



# DISCOURSE ON THE SWORD

論劍

*Tai Chi Chuan*

The Journal of The International Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan Association

Summer 2011 Number 29



**YANG FAMILY  
TAI CHI CHUAN**

## President's Letter - June 2011

### Dear Member:

Tai Chi Chuan has spread to every corner of the world and has an important role to play as a health-giving exercise. The cultural exchange between the East and West is promoted through Tai Chi Chuan's philosophy, resourceful strategies and accomplishments. Those who are knowledgeable about Tai Chi Chuan's history all know of the Yang family's contributions. The founder of Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan, Yang Luchan, learned martial arts from the Chen family for eighteen years. Later, he competed at Beijing's "Duanwangfu" and received the title of "Yang the Invincible." After watching Yang Luchan competing with others, Wang Tonghe, the imperial tutor of the Qing emperors Tongzhi and Guangxu, remarked to the ministers present, "Yang advances and retreats rapidly, empty and full unpredictable, body agile like an ape, hands like dribbling a ball, complete in the circular essence of Tai Chi." Dedicating this couplet to Yang Luchan, he wrote: "Presenting Tai Chi to the universe with shock and awe, his unique skill crushes heroes." At that time, Yang Luchan and his sons, Yang Banhou and Yang Jianhou, wielded great influence in Beijing and Tianjin and had many students. The Chen family transmitted Tai Chi Chuan internally within its own family. This prompted a martial arts exponent, Yang Jizi, to write in a poem, "Who would have anticipated that Henan's Chen family's martial arts would be dependent on Hebei's Yang family for transmission?"

After this, Yang Luchan, Yang Banhou, Yang Jianhou, Yang Shaohou, and Yang Chengfu spread Tai Chi Chuan to Southern China. In recent times, Yang Chengfu's sons, Zhenming, Zhenji, Zhenduo, and Zhenguo have promoted Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan internationally. Tai Chi Chuan's popularity is due to the concerted efforts of these Masters along with their disciples and students and the Yang Family's successive generations have played a crucial role in the development of Tai Chi Chuan.

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I have wonderful news to report: the Yongnian county government has decided to build a Tai Chi Park in the city of Guangfu, the Yang Family's former home town. The site of the Tai Chi Park occupies a hundred acres. The Yang Family's tombs and altar will be relocated there and pavilions and gardens will be gradually built. As this project is of significant importance to Yongnian's economy, a special memorial ceremony was held at the site of the Tai Chi Park on April 9<sup>th</sup>. Jet Li, the international movie star, was there to attend the ceremony. In addition, he will be playing the role of Yang Luchan in a film adaptation of Yang Luchan's story called "Tai Chi." We look forward to the future release of this movie and believe that it will help more people understand Tai Chi Chuan and help promote the development of Tai Chi Chuan.

After a long period of preparation, the International Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan Association at the beginning of this year founded the Tai Chi Chuan Teacher's Academy. The Academy will be based on both a distributed learning process and a centralized training system, establishing an Academy without walls. The Academy will be based on a credit system, ranking assessment, and instructor assessment methodology. Distributed learning is accomplished by learning the fundamental basics of Tai Chi Chuan through our Yang Chengfu Tai Chi Chuan Centers and certified instructors. After receiving credits for the basic foundation training, the centralized training takes this a step further by deepening the foundation work and at the same time incorporating traditional theories of Chinese medicine and modern exercise science. Currently, both Italy and Brazil have implemented a pilot program. In the future, this will be expanded to the rest of the Association.

In 2012 and 2015, the International Association has arranged trips to China. The Shanxi Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan Association's 30th anniversary commemoration is in 2012. The International Association has already planned the itinerary and schedule. This will be a wonderful opportunity to visit China's scenic spots, interact with Chinese culture, sample Chinese cuisine and experience the changes happening in China. My grandfather, Yang Zhenduo, will be celebrating his 90th birthday in 2015. I hope to be successful in organizing my grandfather's birthday celebration so that he can see our development internationally and feel the love and respect we have for him.

Yang Jun  
President

Translated by Mui Gek Chan



# The Grandmaster Memorial Ceremony at the Yang Family Taiji Park

By Zhang Lei

Translated by Hon Wah Chan



On April 10th, the "Taiji Grandmaster Yang Luchan Memorial Ceremony" was held at 10 am in Yongnian Guangfu. These ritual activities took place in the Southeast part of this ancient city, about one kilometer from the former residence of Grandmaster Yang Luchan. The surrounding lake was calm. You could see wild geese flying over and hear frogs making noises. Both sides of the road were decorated with colorful flags. The willow trees were waving in the spring breeze. Policemen stationed in various road intersections were busy directing traffic and maintaining order as guests arrived for the ceremony.

## The Yang Family Taiji Park

In Yongnian County, Yanmenzhai village, there is the "Yang Luchan Cemetery" where four generations of Yang Family Taiji masters are buried. This sacred place has been frequently visited by Taijiquan enthusiasts and researchers to pay their respects to these past Grandmasters. Due to development and changes in environment, the old green pines and cypresses were gone and rubbish started to pile up around the site. The Yang Luchan Cemetery had become of great concern because of the special significance of these unique historical relics. Plans were discussed for relocating the cemetery to protect

culture, respect history and honor public opinions. In Handan, Yongnian and Guangfu, civil leaders met and selected a new site for the ceremony. With support from the Yang Family descendants and Taijiquan enthusiasts, the Yang Luchan cemetery would be relocated to the Southeast part of Guangfu. Based on the purpose of the new site, the place was tentatively named the "Yang Family Taiji Park". It would serve as a place for the Yang Family cemetery, a center for taiji activities and a tourist attraction.

## Ancestor worship and Foundation stone laying ceremony

International Kung Fu movie superstar Jet Li is working on a new film, "Tai Chi," where he is playing Yang Luchan. Prior to the shooting, Mr. Li suggested that worship activities be held at the new site of "Yang Family Taiji Park". In the first stage of development the park is about 50 acres. At the south end is a huge wall. In front of the wall is a four-meter square stage with the "Taiji Grandmaster Yang Luchan" monument. An incense urn is placed underneath the monument. About 20 meters away from the stage, a tower is built on each side of the path. On the front surface of these two towers is a poem: "Hand holding Taiji that shakes the Universe,





Unique skills bring opponents into submission." The other six surfaces contain articles such as the "Wang Zongyue's Taiji Thesis", "Yang Luchan's Original Theory", and other Taijiquan classics. Flowers are planted around two giant rows of words: "Promoting Taijiquan to benefit mankind; Yang style Master shines forever".



The "Taiji Grandmaster Yang Luchan ceremony" was held in a solemn atmosphere. The first event was Mr. Yang Zhenduo and Ms. Pei Xiurong leading Yang Family descendants to present flowers and incense to Yang Luchan's monument. In the second event Mr. Jet Li also presented flowers and incense at the monument. Afterwards, there were speeches by various guests including Mr. Jet Li and Mr. Yang Zhenduo. Finally, the attendants met at the future grave site located behind the wall to lay the foundation stone and plant trees.

#### **Mr. Jet Li expresses his feelings on Taijiquan**

In recent years, Jet Li has frequently expressed his affection for Taijiquan. He emphasized that taiji is a significant part of Chinese martial arts. Based on his affection for taiji and as the founder of the "One Fund", Mr. Li came to Guangfu last year to participate in the "Handan Guangfu public welfare action" activity. This year, he returned again for the Yang Luchan ceremony. On April 9th, Mr. Li stayed at the Handan Gold Capital Hotel and was greeted by local leaders. Mr. Li has a quick mind and is very frank with his ideas. He showed great respect for Mr. Yang Zhenduo and the traditions of Yongnian Taijiquan. He also expressed his philosophy and viewpoints about Taijiquan. On April 10th, when Mr. Li delivered his speech during the ceremony, he said: "My idea is very simple: Taijiquan needs to flourish." On the afternoon of April 10th, Mr. Li was invited to

a forum held by the Deputy Secretary of the College of Handan, Duan Yuming, and Vice President Guo Zhenxing. They discussed the development of The Taijiquan Research Department at the College of Handan and made plans for future cooperation.



#### **Mr. Yang Zhenduo's feelings about his hometown**

Mr. Yang Zhenduo is a great supporter of the construction of the Yang Family Taiji Park. On behalf of the "Yang Zhenduo, Hu Ruidi, disciples and students", he has donated the first installment of 300,000 Yuan. He always stays calm when facing the public and all the cameras. He said: "I was awarded the Ninth Dan in Chinese martial arts and recognized as one of 18 national martial arts experts, this is already a very high honor. This is not just my personal achievement; it is the result of masters from several generations of the Yang family and Yang style taiji. Therefore, as long as I am healthy, I will contribute more to the dissemination of Yang style Taijiquan." Despite the fact that he is already 86 years old, Mr. Yang Zhenduo still patiently explains his knowledge of Taijiquan to many audiences. In the future, he would like to hold several Taijiquan seminars in Yongnian and benefit future generations of practitioners.

*(The Association is currently working with the local Guangfu Development Committee to create an international fund raising drive to help with the construction of the Park. We will most assuredly let you know the details, stay tuned to our website for information on how you can participate!)*



# History and Mythology of the Taiji Jian

— by Edward Moore

*"A pair of swords about to part  
First cried out in their case.  
In night's smoky rain they became  
one,  
Then they took different forms.  
The female sank in Wu River water,  
The male flew into Chu City.  
Wu River is deep and fathomless,  
Chu City has forbidding portals.  
Once Heaven parted from Earth  
Wasn't that worse than Light gone  
from Dark?  
Magic things do not part forever,  
One thousand years and they  
reunite."*

**Pao Chao, New Songs from a Jade Terrace 539-545 A.D.<sup>1</sup>**

In considering the various weapons of the Chinese martial arts, none have inspired as much folklore, art, and study as the double-edged sword known as the jian. Once one of the most popular weapons in China, the jian has been used by soldiers in battle, priests in ritual, and ancient relics of the jian are often found alongside the tombs of the once-powerful kings and noblemen of Chinese history. Over thousands of years, in the vast land that we know as China, from its Neolithic beginnings as a solid stone, bone, or wooden dagger,<sup>2</sup> the sword gradually transformed into an integral part of Chinese martial arts and an enduring symbol of the culture, spirit and values of the Chinese people.

## History

There is not a specific type of sword just for Taijiquan. The sword that is used in taiji is the same one that has developed over centuries of Chinese history, used by warriors, scholars and Daoist immortals from a wide range of disciplines. The first metal weapons in China's history are said to have come from

the time of the Yellow Emperor, around 2600 B.C. Some of the oldest examples the jian that have been discovered date from the Xia Dynasty period, around 2000 B.C. Although these early examples are double-edged, they tend to more closely resemble the short, wide daggers and spearheads from which the sword gradually developed.<sup>3</sup> These were no match for the more popular dagger-axe and spears on the battlefield, which were much more deadly to wield from a short distance away.<sup>4</sup> It is possible that these early swords actually developed from the extra dagger-axe blades or spearheads that soldiers carried in their belts and used in the last instance of close combat.<sup>5</sup> By the Zhou Dynasty, beginning in 1100 BC, the early jian had become one of the most popularly used weapons in battle,<sup>6</sup> although some scholars still consider the jian of that time as a secondary weapon. As bronze metallurgy steadily developed, alloys of copper and tin increased the sharpness and durability of the weapon. Examples of the jian from this period are limited to a length of less than 16 inches, which makes them much closer in size to a dagger than a sword.

The Spring and Autumn Period of Chinese History (770-475 BC) was a time of great philosophical development, and the time in which the important scholars Confucius and Laozi are believed to have lived. As the ideas that would define Chinese thought and civilization were being developed, the jian was also undergoing important changes. Although swords of this period were still made of bronze, copper and tin, skilled artisans developed a mastery of the methods of production that increased the length, sharpness and durability of



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**INTERNATIONAL YANG FAMILY  
TAI CHI CHUAN ASSOCIATION**  
The International Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan  
Association is a non-profit organization  
dedicated to the advancement of Traditional  
Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan.

