each will give a Keynote Address introducing their family style's methods and movements and special characteristics, and each will teach a short 16-move routine derived from their traditional family style. These are presented on a rotation so that you can experience all five styles. Specific times and masters will be scheduled well in advance.

The panel of medical and academic experts will be announced and scheduled well in advance.

The Symposium's Registration/ Reception/Hospitality and Information Central is open every day and is located in The Commons, our headquarters on campus.



Ma Hailong
Wu Style

Yang Zhen duo
Yang Style

Wu Wenban
Wu (Hao) Style

Meals (reasonable price, good quality) in The Commons Dining Hall may be purchased as a package or individually as desired.

Accommodations can be obtained very reasonably in the university's residence halls or at special rates in nearby hotels. We suggest that you arrive a day or two early, or stay an extra day or two, to enjoy more of the area's attractions.

Special Guests, in addition to the Five Grandmasters and the scientists and academic experts, include the Mayor of the City of Nashville, Mayor of the City of Taiyuan, representatives of Nashville's Sister Cities Organization, The Chinese Embassy in the U.S., Vanderbilt University Medical Center for Integrative Health, Annabelle's Wish, Symposium Sponsors, the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, officials of international organizations of Tai Chi Chuan and martial arts, perhaps a country music star...

Special Evening Events Schedule

Saturday, July 4 -----
National U.S.A. Independence Day Celebration. Nashville's Fourth of July patriotic celebration and firework display are rated third in the U.S. Bring the family and enjoy all-day-and-evening holiday fun!

Sunday, July 5 Opening Day -----
Symposium Registration and check-in, Pre-symposium workshops, Grand Opening Sessions, Welcome Reception, Silk Road Trade Show

Monday, July 6 -----
Welcome Banquet and International Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan Association's 10th Anniversary Celebration

Tuesday, July 7 -----

Open Forum, a lively and interactive group discussion on Tai Chi Research by all Grandmasters, Scientific Researchers, Academic Experts; questions posed by Symposium participants.

Wednesday, July 8 -----

Round Table Forum: a second opportunity to interact with the Faculty.

Thursday, July 9 -----

Grand Showcase and Masters Demonstrations. Extraordinary performances by the Grandmasters and lineage holders of Taijiquan, traditional Chinese music, American Country and Western music, Chinese children's dance, more, more, more....

Friday, July 10 -----

Closing ceremonies, Friendship Party All week "Silk Road," the Symposium's trade show, featuring vendors of interesting cultural merchandise, music, DVDs, books, instructional materials and study aids, memorabilia and treasures of all kinds

Sunday July 5 -----

8:00 a.m.-9:00 p.m.

Symposium's Registration/Reception and Information Central is open all day.

7:00 a.m.-9:00 a.m.

Breakfast in the Commons Dining Hall

10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

Pre-symposium workshop
(to be announced)

11:00 p.m.-1:00 p.m.

Lunch in the Commons Dining Hall

2:00-4:00 p.m.

Pre-symposium workshop
(to be announced)

5:00-7:00 p.m.

Dinner in the Commons Dining Hall

5:00-9:30 p.m.
Reception and Grand Opening

6:00-9:30 p.m.
Grand Opening: Welcome Notes, Spotlight Sessions: Introductions of Grandmasters, Science Experts, Academic Presenters, Sponsors, Special Guests

**DAILY SCHEDULE,
MONDAY THROUGH FRIDAY**

Highlights: Keynote address, morning and afternoon Taijiquan Master classes, medical and science lectures and academic presentations, Silk Road Trade Show, Evening Special Events

Registration-----

Monday: 6:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m.

Tuesday-Friday 8:00 a.m. – 6:30 p.m.

6:15-7:00 a.m. -----

Morning Sunrise Practice on the Esplanade

One morning with the Grandmasters at Nashville's "Parthenon" park (photo ops)!

7:00-8:15 a.m. -----

Breakfast, the Commons Dining Hall

8:45-9:45 a.m. -----

Keynote Address: Grandmaster of Taijiquan, Auditorium

9:45-10:15 a.m. -----

Break

10:15-11:45 a.m. -----

Taijiquan Master classes, by two Grandmasters, Gymnasiums

11:45 a.m.-1:15 p.m. -----

Lunch, the Commons Dining Hall

1:30-3:00 p.m. -----

Lectures and Presentations by Medical and Science Researchers and Academic Experts

3:00-3:30 p.m. -----

Break

3:30-5:00 p.m. -----

Taijiquan Master classes, by two Grandmasters, Gymnasiums

5:00-6:15 p.m. -----

Dinner, the Commons Dining Hall

7:30 -----

Special Event of the Evening

**For full information on
Symposium Fees and
Registration please visit
www.taichisymposium.com**



69 Press Down (Downward Single Whip) | # 70 Left Golden Cock stands on one leg | # 71 Right Golden Cock stands on one leg | # 77 White Crane spreads Wings | # 78 Brush knee and push (left) | and transition to # 79 Needle at Sea Bottom

太極拳



Open right foot to the back corner.



Shifting back, bend right knee towards the corner, left leg straightening without locking the knee. Bring in left hand to side of body.



Sink down onto right leg, lowering left hand by your left side then extend it forward towards the inside of the left foot. Maintain the extended hook hand.

Body is open to left corner, left palm facing down; head is level, eyes looking forward.



Simultaneously rise up: standing on left leg, pick up the right knee and lift the right hand. Press the left hand down to the side of your hip.



Sink down by bending left leg, right foot steps back, toes open 45° to the corner, both heels on either side of the centerline.



Shifting back, draw in the right arm to the front of your body, rotate the left arm and sit the palm in front of your left leg.



Shift forward onto left leg; use the heel pivot to turn in the right foot by 90°.



Turn the waist to open left foot to the left corner, rotate left hand slightly downward to grab and pull.



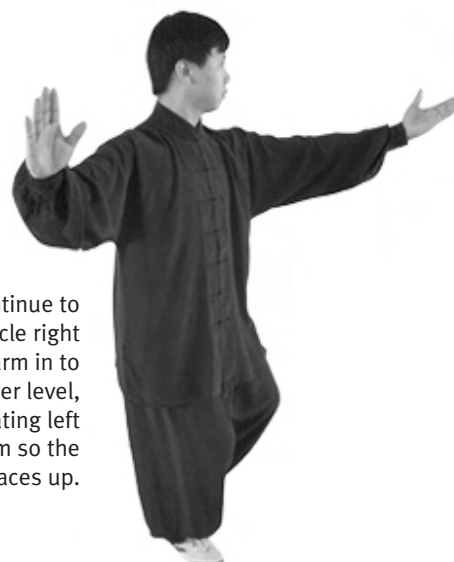
Continue shifting forward and gradually pick up the right leg. At the same time draw the right arm in and set the palm by your side.



