



YANG FAMILY  
TAI CHI CHUAN

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*Tai Chi Chuan*

The Journal of The International Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan Association

Summer 2012 Number 31



## President's Letter

Dear Member:

Last October, the International Association went through an organizational restructuring. It is hoped that this will give the Association a new look and foster new development. Since implementing these changes, the Association has drawn up important development plans and documentation so that the International Association as a whole will be more integrated.

The members of the International Association form the foundation of the Association. By promoting Tai Chi Chuan's role in improving health and longevity, and spreading this Chinese cultural heritage, Tai Chi Chuan acts a bridge for cultural exchange and friendship. Generations of descendants of the Yang family, from our founder Yang Luchan to the present, have led in Tai Chi Chuan's evolution. The Association's long-term objective is in promoting and popularizing Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan. I would like to thank our Association members who support Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan as well as the instructors who promote Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan, and friends who help with Tai Chi Chuan's improvement. You may think that your efforts are small, but everyone's efforts are like droplets of water that combine together to form a river for the benefit of humankind!



In order to spread our art, there is the need to raise standards. The process of improvement includes designing the method of evaluation for ranking. Currently, ranking assessments have been implemented in more than a dozen countries, gradually enabling more Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan practitioners to participate. After more than ten years of experience and member suggestions, we have made improvements to the ranking assessments. Of special note is the completion of the Judges and Ranking Handbook, under Pat Rice's direction. The handbook includes the ranking system, evaluation, judging, and other methods of documentation and policies. The purpose is to allow judges and members to learn, understand and participate in ranking assessments as well as improving the Tai Chi Chuan skills of our members.

Teaching and learning are mutually related, and Tai Chi Chuan's popularity is dependent on how the instructors teach. Therefore, developing instructor's resources is something the Association cannot overlook. The Association's main focus involves establishing instructor training, as it is the foundation for raising the standards of the ranking system. The International Association's Instructors Registry application, evaluation and management methods have gradually been completed. I encourage those who are committed to teaching: from making improvements to raising standards, to participate in the Instructor Registry. All Association Center Directors will also need to follow the Registry's policies.

The International Association is a non-profit organization committed to the development of Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan. In sharing this information, I hope that members will have a better understanding of the Association and participate in Association related activities so as to promote the development of Tai Chi Chuan.

The Yang Family Tai Chi Park is being built under the organization and with the support of the Yongnian County Government. During the Qingming festival, the county government held a memorial service at the new family tombs for the first time. The complete layout of Yang Family Tai Chi Park is grand and elegant. The participation by the county government will promote the efforts of Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan to contribute to a better world. This is an historic moment in Tai Chi Chuan's development!

Yang Jun,  
President

Translated by Mui Gek Chan

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# A Lecture by Master Yang Jun: The Nature of Taiji Energy

Recorded on April 13<sup>th</sup>, 2012 in Paris, France  
Transcribed and emended by Edward Moore  
With help from Mike Lucero

When we practice Taijiquan we always talk about energy, but first I would like you to have a basic idea of what we are referring to when we talk about energy. What various ideas are related to this subject? Before we begin, I would like to review a bit because everything in Taijiquan is related to traditional philosophy and principles. After that we can talk about the various techniques that we use.

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When we talk about the energy we have the saying, "When you practice Taijiquan, you are using taiji energy." But what is taiji energy? Many of you have practiced for a long time, can you explain what taiji energy is? It seems to be a very simple question, but when you try to answer it, it does not seem very easy. Think about it from the philosophy point of view. What kind of philosophy are we using in Taijiquan? We are using yin-yang philosophy. When we say taiji energy, the word taiji relates to Chinese philosophy. It means yin-yang energy. What kind of energy do we identify with yin and yang? Soft and hard combined together energy, this is taiji energy. If you only make it on the hard side or the soft side, this is not balanced. With taiji energy there is a flow, and you change from hard to soft, soft to hard. When you are just talking about it, it's hard to feel it. It needs to be put into practice. How can we try to practice and experience taiji energy? I would first like you to understand where taiji energy comes from. It comes from your relaxation. You need to relax yourself. But what is relaxation? I believe that the first day you joined a taiji class your teacher talked about relaxing, right? Many of us have been practicing for many years, so we should have some understanding of what it means to relax. Relaxation can help your qi to sink down. If we cannot relax then we cannot use the taiji energy in the way that we want to.

We are not looking to be relaxed only at the ending of the movement. We also want a settled and stable feeling the whole time we are moving through the forms. But why do we want to relax? What is the benefit that we will get? There are many benefits that you can get from relaxation. Taijiquan was originally created as a martial art, so the benefits are not only for health, but also for the martial arts. Relaxation helps to make you more agile, more flexible, and it is easier to make changes. There are many different points that we can discuss about understanding the energy, but they all relate to relaxing. If we cannot first figure out why we want to relax, then we are not clear as to why we are doing it. If we don't understand enough about what taiji energy is, then we won't have the right understanding about Taijiquan as a whole. This can also be a problem later when you do push hands training.

Taijiquan follows the yin-yang philosophy, but sometimes when we talk about the taiji energy people's thoughts become very wide, perhaps a little too wide. You can say energy comes from qi, from heaven, from earth, but it seems a little too broad. Even if I say it, I still don't really understand how it is related to heaven and earth. It doesn't help me understand what to do. When you start thinking about each of the methods or techniques, I need you always to think of it from the yin yang philosophy point of view. I would like you to understand that taiji is yin and yang. When yin and yang are together, this is taiji. When there is only yin or only yang, then this is not balanced. That is not taiji. From Chinese we have a saying, "If there is no yin, there will be no yang."

To talk about taiji, we must talk about yin and yang. You can also have a binary understanding. Taiji is one thing comprised of two things. You need to understand that under the subject of taiji there is yin and yang, and this becomes two things. How can we understand this? You have two things under one point.



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The International Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan Association is a non-profit organization dedicated to the advancement of Traditional Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan.

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This may be confusing. When we talk about yin-yang it is a very huge subject. It's a general term, but what is yin and what is yang? Yin is generally slow or still, under, darker, colder, and more about storing and nurturing. Yang is more like warmer, above, always changing and moving around. It is brighter. If it is more in the reaching out and changing nature, it is yang. Yin is more storing; yang is more developing and changing. This is the difference between yin and yang.

When we talk about the binary relationship, you can understand that under one thing, you have two sides. For example: when we talk about temperature, you have a feeling that there is cold and warm. 10 degrees Celsius is a little cold. 0 degrees is cold. 20 degrees is better. 30 degrees is too warm. You have this kind of understanding but you always compare. When you say warm, why do you say warm? It is because you compare it to the cold. If there is no cold feeling there is no warm feeling. When you talk about size, you talk about the big because you think about the small; you compare with the small by saying "This is big". Everyone has a different balance, a different center. I often hear people say, "This is too warm for me." Then again, some people say it's too cold. Some people take off their jacket, but some people think that it's cold and they need to put on their jacket.

Each individual has a different point that is their center. Here I also want you to understand that for things to be balanced there doesn't necessarily need to be a fixed point there. It's like learning taiji: your balance point keeps changing. It keeps shifting, following your understanding and feeling. You always adjust soft and hard to make your balance more precise and clear. It also depends on the situation. When we talk about the binary relationship, you need to be clear about the one first, and then you can discuss the two parts that are contained in the one. For example, when we are discussing the temperature, this is the one, and then you have the warm and cold under it that becomes the two. The temperature is the subject and hot and cold is the relationship.

When talking about Taijiquan, it's very easy to miss the subject and only talk about the relationship, and then people are easily confused. Then they cannot identify if it is yin or if it is yang. For example: when we talk about open and close, is open or close yin? Open is yang. Close is yin. When things close they are yin, when they open they are yang. In the form you understand that open is yang. In diagonal flying, when we open the arms, this is yang, but sometimes we are not doing it that way, sometimes we open and then we close, which is yang? It can be confusing.

What are the subject and the relationship that we are looking for? The subject is about the moving motion: open and closing. We need to understand that each movement has a meaning; then we can see that from the energy point of view, the storage is yin, and the release is yang. From the energy point of view we can have this kind of understanding, but when we compare opening-closing and storing-releasing, they do not always necessarily match. That's how we often confuse the subject and the relationship. You try to use this opening-closing movement

to compare with the energy storing and release, but when you mix those two up, you soon start to become confused. It's like saying, "How big is this warm?" It doesn't make sense right? You compare size with temperature, how can you compare it? Size and temperature are not under the same subject. When you practice Taijiquan you need to first understand what the subject is, then look for the relationship within it. When you are making the movements you need to understand whether you have yin or yang. If I am moving forward and back, yes, I have yin and yang. Forward is yang. Moving back is yin. This does not mean that you cannot issue energy while moving back. From the energy point of view you don't talk about the positions, you talk about storing and releasing. From this point of view you identify the yin and yang. That is why I always want you to look at things and be clear about what is the subject and what is the yin-yang relationship within the subject. That may help you to understand clearly, to figure out the two sides.

I also want you to be clear about the basic nature of yin and yang. The subject is taiji, and under the subject of taiji, the relationship is yin and yang. The two have to be together. If there is no yin there will be no yang. Yin and yang have a relationship: one supports the other. We could also say that they nurture each other. When yin reaches to the top, then it becomes yang. Yin and yang have a relationship of change. In theory, when you reach to the edge of the yin, then you change to the yang. That's why, from this philosophical point of view, if you want to be hard enough, you need to be soft enough. You want hard, but you practice soft. If you can be more soft, then you can be more hard.

Yin and yang also have this relationship: they do not agree with each other, they seem to argue with each other. When yang says this, yin always says that. They disagree with each other, and then they eventually find some point where they both agree. First they argue, then they find the balance point. You want this side, I want that side, and then we find the balance point. That is the yin-yang relationship, they do not always agree with each other. If we have this basic understanding, this will help us to understand more about the energy of taiji.

### Experiencing Taiji energy

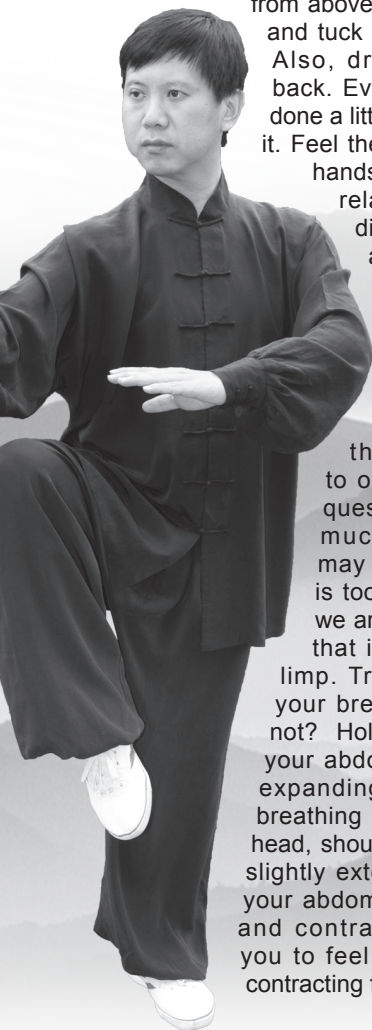
Talking about energy is a big subject. First you have the philosophical point of view: the understanding of the energy. Next you have to understand how you can get a certain kind of energy. When you can get this kind of energy, then it's about the method. What kind of energy do we want? I asked you at the very beginning the question: what is taiji energy? Taiji energy is what we want. Then we have to understand what taiji energy is. Next, we need to understand about the body structure when we use the energy. How do you generate energy, and how can you make the energy grow? When you have this structure, then you know techniques. We have been learning techniques from the very beginning. What are the techniques? We have eight energies. We also have basic methods. When you have a technique though, you are not finished yet, because between you and your opponent there needs to be strategy. If you have good technique, yet use bad



strategy, you are still not going to be very good. You need different strategies for different opponents, and to have different strategies, you need to understand the energies. First I need you to understand what taiji energy is. We discussed that taiji energy is yin-yang energy, right? This is still a little too broad. What is yin-yang really? To be a little more precise, it's not stiff, not limp. That is yin-yang. This seems a little better way to understand it, but somehow, we still can't really understand. What is "not stiff"? Am I doing it too stiff or too limp? It's hard to figure out by yourself. That's why you need external exercises and to practice with other people to help you to figure it out and find the balance.

In order to experience taiji energy, we can practice like this: Stand up and keep your feet shoulder width apart while standing. We do not need to pay attention to the movements as much during this exercise as much as we need to pay attention to the feeling. Standing there, I want your head to have a slight pushing up feeling; you can also describe it as being suspended from above. Drop your shoulders and tuck your chest in slightly.