## HOME OFFICE

P.O. Box 786  
Bothell, WA 98041 USA  
Ph: +1 (425) 869-1185

## SOUTH AMERICA OFFICE

Rua Jose Maria Lisboa 612, sala 07  
Sao Paulo - SP  
CEP-01423-000  
Brazil  
Ph: +55-11-3884.8943  
+55-11-4704.6578

## EUROPE OFFICE

Ornstigen 1  
18350 Taby  
Sweden  
Ph: +46-8-201800

## CHINA OFFICE

No. 131 N Taoyuan Rd,  
Taiyuan, Shanxi 030002  
P. R. China  
Tel: +86- 351- 4226121





the jian.<sup>7</sup> At the same time, chariot warfare, which had previously relied on the dagger-axe and spear, began to decline due to the increased use of cavalry and foot soldiers<sup>8</sup> and the use of the jian became more common. The best known surviving sword from this era, the Sword of Goujian is said to have belonged to the King of Yue, who has long been the subject of many legends that tell of his mastery of the jian. The Sword of Goujian is an incredible example of the sword makers' art near the end of the Bronze sword era. The blade, though buried for 2000 years, was found to still be razor sharp, and shining brightly with etched triangular patterns and characters when unearthed.

The Qin Dynasty (221-206 BC) presented another important time of development for the jian. As early iron production methods that removed excess carbon and strengthened the metal were developed<sup>9</sup>, the nature of sword craft also changed. The new iron jian was of such a superior strength and sharpness that some people believe that the success of the Qin in conquering their rivals and unifying China was largely due to the Qin army's use of iron swords.<sup>10</sup> In the following Han Dynasty (206 BC-221 AD) iron and steel swords became much more widespread and were further developed in sharpness and durability. By the time of the Tang Dynasty (618-907), the jian had taken on the basic form that is still common to this day.<sup>11</sup> Over time, the nature of warfare in China changed, and the role of the sword in battle changed as well. From the Han Dynasty to the Southern and Northern Dynasty (420-581) the jian was gradually replaced in battle by the dao, or saber, which had long been an effective slashing weapon for foot soldiers and the cavalry alike. From this time on, soldiers commonly carried the dao in battle, while only officers continued to carry the jian. As the dao took precedence in the military world because it was inexpensive to produce and its chopping and hacking techniques easier to learn, the jian, with its graceful, flexible and exact nature gradually became more associated with scholars and the martial arts, and less a weapon of mass use on the battlefield. Within the martial arts, the nature of the sword changed over time as well.

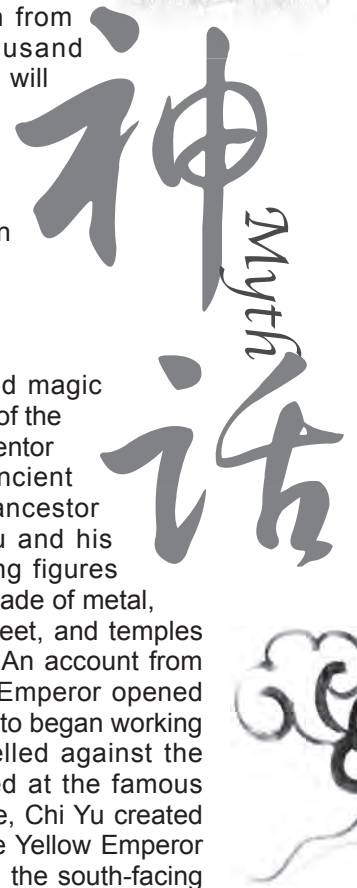
As the focus of martial arts moved from fighting for survival to one of health and culture, it became less important that the sword be razor sharp at the tip and strong enough to parry other swords near the hilt. In Taijiquan, a heavier sword is not necessarily considered better, because it could cause stiffness in the practitioner's body and have a negative impact on the training. Swords of the past could weigh as much as three pounds or more, but a present day Taiji jian will normally be around 1.5 pounds, or 700 grams. In China's rich past, stories of master sword-

makers were common, but in more recent history, the sword smiths of China's past have dwindled down to only a handful, and the large majority of metal weapons are mass-produced in factories. A true hand made jian from a master can cost several thousand dollars. A traditional sword maker will not usually sell a sword without first determining that the buyer possesses the skill and good judgment to use the sword correctly and respect the tradition that surrounds it.

### Myths and Legends

Fantastic stories of immortals and magic run through the history and legend of the Chinese sword. The legendary inventor of metallurgy and weapons in ancient China is Chi You, the mythical ancestor of the Hmong people.<sup>12</sup> Chi You and his brothers were said to be imposing figures that looked like bulls, with heads made of metal, horns on their heads, hooves as feet, and temples and ears like swords and spears. An account from 645 B.C. tells of how the Yellow Emperor opened the mountain and enabled Chi You to begin working with metal.<sup>13</sup> Chi You soon rebelled against the Yellow Emperor, and they clashed at the famous battle of Zhou Lu. During the battle, Chi Yu created a thick fog and nearly won, but the Yellow Emperor used an ingenious invention called the south-facing chariot, which worked like a compass, to overcome the fog and defeat Chi You. When Chi You was executed, his shackles turned into a maple tree.<sup>14</sup>

Another very famous old story tells of the master sword maker Gan Jiang and his wife Mo Xie, who lived in the state of Wu in the third century B.C. Gan Jiang was a famous sword smith who found the best iron and gold from the mountains while wearing the ceremonial clothing of white hemp clothes and a robe made of sweet grass. He then waited for the proper season and time under heaven to forge the metals so that yin and yang would be in harmony. Tales of Gan Jiang spread and soon King Ho Lu commissioned two special swords to be made. Despite Gan Jiang's efforts to make the swords in harmony with heaven and nature, three years passed and the swords were not finished because the metal would not melt in the oven. Finally, Mo Xie, fearing that her husband would be executed by the king, threw herself into the oven as a sacrifice to heaven and three hundred boys and girls worked the bellows together until the iron and gold liquefied and the two swords were created. The Yang sword was named Gan Jiang and the Yin sword was called



Mo Xie. Gan Jiang hid the Yang sword under a tree and delivered the Yin one to the king, who valued it as a great treasure. Although Mo Xie jumped in the furnace, she appears in a later story about the swords, when she helps her son find the Yang sword that is hidden under the tree. It is unlikely that she really jumped into the forge, but the famous story conveys the tedious process of crafting special weapons, and the sacrifice that masters made for their art form.<sup>15</sup>

The sword forms in Yang Family Taijiquan tend to be named after either the sword technique in the movement, a nature or animal theme or legends and myths. Many of the stories behind the names of the Taijiquan forms are based on the stories of Chinese Immortals, who are said to have been people who lived long ago and were of such good character of skill that they passed into the immortal realm where they live on as deities who possess great powers to influence the world of humans. Perhaps the most well known of the Daoist Immortals, Lu Dong Bin is depicted as a scholar carrying a sword as he travels about vanquishing evil, and is said to have written this poem:

*"In the morning I travel to the North Sea, in the evening to Cangwu. In my sleeve is a blue-green snake (the name of Lu's magic sword), courageous and rough is my appearance). Thrice I entered Yueyang, but no one recognized me, Singing a song as I flew by Lake Dongting."*<sup>16</sup>

Lu Dong Bin is the figure in the Yang Family sword form called "Immortal Points The Way," not because he pointed his famous sword in any particular incident, but because he was the first of the Eight Immortals and took on the task of guiding the other seven to the immortal realm, thus "pointing the way" for them to join him. Lu himself was led to the path of immortality by a hermit who offered to teach him to turn normal stones into gold. After learning that the gold would turn back to stone in three thousand years, Lu refused the magic because he did not want to cheat people in the future. The hermit was touched by Lu's character, and eventually took him to the celestial realm to live there as an immortal.

Besides the Eight Daoist Immortals, there are many other immortal characters that populate the myths of legends of Chinese culture. The "Casting the Fishing Rod" movement in the sword form refers to the famous immortal Zhang Ziya. Zhang was born very poor, and was abandoned by his family. For a while he was cared for by animals, who kept him alive. A noble woman adopted him and the young Zhang quickly became a master of military strategy, astronomy and geography. A celestial lord informed



Zhang that he would play an important part in ending the rule of the cruel Shang emperor, who violently ruled over the people of that time. When Duke Chi, who would soon become the new Emperor, came to seek the advice of Zhang Ziya, Zhang sent a message that he was unavailable because he had gone fishing. This was to test the patience of Duke Chi to make sure that he would be a good ruler before agreeing to help him. Zhang avoided the Duke several times while fishing, and each time, Duke Chi was unperturbed, proving to Zhang that he could be a wise Emperor. Finally, Zhang agreed to help him, and he stood up on a hill and drew out his sword, performing a magic ritual that caused snow to fall on the emperor's army, freezing them, then thawing them, which caused a flood. After this Zhang froze them again and the cruel Emperor's army was in total ruins. After the emperor's army was defeated, Zhang was made the chief minister, but he retired as soon as the nation had recovered from the Shang Emperor's cruelty. After Zhang Ziya retired, he chose to live out his days in the mountains in peace, and whenever government officials sought him out for advice, they were told that he had gone out fishing, and would not be available.<sup>17</sup>

The story of Nezha Explores the Sea comes from the Chinese epic written in the Ming Dynasty called the Fengshen Yanji, or Creation of the Gods. Nezha is a young boy who is a reincarnation of the Pearl Spirit, disciple of the Fairy Primordial. Nezha's mother was pregnant for three years, until one night she had a prophetic dream that a Daoist master spoke to her, and a son was born the next day. Because Nezha was born in the shape of a ball, his father thought he was a demon, and chopped





the ball with his sword. When the ball split, Nezha jumped out. He was shining with red light, wearing a magical gold bracelet called the Universal Ring and his belly was wrapped in a piece of glowing red silk called the Sky Muddling Damask. Nezha was a polite and respectful child to his parents, but because of his special powers he accidentally caused a lot of trouble for them.

One day when Nezha was seven years old, and already 6 feet tall, he went to the Nine Bend River to cool off on a hot day. Each time he dipped his powerful red scarf into the water to cool himself it caused the river to shake so much that it disturbed the Crystal palace of the East Sea where the Dragon King named Ao Guang lived. The Dragon King became angry, and sent a dragon guard to investigate. The huge guard had a blue face, red hair and long tusks, and he angrily attacked Nezha with a battle-axe. Nezha neutralized the blow and struck the guard with his magic ring, killing him. Next came the Dragon King's son Ao Bing, but he met the same fate as the guard under a blow from Nezha's magic ring. The Dragon King was furious, and he went to Nezha's father, saying that he would report them to the Jade Emperor, who would deal with them very severely.

After this, Nezha's exasperated father tells Nezha to just stay in the garden and play, but Nezha finds a bow and some arrows and playfully shoots an arrow into the air. As it turns out, it was a magic bow that no mortal could draw, and the arrow went across the sky and killed the disciple of a the powerful fairy named Lady Rock. Lady Rock, after learning who shot the arrow, flew off to the cave of Nezha's master, the Fairy Primordial to seek revenge. She angrily attacked the Fairy Primordial, but since she was not yet immortal, she was no match for his power and he turned her back into her original form, a rock. The Fairy Primordial then told Nezha to return to his parents, who were about to be arrested by the powerful Jade Emperor for what Nezha had done to the Dragon King. Nezha, worried for his parents safety rushed home. The house was in an uproar and the Four Dragon Kings had come to take his parents away. Nezha burst in and said, "I assume full responsibility for what I have done and shall pay with my life. My parents are in no way involved." With that he drew out his sword and cut himself to pieces and his soul floated on the wind to Qianyuan Mountain. After Nezha floated back to his master, he was eventually reincarnated with a body of lotus flowers, and allowed to continue his adventures.<sup>18</sup>

These stories are only a very small fragment of the many myths, legends and poems that are related to the Taiji Jian. For the student of Taijiquan, they

are useful for understanding and appreciating the important role of the sword and those who wielded it in traditional Chinese history and culture. Just as King Arthur's Excalibur was a dazzling symbol of honor and chivalry, the classical knights-errant of China and their legendary weapons came to symbolize moral strength, decisiveness, bravery, loyalty and virtue as they fought evil and protected the innocent throughout the millennia.<sup>19</sup>

Studying the myths and legends of the Taiji Jian provides insight into the deep and honorable traditions that are the precursors to today's sword forms. In China, it has long been thought that the better your sword abilities, the finer your character. The sword is one of the five special disciplines that build the gentleness, wisdom, and integrity of the person who works to master it.<sup>20</sup> The Taijiquan practitioner brings the jian to life with years of continual practice as the graceful, precise, and powerful movements of the form bring energy to the blade. The sword in turn brings the person who wields it a calm focus, refined strength and an unbroken connection to the beautiful and fascinating history of the jian.