Rise up, picking up the left knee. At the same time, press the right hand down, lifting the left hand up.



Bending the right leg, begin to lower the left leg, circle the right arm and to the side, extend the left arm, palm reaching forward.



Continue to circle right arm in to shoulder level, rotating left arm so the palm faces up.



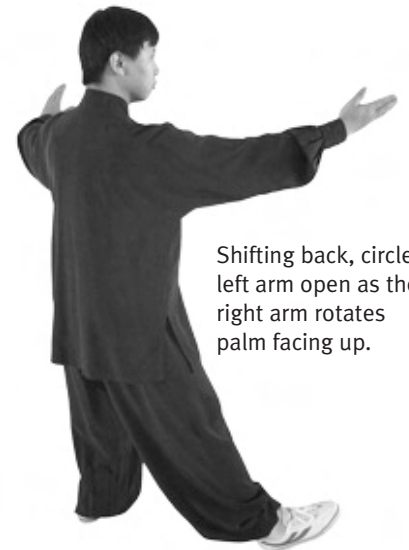
太極拳



Left leg steps back, toes open to the corner. Keep both heels on either side of the center line. At the same time, bring right hand in to the shoulder preparing to strike forward. Pay attention: sink the chest and drop your right elbow.



Shift back onto left leg, use right heel pivot to point toes forward. As the waist turns the body, pull in left palm to side of hip, right hand striking forward. End position: torso open at 45° to the left corner.

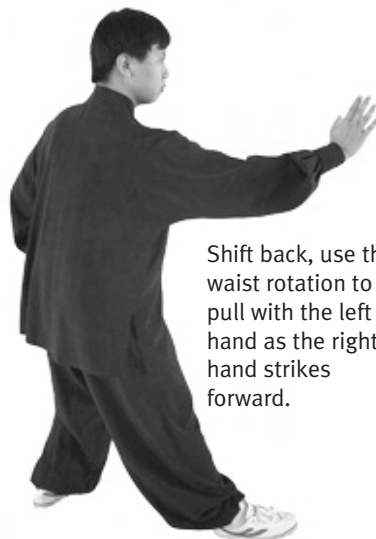


Shifting back, circle left arm open as the right arm rotates palm facing up.



Left leg steps back with foot open to 45°, keep both heels on opposite sides of the center line.

At the same time circle right hand in to sit in front of the shoulder preparing to strike. Make sure to sink your chest and drop right elbow.



Shift back, use the waist rotation to pull with the left hand as the right hand strikes forward.

Right foot pivots on heel, toes pointing forward as the body turns to the left corner.



Shifting back, circle both arms and pick up right leg. As you circle the left arm be sure to drop the elbow and loosen the shoulder.



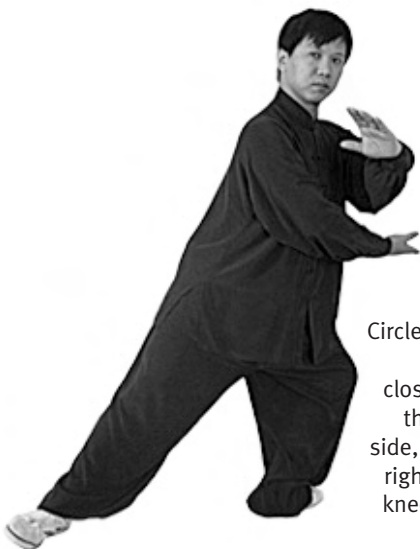
Right leg steps back with foot open to 45°, circle left palm to sit in front of shoulder. Keep both heels on opposite side of the center line.



Shifting back, use the waist rotation to pull with the right hand as the left hand strikes forward. Left foot pivots on heel, toes pointing forward as the body turns 45° to the right corner.



Shifting back, circle right arm open as the left arm rotates palm facing up.



Circle both arms closed to the left side, open right hip, knee and toes.

At the same time as the palms circle closed, the right leg steps open at 45° towards the back right corner.



Rotate the waist to the right, separate the right arm rising, left arm pulling down. Align right arm with leg, palm higher than the shoulder, left palm settling in front of left hip.



Shifting forward, pick up left leg and take a small closing step with left foot open 45° to left corner.



太極拳



Shifting back, open both arms, sink elbows and loosen shoulders, right hand slightly higher than the left.



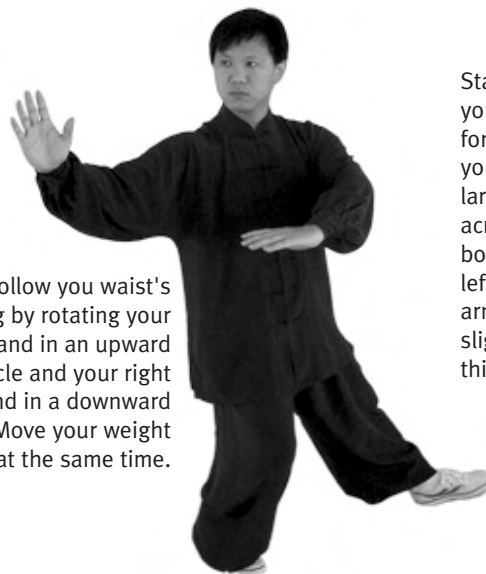
Pick up right leg and step forward, shift weight slightly forward to root the right heel in the empty stance, toes forward. Turn the waist to close both arms to the center line.

Rotate the waist left to turn the arms so the palms face each other.



With the turning your waist, rotate your right arm palm in and make a downward circle. Start an upward circle with your left hand at the same time.

Follow your waist's turning by rotating your left hand in an upward circle and your right hand in a downward circle. Move your weight back at the same time.



Continue your circles until your left palm is extended and flat in front of your body and your right palm is extended to the back right. Step forward at the same time.

Start shifting your weight forward while you make a large circle across your body with your left arm. The arm descends slightly during this circle.



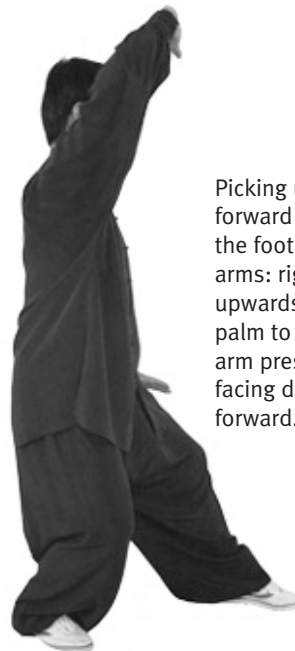
Meanwhile, bring your right arm into a ready position with your palm facing forward.