Also, drop down the lower back. Everything needs to be done a little bit, but don't overdo it. Feel the relaxation. Put your hands at the side. Are you relaxed? Feel it from a different way. First feel a slight extension in the tendons and the joints. I don't want you to feel limp, I want you to have a slightly extended feeling from the inside. It's easy to overdo it. The correct question to ask is, "How much extension?" You may have a position that is too limp or too stiff, but we are looking for a feeling that is not too stiff or too limp. Try this method. Feel your breathing, is it deep or not? Hold your palms against your abdominal area to feel it expanding. Just do the deep breathing and keep your arms, head, shoulders, and lower back slightly extended. Can you feel your abdominal area expanding and contracting? I would like you to feel this expanding and contracting feeling.



If you find this feeling, that means that you are basically relaxed, but you still might become too limp so make sure that you can still keep your head, tendons, and joints connected. The practice is not only about standing here like this, but to stay relaxed like this while we are doing the movements in the form. Next, keep feeling the abdominal area expanding and contracting, but drop your center down by bending your knees. Can you still feel the expanding and contracting? Now open the toe to 45 degrees and move the weight to one side. Keep the flowing, relaxed feeling while you are picking up your leg. If you start to feel a tight abdominal feeling that means that you have some stiffness. If you can keep a natural feeling when you step without affecting your abdominal area then this means that you are relaxed. Next, pick up your leg and step into a bow stance. Can you still feel that your abdominal area is natural?

We know that if you want to use taiji energy, you must use the method of relaxing, and we just practiced a little bit of how you should feel when you relax. Now I want you to follow the relaxed feeling and I want you to practice the energy. I want you to figure out the type of the energy we are using. I want you to do this: open your feet, toes straight ahead. I want your body shape to be coordinated with the basic principles, and I want you to feel your breathing sinking down. Again, your abdominal area should have a feeling of expansion and contraction. Feel your abdominal area expanding and contracting as you breathe. I want you to keep this feeling. Now, "sit" down. Slightly bend your knees and sink down. Bring your arms up and keep shoulders and elbows dropped. Make your arms rounded like they are wrapped around a tree. Turn the palms facing in and leave one fist width space between your two hands. From your own point of view, I would like you to feel your breathing. You should have the expanding and contracting feeling. Keep that feeling. You might be becoming too limp. If you are too limp, you cannot have the right feeling, but if you are too stiff, you can still feel it. I would like you to try both ways.

Now I'll ask you to use strength to stiffen your arms. Make your arms stiff. Now I want you feel the abdomen. It's not very natural anymore, right? If your arms are stiff like you are grabbing something, then the abdomen does not feel natural anymore. If you are starting to feel the abdomen getting stiff, that means you are using too much strength. You don't want to

# Tai Chi Chuan

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be too hard, but you don't want to be too limp either.

First, let's review: lift your head, drop your lower back down, and open your palms. Drop your elbows so that you feel they are connected with your shoulders. From the outside it may not be obvious, but inside you feel extended with the elbows connected to your shoulders and your shoulders connected to your back.

I want you to feel that up and down, left and right, are connected together. When you have this connected, linked feeling then feel the abdomen relax. You can try from your own experience to know whether this feeling is correct, or you can also use external help. What is external help? You need help from a partner. I want your partner to give you a push. Your partner's hands touch your wrists and give a little push. If your balance is affected when your partner pushes, then you are too stiff. This means the feeling is getting too heavy. If it's too limp when pushed, there is nothing and this is not good. You don't want to be too limp, and you also don't want to be too stiff. How much should you do? I would like you to think about this: people who are doing the ward-off, I want you to imagine that you are water. People who push, I want you to imagine that you are a boat. When a boat pushes against the water, the water gives way, but the water is not just going away, letting the boat sink down, is it? As the water yields to the boat, it also supports it. It gives some pressure back. When reaching the balance point, the water will push the boat back up.

I want you to create this kind of boat/water relationship, so you need to clear your mind. You shouldn't anticipate your partner's movement. The water never thinks, "The boat is coming, I'm going away." You don't anticipate, just follow the way it comes, and naturally go. I don't want you have to look at your partner to do it. You don't need to think. Instead, keep your mind calm. That's why in Taijiquan we have a refined energy we call "listening energy": Ting Jin (听劲). We don't call it, "seeing energy." You really can't see energy. You have to feel it. That's why we call it listening energy.

I need you to understand the basic idea of Taijiquan's method, otherwise you can't make it work. If we keep our upper body light, then it's easier to keep the whole body stable. And from an energy point of view, if your upper body is heavy, if it is too full, then the lower body is too empty. How can you keep your upper body from being too full? Do not resist! Each time you resist your partner it will make your upper body heavy and then your lower body starts getting light. I would like the people doing the ward-off to be like water, because water doesn't resist force, but instead yields and returns pressure in a soft way.

I also want you to create a springy feeling in your arms. I want you to have a springy feeling when they push so that you are following but you are also balancing. When they push, you can feel that you are with them, but you never think about them. Don't try to anticipate the push, instead listen and keep the springy feeling. This is the water/boat relationship that we talked about. If I'm stiff and you push, then both of us feel unstable. I need you to keep your weight in the bubbling well in order to find a relaxed feeling

so that their push won't affect your balance. This is how you find the type of energy that I want you to feel.

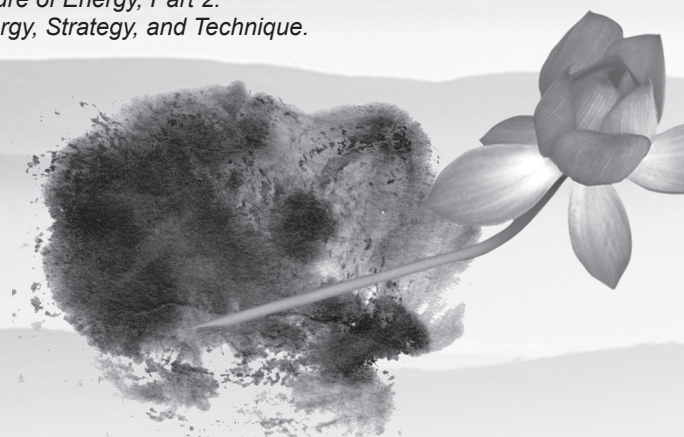
To improve this method, have your partner push at different frequencies and remember that ward-off is water and the push is the boat. The water should not move by itself if the push isn't coming. At first this exercise seems very easy, but you need to figure out a very important feeling about the energy type that we want. You don't want to be limp, and you also do not want to be stiff. If they have not pushed yet and you move, you are not really following nature. Instead, I would like you to stay there until the energy arrives and makes you move. One thing that I need you to forget is being self-centered. I need you to stop thinking only about yourself and instead start following what your partner gives to you. Coordinate with what they give to you to and do it with them. You need to stop thinking about what you should do, what your partner is making you do, and instead focus on coordinating with your partner. You need to change your point of view from thinking, "I'm doing this, I'm going to do this," that's not correct. I want you to open your mind and coordinate with your partner.

Don't put yourself in the center. Instead, put your partner in the center. How do you know if you are doing it correctly or not? I need you to feel like a boat in the water. I need you to feel that the soft and hard follow like water. Also, there is a feeling of energy inside: a springy feeling. When you are doing it correctly, your partner should sense a springy feeling. If your balance is affected, that means you are too stiff. If they push and it's too easy for them to get in, then you are too limp. You don't want to be either too stiff or too limp. I need you find the balance between you and your partner. When you're doing it correctly, then you and your partner are in the yin-yang relationship. You are one now. If you do yours, I do mine, we are never separating. I need you to unify two as one.

This exercise seems easy, but it's actually not very easy. From the movement point of view, it's very easy, but from an energy perspective, it's more challenging. This is a basic method for examining whether your energy type is correct or not. If you have the correct energy type, then later on when you do ward-off you will have this spring feeling. The spring energy in taiji has no particular direction. It's like water, whatever direction you go, the water yields back to you. If you push on the top, there is a springy feeling. Inside, outside, up or down, there is always this springy feeling. That is correct type of energy.

*In our next issue:*

*The Nature of Energy, Part 2:  
Taiji Energy, Strategy, and Technique.*





# The Way of the Center

*A Talk with Master Yang Jun*

By Edward Moore

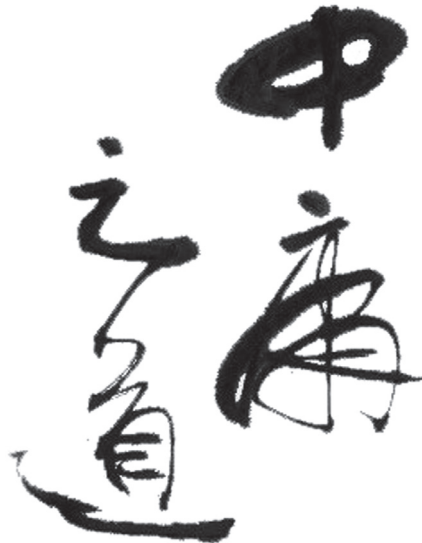
E.M. - Master Yang, in the class you recently said that understanding yin and yang can be called "the way of the center". Even though the center moves and changes, we can still stay in the center. How can we practice this physically and also energetically? You spoke about how the name for China comes from the word for balance or center. How can we stay balanced when we practice?

M.Y. - In Taijiquan there are many ways to talk about zhong (中), which is translated as "center", but here we should understand that center doesn't necessarily mean in the physical middle. It depends on the balance of the yin and yang. To understand the philosophy we say that yin and yang needs to be balanced. We cannot exactly say that Yin and Yang is the center or the middle, and say the same thing about your energy. Here I want to say that the center is sometimes translated as the middle or center, but sometimes the translation is not exactly correct. It depends on the situation. In Chinese we also say the way of the center, the center way.

What is the center way? It doesn't mean you are in the middle position, sometimes you may stand in the center, but you may not be balanced yet. This means that the balance may not be an actual physical sensation. This also helps us to understand relaxation. What is the correct relaxation? We say, "Not too hard - not too stiff, this is the middle way". Everyone has a different understanding of the middle way, and also the whole time you keep adjusting yourself and refining yourself. In the beginning you might think it's not too hard, but maybe you are not really correct. You may still have a lot of inaccuracies. Following your practice and your work with your partner, you have more understanding of yourself and your center feeling changes. From your first year of practice to your fifth year, your feeling can be different. How much strength you use, how much energy can be different. From your understanding you find a balance there, so the center is not just a physical center, it's about balance.

E.M. - How much energy can we put in the hand form or push hands without being too stiff, does it depend on the person or the style?

M.Y. - I should say this is very personal. Everyone has a different personality, different body shape and a different strategy. It depends on your body shape, your skill, who is your opponent, and what their strategy is. You can build up your strategy and your method, so sometimes you can put a little more internal energy into it, which is a little heavier. Sometimes you can put a little less internal energy in it, which is a little lighter. What is correct? In one way it depends on your own feeling and in the other way



it depends on your opponent. For yourself, you need to feel that you can be flexible enough to make changes and keep your balance stable. You should also be able to do what in Chinese we call shou fa tze ru (收发自如) "receive explosion naturally". If you use too much strength, you cannot be flexible enough and you will be too stiff. If you are too limp and your opponent can easily get into your center, then that means maybe you are too light. Really, there is no exact point if we talk about push hands. In the hand form you have your own center, so you find yourself natural, comfortable, and moving flexibly. Because there is no opponent affecting you and making you adjust your center, it's easier for you to find the center there. That is why you need to practice both sides of the exercise. Push hands can help you understand if it is correct or not.

In the hand form you can search your feelings: is your qi sinking? Balance stable? Motions agile? Energy united? Is your spirit calm? These qualities describe your energy.

E.M. - There should be a springy feeling in the body when doing the hand form or push hands. How can we find this feeling and keep it? How can we avoid collapsing?

M.Y. - Here we are saying that the taiji energy comes from your relaxation. It comes from your internal relaxation to coordinate your whole body together. It starts from internal qi sinking down and connects with your whole body. It makes your whole body have a connected, unified feeling. What is correct? First we need to understand, what is taiji energy? Not stiff, not limp. This is a simple way to describe it, not hard and not limp. But how can we more exactly describe it? We say taiji energy basically includes a springy feeling. So its not hard, not soft, and also with a spring inside it. That springiness comes from your natural relaxation, from your softness. It's connected with your whole body together. The spring is what we feel, but when we talk about it, it's hard to describe it. The energy is hard to describe without exactly showing it.