1 Birrell, Anne. *Chinese mythology: an introduction*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Univ. Pr., 1993. 224

2 Ancient Chinese Warfare. NY: Basic Books, 2011. 274

3 *ibid*, 276

4 *ibid*, 270

5 *ibid*, 270

6 Zhang, Yun. *The Art of Chinese Swordsmanship: Manual of Taiji Jian*. N.Y.: Weatherhill, 1998. 16.

7 *ibid*, 16

8 Buckley, Patricia. *The Cambridge Illustrated History of China*. London: Cambridge Univ. Pr., 1999. 41

9 Winchester, Simon. *The man who loved China: the fantastic story of the eccentric scientist who unlocked the mysteries of the Middle Kingdom*. N.Y. HarperCollins, 2008. 185

10 Zhang, Yun, *op.cit.*, 18

11 *ibid*, 19

12 Po, Ya. *An Introduction to Hmong Culture*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2010. 8

13 Birrell, Anne. *Chinese Mythology: an Introduction*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Univ. Pr., 1993. 50

14 Yang, Lihui, and Deming An. *Handbook of Chinese Mythology*. New York, NY: Abc-clio, 2005. 93

15 Birrell, Anne, *op.cit.*, 221.

16 Little, Stephen, and Shawn Eichman. *Taoism and the Arts of China*. Chicago/Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000. 327

17 Wong, Eva. *Tales of the Taoist Immortals*. Boston, MA: Shambhala Publications, 2001. 89

18 Gu, Zhizhong. *Creation of the Gods*. Beijing, China: China Books & Periodicals, 1992. 131-67.

19 Di, Nicola, Robin D., and Ralph D. *Military Culture in Imperial China*. London, England: Harvard Univ.Pr., 2011. 231.

20 Zhang, Yun, *op.cit.*,21



# China Adventure 2012

*By Dave Barrett  
Journal Editor*



The Association is pleased to announce the China Adventure 2012. As in the past, there will be two tours: the long tour lasting for 12 days and the short tour for 6 days. Both tours will converge in Taiyuan for the 30th Anniversary Celebration of the Shanxi Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan Association. These events will include the Invitational Taijiquan Competition and a gala celebration of Grandmaster Yang Zhenduo's 87th birthday.

The long tour will originate in Shanghai on July 29<sup>th</sup> where we will spend the following afternoon touring the China Pavilion at the Shanghai Expo, followed by an evening tour of the waterfront. The following day we will fly to Zhangjiajie to spend 3 days exploring China's first National Park. Established in 1982, this area was recognized by UNESCO in 1990 as a Natural Heritage Site. Located in the Northwest section of Hunan Province, it is a mountain range with many outstanding scenic features and is the home of three minority peoples: Tujia, Miao and Bai. The daily schedule will include early morning practice and instruction with Master Yang Jun. After breakfast there will be a series of trips to visit places of fabled beauty such as the rock formations known as "the Emperor's writing brushes" and the Tianmianshan Sky Arch. This natural wonderland provided the scenic inspiration for the movie "Avatar."



Also, you will not want to miss the beauty of Phoenix City. We will then fly to Changsha, capitol of Hunan Province, for a night's stay on our way to Taiyuan.

The short tour originates in Beijing on August 2<sup>nd</sup> and on the following day both groups will arrive in Taiyuan. During the days of the Invitational Competition, local day trips will be offered to Jinci Temple and Zhang Garden. We will visit Mianshan on August 7. This is a very important mountain in Chinese history and home of the largest Taoist temple complex in China. This will offer us the chance to visit temples and scenic overlooks far above the summer heat of the Shanxi plains.

After the competition events conclude on August 6<sup>th</sup>, the next day will be given over to relaxation, touring and a grand banquet celebrating Grandmaster Yang Zhenduo's birthday. Those of you who were there in 2005 may or may not remember how fabulous this event was, depending on the amount of Shanxi's famous Fenjiu consumed.

August 8<sup>th</sup> will be a travel day back to Beijing and flights homeward. Those wishing to extend their adventure by touring the Beijing area may do so by making arrangements with the Association on an individual basis. Due to fluctuating currency markets and in-country airfares, we will determine the costs of both tours in a timely manner for you to make the proper arrangements.

## Itinerary Outline:

July 29: Long tour arrivals in Shanghai

July 30: Tour of Shanghai Expo

July 31 to Aug. 3: Touring in Zhangjiajie

Aug. 2: Short trip arrivals in Beijing.

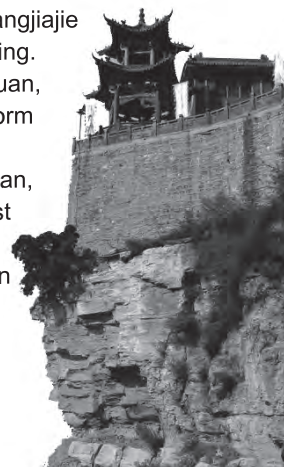
Aug. 3: Both tours arrive in Taiyuan, afternoon rehearsal for the 49-form demonstration

Aug. 4,5,6: Competition in Taiyuan, day tours to local sites of interest

Aug. 7: Day trip to Mianshan and evening Birthday celebration

Aug. 8: Return to Beijing, departing flights home

Aug. 8-10: Optional Beijing tour



# Weapons Safety and Etiquette

*By Pat Rice*

*Director, Yang Chengfu Tai Chi Chuan Center, Winchester Va.*

## Etiquette of Weapons

The etiquette of wearing, carrying, and using a particular weapon depends on several factors. Practical considerations for handling include the structure and style of the equipment, means of carrying, ease of accessing, purpose, function, training methods, and personal preference. Other protocols arise from cultural or regional influences, legalities or conventions or fashions, and these might change over time, according to the era and periods of peace or war. There are also numerous traditions, stories, and symbolisms associated with every weapon that may influence codes of etiquette.

Once etiquette that is appropriate to your tradition has been explained, you should follow those courtesies as a show of your respect for the art, for instructors, and other students.

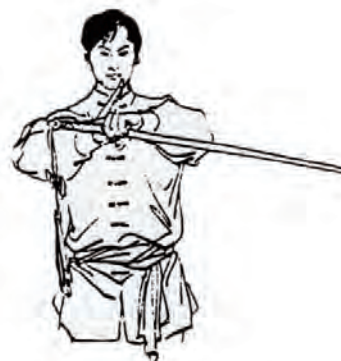
## Martial salutes with short weapons

The “palm and fist” salute is generally used by practitioners of Chinese martial arts to greet each other as a sign of respect. The hand holding the weapon becomes the “fist” shape and the other hand remains a palm. Forming fists with both hands indicates that you are issuing a challenge.

The individual stands upright, with feet together. The weapon is held in the left hand in a standard grip, with the blade either inside or

outside the arm, and parallel to the forearm, and is brought to the center of the chest. The right hand is an open palm, with four fingers together and the thumb separated and slightly bent. The right hand is brought to touch the weapon or the back of the left hand. The two arms bend naturally at the elbows.

Salute with the tip down or behind your arm; with the tip raised and exposed, you are issuing a challenge.



Weapons Salute

## Safety

Safety comes from constant awareness of your weapon. Even if you don't have a truly sharp blade, it can be dangerous. Be sure you are thinking at all times about your weapon's placement and angle, and the distance between you and others. It's proper respect, it's good training and it's safe practice.



You should treat it with the same attitude that you would a loaded gun: no playing, no jokes, no carelessness; all the time, not just in class time. Don't point the sword at another person.

### **Standing in place**

Hold your sword (or saber) by the handle and with the tip vertically downward, whether you are standing in place during class or standing elsewhere outside of instructional time. Don't rest the tip on the floor or your shoes.

### **Walking around**

Carry the exposed sword/saber from one place to another by the handle and with the tip vertically downward, with the shaft in front of you and not over your shoulder or by your side. Pay attention to the angle of your sword/saber when moving about, because this is the time when most accidental pokes happen. Equal attention is required even if the weapon is sheathed, but you may carry it by the sheath.

### **Carrying a covered sword/saber**

Either a hard or a soft scabbard is traditional. Most bags or holders have a handle or a strap for over the shoulder. Length and weight of the weapon plus personal preference also affect how it is carried.

If you carry your weapon on public transportation, particularly through an airport, place your saber or

sword inside a hard gun case with interior padding, and declare it as "sports equipment" for security and customs.

### **Passing a sword**

A sword is passed from one person to another by using the hilt (like learning to pass scissors politely when you were a child).

### **Classroom etiquette**

#### **Training**

Follow instructions for when to practice with the group and when to practice individually.

Space yourself and your weapon's length appropriately from other students and their weapons.

Look before you issue your technique in any direction, especially if you turn before or during the movement. This is not only for the safety of not hitting an unintended target—your training involves developing the skills of aiming and accuracy in executing the techniques.

### **Setting it down during class**

If you are instructed to leave the training floor and walk to seats during an instructional segment of class, place the sword gently and quietly down to your right side, handle toward the front and tip toward the rear of the training space.

At the end of class, sheath your sword and place it in a safe place.



*Editor-in-chief*  
**Yang Jun**

*Editor*  
**Dave Barrett**

*Graphic Design*  
**Jing Li**

*Contributors*  
**Mui Gek Chan**  
**Zhang Lei**  
**Hon Wah Chan**  
**Yang Jun**  
**Edward Moore**  
**Dave Barrett**

**Pat Rice**  
**Eric Madsen**

**Sylvia Dambrauskas**  
**Duc & Carole Nguyen Minh**  
**Gong Baiyu**  
**Audi Peal**  
**Andy Lee**  
**Nancy Lucero**

All Tai Chi Chuan enthusiasts are invited to submit articles, letters, and pictures for publication. Both critical and complimentary letters concerning the form and content of this journal are welcome. Please send correspondence in electronic format to:

[editor@yangfamilytaichi.com](mailto:editor@yangfamilytaichi.com)

or mail to:

**International Yang Family  
Tai Chi Chuan Association**  
P.O. Box 786

Bothell, WA 98041 USA  
Tel: +1 (425) 869-1185

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PRINTED IN USA



Do not lay your sword on the ground.

### **Partner work**

Often partner work is trained using wooden swords until the participants have achieved a certain degree of skill. Whether the equipment is wood or metal, sharp or not, extra safety precautions and observation of courtesies are mandatory.

### **Borrowing a weapon**

If you are allowed to borrow a weapon, ask for instructions about its usage and take special care of it, returning it to the person or the place where you obtained it.

### **Inspecting a weapon**

#### ***Ask permission***

Always ask permission of the owner or the seller to hold and look at a weapon. If you are thinking of purchase, the etiquette is the same.

If someone asks to examine your weapon, give instructions if you reckon the person is not familiar with the weapon.

#### ***Preparatory to performance***

Before your performance in a tournament, officials usually ask to inspect your weapon for safety. Follow instructions and observe safety precautions.

Before performance in other situations, make your own inspection of your weapon to see that no parts are loose.