Sit back on the left leg, circle both arms closed to the left side. At the same time, pick up the right foot slightly and reset it 45° to the corner.



Shifting right, rotate the torso to face forward.

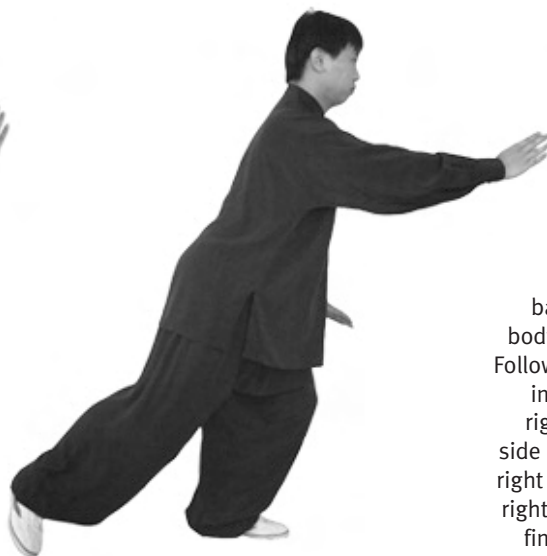


Picking up the left leg, step forward and set the ball of the foot down. Separate the arms: right arm warding off upwards, gradually rotate the palm to face outward. Left arm pressing down, palm facing down, fingers point forward.

Finish shifting weight to the left leg. Your body will be squared to the front, Your left arm finishes beside your left knee with the palm down and the fingers facing forward.

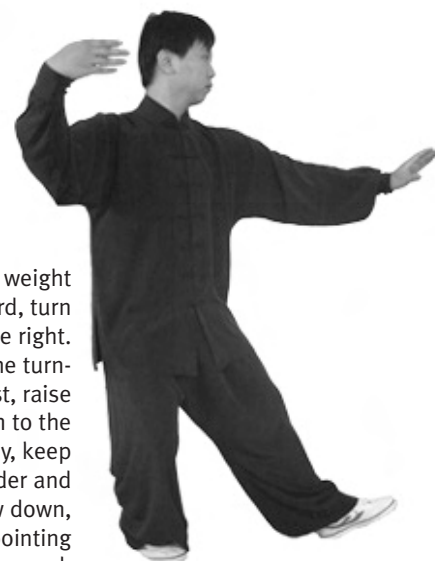


Your right arm is directly in front of your body and the palm is facing slightly inwards. Your back leg is naturally straight, and you should lean forward slightly with your upper body.



Shift weight forward slightly, lower right hand slightly, at the same time raise right leg.

Shift weight backward, turn body to the right. Following the turning waist, raise right arm to the side of body, keep right shoulder and right elbow down, fingers pointing forward.



Raise left arm in front of the body, sit left palm slightly, bend left elbow slightly. Touch the ground with left heel.



By Holly Sweeney-Hillman,
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Looking through the *Lens of Science:*

The Nature of Balance and the Practice of Tai Chi Chuan

The ability to balance in an upright posture is most sought after in our earliest youth and again in our elder years. The young lady, Siera, is at the point in her life when she is investing great effort, concentration, and practice in learning uprightness. Soon, her mastery of upright balance will allow her to walk, run, and reach for things without toppling over. She will have many falls as she learns the art of balancing but she won't be discouraged by them. To move upright is a prize well worth the tumbles. The talent for sustaining balance in fully upright posture is unique to human beings and is our most treasured physical capability. We spend more time learning how to balance than any other creature. (Figure 2) As we get older, we sometimes feel less confident about our ability to balance. Losing our ability to balance makes us fearful about everyday activities, threatens our independence and damages our self-esteem. Falling and fear of falling are regarded as serious health threats for older people.



Siera Skye

In the United States, the National Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (NCDC) has invested millions of dollars over the past 20 years in fall-related research. Tai Chi leads the list of effective fall prevention programs that the NCDC advocates and the NCDC has approved additional funding for continued research into the benefits of Tai Chi for public health and safety.¹ Although the research examined by the NCDC focused on the incidence of falling in different populations, there is obviously a relationship between falling and the ability to balance. It is the premise of this article that the study and regular practice of Tai Chi helps people to find and maintain balance while standing or moving upright. To support this idea, we'll look at what science has to say about balance and then we'll look at how Tai Chi practice addresses the different components of balance.

In the world of science, a generally accepted definition of balance is being able to maintain a body's center of gravity over its base of support. This is precisely what the toddler, Siera, is learning how to do. Although many other creatures can balance upright, more or less perpendicular to the ground, for short periods of time, only humans take on this difficult balancing act as a full time job and without a tail to help. Why humans ever decided to do this is a matter of continuing scholarly debate. Science writer Jocelyn Rice has identified a minimum of twelve competing hypotheses about where, why, when, and how humans got up off their knuckles. All the theories share one theme in common and that is motivation. Humans wanted to be upright for a reason; they wanted something that prolonged upright balance could provide. Here are a few of the motivational theories that have been put forth by various



figure 2

We spend more time learning to stand than any other creature.

scientists: early humans wanted to see above the grasses so they could spot potential predators (thus placing our origin on the savannah), early humans wanted to keep their heads above water (this places our origin in swamps), or, early humans wanted to be able to carry things over long distances and needed to have their hands free for this purpose (this theory hints that we are well evolved for the shopping mall).