When we talk about the spring energy, we also talk about the relationship with you and your opponent. For example, one part of the energy comes from your opponent. How you do the correct relaxation, how you do spring energy or Taiji energy depends on the opponent. The relationship between you and your opponent is like the relationship between the water and a boat. When the boat sinks down, the water follows. When the boat goes down more, the





water gives more pressure back to the boat. The water has a softness and follows whatever force comes to it, and also at the same time gives some pressure back into it. The water has no shape, which means that it gives pressure equally everywhere. That is the idea about the Taiji energy, but you can actually try with someone. Just doing it by yourself isn't enough to know it whether you are doing it or not. It's hard to distinguish by yourself. That's why this springy feeling is a little hard to explain just with language. We can simply say the energy comes from your internal feeling, from the relaxation that is not too hard, not too limp, and with a spring inside it, and people will still not have an idea about it. Sometimes if you only do the hand form, you cannot really know if you are doing it clear or not. It's not really necessary that you do push-hands, but you can use some basic movements with a partner to help you understand the spring feeling.

E.M. - What is the feeling of Zhang Gong (張弓), and how can it improve our practice?

M.Y. - In Chinese we call it shu jing wuzhang gong (蓄勁如張弓). This means when you store energy you feel like you are pulling a bow, fa jin wufang jian (發勁如放箭). When you explode the energy its like the arrow has been released, sending it out.

E.M. - Do you have that feeling in the hand form also, or just the faster movements?

M.Y. - Yes, in the hand form. Storing energy and sending out energy is yin and yang. When we talk about the martial arts, we always have a part that is storage of energy and one part that is releasing energy, or one part is neutralizing and one part that is sending out. So, how can you store energy? When you are sitting back, you are storing energy for moving forward, and when your arm reaches to the front, your arm stores energy for striking back. Back to forward, forward to back. When you reach to the top of the yin, you go to the yang. When you reach the top of the yang, you go to the yin. The storage and sending is this yin/yang relationship. A good taiji player can make this sending to storage change very quick, but they will still have storage there. After you send, you need to store. Every movement when we practice the form, moving back to forward and changing to the right, going to the left, those are all storing energy to go to the other side. When you close you are storing energy to open, when you open you store energy to close. This is yin changing to the yang, yang changing to the yin.

E.M. - What is the difference between Jin 筋 tendon/energy and Jin 勁 energy force, and Li 力 force in Taijiquan? These terms can be hard to understand.

M.Y. - What does it mean in taiji? This does not only relate to taiji. We say in taiji that your energy must connect with

your spirit. When we say this person has a lot of Li, that means he has a lot of force, but the spirit is not combined. Jin is more connected with the internal and trained energy, and force is only related to your muscles and your physical condition. Jin (勁) is tendon and Jin (勁) is energy. The pinyin way to write them both is the same, but the Chinese meanings are very different. Jin (勁) is the fourth tone.

E.M. - So can we make the energy, Jin (勁) stronger from practicing more? By practicing the form correctly?

M.Y. - I should say that it's from your internal qi being strong that the Jin energy is strong. Also, the skill from the practice of the form makes you more accurate with external and internal. Internal alone will not work, you also need external. They need to work together. When you do zhan zhuang, this is helping you to nourish your qi, and when the qi is strong the energy is strong. The energy needs to be combined with your spirit and with your understanding of the technique. The more you practice, the more you understand and the more accurate your energy is.

E.M. - So Jing, Qi and Shen (精氣神)(energy, essence and spirit) are connecting to Jin?

M.Y. - Everything is connected! If you have no Qi you have no energy, no spirit. If you have no essence you also have no energy. The three basic elements all help to support your internal strength and build up your internal energy. When we talk about strong energy, it also goes with your understanding of the techniques. This means that you have to understand the energy. If you don't understand it, all your strength is just stiff force.

E.M. - Master Yang, lately you have talked about how we should keep the tailbone in the center. How does that help the practice, and how is it done?

M.Y. - Okay, how can keeping the tailbone in the center help the practice? First, when we talk about practicing Taiji, one aspect of the principles is related to your body shape, how your body shape looks from the outside and how it's affecting your internal energy. But if you don't have a correct body shape, then you can't make your internal energy function correctly. We say Taijiquan is one kind of internal martial art, so for the internal to function correctly is very important, but it also depends on the external. This is why the shape of the body is very important during the practice. Here we will talk about keeping the tailbone in the center. This is one of the classic sayings, "li shen jung zhuang". (立身中正) Li is standing, shen is body, zhong is center, and zhuang is square (straight). This is the direct translation. So how can you know if you are li shen zhong zhuang or not? The tailbone is in the center, this is one part that is helping you, and when your tailbone is in the center basically your



hip, your crotch and your waist are in the center position. When you have of these centered, it helps your lower body balance and be stable. At the same time, when your tailbone is in the center it helps your qi to be in the center and your internal energy is centered.

If instead, your body is diagonal or leaning, that can affect your breathing, and we know the breathing is connected to your qi, and the qi is connected with your energy. When your body shape is not centered enough it will make your internal energy feel like it is not centered. Eventually, this will go from affecting you physically or externally, to affecting you internally. This means that you don't have the right posture to keep your balance stable. At the same time, there is more to understand about keeping the tailbone tucked in and in the center. When your tailbone is in the center and tucked in, it helps your qi to sink down. When your qi is sinking down it helps your dantian to be more stable. When the dantian is more stable, more balanced, then it helps your physical balance to be more stable.

You also ask about the tailbone, how can we do that? This part is hard to answer. We need to look at which movement and posture it is. Generally, when we talk about the tailbone being centered, we use your footwork, and between the front and back feet find the center. For example, when you are standing straight and doing nothing, your tailbone is in the center between the two feet. Sometimes the movements may be affecting things differently. For instance, when we do the bow stance, you should use the front toe direction and the back heel position and find the middle line. That is the center. When you are in an empty stance how can you find the tailbone in the center? Normally we say your tailbone is more close to the back heel position. That is how we center the tailbone in the movements. Different movements can have some differences, but generally it's like that.

E.M. - We have three basic methods for leading with the waist: horizontal, vertical and figure eight. Can you explain how these apply to our practice? When we are practicing the form, are we always going to be using one of these methods?

M.Y. - It's not only in the hand form; when you are neutralizing in push hands these are the three basic methods that you use.

E.M. - So using these methods is a way to keep the body more relaxed and centered?

M.Y. - These methods keep your waist as the control point, leading the movement, and allow you to move continually without stopping. They also help your energy to flow from storage to release without interruption. The more you practice, the more you get used to it. Each time you use your waist leading and turning, you can also feel your dantian coordinating with it together. It is the mind that leads the qi, and the qi that leads your body to move. Internal and external are combined together. In the end you are not really going to think about how your physical body moves, because your body is getting familiar with the techniques. From the mind, from your internal qi moving, your body moves. It's like driving a car. You really don't think about how you touch the brake, it's all about the mind, it's all about the internal.

E.M. - Please explain the second principle, the practice of pulling the back (拔背). How can we better understand this principle? Ba Bei. We translate it as pulling up the back, but that seems a little confusing.

M.Y. - One of the principles about the body shape is "sink the chest, pull the back". How should we understand this principle and how can it help the practice from an internal and external point of view? First, understand this principle. What this principle requests of you is that you slightly tuck in the chest. In English we translate it as sinking your chest, but actually it is not sinking down, but tucking it a little inward. When your chest is tucked in, your back will naturally be a little rounded. Here you also need to connect with the other two principles, which are: head pushing up and waist sinking down. When you have this tucking in and pushing up feeling, your back will be pulled and have a slightly rounded shape. The important point is don't overdo it. Rounded just a little bit! When you have this feeling, it is the correct body shape.

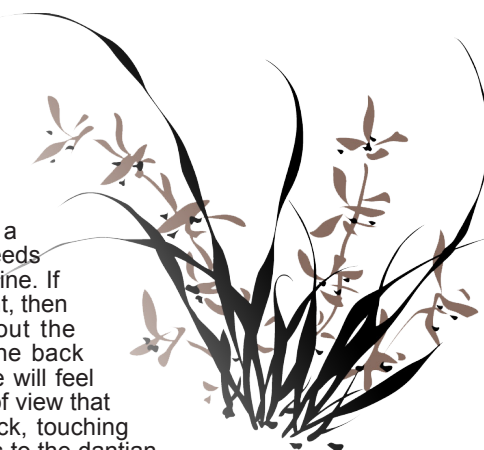
You asked how can this principle help you? Internally, when you have the chest tucked in, it will support your qi sinking down, and you can have qi sinking down to the dantian, and stomach breathing, deep breathing. When your qi can sink down, your root becomes more stable, more balanced. When the qi is sinking down the dantian can be full, when the dantian is full of qi, then the qi can reach to the whole body. When the main river has enough water, then the connected streams can naturally have enough water. We always want the dantian to feel full and charged, going in and out with the breathing. Energy cycles through the dantian, sending out and coming back and then sending back out from the dantian. This is the idea from the internal point of view.

From the external point of view, physically, we have a saying that your energy needs to be sent out from your spine. If the waist is the leading point, then the back needs to send out the energy. When you have the back slightly rounded, pulled, we will feel from the martial arts point of view that the qi is sticking to the back, touching the back. Your energy sinks to the dantian, from the dantian to the wei lu (尾闾), and then sticks to the back. Because of the back pulling, you will feel the qi stick to the back and this will help your energy from the back be sent out to wherever you want to send it. That is why sinking the chest and pulling the back is important.

E.M. - One thing I have noticed is that when someone is looking from the side, it doesn't really look like you are making your back very round.

M.Y. - No you can't overdo it. When you tuck in your chest you need to find a balance with your head pushing up. If your head leans down, then you will round the back too much. The waist is tucked down, the head pushing up and your back is a little bit rounded. Actually the back pulling is not just up or down, it also includes left and right pulling. The back is slightly rounded. In the class I've never said, "pull up the back". I've always said, "slightly round your back".

E.M. - Thank you, Master Yang, for taking the time to explain these things!



# Looking Through the Lens of Science at The Ins and Outs of Breathing

By Holly Sweeney-Hillman  
Bedminster / Montclair Center Director

## Introduction

The physiology and body mechanics of breathing are extremely complex and an entire book devoted to the subject would be justified in order to explore fully the fascinating topic of breathing. The purpose of this brief article is to inform the reader about the basic facts of inhalation and expiration, what happens physiologically and mechanically when we breathe in and breathe out. It is hoped that this information will be particularly useful for students and teachers of Tai Chi.

## Physiology of Breathing

The physiological essence of breathing is the diffusion of gases through biologic boundaries. The two boundaries essential for breathing are the air/blood boundary of the pulmonary membrane of the lungs and the tissue/blood boundary of the systemic capillaries that course throughout the body.<sup>1</sup>

The lungs have a tree-like structure: trachea branching out to bronchus to bronchiole to respiratory bronchiole to alveolar ducts and lastly to the alveolar sacs which appear like myriad blossoms on the upside down tree of the lungs. It is here, at the pulmonary membrane of the alveoli, that

a gas exchange between air and blood occurs: carbon dioxide diffuses out of the blood and into the lungs and oxygen diffuses out of the lungs into the blood.<sup>2</sup>

Systemic capillaries are like tiny roads that go everywhere in our bodies, around and through organs, muscles, skin and bones. It is at the boundaries between these capillaries and various types of tissues that carbon dioxide diffuses out of the tissues and into the blood, and oxygen diffuses out of the blood and into the tissues of the body.<sup>3</sup> **Figure 1** diagrams these two cycles of diffusion that comprise respiration.

The efficiency of these cycles of diffusion determines the rate of breathing, which is how often a person needs to breathe in and breathe out. Efficiency of diffusion is dictated by many complex physiological variables such as the overall health of the lungs, heart and capillaries; the amount of hemoglobin molecules in the blood, the pH of the blood, the proportion of gas molecules in the air, the humidity of the air, geographic altitude and so on and so forth. Which is to say, rate of breathing is governed by the wisdom and necessity of our bodies and should not be fooled with. Calming our minds sometimes naturally changes our breathing rate but it is ill-advised to impose a breath rate upon yourself or upon someone else.<sup>4</sup>

## Biomechanics of Breathing

This article will go into more detail about the body mechanics of breathing because that is what we feel when we breathe and what we can work with to improve the efficiency of our breathing.