#### ***Examining the blade***

To examine the blade, do not touch the metal but rest it on cloth or on the sheath in order to examine it. Oil or sweat from your skin affects

the cleanliness and ultimately the condition of the metal. Also, keep the blade distant from the moisture of breath from the nose and mouth.

### **Purchasing**

The purchase options for weapons can vary quite widely, depending on quality of materials used in the blade, handle, sheath and fittings, price, and ornamentation or other special characteristics according to the maker or the preference of the purchaser.

Pommel: the pommel should be well attached with no loose parts. There may be a finial of some type or the fastening may be a simple screw or nut.

Handle: the quality of the handle is important in your comfort of usage. Some weapons are made for use with two hands, others for single hand. The grip should be suitable for your hand size and smooth enough for continuous use without irritation. Often the user wraps the handle with athletic tape or other material for absorbing sweat and to avoid slippage.

Hilt or Guard: the hand guard should be flat and parallel to the blade, and firmly attached. The sword guard points toward the tip. The collar below the guard should not slide or move. The style and design is a matter of personal preference and often expresses the individuality of the manufacturer or the purchaser.

Blade: the blade may or may not be sharpened since usage is for training and practice and not for combat. It is appropriate for the back third to be thicker and not particularly sharp, the middle third to be less thick and somewhat sharp, and the front third to be thin and sharp. The taper should be smooth and even. The spine may or may not be strongly defined.



Tip: the tip should be pointed and well defined, but may or may not be sharp.

Stability: when the tip is on the floor and the weight of the sword allowed to rest into the blade, there should be no more than 45 degrees of flex at the tip.

Balance: the balance point of the sword is a matter of preference and usage. Some users prefer the balance further forward to aid in executing certain techniques, and others prefer the balance nearer the handle for quickness.

Length: the length is proportionate to the user. When held in preparatory position in the left hand, the sword should come to the top of the ear, and the saber to at least the bottom of the ear.

Tassel or flag: the sword tassel or the saber flag (silks) may vary in material and color and in weight and quality. Properly outfitted weapons include the tassel or flag.

Sheath: the sheath is usually wood and may be covered with skin or imitation skin to keep moisture out. Metal sheaths are not common. Brackets should be firmly attached and not slide.

Ornamentation: special designs or aesthetic details on the pommel, handle, blade, sheath, or other areas are matters of personal preference; they also may be characteristic of certain manufacturers or groups of users.

### **Care and Cleaning, Storage**

Occasionally clean the blade with a special fluid intended for care of metal.

At the conclusion of your use, wipe the blade

and handle with a cloth, and apply a light coat of oil. Sheath the sword and store it where moisture cannot permeate.

Most often the students carry their personal weapons home and back to class, but if it is stored at the school it should be kept in the designated area and should have your identification on it.

### **Sources:**

*Taiji Sword, Classical Yang Style* by Dr. Yang Jwing-Ming, 1999.

*Sword Imperatives: Mastering the Kung Fu and Tai Chi Sword* by Grandmaster Ju-Rong Wang and Master Wen-Ching Wu, 2006.

*Taiji Sword and Other Writings* by Chen Weiming, translated by Barbara Davis, 2000.

*Rules for International Wushu Competition* by The International Wushu Federation, 1999.



# Shisan Zijue: Introducing the Thirteen Key Sword Techniques



劈 -Split

Pī

Shooting Star Chases the Moon



崩 -Burst

Bēng

Swallow Carries Pieces of Earth in its Beak



点 -Point

Diǎn

Casting the Fishing Rod



刺 -Thrust

Cì

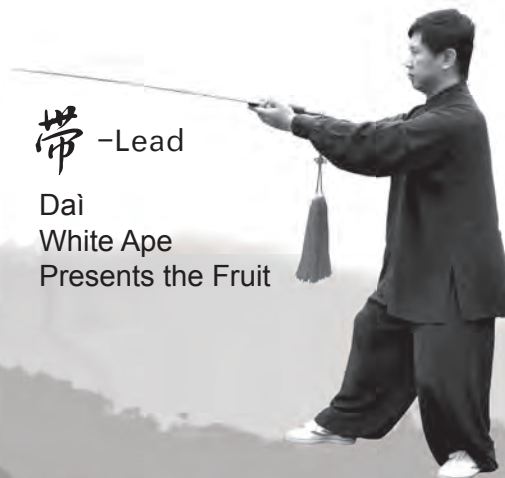
Birds Lodging in the Forest



抽 -Draw

Chōu

Rhinoceros Looks at the Moon

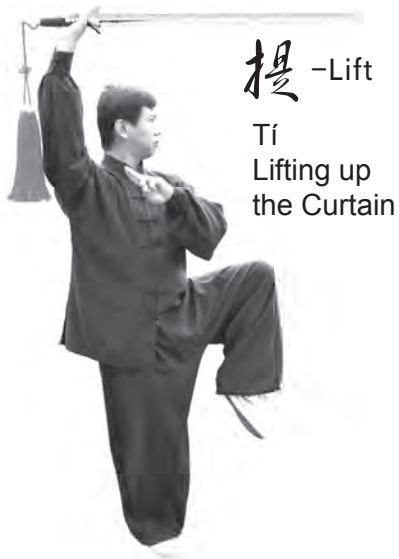


带 -Lead

Dài

White Ape Presents the Fruit





提 -Lift

Tí  
Lifting up  
the Curtain



撩 -Circle

Liáo  
Big Dipper



搅 -Stir

Jiǎo  
Fair Lady Works at  
Shuttles

击 -Strike

Jí  
Phoenix Opens its Right Wing



压 -Press

Yā  
Phoenix Opens its Left Wing

抹 -Slice

Mō  
Block and Sweep, Right



截 -Intercept

Jié  
Black Dragon  
Swings its Tail



# The Role Weapons Play in Yang Family Taijiquan

*A Conversation with Master Yang Jun*

*“When the weapon becomes familiar, it becomes a part of the body. You and the weapon become unified and the movements are flowing, graceful and powerful.”*

**By Eric Madsen**

With help from Sylvia Dambrauskas

After spending a couple of years practicing the hand form I went to a seminar at Reed College hosted by Dave Barrett. Over the course of three days I learned the Saber form. As I strained and contorted my body trying to imitate Yang Laoshi's graceful movements I was humbled to see just how much more lay ahead. Since that seminar I have taken weapon classes with Yang Laoshi in Seattle, WA.

When Yang Laoshi teaches the weapon classes he mixes detailed instruction of the physical postures with anecdotes about their names. When the form is examined in the class you see each individual piece. Each rotation, each circle has two or three meanings. By practicing on your own, the footwork slowly becomes natural and the movements link together smoothly.

The sources of many of the postures names are stories that take us deeper into the myths of China, a place where immortals, dragons, phoenix, rocs, demons and ancient heroes live.

I spoke with Yang Laoshi on March 17, 2011 to ask some basic questions I and other students have had about weapon practice.

**Laoshi, thanks for taking the time to answer some questions about the weapons. Let's start with explaining what the weapons are in Yang Style Taijiquan?**

Yang style Taijiquan has two parts: empty hand practice and weapon practice. Empty hand practice includes the hand form, push hands, and single movement fajin practice.

In Yang style there are two types of weapons, long and short. In the past the long weapon was the spear, but at one point our family took the spearhead off, so now we just practice the staff. The short weapons are the sword and saber.

**Would you please explain the purpose of weapon training?**

Before the use of firearms, weapons were important because they increased your power and ability to injure an opponent. People needed to use these weapons to better defend themselves. We have a saying that if your weapon is one inch longer than your opponent's then you are one inch more powerful. [一寸长，一寸强] Simply said, 'one inch longer is one inch stronger.'

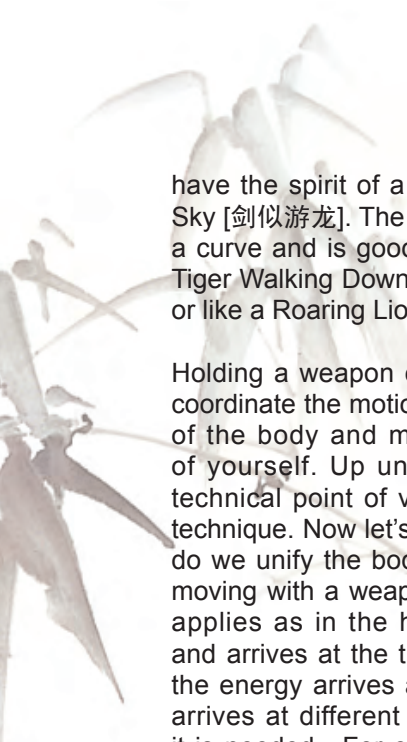
Because using a weapon increases your power, weapon training is seen in all martial arts. No matter which martial art, the weapon forms is based on the hand form, technique, principles and flavor. They are connected to each other. Because Taijiquan is an internal martial art, we use different techniques than the external schools. This is evident in all of our forms. We have three different weapons in Yang style Taijiquan and each weapon stresses a different technique.

**When holding a weapon, the feeling is different. Postures that seem simple become difficult. What makes the energy change when holding a weapon?**

The difference is that when you hold a weapon you add that weapon's technique. Other than that, you basically follow the same principles as the empty hand practice. The technique is based on the design of the weapon. For example, when you wield a sword you may lift, thrust, and slice. These specific techniques aren't in the hand form. The saber and staff also have unique techniques. Because of their shape, design, culture, and history, each weapon has its own function.

The weapons differ in their shape and design. When you use a light and flexible sword, it makes your technique light and flexible. If you are able to coordinate its technique with your body then you will





have the spirit of a Dragon Wandering through the Sky [剑似游龙]. The saber is heavy and strong; it has a curve and is good for chopping. Its spirit is like a Tiger Walking Down from the Mountain [如猛虎下山] or like a Roaring Lion [雄狮怒吼].

Holding a weapon extends your body. You have to coordinate the motion of the weapon with the motion of the body and make the weapon an extension of yourself. Up until now, I have spoken from a technical point of view; each weapon has its own technique. Now let's talk about how to practice. How do we unify the body and weapon together? When moving with a weapon, the same transfer of energy applies as in the hand form. It starts at the root and arrives at the tip. When practicing empty hand the energy arrives at the hands. With a weapon, it arrives at different parts of the weapon, wherever it is needed. For example, if a movement requires energy being sent to the tip, send energy to the tip. Another movement sends energy to the middle of the blade. When practicing with a staff we send the energy to the tip or one-third down from the tip of the staff. The staff is longer and takes more skill. It is essential to know the techniques of the weapon being used so we can control and understand its energy. We practice single movements to send energy to different parts of the weapons.

In Taijiquan, from the beginning, we say no resisting, no separating. When we extend the theory of push hands to the sword, we want to maintain these principles. Taijiquan has a two-person sticking sword practice very similar to single arm push hands, and from this sticking there are some types of circles. You use the circling to attack with different parts of the weapon, hitting your partner's wrist, body, or anywhere you can reach. We use the same sticking energy with the staff to make circles while the other partner practices basic techniques like thrusting. When thrusting, the person defending sticks and uses a circle to deflect the attack using the same motion to counterattack. The basic skills learned in push hands are practiced with a weapon.

### **Traditionally, how long should someone practice empty handed before moving onto the weapons?**

It's not necessary to say how long you've practiced. When you can feel your hand form is flowing and more comfortable, then you can start practicing with weapons.

Traditionally, one should practice the basic hand form and push hands first. Only then may they go onto weapon training. It is recommended one should start with the sword, then the saber and

long staff forms. When practitioners have a basic understanding of push hands, then they can naturally include the ability gained from empty hand practice with a weapon. Following the traditional way it was very clear. That was the past. Today's practice is mostly to improve health and we don't care in what order the weapons are learned, so we encourage you to follow your interest. For example, one person, after finishing the form, goes straight to the sword. They may never practice push hands, and we say this is ok. This is true for many people because of the beauty of the sword's movements. Sometimes they practice the sword more than the hand form and, if this is for health, then that's also acceptable. Some practitioners are only interested in empty hand training and may never pick up a weapon. For this type of person, if they don't practice with weapons, they should at least use the staff to coordinate their body with their breathing.