In addition to motivation, some scientists have been interested in examining the biomechanical advantages to balancing upright, making the assumption that Nature chooses efficiency whenever possible. Biomechanically, the human gait of covering ground on two legs requires less energy than covering ground on four legs. The walking gait of humans is one of Nature's most efficient inventions, involving minimal muscular effort because the legs are swung like pendulums using rhythmic momentum instead of muscle energy. Most researchers have focused on walking as the gait that defines human evolution. That's why Harvard University anthropologist Daniel Lieberman

has caused quite a stir in the scientific community with his hypothesis that the motivation that created our uprightness was running. Lieberman observes that humans can pretty much outrun any mammal in the world, particularly in hot dry conditions, because of the efficiency of our upright balance on two legs. Humans are not particularly fast runners but can run for much longer periods of time than other animals. Lieberman proposes that hunting and scavenging motivated our running behavior, stating that early humans could literally wear out their prey in prolonged chases. Lieberman makes some compelling observations about human structure to support his argument: compared to other primates, humans have huge extensor muscles, notably the gluteal muscles (i.e. butt muscles) and the hamstrings. These muscles become strongly developed by running because the body is leaning forward. Lieberman likes to say that when a person is running, they are always falling. These muscles contract strongly to help stabilize the torso, so we don't topple forward. Figure 3 shows drawings from Leonardo Da Vinci's notebook. Leonardo was also fascinated by the massive system of extensor muscles in our hips and legs. In addition to our well developed extensors, Professor Lieberman cites the tendon structure of the human leg as further support for his 'born to run' theory of human development. Humans have long tendons in the lower legs which act as energy storing springs. Lieberman says this kind of tendon structure only evolves in animals designed to run. Lastly, he talks about features of our head structure that sets us apart from apes and allows us to be good runners. He notes that humans have more sensitive semicircular canals than other apes. Semicircular canals are structures in the vestibular system of our inner ears that act as gyroscopes, meaning our heads can be bouncing all over the place and we can still figure

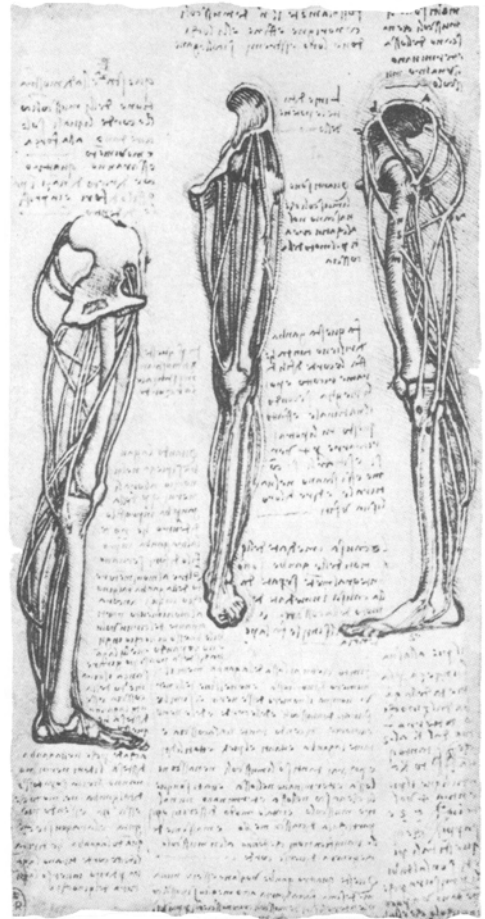


figure 3

out which way is up in order to maintain our balance. Also, humans have a special ligament which connects our head to our spine. This ligament, the nuchal ligament, stabilizes our head so it is held steady while we are running. Fast running and jumping animals like horses, dogs, rabbits, and humans all have well-developed nuchal ligaments. In humans, the strength and elasticity of this ligament also contributes greatly to our ability to hold our head upright as we stand or move around. Lieberman maintains that none of these structural features could have evolved from walking.²

If Lieberman's observations are correct, running may have helped early humans evolve some of the structural capacities that help us balance today: large extensor muscles that stabilize us from pitching forward, highly developed semicircular canals that keep us from being disoriented while we are moving, strong nuchal ligaments to hold our

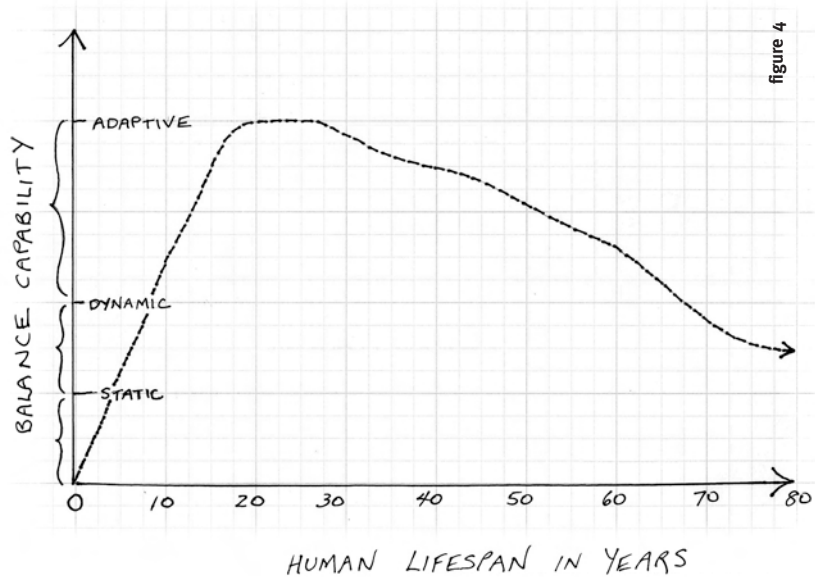


figure 4

heads upright. If running was the why that helped us develop some structural advantages to balance upright, the next problem is how, how do we accomplish our balancing act?

Although we frequently use the phrase “holding our balance,” true balance is an equilibrium of the moment. To achieve equilibrium, a person must possess three distinct but interrelated types of balance: static, dynamic, and adaptive. Static balance is the ability to sustain a chosen posture*. Dynamic balance is the ability to maintain chosen postures while moving. Adaptive balance is the ability to move while maintaining chosen postures while negotiating changing environmental demands. Figure 4 diagrams the competence gained in these skills over the course of human life span. The highest peak in the graph occurs at young adult age, a gradual decline is seen in aging populations. To better understand how balance skills are lost, let’s first take a look at how they are gained. (*The term “chosen posture” recognizes that the human balance spectrum is broad, going from the average person’s more or less uprightness to the acrobat’s perfect upsidedownness to the figure skater’s twirling miracle of unfolding configurations while revolving on the blade of one skate.)