## Movement of the Diaphragm

The diaphragm is widely considered to be the principal muscle of respiration but I prefer to consider it as the head of a very large committee of muscles involved in breathing. I would also say that the function of the diaphragm as a postural muscle equals its importance in respiration. As a postural muscle, the diaphragm unifies and stabilizes our structure through all planes of movement: top to bottom, side to side, front to back, and diagonal through diagonal.<sup>5</sup>

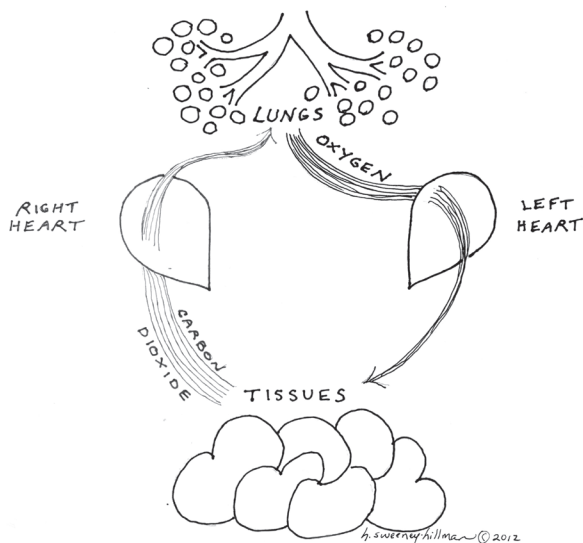
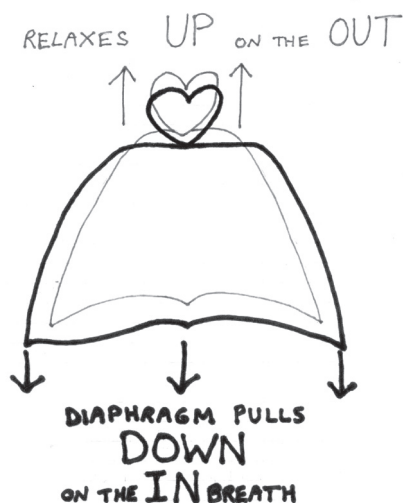


Figure 1

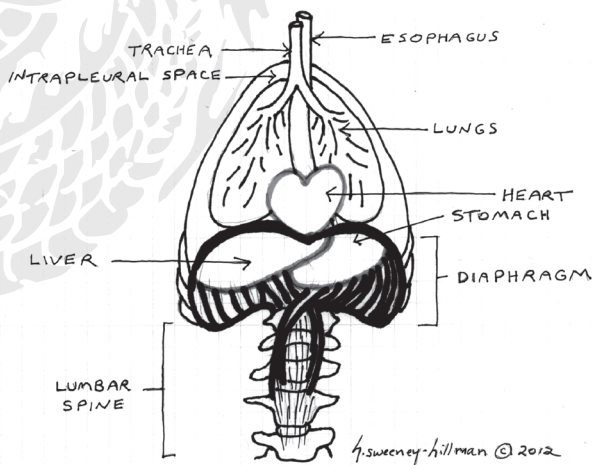


Looking at the structures involved in breathing, it is sometimes helpful to consider what is attached to what and what isn't attached to anything. There are no physical attachments between the lungs and the chest wall. Instead, the lungs are held tightly against this wall by a slight vacuum in the intrapleural space, the very thin space between the lungs and the wall. When the chest cavity enlarges by the downward movement of the diaphragm, the intrapleural vacuum increases causing the lungs to expand, which creates a slight vacuum in the lungs themselves and air is sucked inward. During expiration, the intra-alveolar pressure becomes slightly positive and air pushes outward.<sup>6</sup> **Figure 2** diagrams the movement of the diaphragm during the inhale/exhale cycle.



**Figure 2**

Unlike the lungs, the diaphragm is connected to many body structures and many structures are also connected to it. We could imagine the diaphragm as a two-domed roof on top of the large chamber of the abdominal cavity. The heart is located on top of the roof between the two domes



**Figure 3**

and is attached via the pericardium to the top surface of the diaphragm. The liver and stomach are connected to the underside of the diaphragm.<sup>7</sup> **Figure 3**

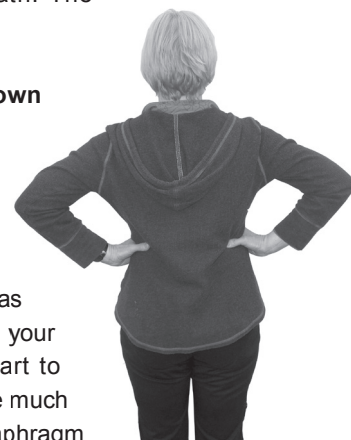
So, every time we breathe, the heart, stomach and liver go for a ride with our diaphragm. It may surprise you to learn that the TOTAL downward and upward movement of the diaphragm with each breath is about ½ inch (1.25 cm). This small range of movement makes sense when we know that the pericardium is attached to the diaphragm and would squeeze the heart if the movement of the diaphragm pulled it too far down. Advice to avoid heavy exertion after eating a big meal is warranted when we recognize that the diaphragm moves the stomach down and up with every breath.<sup>8</sup>

### Body Movement

It is perplexing to discover the small the range of movement of the diaphragm because we feel so much movement in our bodies when we breathe. In addition to the movement of the diaphragm, what else is happening? The answer is a complex choreography of muscles, ribs, and vertebral movements that occurs in a sequence of coordinated actions with each breath. The entire sequence has three phases.

#### Phase One: Movement Up and Down through the Vertical Axis

As stated previously, to let air come into our lungs, the diaphragm tightens and its two domes move downward, using the lumbar vertebrae and the lowest ribs as the origin of its contraction. If you put your hands on your lower ribs as you start to breathe in, **Figure 4**, they do not move much at first because they are what the diaphragm muscle fibers are holding onto to pull down, although in a fraction of a second you will feel these ribs expanding outward when the diaphragm drops fully down, pushing the abdominal contents downward. The lower ribs fan out and the pelvic floor expands slightly as the organs are pushed down.<sup>9</sup> **Figure 5** diagrams the downward and upward movement of the diaphragm through the vertical axis.



**Figure 4**

#### Phase Two: Movement Side to Side Through the Lateral Axis

Some of the thoracic ribs (#2 through #9) are lifted upwards by the intercostal muscles, assisted by the scalene muscles, in response to the diaphragm descending. Since these ribs are positioned draping



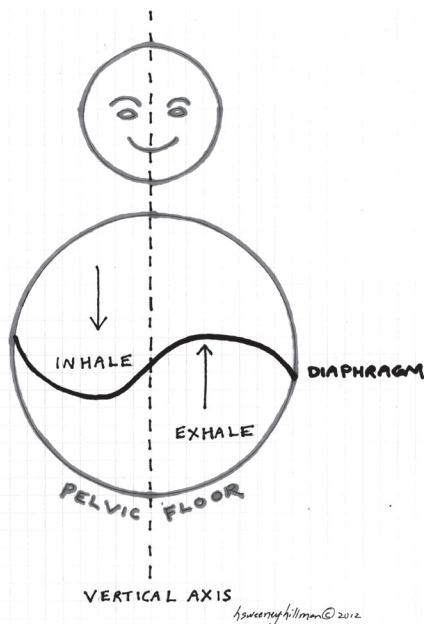


Figure 5

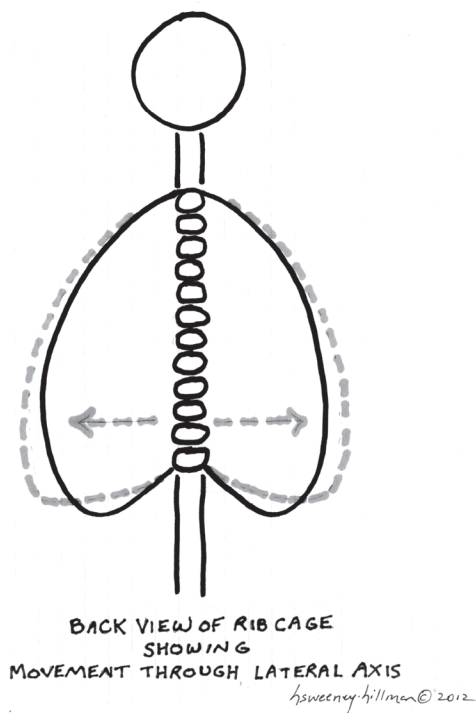


Figure 6

downwards from the spine to the front of the body, they are lifted up to a position more parallel to the floor. This is NOT to say that the whole rib cage lifts up, just certain ribs are rotated up. The structure of these ribs relative to the vertebral column produces one of the most elegant movements of breathing: the thoracic spine lengthens and the thoracic discs are opened, thus drawing fluid into

the disc material, hydrating and expanding it, **Figure 6**. Although this effect is part of our natural design, this breath movement does not happen in many people because their body posture and head position prevent it from happening. If posture and head position allow the free movement of the thoracic ribs, you literally feel the lengthening of the spine on the in breath by lightly placing your hand on top of a person's head. You will feel your hand gently being pushed upward on the in breath. If you put your other hand on the lower back of the person, you will feel the Phase One expansion of the abdomen move the lumbar vertebrae slightly outward on the in breath and relaxing slightly inward on the out breath, **Figure 7**. Again, poor posture and accompanying patterns of muscle tension can prevent this natural movement from occurring.<sup>10</sup>



Figure 7

### Phase Three: Movement Front to Back Through the Median Axis

If the in breath is deep and a person's posture and flexibility allow it, the sternum (breastbone) will move forward and away from the thoracic spine, increasing the volume of the chest from front to back on the in breath. This happens because the thoracic ribs, at the beginning of the in breath, are angled downward. As these ribs are lifted to an angle closer to 90 degrees with the vertebrae, the sternum is lifted with them, **Figure 8**.<sup>11</sup> Again, please take note; this is a different movement than lifting up the entire ribcage. Lifting the entire ribcage, which is accomplished by tensing the sternocleidomastoid muscles and arching the back, is not necessary or desirable for natural efficient breathing.

In summary, the movement sequence of the unencumbered inhale proceeds in three stages: 1) the

domes of the diaphragm drop down until they are engaged on the organs, the liver and stomach in particular, which causes the abdominal cavity to expand; 2) the thoracic ribs are lifted, widening the chest and lengthening the thoracic spine; 3) the sternum is pushed forward by the lifting of the ribs, thus deepening the chest.<sup>12</sup>

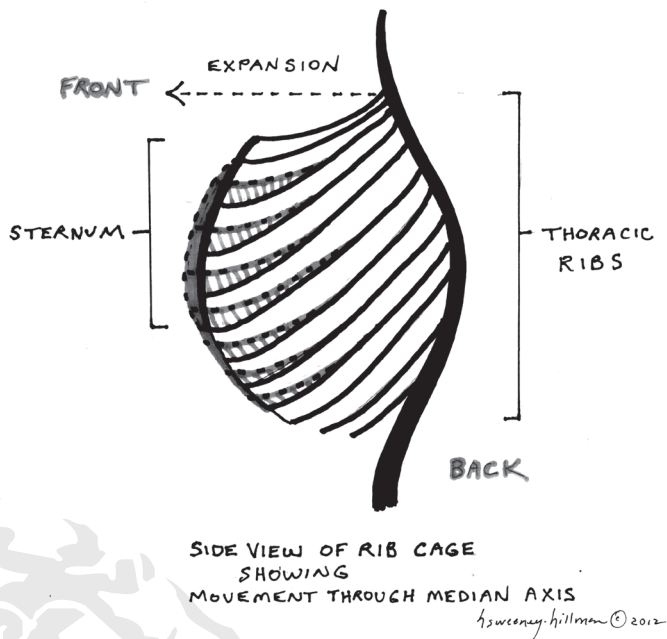


Figure 8

### Conclusion

Now that we know the basic ins and outs of breathing, we are better prepared to address the frequently asked question: “How can I improve my breathing?” The answer to this question is: improve your mental quiescence, your posture, and your overall body balance and flexibility. In other words, practice Zhan Zhuang.<sup>13</sup>

As described in more detail in the Winter 2012 issue of Journal of the International Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan Association, Zhan Zhuang practice gives you a way to improve your posture by following the ten essential principles of Yang Chengfu and applying a method to discover what is natural and what is forced when you work to improve your overall body and breathing mechanics.

Many people believe they can somehow breathe better by working directly with their breathing: they tell themselves breathe slower, breathe deeply, breathe into their bellies, breathe into their backs, etc. But this never works because breathing just happens the way our posture and the looseness of our body will let it happen. We can genuinely change our breathing only by changing our habits of mind and body.

### The elements that facilitate natural efficient breathing are:

- Head naturally upright, with the back of the neck extended and the front of the neck relaxed, i.e. the chin is not pushed forward. This helps the whole spine to lengthen so the ribs drape downward from the back of the body towards the front and the breastbone can be flexible.
- Diaphragm and pelvic floor should be aligned. If the lumbar spine is arched or too flexed, this alignment will not happen. As recommended in the practice of Zhan Zhuang, you want the lowest part of your back to be slightly rounded to align the pelvic floor under the diaphragm but not rounded too much. Anything that is done to extreme will create stiffness and prevent the natural movements of the breath in and the breath out.<sup>14</sup>
- Do not pick up the ribcage when you breathe in or collapse it down when you breathe out. Maintain balanced upright posture and you will feel the internal movements of the lowest ribs expanding outwards and the middle ribs rotating and lifting the spine slightly, making you feel a little taller on the in breath. Remember to let breathing out be as relaxed and deeply felt as breathing in. Don't hold anything in a position that is rigid and does not change.
- Keep your mind calm and gently focused on your breathing without trying to make anything happen; observe and experience each inhale and exhale without imposing anything.