It is recommended that people practice the empty hand techniques first, because the footwork, body shape and coordination of the hand form are basically the same as the weapon form. If you learn the hand form first, then it will be easier to learn the weapons.

### **How does the foot work change between the hand form and weapons?**

It is a little different. The hand form is practiced at a slow and even pace. Of course, some empty hand practice is fast, but normally the practice is slow. In the hand form, empty and full are clearly defined.

The footwork in the weapon forms is quicker; this keeps the weapon moving in a continuous, flowing motion. Sometimes your weight doesn't have to go 100% back before picking up your leg. Use the momentum to make your footwork. Momentum makes the stance longer than in the hand form. This type of stepping gives the weapon its style.

### **How is it possible to create a strong root when we step quickly?**

As in the hand form, place your weight at the right place in different stances. With more momentum, the weight should not shift back too much. If too much weight is in the back, it is impossible to move forward quickly. If it takes too much time to step, you will not be agile enough. The weapon will lose its continuous, flowing feeling.

Borrow the momentum to make your empty and full clear. It doesn't just help; you have to count on the momentum to clarify your movements.



The weapons have special footwork not found in the hand form. Most significantly, there are jumping movements. Also, some of the transition movements are slightly different because of the speed.

### **What purpose do the tassels and flags on our weapons serve?**

The tassels and flags are decorations. They add beauty to the weapon and balance the energy from the front and back. In the past, the tassel itself was used to attack. There is a weapon called the Long Tassel Sword [长穗剑]. This weapon's tassel can be used as a whip. Sometimes, small blades are hidden in the long tassels, which could cut when swept across an opponent.



The tassels move with the sword, raising the spirit of the practitioner. At the same time, it is distracting to opponents. Tassels help balance and demonstrate control over a weapon. When using a medium-length tassel, if the energy is incorrect or the speed is not even, the tassel will give you a problem. If the energy is correct, the tassel can help keep the energy even and changes smooth. It is said that the sword's tassels are like falling snow.

The saber has flags, and like the sword's tassels, your spirit can be raised by its sound. Not only are the flags very distracting as they fly about, but also their sound can also be a nuisance.

I have heard that when fencing, the sword tassels are very short.

That's correct. When two people practice, the circles can be large, small, fast, or slow. It's not always possible to keep the speed even. The tassel used in two-person practice is different than the medium length tassel used in form practice.

### **What about the spear or staff?**

The spear has a decoration. In Chinese, we call it [枪缨]. We don't use it for the long staff because we cut the top off.

### **Some people practice with wood swords and others with metal. What material is best for weapon practice?**

Typically one should use a metal weapon, but sometimes a wood sword is more appropriate. When you practice weapon forms and single movements

to develop energy control, it is better to use a metal sword. The metal we use is springy; that will give more feedback as to which part of the sword the energy is being sent to. A wooden weapon can damage your wrist because its energy is inflexible. The same is true of collapsible metal swords, which have a similar feeling to wood.

Metal weapons are very slippery. If you use a metal weapon to practice with someone else, it is dangerous. It is important to use a wood weapon when fencing and sticking to another person. In a sword fight, you would use a metal sword, not wood; but if the energies are understood well enough it shouldn't matter what weapon you have in your hand. Metal or wood, you wouldn't be picky.

I have one story about Yang Chengfu I'd like to share.

Once, Yang Chengfu went to Wuhan to visit the [黄鹤楼] Huang He Lou [yellow crane tower]. As he was exiting a man armed with a saber challenged him to a duel. Master Yang Chengfu, himself unarmed, was a virtuous man and refused to fight. The man lunged towards him with his saber, attacking. Seeing no way to escape, Master Yang broke off a small branch from a tree. Using this twig, he made his opponent's weapon very heavy. Even though the man attacked Master Yang many times, with great force, Master Yang countered every blow. Seeing his strength subdued with only a twig, the man gave up and left.

It is said that if you are a master calligrapher, it doesn't matter what brush you use. You can make a masterpiece with anything. In the beginning, your teacher may give you advice on the proper tools. However, once when you've reached a high level of skill, anything can be used.

### **Where does the staff fit into this? It's wood.**

The staff is made of a special wood, called Wax Wood. One staff is actually made from an entire tree trunk; its wood is flexible and springy making it perfect for transmitting energy. In order to clearly send energy to other parts of the staff, you must have a lot of coordination and control.



Huang He Lou

If you are too stiff then it cannot be controlled and won't move.

Today, in Yang style, the staff is mainly used to practice coordinating energy. The basic techniques are Zha, Lan, Na [扎、拦、拿]. Zha is thrusting, Lan is blocking, and Na is controlling. In Chinese we say if you thrust straight, even if it's a staff, it still acts like a spear. It pierces a straight line. When it is swung, it is like a staff. When you swing, the staff can sweep a vast area, striking all around you [枪扎一条线, 棍扫一大片]. It acts like a string; it is flexible but can also be straight. Similar to the sword movement Poking the Grass to Seek the Snake, the sword does not go straight out; instead, there is a curve that follows one line out. The string can be pulled straight or it can curve.

When thrusting, the energy is that of a dragon and when swinging it is like a wheel. There's an arc, a curve. When swinging the staff or spear, if you're good, not just one person is struck. Everyone around is hit.

**In your opinion, is one weapon more important than another?**

No, I won't say that. Earlier, I said 'one inch longer, one inch stronger'. There is another line to that saying, [一寸小, 一寸巧] 'one inch shorter is one inch more dangerous.' When you're big you are heavy, and movements take more time. When you are one inch shorter, you are one inch faster. When you are small, you can be trickier.

For people who are naturally strong, a long weapon is good match. For people who are small, maybe a short weapon is more suitable. Who can say which one is better? Like the staff, it is difficult to practice energy coordination because it's heavy and hard to control. It doesn't matter if you like it or not. If you are interested in developing your energy and foundation, it's necessary. If you are practicing for health reasons, maybe you can be excused.

**Has the Yang Family style ever had a very short weapon, like a knife or dagger?**

No, we don't have anything like that now. In past, there were stories of a throwing weapon, like a metal ball (shot). My great grandfather had this skill, but later generations did not learn. This part of the art has been lost.

**That sounds difficult.**

I will say this about anything; if you practice it enough, it can become natural. If you never practice, you will never build that skill.

When the weapon becomes familiar, it becomes a part of the body. You and the weapon become unified and the movements are flowing, graceful and powerful.

**The hand guards have pronounced quillons (the arms of the cross guard), is it possible to trap weapons using them?**

The hand guards, as their name implies, guard your hand. Because the weapons are slippery, it's very easy for a weapon to slide into you when they touch. Most short weapons have a hand guard. When used correctly, the hand guards can trap and disarm an opponent's weapon. For example, the saber's hand guard can help hook and trap when a weapon slides in close. By merely twisting, their weapon is in your control. You can also do this with the sword.

**Have the hand guards changed in the past?**

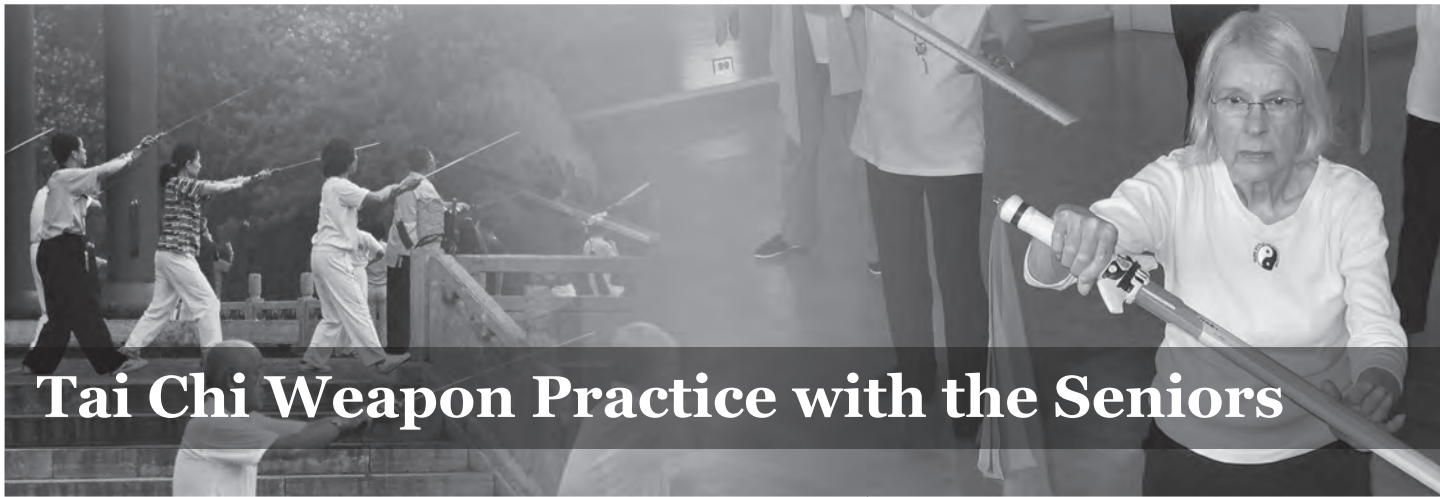
Yes, the saber hand guards changed. I don't know when or by whom. But the Yang style saber is unique. No other Taiji family uses that saber.

**The weapons are quite difficult, even after learning the hand form and push hands. What advice do you have for people practicing weapons?**

When first using a tool, it feels uncomfortable. It's the same as when you first use chopsticks; they feel difficult to control. The secret is to keep practicing. If you ask anyone in China if it's difficult to hold chopsticks, they will laugh. Someone from the West might say chopsticks are difficult to control. The more you work, the easier it becomes. Gong fu means that if time is dedicated into something, you will develop skill. I'd also like you to understand that Taijiquan is about balance. Practice, but don't practice too much. If you work too hard too soon, it can hurt you. The weapons put a lot of stress on your wrist and if you are not skilled enough, you may injure yourself. Ideally, one should practice weapons in moderation. I hope you can find this balance and develop an interest in the weapons.







## Tai Chi Weapon Practice with the Seniors

*By Mari Lewis*

A group of seniors in Ridgefield, CT, have been studying Tai Chi with me for several years and were ready to move on to weapon practice. However, when they held my saber they felt discouraged and intimidated by its weight, length and by the possible danger of swinging such a weapon. Several had shoulder problems and they didn't find the standard Association saber to be a friendly tool to practice with. I needed to look for a more appropriate practice tool, something light but long enough for them to swing, thrust, and strike with. Something like...a yardstick!

For an instance I imagined the class, swinging, thrusting, striking with the yardstick. But no, it did not look martial. Delete that idea.

I searched the web for other ideas and alternatives. There were wooden swords, bamboo samurai swords, but none that were sufficiently light. I shared my dilemma with other students who have been practicing weaponry with me, one of them suggested a NERF (Non-Expanding Recreational Foam) sword, and showed me one belonging to his grandson. It was feather light yet very sturdy, not too long, not too short; it had a strong hilt with a wide hand guard, very well designed to feel and look real (well, sort of) and best of all: 100% safe! It was the perfect alternative. Toy weapon, why not! I swung the toy saber and it felt quite good. It would do just fine for learning the choreography and the saber technique. Later we could move on to the metal saber. In the meantime, grandkids will think it's cool!

We purchased our weapons from Toys R Us, screwed a metal ring at the end of the hilt, tied the red/green scarf, and voila! It looked just like the standard Association saber!

Learning the moves with the toy weapon has been, "challenging, energetic and fun" said Jane Knox. Diane Kerner finds it rewarding but, "quite a challenge



to learn the correct moves, posture and the proper way to hold the weapon". The lightness of NERF saber allows easy, free movements, while the strong and sturdy grip enables students to experience the swing, thrust and strike energies similar to those when using the metal weapon. Mike Cali commented that the saber practice, "makes the women in class more aggressive". Indeed, for Dinah Sours, "it is great fun to switch persona and swing the toy saber".