Scientists have spent decades trying to understand exactly what is going on as the young lady in Figure 1 goes from dependence to independence by mastering the art of balance. In the early 20th century, a researcher named Magnus created a theory of “reflex hierarchy” to explain how balance is achieved. His theory was based on countless gruesome experiments on animals. He interpreted his experiments with animals as indicating that the ability to balance was based on reflexes, in other words, balance was ‘hardwired’ into our physiology and would manifest in a predictable and orderly sequence of postural behaviors. However, the postures and movement responses of animals when examined outside the contrived and artificial parameters of his laboratory studies did not support his theories. Scientists began to realize that the variety and spontaneity of postures and movements that are witnessed in healthy animals interacting in a natural environment could not be explained by Magnus’s theories which confined balance to the rigid limits of postural reflexes. Although his theories shaped an entire generation’s thinking on child development, by the 1980’s another group of scientists had replaced Magnus’s reflex model with an entirely different model based on systems theory.³

Systems theory states that: “A system, by definition, consists of an organized set of parts (the subsystem level) that interact with each other in such a way as to generate unique properties (emergents) expressed at the level of the whole (the systems level). In other words, systems generate unique behaviors that emerge out of a complex set of subsystem/system/suprasystem interactions.”⁴

The application of systems theory to the phenomenon of human movement created scientific research that was quite different from Magnus’s laboratory studies. Interesting findings began to emerge from this new research and one of the most important discoveries was that flexibility of behavior is achieved through practice and repetition and that with repetition, movement patterns become more adaptable and less rigid or stereotypic. “Practice and experience allow the organization of action systems to accomplish a functional end... rather than acquiring a motor program, the individual develops a skill. That skill is the ability to use information to coordinate movements and postures flexibly in the context of a task.”⁵ In other words, we could define balance as a learned and practiced complex skill rather than a rote function of the nervous system.

Action systems researchers made another important observation about balance. They discovered that balance while performing an activity was dependent on anticipatory postural adjustments. They demonstrated that postural changes preceded the overt movements necessary to perform a task and these changes prepared the body to balance. This anticipatory postural activity prevented a person from losing their balance as they performed different activities. These findings indicated that cognition is an important component of the ability to balance.⁶

“Cognition” is defined as the process of knowing, perceiving, and remembering. Regarding human movement, cognition is knowing what you want to do (for instance, “Brush knee left, push right”), perceiving what you are doing as you move (how closely your “brush knee left, push right” conforms to the standard your teacher shows you), and remembering what you did so you can try it again. Master Yang Zhenduo’s comments on the progression of Tai Chi study, moving from “approximate” to “detailed” to “refined” practice is a perfect description of how cognition affects practice and practice affects cognition.

Before any movement is performed, our nervous system needs to anticipate how to balance our body as it moves. This anticipatory activation of postural muscles is based on experience and the process of cognition. Studies have shown that lack of ability among older adults to anticipate and adequately prepare their postural control systems for movement was linked to losing balance during experiments. Studies also showed that older adults showed proportionally more improvement in balance tests than younger subjects if the balance tests were repeated several times. This suggests that older adults intuitively rely more on cognition than reaction time to control their balance.⁷

In addition to cognition, there are physiological factors that contribute to the ability to balance. The big three in this category are: the vestibular system, vision, and proprioception.

The vestibular system, located in our inner ears, resolves conflicts about balance through a complex structure of semicircular canals which can sense acceleration and turning. (These are the structures that Lieberman says evolved from running). Most of us have had experiences which give examples of our vestibular system

in action. One is when we are in a stopped vehicle and the vehicle next to us starts moving. Our eyes can be tricked into perceiving that we are moving but in a moment or two our vestibular system sorts things out and lets us know that we are not moving but standing still. Another example is when we are in an elevator that zooms down fast. Even after the elevator has stopped moving, we have a dizzy feeling that we are moving but in a moment, the fluid within our semicircular canals stops swirling and we know we are no longer moving. These examples show that the vestibular system tends to exert a controlling influence over all other sensory systems of balance. Degeneration or disturbance within the vestibular system is not uncommon in people over 50 years of age. People with vestibular problems can be helped by doing exercises which help them rely more on vision and proprioception.⁸ Tai Chi movements like ‘Wave Hands Like Clouds’, which combine turning head movements with a specific visual focus are similar to movements used in vestibular therapy. Also, Tai Chi’s emphasis on developing a ‘root’ in the feet is an example of how we use proprioception to increase confidence in our sense of balance.

Research conducted on balance consistently finds that vision impairment due to low light conditions or poor eyesight negatively affects our ability to balance. Most of us know the relationship between sight and balance through direct experience. The aging process frequently reduces visual capabilities and this is an important consideration when looking at balance in older adults. Relying more on proprioception can help reduce the impact of poor vision on balance.

Proprioception is the foundation of all our movements and the ability to achieve equilibrium. It is the sense that allows us to know the positions of our limbs, the amount of tension in our muscles,

and how much our joints are bent and the amount of pressure we can feel within our joints. Proprioception could be described as our internal GPS that maps our structure and body mechanics on a moment to moment basis. Disuse, more than aging, reduces our proprioceptive abilities. In the Big Three of Balance, (vestibular system, vision, and proprioception) proprioception seems to be the most robust, trainable, and durable sense throughout our lifespan.

However, it is important to keep in mind that it is the interaction between these three systems that enable us to balance. This interaction is a function of our nervous system and our nervous system demonstrates “plasticity” throughout our lifetime.

“Plasticity” describes the ability of our nervous system to make structural changes in response to internal and external demands. One of the structural changes the nervous system is capable of throughout our lifetime is to continue to grow dendrites. Dendrites are long tentacle shaped projections that receive incoming stimuli and pass the information to the cell body of a neuron. Neurons are the nerve cells that allow the nervous system to exchange information throughout the body and to direct movement activities. Every dendrite is branched to receive multiple inputs from other neurons. You could imagine a neuron like the trunk of a tree and the dendrites as the branches, the more branches on the tree, the wider the area of shade the tree would cast. In the nervous system, this area of shade would be termed a “receptor field”. The bigger and denser the ‘shade’ cast by the forest of dendrites, the richer and more detailed is the information network shared by neurons. This information network allows us to put together many bits of sensory information in order to accomplish complex tasks like balancing.⁹ In the