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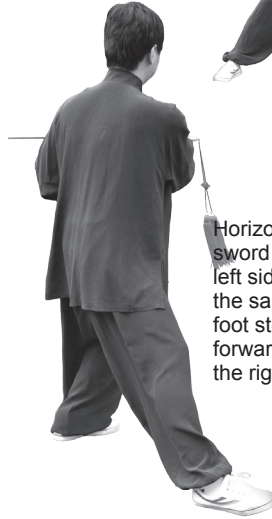




Transition from  
**Swallow skims the water.**

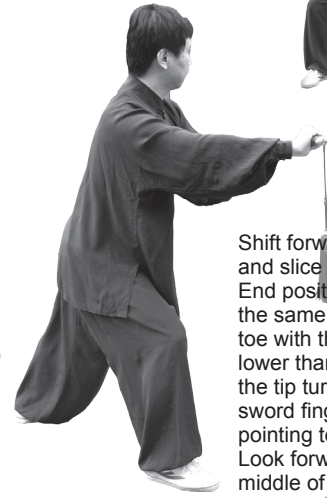


Shift forward turning the body to the left. Bring the right foot in and at the same time use the waist to circle the sword to the left.



Horizontally rotate the sword and set it by the left side of the body. At the same time, the right foot steps diagonally forward about 20-30° to the right.

**Block and Sweep, Right**



Shift forward, turn the waist and slice the sword to the right. End position: right arm about the same direction as the right toe with the sword slightly lower than the shoulder with the tip turned in slightly. The sword fingers follow the sword, pointing to the right forearm. Look forward through the middle of the blade.



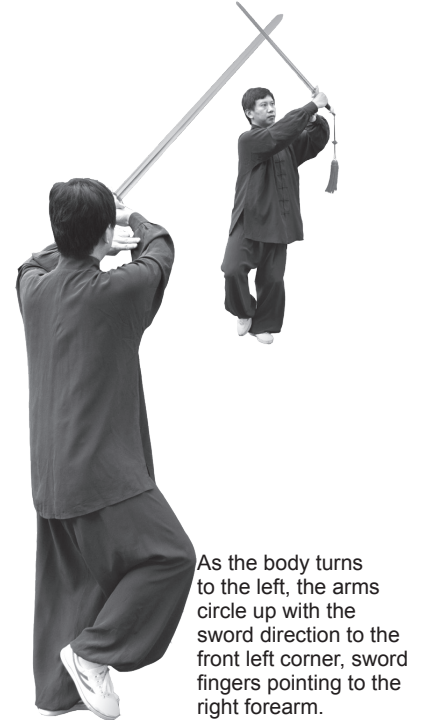
**Block and Sweep, Left**



Move forward and bend the left knee. Use the turn of the waist to slice the sword left. The sword fingers point to the right forearm. Look forward through the middle of the blade.



Shift forward turning the body to the left. The arms circle open at the same time the right foot is drawn in.



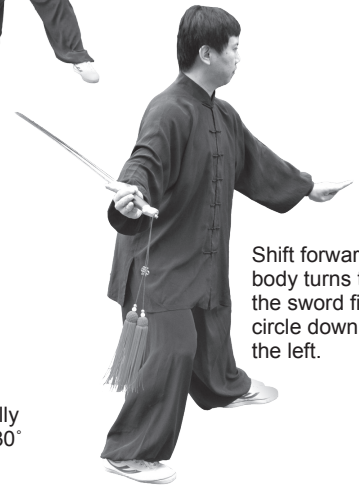
As the body turns to the left, the arms circle up with the sword direction to the front left corner, sword fingers pointing to the right forearm.



As the weight moves to the right leg, bring the left foot in and turn the body right. Horizontally circle sword to the right with the sword fingers following.



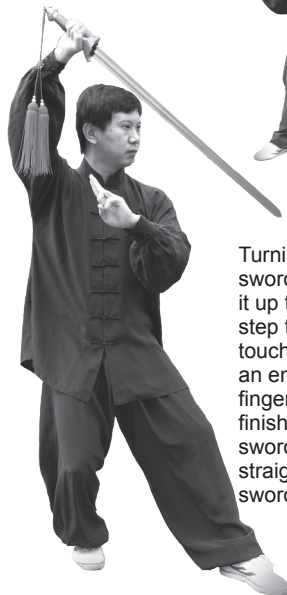
Horizontally rotate the sword. At the same time, the left foot steps diagonally forward about 20-30° to the left.



Shift forward. As the body turns to the left, the sword fingers circle down and out to the left.

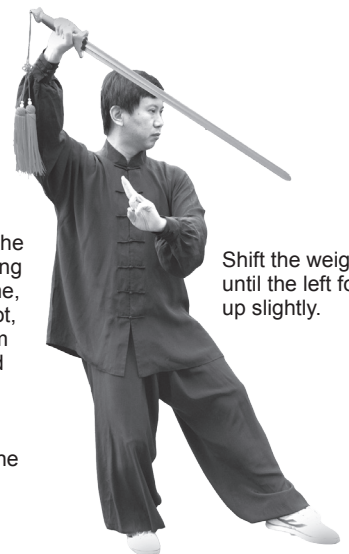


## Little Dipper



Turn and shift to the right, the sword circles from up to down. At the same time, step with the right foot turned out to 45°, toes pointing straight to the front.

Turning to the right, sweep the sword across the body circling it up to 45°. At the same time, step through with the left foot, touching with the ball to form an empty stance. The sword fingers follow the sword and finish sitting between the sword and right arm. Look straight ahead, in line with the sword.



Shift the weight back until the left foot picks up slightly.





Turn the body to the left, swinging the left leg and picking up the knee. The arms open, extended on the side of your body, slightly lower than the shoulders. The sword sits horizontally with the tip turned in slightly. At this time you are facing to the back right corner.



Sink down on the right leg while keeping centered and step out with the left foot to the corner. At the same time, rotate the palms with both arms rounded and set them by the hips. Keep your sword tip up.

## Swallow Returns to its Nest



Bending the knee, shift forward and thrust out the sword to the corner with both hands, tip reaching to knee level. Look forward to the sword tip.



Keep centered on the left leg while sinking down until your right foot touches the ground.

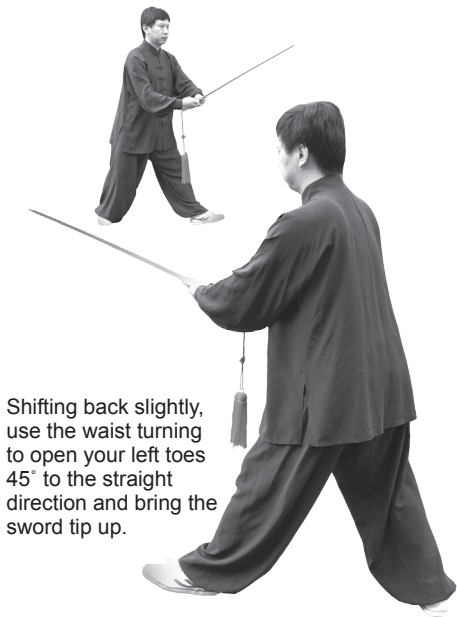


As the weight shifts forward, the sword follows and goes down.



Jumping up with the right leg, keep the body centered. Bring the sword up.





Shifting back slightly, use the waist turning to open your left toes 45° to the straight direction and bring the sword tip up.



Move forward and stand up on the left leg. Pick up the right leg with the knee pointing to the corner. Bring the sword up, curving the arms. Hold the sword like you are offering an incense stick. Head up, eyes looking forward.



The right foot goes straight down and then the leg swings out to the front.



Landing on the left foot, step out with the right foot to the corner. At the same time the left arm circles forward and up as the sword is drawn back to the hip. The left arm is in front of the body, above the shoulder. The right arm is set by the side of the hip. Keep your sword tip up.



Moving forward, bend the knee and thrust the sword downward to knee level. The left arm continues to ward-off up over the head. Keep the body square to the corner, eyes focused on sword tip.



**Agile Cat Seizes Mouse**



## Phoenix Lifts its Head



Press down the sword handle and bring the sword tip up to throat level, head up, eyes following the tip looking straight forward.



Shift back and level the sword.



The left foot steps out to the corner. Keep the feet on two sides of the center line.



Moving to the left, open the arms and turn the body to the back right corner direction. Keep the weight centered on the left leg.

# 太極劍



Use the turning waist to circle the sword from right to left. At the same time turn the right toe in 135° to the straight direction.



Rotate the sword horizontally with the palm facing down. Then shift the weight back to the right and sit the sword on the right side with the tip turned in.



Shifting the weight back, rotate the arms, sitting the sword at the side of the hip. Keep the sword tip up and at the same time bring the left foot in.



The left foot steps to the corner in a bow stance. Shift forward and thrust the sword out with both arms while looking at the direction of the sword tip.







Shift the weight back with the left arm circling down.



Follow the body turning to the right, circle the left arm to the right and turn the left toe in.



Move the weight back to the left leg, closing the arms in front of the body. At the same time, the right foot steps out to the diagonal direction (less than 45°).



Continue to shift back, circle the sword up to the back right corner direction and close the arms to the left. At the same time bring the right foot in.



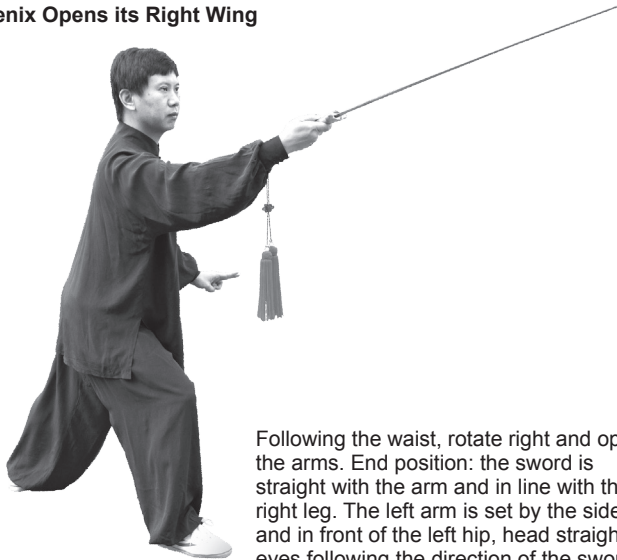
Continue circling the sword from back to down. At the same time, step out with the right foot and open the toe to the straight direction. Make sure your feet do not cross the center line in the corner direction.



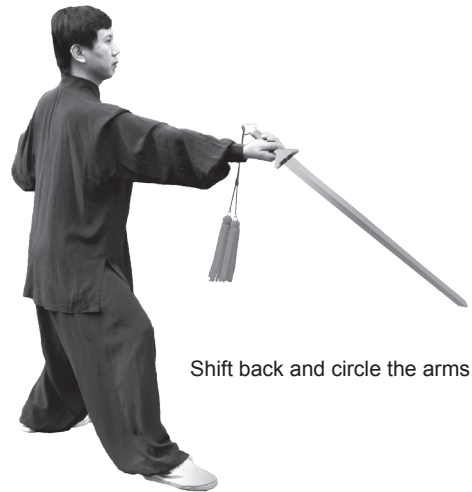
## Little Dipper

Follow the body turning to the right, the sword circles from down to up at 45°. At the same time, the left foot steps out, touching with the ball as a standard empty stance. The sword fingers circle, following the sword to sit between the sword and the right arm. Head straight, eyes looking in the direction of the sword.

## Phoenix Opens its Right Wing



Following the waist, rotate right and open the arms. End position: the sword is straight with the arm and in line with the right leg. The left arm is set by the side and in front of the left hip, head straight, eyes following the direction of the sword.



Shift back and circle the arms open.



The left foot steps back. Make sure the footwork position is on two sides of the center line in the straight direction.



Shift the weight back. The sword follows the turning waist, pressing down. Circle down and open the left arm. Pivot on the right heel, turning the toe straight.