How do these seniors compare weapon practice with the Hand Form? Maria Maley who was hesitant in the beginning, finds the saber practice, "freeing and relaxing, more so than the Hand Form." Elsie and Michael La Plante make this comparison: "The slow, graceful movements, as one goes through the routine of the Hand Form, improve balance and flexibility.

The intense focus required to execute the different moves is almost meditative. One can forget all the small annoyances of daily life and just focus on the movements and there is a sense of accomplishment each time the complete routine is finished. Practicing the Saber brings another dimension to our practice. It's so much faster and challenges our balance in a completely different way than the slower Hand Form. We find ourselves laughing a lot during practice... it is so much fun! Plus there is the camaraderie we've experienced with the others in our group."

For Chris Lecher, "The Hand Form has been a soothing rhythm of precision movements that challenge my mind, balance and stamina. The movements with the Saber brings a stronger meaning to the art of Tai Chi. It enhances the Hand Form by putting more thrust and power to the martial form. It also renews the challenges of performing the movements of Tai Chi."



Janet Belote makes the following observation on the Hand Form and the weapon practice: "Tai Chi helps improve my memory, muscle strength, balance, and overall physical and mental health. When a weapons component is added, the benefits are increased. Deeper concentration is required because I have to know the proper stance and now must also know where the saber should be oriented. My balance has improved and I walk with more confidence. I have better muscle tone and feel stronger when I practice with the saber. I often find myself reviewing the moves in my mind wherever I am. It brings me inner peace and provides mental relaxation during stressful times. Practicing with the saber makes me feel empowered, like I am able to conquer anything. My grandchildren think it is so 'cool' to show them the saber moves. The three year old says, 'Hey, grandma do your super hero thing', I hope that my participation in Tai Chi encourages the younger generation to be life long learners and to remain

active into their senior years."

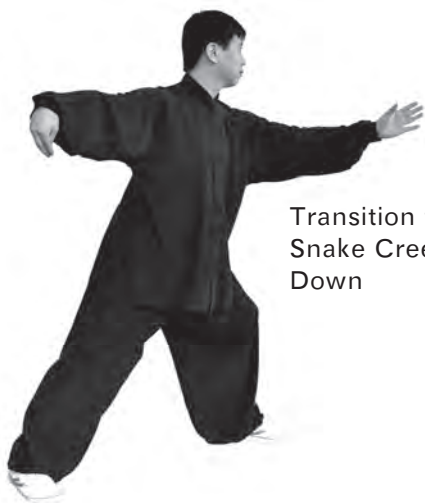
And last but not least, Willie Mayr, aka Captain Willie, sums up the experience of practicing weapon with the NERF saber: "What is the day? Tuesday, Thursday, never mind I'm old and the only thing I need to remember is that it's time to act. What will I slay today as I practice my Tai Chi saber moves? If I can just get my feet correct and not lose my balance I might be able to help 'yon damsel in distress.' Nuts, I crossed my feet. At least my balance is still good even if the saber blade is pointed in the wrong direction. The darn colored hankies keep hitting me in the face and I lose sight of my opponent, which is not good. Practice makes perfect. Place my right foot this way and move the left here, the saber turns this way and I lift my left foot, push my left arm straight out, swing the saber, and oops I just cut my arm off. Thank goodness it's just a NERF saber. Why do I do this? It's fun; it helps improve my balance, and keeps my mind active."

Yes, thank goodness for the toy weapon — we have no injury, nor damage to worry about. However, as light and maneuverable as this toy weapon is, we pay close attention to our form, to our movements: always making sure that our shoulders are down and relaxed. We pay attention that our feet are rooted and drawing energy from the ground. We keep our waists flexible, controlling and directing the energy through our arms, to the weapon.

The seniors are enjoying and making remarkable progress with the saber practice. Applying the fundamental principles of Tai Chi it is very impressive to see how they can make a harmless foam toy weapon look like it can cut, strike and stab. Perhaps a yardstick wasn't a bad idea after all.



# Practice Pages



Transition from  
Snake Creeps  
Down

Shift your weight forward; turn in the right toes to the corner (45°).



Use the waist turning to left to open the left toes to the corner. At the same time, rotate your left arm and change left palm to the grab shape.



Continue shifting forward; pick up your right leg while bending your right forearm in with the left arm closing toward your chest. Both hands change to fists with the right fist sitting by your waist.



Shifting back, rotate body to the right. Use the heel pivot to turn your left foot straight and at the same time, pull the right arm back to the side of your right hip. The left fist extends forward while keeping the left arm rounded with the wrist facing downward. Do not lean back. Torso faces 45° to the right, eyes looking forward.



Step back and  
Ride the Tiger

Turn body to the left until torso faces square to the front. Pick up the left foot and change from heel to ball touch empty stance. At the same time, the right arm circles upward until it is slightly over your head with the palm facing forward. Left arm circles downward to the left side of the hip with the palm facing down.



Rotating the torso to the right, the left arm opens to the left, circling up. The right arm opens to the right, circling down.



# 太極拳



Step Forward  
Seven Stars

Step out with the right foot into an empty stance using the ball of your foot. At the same time, cross your arms and punch, deflecting outwards. Body direction is square with the torso slightly leaning forward. Both fists point up diagonally with fist eyes facing you. Head up, looking forward.



Step back with your right foot; at the same time rotate your arms toward the right side of your body.



Right foot touches the ground with toes open to the corner (45°). At this time, rotate the right arm until the palm faces upward with left palm facing downward. Keep looking forward.



Continue turning body to the right until it is 45° to the corner. Circle both arms, closing them to the front, palms facing down.



Continue rotating to the right. The right arm circles outward from left to right under the left arm while the left arm circles in towards your body. The left foot continues to touch with toe, naturally.



Continue turning your body, the right arm circles open with the palm sitting. The left arm circle closes in with the palm sitting at the side of the right forearm. At this moment, the right arm is facing the left side of the back corner direction. Without shifting, keep the weight on your right leg. The left foot naturally turns while continuing to touch with the toe.



# Practice Pages



Continue rotating and lift up the right heel slightly. Use the ball of the right foot to turn the toes to the back of the right corner. The left toe will turn while naturally touching the floor. Both arms follow the body rotation without changing shape. The right arm now faces the back right corner.



Still rotating to the right, sweep the left leg in a circle while using the ball of the right foot as the pivot point. The left foot lands, pointing straight ahead. When the leg sweep has finished both arms maintain their shape with the right palm sitting on the right side at 45°.



Shift to the left leg and pick up your right leg with the knee pointing to the right at 45°. Bend your knee with the toes pointing down. Look to the right corner.



Sitting down on the left leg, step out with the right foot to the corner forming a shoulder width bow stance.



Shift forward slowly, right foot using the heel-to-ball-to-toe method. At the same time, both arms circle downward from the left side corner to the right side corner.



Continue shifting forward and rotate the torso to the left with both hands forming fists. The right arm circles from down to up as the left forearm bends in towards the chest.

# 太極拳



Prepare to kick by dropping your right leg down.

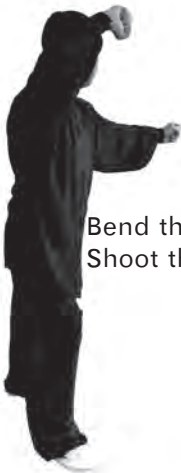


Swing the right leg in a circle: crossing down to the left and then up to the right. At the same time, circle your arms horizontally from right to left. Both palms will pat the right foot.



Turn Body and Swing Over Lotus

After patting your foot, bend your right knee with the toes pointing down. Maintain the right leg direction to the right corner. Both arms arrive to the left side of the torso at 45°. Eyes look past the left arm.



Bend the Bow and Shoot the Tiger

Complete the weight shift forward by bending the right knee as your body rotates to the left. Use the waist rotation to shoot both fists to the left corner direction. The right arm is slightly over your head, while the left fist points to the corner with the arm lower than shoulder. Incline the torso in the same direction as the right foot.



Open your left toes to the left corner and turn the waist to the left to close the right toes in the same direction. Both feet are now parallel. At the same time, circle the left arm downward and curve it in while opening the palm. The right arm circles downward with both hands closing in to the center of your body, facing forward. The right fist sits slightly.



Shifting to the left, pick up your right leg as both arms circle downwards.





# Practice Pages



Step forward with your right foot placing it in line with the left heel. As the right heel almost touches down, open the foot to the corner (45°). At the same time, both arms circle down and open to the back left corner.



Shift to the right leg and turn the body to the right. The arms follow the torso rotation and circle upwards, deflecting to the front. At this time, both hands are at the center of your body with the left palm by the side of your right arm.



Rotate the body to the right, at the same time separate the arms and step forward. The right fist sits at the hip and left arm is extended in line with the left shoulder. The body direction is open at 45°.



Shifting back, use the waist rotation to the right to pull your right arm back while opening your left arm slightly. As the right arm pulls back it should cross the center of the left forearm. The right arm sits in front of your chest. Keep armpits open, elbows out.



Turn the body square, using this rotation to turn the arms and sit the palms in front of your chest. Make sure your torso does not lean backwards.



Apparent  
Close Up

Shifting your weight forward, push out your arms. Keep arms shoulder width apart at shoulder level.

# 太極拳



Step Forward,  
Parry Block  
and Punch

Moving forward, bend your knee for a bow stance. Turn your body square, punching out at shoulder level and in line with the right shoulder. The left arm draws in and forms a sitting palm beside the center of the right forearm.



Extend your right arm forward slightly, rotate your left palm down and open your left arm slightly to the left.



Torso turns slightly to the left and the right arm circles to the left while left arm passes under your right upper arm. Both palms are facing up.



Rotating to the right, use your waist turning to rotate your arms. The right arm rises slightly as it circles.



Shift to your right and use the waist rotation to turn in the left foot, toes pointing straight ahead. At the same time, the right arm delivers a chop to the corner.



Shifting to the left, circle the arms down and rotate them to turn the palms facing in. The arm shape is rounded.



## Cross Hands



Draw your right foot in and place it shoulder width apart, toes pointing straight ahead. The arms continue to circle down and cross center with right arm on the inside.



Shift your weight to the center. Keeping the arms rounded, ward-off upward. Your right arm is now on the outside, crossing at the center of the forearm.



Rise up, extending and opening your arms.

## Closing Form



Rotate your arms to turn the palms face down, shoulder width apart.



Lower the arms, pushing the palms to waist level.

## Return to Normal



Rotate your arms to straighten your palms, setting them at the side of your body. Return to the original position.





# The 10th Anniversary of the Paris Yang Chengfu Center

*By Duc & Carole Nguyen Minh  
Directors, YCF Center Paris*

2011 Paris seminar



We have had such a beautiful adventure since we met Masters Yang Zhen duo and Yang Jun. We could never have imagined this when each of us started practicing Tai Chi Chuan. We were just following the Tao.

Today we feel honored to belong to the large family of Yang Style practitioners. From the Masters we get an exceptional transmission of the Art of Tai Chi Chuan, with the chance to have close contact with them. We particularly appreciate their kindness and ready availability. We deeply value the ethics, values, benevolence, and martial code they embody.

For 10 years now, we have collaborated with clubs in France practicing Yang Style Tai Chi Chuan, with the spirit transmitted by the Masters. For historical reasons, our style is called the Yang Zhen duo style in France, which makes it a little confusing when we want to communicate our style. Today, our Center has about 180 members from all over France.

The Association-sponsored International Seminars in Paris have provided the focus to rally these Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan practitioners. From our location in Gif, which serves as our headquarters, our activities aim not only to improve and prepare students for the seminars with the Masters, but also to increase collaboration and exchange between the Center and all these clubs throughout France.

For this purpose, we organize five weekend seminars yearly and at the end of the season we hold the ranking sessions. Since 2007, we have already ranked about 60 students and 5 of them are now Certified Instructors.