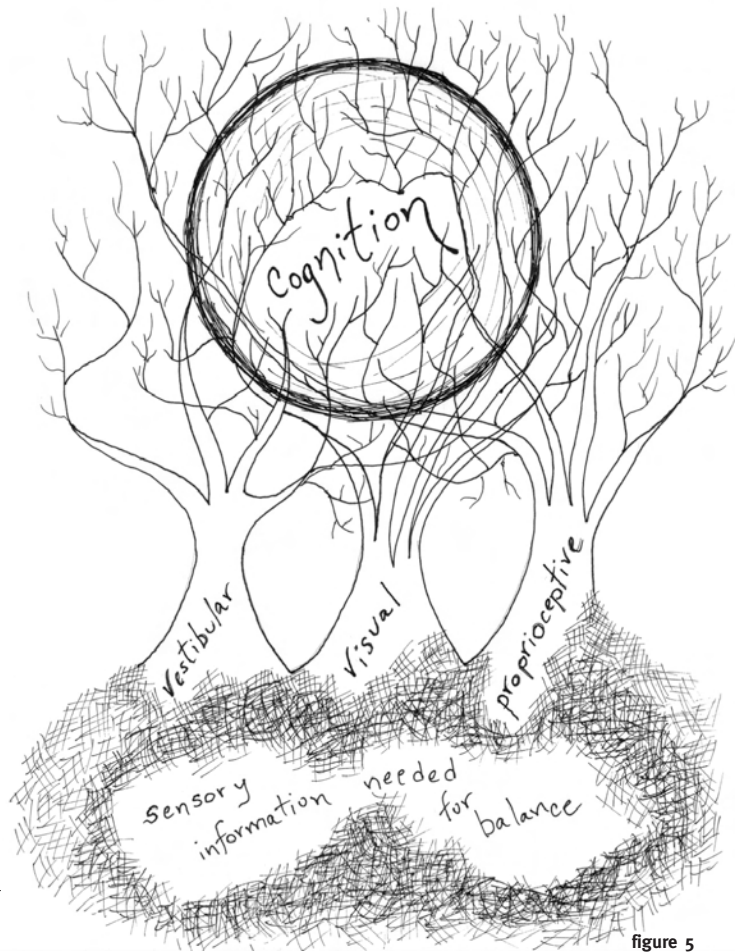


figure 5

language of Yang Chengfu's 10 Principles of Tai Chi Practice, the 'dendrite forest' helps the nervous system *unify internal and external*. The growth of dendrites is a perfect example of the concept of "use it or lose it". The number of dendrites we have to use will be determined by how much we challenge our capabilities and by how much we practice to maintain our abilities.

Figure 5 is a fanciful illustration of the 'dendrite forest' of our nervous system. Cognition is shown as the sunlight that motivates the growth of the forest. Neurons of the vestibular, visual, and proprioceptive 'trees' grow countless dendrites to connect and integrate all the pieces of sensory information that we need to balance. The dense shade under the trees represents a rich field of sensory information that we can use to find our balance.

This article has investigated the components needed to produce balance; defining balance as being able to maintain center of gravity over base of support while standing still (static balance), while moving (dynamic balance), and while spontaneously coping with the environment (adaptive balance). The elements that appear to be essential in the development of balance are motivation, certain physical capabilities, cognition, and sensory integration.

Scientific thought on balance leans toward motivation as the reason we balance upright in the first place. We have evolved to want to balance upright which is different from saying we evolved knowing how to do it. We have to learn to balance, we are not born knowing how. In order to keep

balancing throughout our lifetime, we have to keep wanting to learn how to do it. Just like the toddler Siera, we have to keep trying till we get it right. As our bodies change, we can keep our balance skills up to date with practice. The more we practice, the more we'll get it right.

The way Tai Chi is practiced addresses the different types of balance. The individual postures of Tai Chi give students the opportunity to practice static balances of varying degrees of difficulty. The Tai Chi forms, which are sequences of postures connected by transitional movements, challenge dynamic balance capabilities. Practicing Tai Chi in a group and in different environments provides adaptive balance practice. Tai Chi Tui Shou (push hands) provides the most rigorous



figure 6

The Annotated Lexicon: ZHONG DING

Introduction By Audi Peal

To understand “equilibrium” from the traditional Chinese standpoint, one has to understand the word “zhong.” “Zhong” has “middle” or “central” as its core meaning. “Center” is perhaps too specific, although “zhong” can indeed be used in compounds that mean “center.” In philosophical terms, “zhong” can also have a more dynamic and moral connotation. For example, “zhong” is the word used in the Confucian classic the Doctrine of the Mean to signify the “equilibrium” or “mean” that every cultivated individual should follow as a “golden rule.”

The word “Zhonghe,” which is a compound of “zhong” (“middle”) and “he” (“harmonize”), can mean “neutralize” or “balance out” in the chemical sense, but can also be interpreted as “impartial” or “even-tempered.” The two syllables can also be interpreted as separate words, meaning “equilibrium” and “harmony.” It can be seen in the Doctrine of the Mean with this latter meaning.

In the original Chinese, Doctrine of the Mean is “Zhongyong.” In modern Chinese, this word just means “mediocrity,” but its meaning in the Doctrine of the Mean is somewhat disputed. The Song Dynasty Neo-Confucians explained the term as follows: “zhong” means “not tilting or leaning” (“bu pian bu yi.”), i.e., impartial, and “without excess or deficiency” (“wu guo bu ji”), while “yong” means “ordinary.” These Neo-Confucian terms are also quoted in Zhang Sanfeng’s Taiji Treatise, among other places. They refer to keeping to what Master Yang Jun has referred to as the “middle way,” and to what could be thought of as the Goldilocks middle that is “just right.” If you control the “fulcrum” in the “middle,” anywhere else the opponent goes will be an inferior position. Sunzi says in the Art of War: “Putting yourself beyond defeat is in your hands, but defeating the opponent is in his hands.”

practice requiring all three types of balance.

Figure 6 shows some students practicing Tai Chi sword form. We can see that the way they are balancing on one leg looks more like running than walking. Tai Chi develops physical capabilities that walking alone could not develop. The lowered, bent knee stances of Tai Chi develop strength in the extensor muscles of the hip and leg. Increased strength in these muscles help stabilize us when we move, keeping our torso from toppling forward. The way weight is transferred from one leg to another in Tai Chi is completely different from walking and requires much more muscle effort. The slow controlled transfer of weight maintains higher numbers of motor units and thereby contributes to increased strength overall. The mechanics of Tai Chi movement are closer to running than walking. Just like running, we move from a supporting bent leg toward an extended forward leg. Like running in slow motion, we gradually bend the forward leg while we straighten the back leg to transfer weight from one leg to another. In Tai Chi, we bend and straighten our legs like compressing and releasing springs. This pattern of compression and release conditions our tendons.¹⁰

The variety of Tai Chi movements and the precision of their performance gives cognitive abilities quite a work-out. An experienced Tai Chi player knows more than a hundred distinct postures and many more transition movements that connect one posture to the next in a continuous flow of movement that can go on for nearly an hour to complete just one Tai Chi form sequence. It takes a lot of cognitive skill to remember, anticipate, and track so many discrete

movements. The cognitive aspects of Tai Chi practice give students a huge repertoire of anticipatory balance strategies.