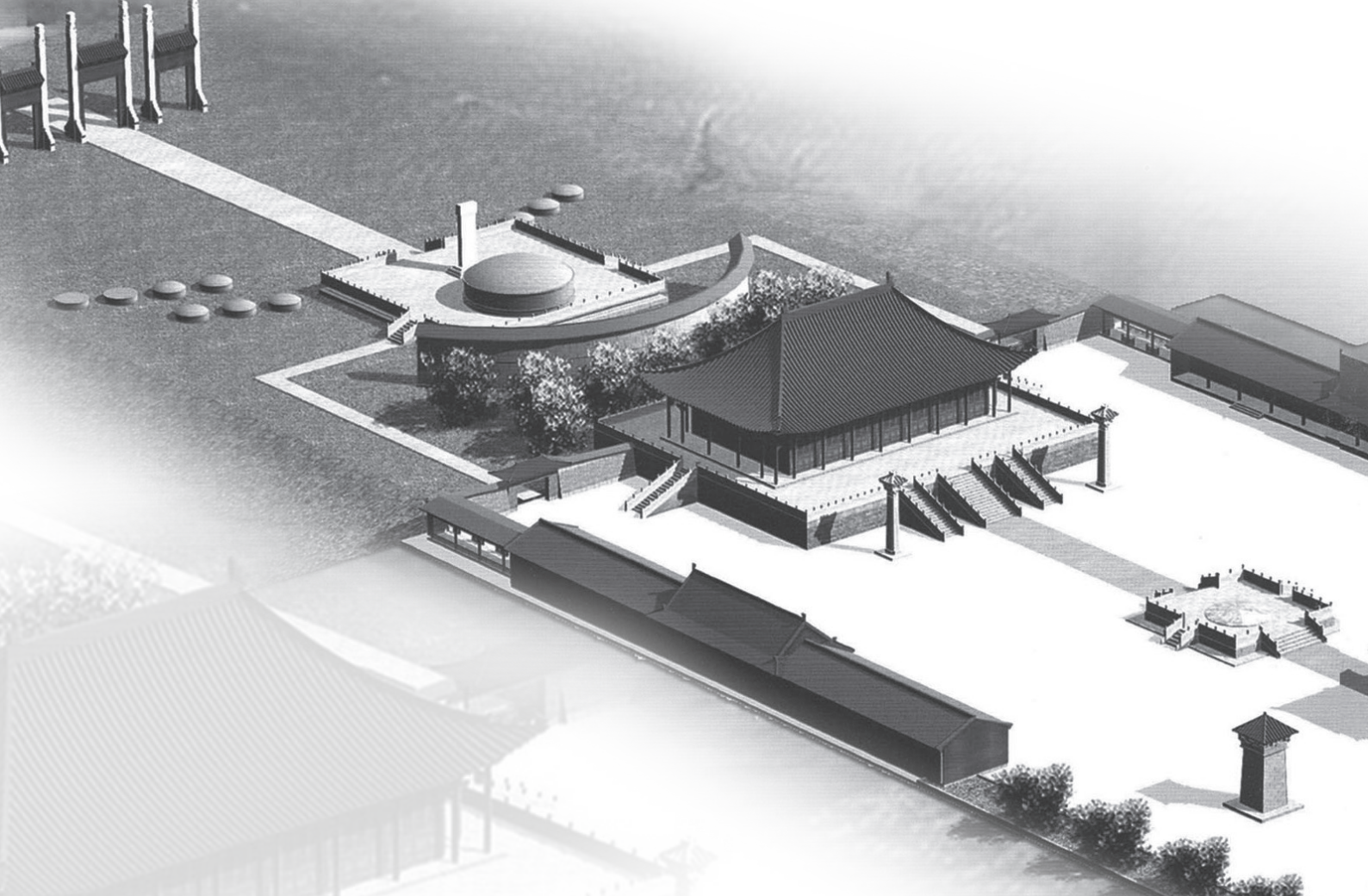


Change the right foot from heel to ball touch empty stance. Keep sinking the chest and open the arms evenly on each side. Head up, eyes looking straight forward.

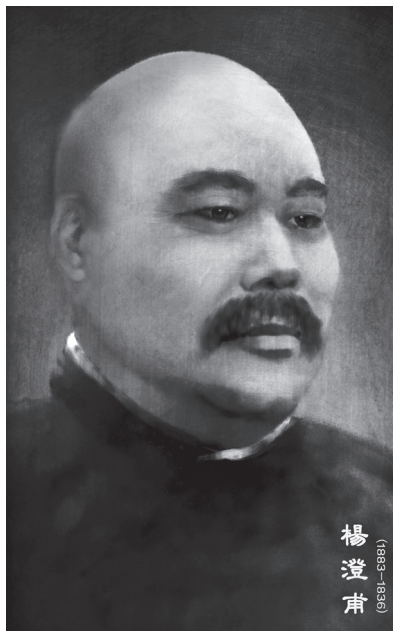
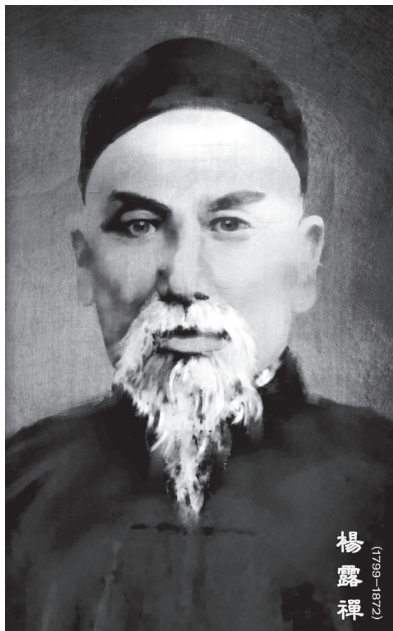
## Phoenix Opens its Left Wing







# YANG FAMILY TAI CHI CHUAN MEMORIAL AND CULTURAL CENTER





For over 200 years, Grand Master Yang Luchan and his descendants have taught Tai Chi Chuan as their livelihood. It is because of their achievements that Tai Chi Chuan rose from obscurity and has spread far and wide. Yang Luchan was buried in Yanmezhaicun. Currently, ten members from four generations of grand masters are buried next to Yang Luchan.

After China opened to the West, the popularity of Tai Chi Chuan increased greatly. Guangfu town gave birth to the Wu and Yang styles, quickly making it a fertile ground for the development of Tai Chi Chuan. Because of the profound influence and authority that the Yang family has earned, every year thousands of practitioners come to the Yang family tomb to visit the birthplace of this art and pay their respects to Yang Luchan and his descendants.

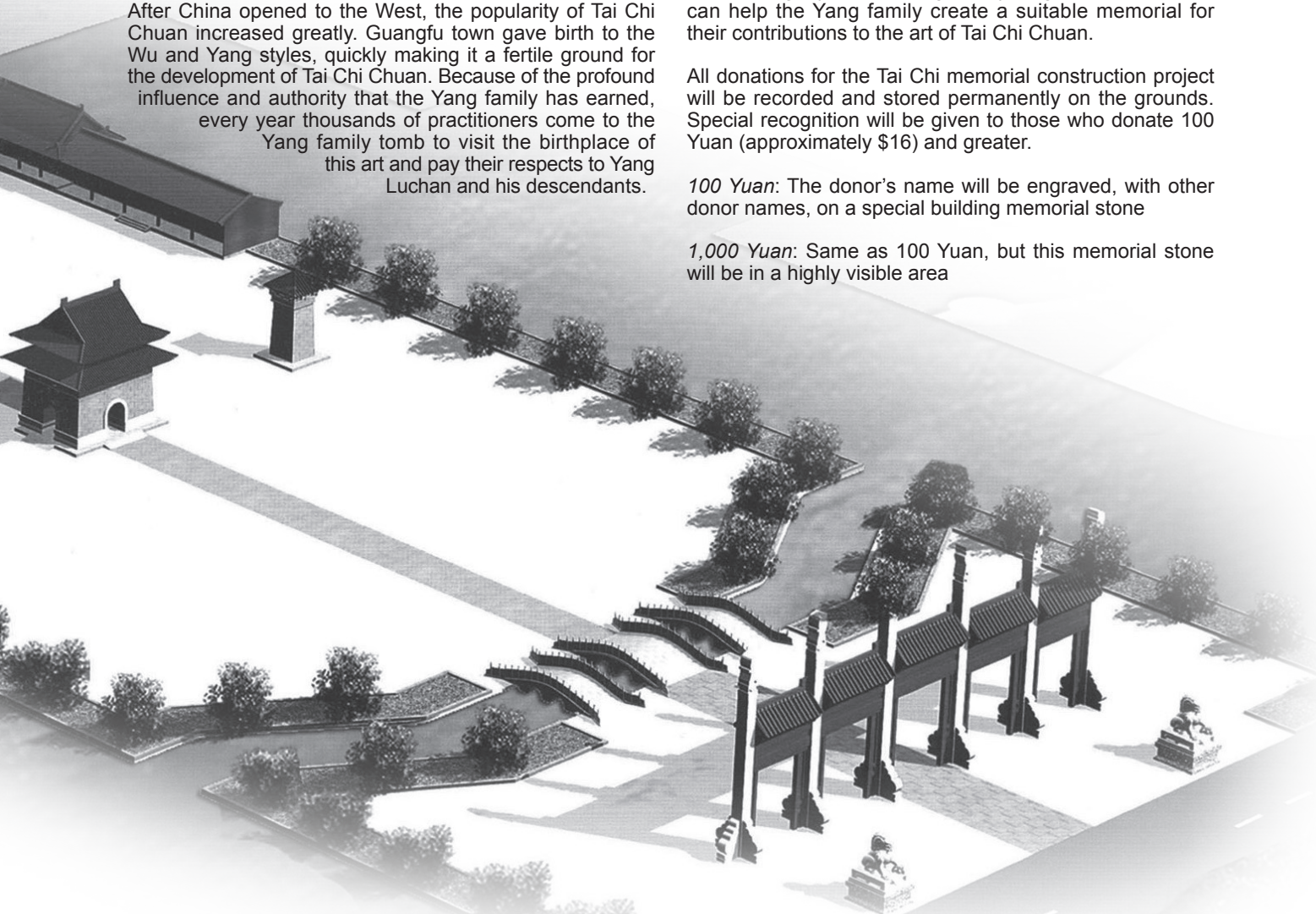
Chi practitioners worldwide to meet, learn and exchange knowledge for generations to come.

Contributions to the building of this cultural heritage site are welcomed and encouraged. This is a chance for donors to be a part of a common goal to promote Tai Chi and the legacy of the Yang family. Together, supporters can help the Yang family create a suitable memorial for their contributions to the art of Tai Chi Chuan.

All donations for the Tai Chi memorial construction project will be recorded and stored permanently on the grounds. Special recognition will be given to those who donate 100 Yuan (approximately \$16) and greater.

*100 Yuan:* The donor's name will be engraved, with other donor names, on a special building memorial stone

*1,000 Yuan:* Same as 100 Yuan, but this memorial stone will be in a highly visible area



In recent years, rapid growth has encroached upon the Yang family tombs. Now the space is crowded with homes and streets. A place once known for its calm and peace has become an unsuitable memorial for a family that has provided people with so much. It has fallen on the shoulders of the current generation to save the family tombs by relocating them to a different plot of land. The officials of Yongnian have given generously to the initial funding for the construction of the new tombs on 16 acres of park space.

The grounds will include a memorial hall and cultural center along with a large courtyard for displays and other activities. Extensive waterways will surround the memorial and visitors can rent boats to paddle through the park. This memorial park will honor all generations of the Tai Chi Chuan masters of the Yang family. Its ultimate goal is to help spread Tai Chi culture and be a positive influence that benefits humanity. It will also be a common place for Tai

*10,000 Yuan:* The donor's name will be engraved on an individual memorial stone, along with a 200-word biography

*20,000 Yuan:* Same as 10,000 Yuan, but with a 500-word biography

*50,000 Yuan:* Same as 20,000 Yuan, but the memorial stone will be placed in a highly visible area

Those who make contributions of *1,000 Yuan* or more will receive a certificate of appreciation and lifetime free admission to the memorial park.

Donations may be sent to:

International Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan Association  
P.O. Box 786  
Bothell, WA 98041 USA





# Searching for the Internal, Part 2

*"In stillness be like a great mountain; in movement like a mighty river."*<sup>1</sup>

*By Ed Boates*

## **Introduction by Dave Barrett**

In our last issue, Ed Boates introduced a series of images that he has developed over the years and uses to deepen his practice of Taijiquan. Based on his extensive readings, he has incorporated quotations from many sources that have nourished his daily practice. In this article he focuses on the topic of movement, function and mental process.

A retired physical education teacher, Ed has devoted himself to exploring the intersection between daily practice, textual study and self-cultivation. His approach is holistic, inclusive and exhaustive. He is one of the most devoted, creative and tireless taiji practitioners I have ever met. In sharing these insights it is our hope to inspire other students to integrate practice and theory in a creative, imaginative way that gives depth and breadth to their life long practice of Taijiquan.