We have also taught seminars in other places like Madagascar in 2007. Since last year, we have organized summer seminars involving instructors in different regions of France, including Toulouse, Auvergne and Dordogne. These activities have strengthened our relationships with students from everywhere. We have a special relationship with teachers from Madagascar such as Philippe, Jacques, Masako, Annick and Hugues as well as many others who are committed to our project there. Together: teachers, practitioners and organizers of the Club share a common passion: Tai Chi Chuan. We thank everyone for their demonstration of confidence and friendship.

We hope, in time, to foster a regional educational dynamic all over France. Many clubs are now growing with ranked instructors in different towns and regions: Lyon, Toulouse, Brittany, and Lorraine. We are now preparing to create a School for Tai Chi Chuan Teachers, modeled on pilot projects in Italy and Brazil.

We thank everyone for their participation and support! We especially wish to express our gratitude to Fang Hong for her help, along with all the staff and the Directors of the International Association.



2001,  
1st Paris seminar





# Stealing Boxing

By Gong Baiyu

## Chapter 1

***Learning martial arts because he was young and weak,  
he searched out esoteric martial arts knowledge.***

Yang Luchan's family lived in the south of Hebei Province in Guangping Prefecture. His family were farmers. Although he had inherited the wealth of his ancestors and his family was well off, Yang Luchan was frail and sickly as a young boy. His father doted on his weak son and worried whether he would live or die; he had him not only study with, but also attend one of the house guards, named Lǐ Dēfā, who was a martial arts teacher. He hoped that by practicing and training in martial arts, his son would grow stronger and healthier. His father also bought some boxing and sword manuals so that Luchan could study from them on his own. In those days, neither father nor son could have dreamed that Yang Luchan and his future generations would become well known for martial arts.

Yang Luchan was small and thin, but gifted with intelligence. Within a single year, he had already learned the set that Master Li was most proud of: the Long Fist Ten-Piece Brocade. Master Li was only an ordinary instructor. He was somewhat physically strong and knew a few showy moves, but he had no profound, unique martial art technique.

***After teaching Luchan the Long Fist set, Master Li ended up embarrassing himself when they attempted to try out a technique.***

This occurred during the summer, when Master Li was in the practice area, watching Yang Luchan doing his martial arts training. He gave him comments on the movements and demonstrated them as he explained which movements were wrong, which movements had no power, which required the energy to be sent out in one way, and which required the energy to be received in another.

Yang Luchan was extremely bright and had read some books. Having a smattering of knowledge, he had already figured a few things out. As he let his hands drop, he walked up to Master Li and asked, "When I practice the movements Swing the Elbow and Press the Opponent and Scoop the Palm up to the Groin, it never feels right. How best can I use my

energy? How can I do it better?" As he said this, he did the posture.

Master Li patted his abdomen and said, "The energy all comes from here. Energy, you see, is issued from the dantian. Luchan, you think you're too smart. I always say that martial arts must be both practiced internally, using the breath and externally by exercising the tendons, bones and skin. In using energy everything relies on your Qi. Your posture is not right."

Yang Luchan smiled and said, "Master, if I follow your way of practice, I always feel uncomfortable. You just said those two movements of sending out of energy were not right. Let me do it again and you can correct me."

Yang Luchan practiced the two movements and Master Li shook his head. Then he did Swing the Elbow and Press the Opponent and Scoop the Palm up to the Groin and said, "Luchan, your energy was too much. Look at my palm and how I send out the energy. How much energy did my palm send out?"

"Master, how do you break these movements or postures?"

"You need to use Split Fist, Open Step. If you do this, then you can slip out."

"If I do it this way, is it okay or not?"



As Luchan asked these questions, he was moving. His right foot slipped back and his right fist suddenly shot out from under his left wrist, and “WHAM” – with one fist he struck Master Li’s nose, by accident.

Master Li’s nose began to bleed. A surprised Luchan shouted, “Oh my! I’m sorry Master, I did not mean to hit you!”

Luchan’s strike happened suddenly and spontaneously. At this moment, Master Li lost his patience and flew into a rage, “Little kid - I teach you and you strike your teacher!” At that time his nose kept bleeding and he started whimpering.

Yang Luchan controlled his laughter and apologized. But he could not hide his satisfied expression. When Master Li saw this he became even angrier and grabbed Luchan because he wanted to beat him but Luchan broke his grip and slipped away.

Several servants came running up and tried to tend to Master Li and one servant ran into the home. Master Li lowered his head, wiped the blood from his nose and saw more people coming to help him. His face was turning red and his hands were shaking. He said to everyone, “No problem – we are just practicing. Just a little strike and, well, good student you can go now. I cannot teach you, young sir.”

That day, Luchan’s father did his best to apologize. Master Li felt embarrassed and under duress. He stayed a few more days and then left. This matter soon spread throughout the countryside. It became a popular joke in the village. Luchan was reprimanded by his father and told he should not insult his teacher.

A few months later, a friend of his father recommended a teacher named Liu Ligong. His Long Fist was excellent and refined. At that time he was very famous and specialized in the Six Combination Hook. He was old, bold, unconstrained, uninhibited and did not show his age. He was employed as a security guard for postal shipments and for fifteen years he had never lost a shipment. He was getting close to his sixties, and decided to retire so he could teach students in his later years.

He was recommended to the Yang Family. His spirit and style was very different from Master Li. After Yang Luchan’s student/teacher initiation ceremony, Master Liu Ligong asked Luchan to show him what he learned. With his hands behind his back, he hesitated and said, “What I learned before got me into trouble.”

“How many years have you practiced?”

“Four years.”

Master Liu Ligong coughed and asked, “Who was your previous Master?”



Luchan told him the whole story.

Master Liu Ligong nodded his head and said nothing.

After a little while, he talked to Yang Luchan in a serious tone.

“In the martial arts area most masters parade their style to show off what they have. They often envy and hate and slander other styles. Many practice just for stylistic fighting. The martial arts are not respected or valued because of these ignorant masters. I have practiced a few years of Gongfu and I am very careful not to say good or bad of others to promote myself. This is our secret of how to avoid conflict, as well as a method to stop and repress fights. To succeed in Gongfu, you practice every day until you are old. You study every day until you’re old – and one day, you will understand what your teacher has taught you. You will remember this your whole life. The masters you will meet will have different depths of Gongfu. If you follow a master





and practice for many years and do not deepen your Gongfu, you have wasted your time. You should blame yourself because you were not careful when you chose your teacher. On the other hand, if you are a teacher and not concerned with your morals and skills surely this is not right. An unskilled teacher isn't thinking about wasting your time. He may think he is doing what he can to teach you but because his skill is not refined, the end result is an impasse. To receive gifted students and to find a true teacher are both difficult."

Yang Luchan nodded his head and listened intently as Master Liu continued, "I don't really have any astonishing Wushu or outstanding Gongfu because my Master taught me to pay special attention to the refinements. To truly understand martial art techniques you should be taught orally and take them into your heart. I studied the essentials of the Long Fist and practice the keys of success in the Six Combination Hook. After more than ten years of practice I may have a little understanding of it. For me, Liu Ligong, having been in the martial arts area for many years, all I rely on is my fist and two steel hooks and this is my reputation. Today, now that you are formally my student, I have told you how I learned before and I will teach you the same way. After I teach you all I know, you will then find another teacher. Today, I say to you personally, I dare to say, I will not guide you the wrong way. We have a saying, "One general gives one order. One Master gives one teaching." You practiced the complete sequence of your previous form but you didn't understand the essence. Even if you were to continue to practice this way for ten more years, it would be as if you hadn't practiced at all! If you practice the hand forms and don't know the essence, or practice sword and don't know its true meaning, how can you be brilliant? Luchan, before we begin, let us make a pact. We must agree with each other. You feel you have made no progress – I also think you are just starting to learn martial arts. We will start from the beginning. You must not lose patience, you must not stop practicing. Practicing martial arts demands constant study to get results. You must be patient and have the force of your desire. I will teach and you must practice. If you can agree with these terms I will receive you as a disciple. If not, you can go look for another teacher. I don't want to be blamed and have the reputation of wasting students' time when I become older."

Yang Luchan was very surprised to hear this. He thought a little and then bowed with respect and said, "This student is willing to follow his teacher's

orders and it doesn't matter how many years it takes. As long as you teach me, I will be patient and study seriously."

They shook hands and Master Liu said "Very good, we have made our deal. Tomorrow we will go to the training ground and practice."

With his first teacher, Yang Luchan went astray and wasted his time. He did not make the same mistake twice. Master Liu had genuine Gongfu. His way of speaking, his energy and temperament, were calm and grounded; very different from other masters. When he taught, each movement was explained in every detail: upper, lower or middle parts of the techniques and the applications. He repeated and repeated his explanations and never lost his patience. He always wanted to make sure that Luchan clearly understood his methods and never stopped until he was satisfied that this was so.

Yang Luchan was talented and enamored and fell deeply into his study. Master Liu also had special teaching methods. Teacher and student got along well with each other and Luchan made progress quickly. Master Liu had planned to teach Luchan for at least one year to build a stable and rooted foundation. With Luchan, however, it only took six to seven months to make his lower body stable. Master Liu was happy and proud of his student's progress. The most difficult part of being a teacher is finding an intelligent and obedient student. Master Liu decided to accelerate his training and taught him the long fist Shiduanjin.

Luchan realized Master Liu's teaching was totally different from his previous Master. Liu Ligong first demonstrated the whole sequence of the Long Fist Shiduanjin by himself. He was quiet as a virgin and as quick as the flight of a flock of frightened



birds. After he performed, he showed Luchan every single movement with applications. He explained and shared his



experiences with Luchan. He also showed how the techniques were used in the past, movement by movement.

Luchan understood and was very pleased and always obeyed Master Liu.

After two years, Master Liu had completely taught the Long Fist Shiduanjin to Luchan.

The Shiduanjin originated as thirty-five techniques and later on it was simplified to eighteen. The legend says the founder of Wudang, Zhang Sanfeng, created the system by using the best of the Shaolin Temple Eighteen Buddhist Arhat Hand. With time, these eighteen techniques were changed by the individual families who taught the forms.

Master Liu taught Luchan for three more years all of what he had learned from his many years of experience in the martial arts. Luchan did not let Master Liu down but when it came to Master Liu's Six Combination Hook, Luchan did not do so well. Luchan was limited by his talent. He didn't have enough strength and Master Liu also felt deeply ashamed that he himself did not have enough understanding of internal Gongfu. He did not feel qualified to teach Luchan internal martial arts and worried that if he couldn't teach correctly, all their previous labor would come to nothing.

Following those years of practice, Yang Luchan's body was not as weak as before. His short and thin stature did not change but the color of his face and muscles became more solid in appearance. Master Liu told Luchan, "If your arms don't have five to six hundred pounds of force or strength you cannot use the six combination hook because it is heavy." Luchan also understood that the Master didn't want to teach him because he wasn't strong enough but yet he could do nothing about it.

One day the cool breezes were blowing at the end of the fall season and Liu Ligong started to miss his home. Then he said to Luchan, "You and I have been together for five years, from today we will have a half of a month more together. After the Moon Festival, that will be the time for me to return home. After I leave, you must practice by yourself or find another famous teacher. Find good friends. Because I am limited by my knowledge, I have done what I can to teach you everything. Your body is thin and short but you have more talent than others. If you can meet a real internal Gongfu Master then you can improve in those areas where you are lacking. This is the only way for you to improve. Look to the future. I hope you will make sure that you go in the right direction."

Yang Luchan realized Master Liu wanted to leave and was very surprised. He quickly stood up and asked him, "This student has respected his teacher and practiced hard. My study is not complete and I have never dared to become lazy. Is there anywhere where this student has failed? Has this servant done anything wrong? I haven't learned Gongfu from the Master yet? How can I find my way? I'm hoping the Master can stay two to three more years so I can get more benefit from your teaching."