Tai Chi practice includes persistent application of sensory integration. For example, the “prepare” (yu bei shi) posture at the opening of each form represents specific and intense sensory observation: Is my head upright? Is my back lifted up and my chest contained? Is my waist area loose? Are my shoulders relaxed down? Is my spirit lifted? Is my mind tranquil? As a student progresses through the study of Tai Chi, the challenge of integrating sensory information increases, leading to incredible sensory refinement – the ability to sense beyond structure to perceive energy and intention.

But, as any Tai Chi player knows, it all comes down to practice. And practice is a matter of motivation and motivation is a matter of spirit. If you can raise up your spirit and practice Tai Chi everyday, you will improve your balance. Science is on your side.



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"Zhongding" is, as far as I know, only a Tai Chi term of art. It can be understood as meaning: "centrally fixed/stable/settled/calm" or "firming up on/in the middle." It refers to one of the "five steps" ("wu bu"): namely, "advancing step" ("jin bu"), "retreating step" ("tui bu"), "look/attend left" ("zuo gu"), "gaze/anticipate right" ("you pan"), and "central equilibrium" ("zhongding"). Some practitioners stress that "zhongding" is the basis of

the other four "steps."

"Ding" in the expression "zhongding" means to "make settled/firm/stable/fixed/certain." It is a very common word in Chinese and is used in a wide range of expressions, including the equivalent of words like "definite(ly)," "making a decision," "stabilizing," and "becoming composed." An important usage in Taijiquan is in the expression "ding shi" ("final posture" or "settled posture"), which can refer to the point

where the transitional movements of a form "posture" ("shi") "settle" ("ding") on a final expression before moving on to the next posture.

In English, the term "equilibrium" connotes a natural still point resulting from a dynamic situation. This point, however, is otherwise neutral. The most salient uses of similar Chinese philosophical terms, however, carry overtones of what is efficient, moral, or in harmony with the natural order. ☯



By Andy Lee
Center Director,
East Brunswick NJ

ZHŌNG DÌNG - Analysis of 中定

Zhōng Dìng 中定 (central equilibrium)

1. Keep balanced and be stable so that your body is ready to do anything.
2. Keep the central axis of the wheel of your body stable, flexible.
3. It refers to the internal factor of movement, not a physical point.
4. It is the stable post of the nervous system.
5. It is earth, which means everything is generated from it.
6. If the balance cannot be held, any other technique or posture and movement, meaning the transition, cannot be done skillfully.

Zhōng - Analysis of 中				
Character		Spelling	Hanzi Rebus	Genealogy
Simplified	Traditional	拼音/Pīnyīn	Radical	Etymology
中	中	Zhōng	丨 gēn a vertical stroke (also read xin or tui) is one stroke and its position in character: middle. Gun, a down stroke, a perpendicular. The ancient form of this character resembles "口" flag and with 丨 gēn drawn in the middle, the center.	The character represents a square target pierced in the center by an arrow. It symbolizes many things in many characters. Here, it is the arrow, but it could also be a flag or banner pole. In classical China, various nationalities of Hua Xian lived in the Yellow River areas. They considered themselves to be in the center of the earth. They considered themselves to be the "center country", while all other areas surrounding them were referred to as "四方" sì fāng: the four directions. Since then "中国" Zhōngguó--China became the name of the country.
中 Zhōng	In Classical Chinese, Zhong is well-translated as center or middle. When used as the country's name, Zhong places China at the center of the world.			

Dìng - Analysis of 定				
Character		Spelling	Hanzi Rebus	Genealogy
Simplified	Traditional	拼音/Pīnyīn	Radical	Etymology
定	定	dìng	宀 miǎn roof, cover	Living indoors is a critical part for life, and only after having your own home can life settle and be stable.
			止 zhǐ is a pictograph of a foot with protruding toes 疋 zhèng/zhēng depicts a 疋 zhǐ-foot walking towards the position represented by "一 yī. means stop 止:at the line 一Yī .	The ancient form depicts a 宀 miǎn: roof on top and on bottom 疋 zhèng walking toward a destination—home.
定 Dìng	To fix, to settle, certain, quiet. It is order - Zhèng 疋 in the house, Miǎn 宀 --roof. It can mean a person has returned home safely. In other characters, "ding" represents this meaning. For example: 平定 píngdìng: peace or 安静 ānjìng: quiet and stable.			

Hanzi	Pinyin	Footwork	Quality	Direction
中定	Zhōng Dìng	Center/axis on the compass	Central Equilibrium	Center

中定

COMMENTARY ON ZHONG DING



"Zhong ding is not the same as balance. The word zhong in Chinese is centered and ding is stillness. Balance can be attained by intention and strain even in a very distorted body position, while zhong ding is natural, as in the classic description, 'As if the body were supported from all sides'."

Dr. Wen Zee, "Zhong-ding: Hidden Weapon of Form, Push Hands", pg.20

"While standing, the body is centered and comfortable, supported in all eight directions. The tailbone is centered, the spirit rises to the crown, from top to bottom, one straight line."

Chen Xin, quoted in *Chen Style Taijiquan*, pg. 81

"Stability means that you must keep your body centered, a condition referred to as zhong ding. To be stable or to maintain your center, however does not imply that your body should not move. The goal is to keep your body stable while it is in motion. If your movements are correct, Qi will sink to the dantian and the resulting feeling will be that your feet are extending down into the ground like the roots of a tree. This feeling indicates that you have achieved stability. Just as yin always contains yang and vice versa, stability must always include a sense of nimbleness, and nimbleness a sense of stability"

Zhang Yun, *The Art of Chinese Swordsmanship*, pg. 30

"The tan-t'ien is located in the abdomen, closer to the navel. This is what in physiology is called the body's 'center of gravity', located along the line of the waist. Its position and significance is precisely the same as the tan t'ien. The center of gravity is also what T'ai Chi Ch'uan calls, 'central equilibrium'. Central equilibrium cannot be separated from the tan t'ien. This is why the Classics say, 'At all times keep the waist in mind', 'the waist is the ruler' and 'the waist is the pivot'. In other words we can say that T'ai Chi Ch'uan is an exercise which emphasizes man's center of gravity."

Cheng Man-Ching, *Advanced T'ai Chi Form Instructions*, pg.50

"Developing the waist is the best way to find your center, your whole body pivot. Once you start wobbling at the hip you have lost your unitary connection."

Chen Youze, "On creating a State of Song", pg.16

"The waist is the dominant part for all movements in Taijiquan, the 'source of sense and perception'. Only when the waist is loosened, can all the movements be made with agility and coordination. Loosening of the waist helps the Qi to sink downward, and increases the root of the body or zhong ding (central equilibrium)."