*Specials thanks to Ed's student, Jason Ward, who has transcribed these articles from his hand written manuscripts.*

## **The Functional Images**

### **1. Swimming in the Air**

*"To liken air to water aids the imagination. It is like water in the sense that if one pretends to swim while out of water his movements automatically conform to the principles of Tai Chi. By this practice the novice will feel the air to be heavy in the sense that he feels the water to be heavy. As you make progress the air will not only feel heavier than water, it will feel like iron."*<sup>2</sup>

*Cheng Man-ch'ing*

*"A more advanced tenet of his (T.T. Liang's) teaching which he held was to actively imagine the resistance of the air, first to the movements of the arms ('swimming in the air') then later to the movements of the legs and torso as well. Ultimately he said this creates a kind of 'force field' around the body as well as the tremendous intrinsic energy and hyper-awareness."*<sup>3</sup>

*Don Ethan Miller*

During the early years of my Tai Chi training, I was somewhat mystified by the concept of "effortless effort" in the performance of the form, because many of my previous athletic pursuits had required arduous effort. The concept implied that some effort was required to perform

the movements. The question pondered was, "How much effort?" I queried several teachers about this question. The best answer I received was from Sam Masich: "Just use the minimum effort necessary to perform each posture." If at that time I had been aware of and applied the functional image of "swimming in the air", I would have been able to have my movements automatically conform to the principles of Tai Chi.

To get a feel for this functional image, imagine that you are totally immersed in water standing on the bottom of a swimming pool. Then proceed to practice the movements of your Tai Chi form. Doing the movements in that environment you would feel the tangible resistance provided by the water. The challenge is to duplicate that same feeling while moving across the ground and through the air.

As T.T. Liang wisely suggested this feeling image is best approached as a two-stage process. First of all, endeavour to be sensitive to the feeling of the air on the arms, and then graduate to feeling the air on the torso and the legs. Eventually you want to feel that your entire whole body is "swimming in the air" as it moves in all directions.

### **2. The Wheel**

*"As you turn your body you should keep your attention on your core channel and use it as the axis of your turn. However you should also focus part of your attention on your lower tantien, which is on this core channel, so that it is also the center of your turn. It is important that you move and turn equally from both places, as this results in the largest output of energy to all the systems of the body."*<sup>4</sup>

*Bruce Frantzis*

*"It's useful to center your attention in the mid-section to increase your sense of body presence. This gives body awareness a central location, like the hub in a wheel. And like the wheel – which rotates around the hub – directing your body's actions from the center is more effective and powerful than one might think."*<sup>5</sup>

*Peter Ralston*

Master Yang Zhenduo in his teaching has emphatically stated that "of the Ten Essentials the waist requirement is the most important. It places emphasis on having a loose waist and loose hips".<sup>6</sup> The pivotal importance of the waist

is further emphasized in his book *Yang Style Taijiquan* by frequent repetition of the instructional phrase, “Following the lead of the waist”. The correct use of the waist plays a crucial role in Yang Chengfu’s essential principles that require both integration of the upper and lower body and continuity without interruption.

Imagine the waist as a horizontal wheel, the circumference of which is the *dài mài* (帶脈) or belt/girdle meridian. The rotational kinetics of Tai Chi could be imagined as energy spokes emanating from the hub which is the *dāntián* (丹田) to the periphery of the wheel. In sum then, we have the following imagery: The central channel as the axle, the *dāntián* as the hub and the waist as the wheel.

All of the energetic and kinetic movements of Tai Chi are motivated by mental intent and given initial impetus by the hub and the axle working in tandem, and ultimately expressed by the wheel. For each movement, I endeavour to feel the axle and the hub move in unison. This occurs just a split-second before the activation of the wheel, which leads the movement of the rest of the body. As one postural movement reaches completion the axle and the hub are already preparing for the wheel to lead the next movement.

### 3. The Gravity Pull

*“Letting yourself completely relax through surrendering the weight of your body to the pull of gravity is like dropping a large and substantial stone into a calm and clear pond. The ensuing splash, like a powerful jolt to the system, initiates a profound energetic explosion deep within the core of the body.”*<sup>7</sup>

Will Johnson

*“Taijiquan is an art with strength concealed in the gentle movements, like an iron hand in a velvet glove or a needle concealed in cotton.”*<sup>8</sup>

Yang Cheng-Fu

The goal of dedicated practice is the achievement of structural integrity, physical alignment and the feeling of rootedness. These desirable attributes are maintained and enhanced during movements by feeling the pull of gravity. The first feeling of the gravity pull should be felt constantly between *dāntián* and the anchor and manifests as the awareness of a strong downward pull at the perineum point *huì yīn* (會陰) at the pelvic floor. Another way to feel the gravity pull is accomplished by feeling the underside of the body frame as heavy. Imagine that all the bones of the body – especially the arms and legs – are composed of iron.

For example, during the opening movement of the Yang Style form, imagine the arms – as they lift up and lower down to be heavy like iron and therefore magnetically attracted to the ground. This awareness of heaviness can

be realized in all movements of the arms and legs. By weighting the underside of the frame one can experience greater relaxation and stability during practice.

### 4. The Balloon

*“How is the balloon related to Tai Chi? When you practice Tai Chi, you have to feel like your body is the balloon. Just as the air fills out the inside of the balloon, it is qi that fills the inside of your body, expanding it so that you feel the fullness. This fullness unifies the body.”*<sup>9</sup>

William Ting

One should imagine that the whole body has the innate potential to spherically shrink and expand in size like a balloon. This sensation comes from the extending and loosening process, and the opening and closing dynamics of the motions. Master Yang Zhenduo during his Tai Chi Chuan seminars constantly encouraged us to practice relaxing (*fang song*) into all our postures. He suggested that dedicated practice of the *fang song* training method would eventually result in the transmutation of external muscular strength into internal power.

To cultivate *fang song*, imagine that your entire connective tissue system is a vast network of elastic bands. Then seek to maintain a delicate balance between the loosening and extending of those elastic tissues. If a posture is loose but not extended it will appear collapsed, and if it is extended but not loose it will be stiff. The yin-yang pulsing process of closing and opening the joints and cavities must be achieved by mind intent, rather than muscular effort. The synovial fluid that cushions the joints is compressed and expanded.





When you perform the yin movements of the form, imagine all your joints and cavities closing as you absorb qi into your central channel and dāntián. During the yang movements of the form, imagine opening all your joints and cavities, as the qi expands from the central channel and filling your whole body like the inflating of a balloon

### 5. The Mirror

*“Let your body be the infinite. Follow the path of not possessing. Be all heaven has given. Don’t look for gain, be empty that’s all. The one who’s gotten there uses the heart and mind like a mirror, and doesn’t go to see things off, nor go out to welcome them. Such a one responds, but doesn’t treasure, thus conquers things while remaining uninjured”.*<sup>10</sup>

Chuang Tzu

*“Amid the daily activity of the psyche, can you embrace the one and not depart from it? When concentrating your vital breath until it is at its softest, can you be like a child? Can you sweep clean your profound mirror so you are able to have no flaws in it?”*<sup>11</sup>

Lao Tzu

*“Meditation in activity is a hundred, a thousand, a million times superior to meditation in repose. The stillness in stillness is not the real stillness; only when there is stillness in movement does the universal rhythm manifest.”*<sup>12</sup>

A Taoist Proverb

The last of Yang Chengfu’s Ten Essential Principles is usually translated as tranquility or stillness in movement. Therefore it seemed appropriate that the final functional image should involve the cultivation of stillness. For years I have been absolutely enthralled and totally fascinated by what Bruce Frantzis refers to as the “Taoist Exercise Meditation Continuum”. The Taoist concepts of Pǔ (樸): the un-carved block, and Wú Wéi (無為): non-doing, continue to intrigue me and motivate me to practice.

The Taoist spiritual tradition describes the meditative journey in five phases: Vitality-Energy-Spirit-Emptiness-Way. The first three are the renowned three treasures of Taoist practice. The diligent cultivation of the three treasures leads the practitioner to the discovery of emptiness and possibly the realization of the Tao – The Supreme Ultimate and Absolute Mystery of Infinity.

The primordial or original mind of the Tao is compared in the Taoist literature to a crystal-clear mirror that has the innate capacity to impartially reflect whatever appears before it. The content of the reflections do not damage or change the pristine nature and purity of the mirror. The ordinary human mind by contrast is like a dirty mirror. It is smudged and besmirched with physical tension, emotional conflict and conditioned thought. The process whereby the

Taoist practitioner seeks to restore the original mind of Tao is called meditation or “polishing the mirror”.

In sum then, “Searching for the Internal” involves the two-fold cultivation and refinement of both energy and consciousness. I would like to express my deep sense of gratitude to all of the teachers I have quoted. Their insights have deepened my understanding of the marvellous art of Tai Chi Chuan.

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# Stealing Boxing

By Gong Baiyu

## Chapter 3

*Seeing an injustice on the road  
Trying to mediate involves a fight*

After throwing him down, Master Mu Hongfang rushed to help Luchan stand up. "What happened? I'm so sorry. Are you hurt anywhere?" The practice square was filled with soft sand and Luchan had supported himself with his left hand when he fell down, luckily he didn't bruise his face. Luchan stood up, ashamed, his face turning purple. He felt so embarrassed; he forced himself to smile and said to Mu Hongfang, "Mu Laoshi, thank you for being nice to me. Now you should really believe that I have no gongfu. If you want to beat me up, it will be very easy— it won't be hard.....I.....I.....I actually don't know anything."

Mu Hongfang smiled coldly. "Xiao Xiong Di (little brother), you have been practicing gongfu. You say you have never practiced? Practice or no practice, you know yourself. If I, myself, didn't have two eyes I would definitely believe you." With a sly laugh he turned around and said to his students, "What say you? Your teacher's not blind, right?" Laughing louder now, "Look at him, his age is so young, but his practice is not bad. If I were not your teacher, and instead one of you, I would have definitely been thrown here."

Yang Luchan now understood he was using him to show off his skill so his students would admire him. He felt even more embarrassed and ashamed. At that moment, he was feared he might lose control and suddenly turn hostile. He swallowed his anger and with his two hands, bowed and saluted to Mu Hongfang and said, "Mu Laoshi, I disturbed you for a long time and delayed the brothers' training. Here, I say goodbye to you, I will see you tomorrow."

Mu Hongfang smiled broadly. "Xiao Xiong Di! Are you really mad at me? Didn't I say before, you and I were exchanging our skills – it's not that you were challenging me. Who wins, who loses, we should not care very much. Xiao Xiong Di, why are you so serious now?"

"Mu Laoshi, don't trouble yourself. I need to go rest now. Tomorrow, I need to continue my travels."

"Xiao Xiong Di. Do you really wish to go study under the tai chi gate?"

At this moment Yang Luchan couldn't restrain himself. He shot back, "ABSOLUTELY! My natural instinct is that I like this work. If I learn but cannot refine my skills I will feel grief and suffer from being bullied. I'm determined to find a famous teacher and make my gongfu a success so I can avoid being despised by people! This is the sole purpose of my travels!" He turned quickly to leave.

"Good! You really do have aspirations, Xiao Xiong Di. You are a straight person. If you have any wishes, you should speak out. Please do not be too sensitive. I think the martial arts have many gates. Any kind of gongfu, if you practice purely, you will be successful and become famous. Why should you formally pursue only tai chi chuan and no other styles? I'm afraid, Xiao Xiong Di, you will get there, find no fertile ground and be rejected in the end. This Master Chen has a very strange personality – it's common knowledge. No one can talk to him and make him hear anything. His tai chi chuan has received a good deal of fame and prestige but he barely has any students. In all these years, he only has five or six disciples. Many people come from afar attracted by his prestige but everyone leaves disappointed and returns home with a sour face. He simply doesn't want to receive students. Even if he does, in two or three years he only teaches one or two techniques. Concerning Master Chen, in our local gongfu community, voices of discontent are everywhere, because he rejects everyone. Xiao Xiong Di Yang, it's not that I'm trying to destroy your happiness, it's just I'm afraid that if you go there you will plow on the dead air and get rejected by him. Why have you decided to go to this most unreasonable person?"