Master Liu said, "Luchan, we have been teacher and student for a long time. Do you not understand my personality? Even I didn't study much in school. I know promises must be kept and actions must be resolute. You and I made a pact before we started. What I said to you at the beginning I hope you have not forgotten. Your family has treated me very well. When a teacher can meet a student like you that wants to study, one who has understanding and respect, that is enough for me. You already have some basic foundation. Me, I'm old and tired of living away from home, I really want to go back to my homeland. You and I are spiritually related and so you do not need me to stay."

Luchan understood Master Liu's personality, words, deeds and his resolve. He dared say no more. He told his father of Master Liu's impending departure. Both father and son prepared a plentiful travelling case. On the day of the Moon Festival the Yang family provided a farewell banquet. Master Liu was very thankful and prepared to leave on August 17<sup>th</sup>. At night, father and son prepared all his luggage and included all the wages Master Liu never used.

Luchan respectfully brought a plate and placed it in front of Master Liu and said, "Your teacher's







wages from these years amount to four hundred and seventy five taels of silver. Here are 50 more taels of silver and some clothing; it is this student's way of being thankful. Please accept it."

Master Liu smiled and said, "You are too serious and honest. My family is not dependent on those wages for a living. You keep it and save it for me. If at anytime I need it, I will come here to get them. Those clothes, I will accept and keep."

Even as Master Liu said this, Luchan and his father could not follow his wishes. They put the silver taels together and hid them in his luggage. The servants brought tea and, sitting off to the side, listened to the Master's parting words of advice.

Master Liu knew Yang Luchan and his father were well meaning and he said from his heart to Luchan, "It is a pity my martial arts are so shallow and your talent is so high. Even though I like you as my student, I don't have anything else to teach you. Our predestined affinity has come to an end. What else can I say?"

Luchan quickly answered, "Master, look at your disciple. We are really congenial, you and I. In the future, I don't care whether you teach me or not, please stay here for a few more years and help this disciple. This will be better than just practicing by myself." Luchan said this and could see Master Liu looking up like he wasn't listening, daydreaming. Luchan dared not say anymore.

After a little while, Master Liu generously said to Luchan, "What are your plans for the future?"

Luchan answered, "Because I was weak, I practiced martial arts. I have gotten many benefits from it. I will work hard. I have already put my hard work in this direction so I want to practice until I can have some success, become famous and set up my own career."

Master Liu said, "I really like your talent. If you have a good teacher to guide you, it will not be difficult for you to become famous. If you don't continue to practice, I will feel sorry for you. I gave all of what I know to you, really because I did not want to waste your time. Now I give you a tip: in Henan Province, Huiqinfu, at Chenjiagou, there is a person named Chen Qingping. He met an extraordinary person when he was young who taught him a method that comes from the Taiji diagram and created a martial arts system called Taijiquan. This martial art has a unified theory and a very clever method. It is different from all the other kinds of martial arts. This martial art is not just for facing an opponent, it also has the ability to prolong life, preserve health and improve one's life. It's clever and uses skill to control force. It is able to help the weak to become strong. Following your talent and your build, if you have Master Chen as your teacher then you can abandon your frail body and extend your talents by using skill to control force. You will not have to worry about becoming famous."

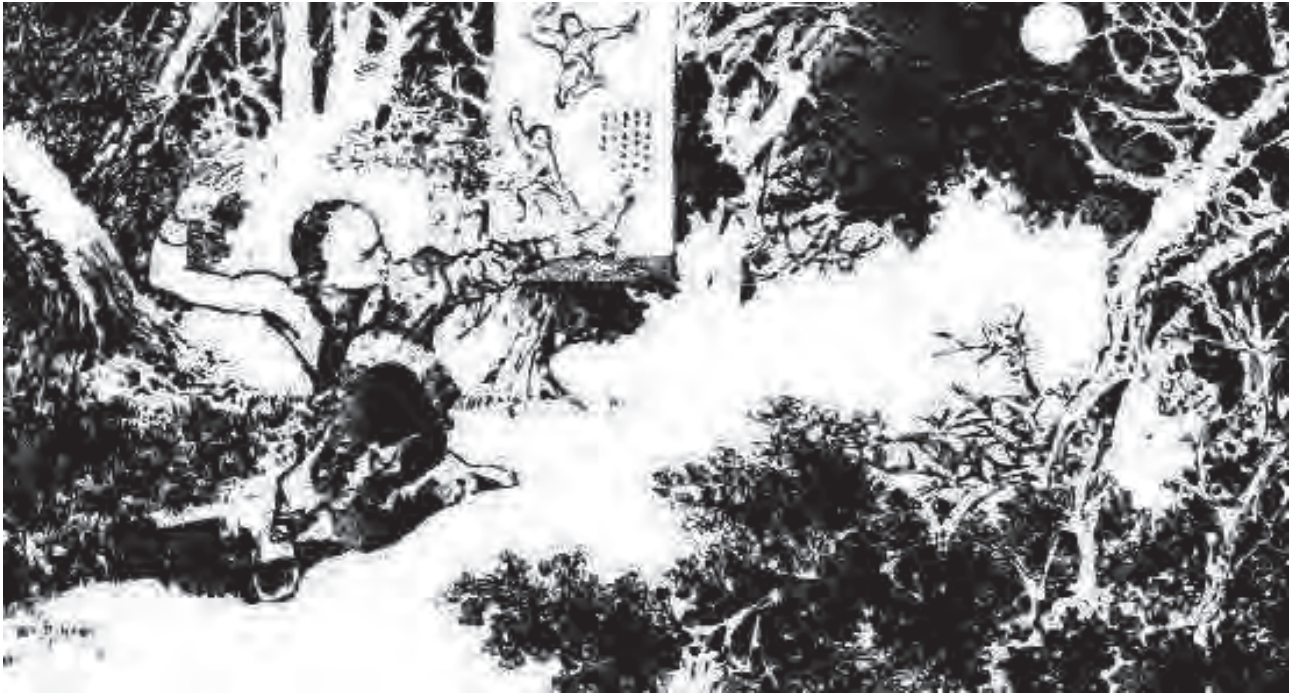
Luchan answered happily, "Master, if you know this famous teacher, why didn't we invite him earlier? Tomorrow, I will prepare a gift and ask one of my servants to invite Master Chen."

Master Liu could not help laughing, nodded his head and said to Luchan, "You mistakenly think this is so easy! You cannot use money to invite Master Chen. You cannot use relationships either. You want to invite him to your home, are you joking? Even if you prepare a thousand taels of gold, he will not come."



Luchan's face turned red, "I am still very young and do not understand these things. Teacher, can you tell me what should I do?"





Master Liu Ligong stroked his beard, smiled and said, "With most people who are outstanding and possess special skills, their personality is often strange. Master Chen is more eccentric than others. Doing things his own way, he has unique skill but does not have many students under him. He received a secret and after twenty years of intense training and hard thinking he has found the essence of this martial art. He knows Taijiquan does not come easy, so it is not easy to get him to teach anyone. He also worries that if he teaches the wrong type of person it will tarnish his name and so he chooses his

you are talented and if you don't continue - it's a pity. That's why I want you to study under Master Chen and then you can unleash your talent. However, if you want to invite him here, 9 out of 10 times that probably will not happen. You should make a special trip to Henan and study under him, that is possible. That may be your lucky chance."

"Master, do you wish me to go to his home and study under him? His personality sounds so difficult and unreasonable. I have never met him. Can you give me a recommendation?"



Master Liu waved his hands saying, "That will not help. Let me tell you: sincerity can move peoples' hearts and you only need to sincerely want to learn this consummate art and to respectfully come to his home. Present the disciple card I gave you and ask if he will receive you. This is better than a recommendation from someone. Also, while I know of Master Chen from his reputation, I don't know him personally. Luchan, because you have outstanding talent and lofty goals, this is why I have shown you this way. If you want to go or not, you can think it over. You don't have to decide at this moment."

disciples strictly, regardless of the relationship, profit or benefit. He is arrogant, very aloof, and private. He doesn't want anything from anyone and with his door closed, he enjoys his life. That's why he has cultivated a habit of not taking even one blade of grass and also not giving out one blade of grass. This kind of person is not easy to deal with. I know

*In our next issue, Chapter 2:  
Arriving in Henan to seek a master, Yang Luchan  
breaks the rules by watching a training session.*

*Translated by Yang Jun and Audi Peal  
Transcribed by Nancy Lucero  
Transliteration by Dave Barrett*





## Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan SEMINARS



### Master Yang Jun

6<sup>th</sup> Generation Yang Family and  
5<sup>th</sup> Generation Lineage Holder of Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan



#### Cambridge, UK

Oct 21-23, 2011 Hand Form  
Oct 24, 2011 Saber Form  
Oct 25, 2011 Push Hands  
Contact: Mike Taylor  
Martin Fayers  
3, Pitfield Close, Fenstanton  
Cambridge PF289FE UK  
Ph: +44 1480 392534  
Email: mike@yangfamilytaichi.com or  
martin@yangfamilytaichi.com  
Heep://yangstyletaichi.co.uk

#### Rome, Italy

Oct 28-30, 2011 Instructor Training  
Contact: Claudio Mingarini  
Via Alfredo Casella 23-00199 Roma  
Tel: (W) 39-6-8610590  
Cell: 39-347-3635333  
Email: claudio@yangfamilytaichi.com  
www.taichiyangfamily.it

#### Sao Paulo, Brazil

Nov 11, 2011 Theory  
Nov 12-13, 2011 Sword Form (MYJ)  
Nov 12-13, 2011 Hand Form (FH)  
Nov 14, 2010 Push Hands  
Nov 15-15, 2011 Instructor Training  
Contact: Angela and Roque Soci  
Rua Jose Maria Lisboa 612, sala 07  
Sao Paulo - SP  
CEP-01423-000  
Brazil  
Ph: +55 11 3884.8943  
and +55 11 4704.6578  
Email: angela@yangfamilytaichi.com  
www.sbtcc.org.br

#### Mendoza, Argentina

Nov 18-20, 2011 Hand Form  
Contact: Sergio Arione  
Victor Velazquez  
San Martin 1297  
Godoy Cruz  
Provincia de Mendoza, Argentina  
Ph: (0261) 156 57 21 71  
(0261) 431 3982  
Email: Sergio@yangfamilytaichi.com  
Victor@yangfamilytaichi.com  
taichimendoza.com

#### East Brunswick, NJ

Feb 18-19, 2012 49 Form  
Feb 19, 2012 Push Hands  
Contact: Andy Lee  
P.O. Box 232  
East Brunswick, NJ 08816  
Ph: (732) 238-1414  
Email: leeandy@yangfamilytaichi.com  
www.taichiusa.com

#### Montreal, Canada

Mar 16-18, 2012 Hand Form  
Mar 19-20, 2012 Sword Form  
Contact: Sergio  
19 Centre Commercial Street  
Roxboro, Montreal  
Quebec Canada  
H8Y 2N9  
Ph (514) 684-5984  
Email: Sergio@yangfamilytaichi.com  
www.taichimontreal.com

#### Troy, MI USA

Mar 30, 2012 Push Hands  
Mar 31, 2012 49 Form  
Apr 1, 2012 Sword Form  
Contact: Han Hoong Wang  
P.O. Box 99194  
Troy, MI 48099  
USA  
Ph: (248) 680-8938  
Email: han@yangfamilytaichi.com  
www.michigantaichi.com

#### Paris, France

Apr 13-16, 2012 Hand Form  
Apr 17, 2012 Push Hands  
Apr 18, 2012 Saber Form  
Contact: Duc Nguyen Minh & Carole Nguyen  
27 Allee des Gravieres de La Salmouille  
91190 Gif. Sur Yvette, France  
Ph: +33-(0)9- 620 683 65  
Email: duc@yangfamilytaichi.com  
www.clubchevy2.com



INTERNATIONAL YANG FAMILY  
TAI CHI CHUAN ASSOCIATION  
P.O. Box 786  
Bothell, WA 98041 USA