Wu Ying-hua & Ma Yueh-liang, *Wu Style Taijiquan*, pg.18

"Body centered and upright implies that the torso be naturally upright. It doesn't mean that the spine should be completely straight, which in reality is not possible. By tucking in your sacrum, you can lessen the strain on your lower back and allow your waist to move more freely"

Liang Shou-Yu, *A Guide to Taijiquan*, pg 16

"The term 'centered' refers to the time just prior to opening/closing or extending/contracting. Stability is expressed through silence and stillness. In being centered and stable, the mind is clear and the person does not lean to any direction. Centered stability is at the root of the Way. Centeredness is achieved by moving neither too much nor too little. Stability requires that one maintain smooth breathing and not be lured by apparent promise of gain. Always remain centered when reacting with the opponent, whether you are extending, contracting, advancing, retreating, or looking to either side. Once a person can operate from the center of the circle, their range of reaction becomes limitless. This is a guiding principle for all parts of the body."

Wu Kung Cho, "An excerpt from the Golden Book"

"Keeping one's center of gravity stable in whatever position they take and also in the process of transferring from one position to another is a fundamental skill a student of Taijiquan should seek to build up through their daily practice. To be able to maintain one's own balance at all times and to detect an opponent's center of gravity and to sense and make use of the slightest loss of balance instantly is what distinguishes the outstanding from the ordinary"

Yang Yuting, in Wang Peisheng's, *Wu Style Taijiquan*, pg. 216

"In studying balance seek equilibrium of stability throughout all postures and movements. Whether standing still, or leaning forward and backward, each stance has its inherent center. Follow the principles of push hands to study the relationship of the balance of forces expressed through all movements. To remain constantly rooted and stable, the center of gravity must remain as low as possible."

Wu Kung Cho, "An excerpt from the Golden Book"

"The crown of the head is like a plumb line and therefore we speak of 'suspension from the crown of the head'. The two arms are like a balance that circle to left and right, the waist is like the stem of the balance. If one stands like a plumb line and balance, then the slightest deviation in lightness, heaviness, floating or sinking will be obvious."

From the Yang Family Forty Chapters,

Lost T'ai Chi Classics from the Late Ch'ing Dynasty, pg.77

"With the spine and waist as sustaining pillar and axis and the feet firmly rooted aground, all other parts of the body are maneuvered in pairs and fours, simultaneously and rhythmically, feeling yourself like a fish propelling under the water or a bird sailing above the air, forgetting all worldly worries and attaining a heavenly state of serenity."

Wen Shan Huang, *Fundamentals of Tai Chi Chuan*, pg.. 28

"Not leaning or inclining does not refer to the physical body but to a natural centeredness of the spirit...Although the body may depart from the vertical, the vertical still exists internally; we must not be dogmatic."

Chen Xin, quoted in *Tai Chi's Ancestors*, pg. 81

Compiled by
Dave Barrett
Association Journal
Editor

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YANG FAMILY 2009 SEMINARS

with
Master Yang Jun
*Sixth Generation
Yang Family*



BERLIN GERMANY

April 9-13, Hand Form (9-12am)
April 9-13, Hand Form
(3-5pm director reviewing)
April 9-13, Push Hands (3-5pm)
April 14-15, Sword Form
Contact: Johannes Mergner
Kaiser-Friedrich-Str. 89
10585 Berlin
Tel.: +49-30-3478781
Fax: +49-30-36407017
johannes@yangfamilytaichi.com
www.yangstil-taiji.de

PARIS FRANCE

April 17, Theory (7-9pm)
April 18-19, 49 Hand Form
April 20, Push Hands
April 21-22, Sword Form
Contact: Duc Nguyen Minh
27 Allee des Graviers de La
Salmouille- 91190 Gif.
Tel.: +33-1-69 33 33 64
Fax: +33-1-60 12 24 19
duc@yangfamilytaichi.com

FIRENZE ITALY

May 7, Theory (5-7pm)
May 8-10, Hand Form
May 11-12, Sword Form
May 13, Push Hands
Contact: Roberta Lazzeri
via Santo Spirito 32
50125 Firenze (Italy)
Tel.: +39 347 7309931
roberta@taichi.firenze.it
http://taichi.firenze.it

CAMBRIDGE U K

May 16-17, Hand Form
Contact: Mike Taylor
3 Pittfield Close, Fenstanton,
Cambridge, PE289FE UK
Tel.: +44 1480 392534
or +44 7717 697509 (mobile)
meimei@yangfamilytaichi.com
or mikenera@msn.com
www.yangstyletaichi.co.uk

BARCELONA SPAIN

May 19-21, Hand Form
Contact: José Luis Serra
Center Wutai
Marques de Sentmenat 12
08029 Barcelona
Tel.: 0034 933293819
yangtaichistyle@yahoo.es

ATLANTA GEORGIA USA

Sept 4-7, Hand Form
Contact: E. Lee Saffold
Tel.: (404) 667-0581
qzsaffold@yahoo.com

MONTREAL QC CANADA

Sept 17-18, 2009 Sword Form
Sept 19-20, 2009 Hand Form
Contact: Sergio Arione
19 Centre Commercial Street
Roxboro, Montreal QC, Canada
H8Y 2N9
Tel.: (514) 684-9584
or (888) 548-2454
Fax (514) 684-8291
sergio@yangfamilytaichi.com
www.taichimontreal.com

LOUISVILLE KY USA

Sept 26, Push Hand
Sept 27, Saber Form
Contact: Carl D. Meeks and
William W. Wojasinski
P.O. Box 35007,
Louisville, KY 40232
Tel.: (502) 693-7724
or (859) 312-2456
carl@yangfamilytaichi.com
william@yangfamilytaichi.com
www.kentuckytaichi.com

ROME ITALY

Oct 9-11, Instructors Training
Contact: Claudio Mingarini
Via Alfredo Casella 23-00199
Roma, ITALY
Tel.: (W) 39-6-8610590
Cell: 39-347-3635333
claudio@yangfamilytaichi.com
www.taichiyangfamily.it

CRETE GREECE

Oct 15, Push Hands (am 3 hours)
Oct 16-18, Hand Form
Contact: Kostas Kotsifakis
Nikolaou Skoula 59
Chania, CRETE, GREECE
Tel.: +30-6944334698
Fax : +30-28210-27335
Kostas@minosnet.gr

RIBEIRAO PRETO. . . BRAZIL

Oct 30, Saber Form
Oct 31 & Nov 1-2 Hand Form
Contact: Fernando De Lazzari
Rua Cerqueira César, 1825
Ribeirão Preto, Brazil
Tel.: +55 (16) 3911-1236
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