Luchan at this moment considered Mu Laoshi to be his enemy, so even though what he said might be true he wasn't going to listen to him. He answered falsely, "I will think deeply about it. At this moment I cannot make a decision." He still simmered with anger and embarrassment. He cut off the conversation abruptly, bowed slightly, "Talk to you again tomorrow." With those words, not allowing Mu Hongfang to answer, he turned on his heel and walked away. Mu Hongfang feeling very proud of himself, pretended to be very humble, smiled saying,



"Don't go away – we can talk more - are you tired? We'll see each other tomorrow. I will bid farewell to you now." Luchan half-turned and said over his shoulder, "You flatter me, I don't deserve it." He unlatched the gate, angry and resentful, walked out of the yard and back to his room. Closing his door, he lay on the bed feeling unwell and humiliated. His thoughts were racing. "If I want exceptional gongfu I must meet a famous teacher and put hard work on it otherwise I should shut my mouth, and never mention these two words: martial arts. In the Jianghu\* world unpleasantness is everywhere. Even if I



treat people sincerely they pay me back with cunning and deceitfulness. This Mu Laoshi is playing me maliciously. This is a good lesson. I now understand the proverb – when you meet people give them only three sentences, not your whole heart. For a while, his talk about long fist and the differences between Northern and Southern confused me. It was all a pack of lies. I got myself into this suffering. From now on, I have to remember this." He kept thinking until after midnight then he finally fell asleep. At sunrise, he got up and didn't want to see Master Mu (who also owned the hotel) again so he called for servants to bring pitchers of water, paid them and checked out. He asked directions to Chen Village - from there it was about 60 li (roughly 30 kilometers). He hired a cart and was on his way to Chen Village.

Riding away, Luchan felt annoyed. When the driver spoke to him, sometimes he answered, sometimes he didn't. He inquired about the Chen family's martial arts influence in the local area. He traveled on and on and finally drew near Chen Village in the late afternoon. From a distance, this Chen Village looked to be quite a busy town. The driver told him, "You are arriving on a big market day. Around this area, more than forty villages come here to trade." He asked Yang Luchan, "Do you came here to visit your friends and relatives or just passing through. If you have nowhere to go, at the entrance to the village is a big hotel. If you miss this hotel then there will be no others as good."

Luchan thought for a while, "It's not too late in the day,

just my first time being here. I need a little rest from my travelling to get to know the local area and get some information about Master Chen's conduct. Then I will go to visit and not be inappropriate. I don't want to be inappropriate again." Making a decision he spoke to the driver, "I'm here to visit friends. I have a place to go but I'm afraid if I arrive suddenly then it won't be convenient. If the hotel is clean I will stay there first." The driver put his thumb up, "Sure! Sanyi Hotel is really clean. Mostly business people stay there. Go there and you will surely be comfortable." How could Luchan know the driver was just a shill for the hotel and he had just made 20 daqian for liquor money? Arriving at the hotel Luchan thought, "Where is the big hotel? Clearly this is just an ordinary hotel – a very small hotel. I'll stay here just one or two nights; it doesn't really matter to me if the hotel is big or small. When I meet Chen Laoshi, I'll present my Disciple Application, then I will stay in my teacher's home."

Welcomed by the hotel, he found a clean room and rested. At night he asked the clerk about Master Chen. The story he told was much the same as what Master Liu and Mu Hongfang had said. Luchan asked this and asked that. Half believing and half doubting what he heard he then rested early. The next day he awoke in the early morning, washed and dressed, then asked directions to Master Chen's home. He prepared all his gifts and wrapped them then set out.

Heading straight to the south, not very far, he saw that this street was really busy. People passing by Luchan didn't recognize his face - most of them turned their heads back to look at him. Even though Chen Village is a big town, it is not on a thoroughfare and not accustomed to outsiders. Down on the south side there is a horizontal East Street, turning onto that street then back to the north, he found a country house with a tiger sitting at the gateway and behind it an exquisite compound. Luchan arrived in front of the gate, looked inside and saw two workers talking with each other. He felt that this must be Chen's house from what the hotel clerks told him. He walked up the stairs and said, "Please, is this Chen's home?"

The older of the two stood up. "Correct! This is Chen's home. Who do you want to see?"

"My family name is Yang. My name is Yang Luchan. I come from Zhili, Guangpingfu. I am especially here to visit Master Chen. Is Master Chen at home?"

Upon saying this he put down all his gifts and from his chest pocket he took out a card, bowed and stretching out both arms passed the card to the laborer, who took the card, looked at it and could not read it. "My master is at home now."



The younger worker had a cold tight smile. "Old Huang, not this again? Did you hear what he was asking?" Luchan answered quickly, "Lao Xiong (older brother), I'm troubling you to please tell him I am here!"

Old Huang pinched the card and walked into the compound. In just a short while he came back red faced, still pinching the red card. "My master is not home! Here is your card."

"When did Chen Laoshi go out?"



"Who knows? He leaves and doesn't let me know, how would I know?"

"When will he be back?"

Old Huang gave the card back to Luchan. "I don't know, I don't know. If you want something, leave a message." Saying this he sat on the bench, stuffed tobacco into the top of his pipe and started to light it up and smoke.

Luchan looked at his expression and felt downcast. If he weren't at home, he would just have to come back again. Then he smiled. "I don't have anything urgent; I just admire his reputation and made a special trip so I could visit with him. Excuse me for disturbing you; please take my card to him. I have some native produce from my hometown; it's a gesture of my filial respect for Master Chen. Excuse me, I'll be back." Old Huang looked up with disdain. "Sir, you are so annoying! Didn't I tell you, he's not at home. Who can make decisions for him? You'd better take the gifts back. My master doesn't know you."

Luchan's face turned red. "If you can't accept a gift, it's not a problem." The young worker came closer and explained, "Sir, please, if you don't mind. Let me tell you that this man has a strict temper. If we even do a little something wrong, he will not be pleased. I hear from what you are saying

that you do not know him. Those gifts, please take them back until you can meet our master, then you can give them to him yourself. We are just workers, how can we accept those gifts for him?"

Luchan thought it over, saw the truth and thought to himself that he could just bring them back tomorrow. Holding out his card, "Just this name card, excuse me for bothering you." The younger man shook his head, "Take it back and bring it tomorrow. Please, don't be mad at me."

Yang Luchan came this far only to turn around and go back to his hotel. "Am I really that unlucky? He must not want to see me. Even if he doesn't want to accept a disciple, why won't he even meet me? How can he know my reason for coming here?" Feeling listless and dispirited, he went to the clerk to ask for more information about Chen Xingping. But at that moment, the hotel was very busy – the clerk had no time to talk. After lunchtime, Luchan was able to tell the clerk that Chen Qingping was not at home and couldn't accept his gift. The clerk told Luchan this story. "Master Chen is not an easy man to approach. In our area most everyone is likely to practice some gong fu, because there are many bandits in this area. Every village has a guard; every village has a few places to practice martial arts. Master Chen travelled around for two decades, then he came back home and began to develop this tai chi chuan. No one wants to open up a practice square. Everyone thought to study with the Master. Anyone who tried to learn from him hit a wall: two words, "no teaching." Some, without fear, relying on their martial arts skill would get to the gate and want to challenge him. It never turned out well for any of them. He is full of arrogance because he really has exceptional abilities. Gradually, no one would come here to challenge him anymore. From that time on there were no more bandit cases. This is enough to prove his prestige. These Jianghu bandits don't want to make trouble here. Other martial arts stylists don't want anything to do with him. He is that eccentric!"

Luchan asks, "Are you sure? He doesn't teach even one disciple?"

"Not really. He has some students, but as far as I know, that is all. He sees who pleases his eyes then accepts that person. Even if you find him, he will definitely not accept you." Luchan frowned.

"Sir, you should stay here a few more days. Our area here has a market day on any date that ends with 3, 6, or 9 and tomorrow is the 9th. It will be very crowded, you can have a look around." Yang Luchan was dejected.

The next day as the dawn was brightening, noise began to rise from the street – horses and carts passing by. Luchan



listens and gets up. The servant brings in the water. After breakfast, feeling disconsolate, he leaves his room and looking out the hotel's front door sees that it is very lively. The street is full of booths selling farmers tools, food, fruits and various sundry items. Luchan looks around a bit, turns around and goes back in. Thinking things over, he changes his clothes and taking up the gifts and cards sets out for Chen's home again.

The street is jammed with booths and people passing by. There are still more arriving with carts piled high and the drivers cry out to the crowd to move aside in the street. The street is narrow and if one is not careful, it is easy to bump into people and the booths. "Excuse me, make way, excuse me", can be heard everywhere. Luchan moves carefully with his gifts. A bit farther on, the road becomes even narrower. Both sides are lined with booths selling produce from the mountains, chinaware and local metal products.

Among the crowd on the teeming street is a little donkey that has copper bells on it's bridle. Luchan hears the ting, ting, ting of the bells and turns back to see the rider. It's a young man man of twenty, whose freshly shaved pate shows the blue skin on his head, wearing a long braided queue wrapped around his neck. He has a clean white face, black eyebrows and handsome eyes. He is wearing purple flowered cotton clothing, white socks and blue colored shoes. His left hand is holding the reins; in his right hand is a leather whip. The black donkey is also well groomed, with a big woolen saddle and the two tinkling copper bells.

Despite the crowds on the street, the donkey is moving dangerously fast. The young man has great riding skill. Bells ringing, he moves left and weaves to the right, people trying to get out of his way. In the blink of an eye, the little donkey arrives alongside of Luchan. Luchan rushes to move to the side, the things in his hands swing and bump into the donkey's head, almost spilling out. Startled, Luchan yells, "Hey, be careful!" The donkey spooks, the rider reins him around into a chinaware booth. Plates and bowls go flying and fall with a great clatter and crash.

The stall keeper is an older man of about 50 and he begins shouting. People stop and turn to stare at the commotion. The rider is still trying to control the donkey as it tramples the chinaware. The old man grabs the donkey's reins and yells, "Are you blind? Breaking my china? I haven't even started selling yet. You break these things; you pay for them! Don't even think about leaving."

The rider steps off the donkey and goes eye to eye with the merchant. "Break these, pay for that, who are you calling blind? What kind of talk is that? It's a pity that you

have lived this long only using your mouth to eat. Don't you know how to speak with a civil tongue?"

The vendor's eyes pop wide, his face becoming even redder. "If you're not blind why trample my booth? I swear you need to pay for everything! Here I have at least a hundred diao worth of china!!" The rider retorts angrily, "I just broke a few of your things! How dare you ask me for a hundred diao? Your booth is out into the street; it's out of place. You put this here. I will not pay you, what are you going to do about it?"

The old man was furious. "If you don't want to pay, I'll keep your donkey. Xiao Xiong Di, even if your father is the Emperor, you will still have to pay me!"

The rider sees that the old man will not let go of the donkey and he acts shamelessly, becoming vile: "Let go!"

"I will not!" The words were not even out of the old man's mouth when the whip comes down hard on his wrist with a loud smack. He grabs his wrist and drops the reins. "Aieeeee! You brat, you hit me! This old life, I sell to you now!" He opens both hands and jumps forward, scratching at the rider's face.

The rider calmly switches the reins to his right hand, leans his body to the side and uses "Golden Silk, Coil Wrist" to bind the sellers left arm. He begins to whip the old man. "You are acting wildly. Here, I will tame you."

The whip lashing again and again, the old man's screams could be heard well down the street. Suddenly, someone steps in from the crowd. His left hand expertly blocks the whip and his right hand gently pushes the old merchant back. "Lao Xiong, why trouble a poor man just trying to sell some chinaware?"

The rider takes a step back, standing firm. The old man staggers back two or three steps and is caught by someone in the crowd.



The rider looks the man over, up and down. He seems young with a very slim, weak body, wearing a long suit. His accent is not local and his hands have extraordinary power. The rider goes pale.

This travelling man who sees what is not fair, comes out and tries to stop the quarrel, it is the one who has come into Hunan to find a famous teacher, having the goal of learning the lost body of knowledge: Yang Luchan. He had been watching the donkey's wild ride through the streets. When the chinaware was being trampled, he was part of the crowd. But as the rider began to beat the old man, he was moved to intervene. He put down his gifts, giving them to a vendor who sold cotton. "Excuse me, let me consign these here for a little while." Without waiting for an answer he then stepped in to block the whip and relieve the old man.

The rider's eyebrow shot up and in a stern voice he told Luchan, "You go on your way. Don't get involved in other people's business."



"Lao Xiong, I didn't want to get involved until you began to whip that poor man. He just has a small business and is quite old. Why should you whip him for that? I'm afraid it's also going to get you in trouble! It looks like you can afford to pay him for his losses. If you can't do that, at least pay him back with your courtesy."

"I don't need any of your wagging tongue! I just broke a few of his things. I didn't say that I wasn't going to pay. He grabs my donkey and starts yelling at me and wants to fight with me with his life to keep my donkey. I am Mr. Fang, born with a bone. I accept soft but will not accept hard. If I kill people, I'll pay with my life; if I injure people, I'll go to the court. Be on your way!"

Yang Luchan controls his anger saying, "You broke his things. Of course, he naturally became upset. Lao Xiong, you'd better give him some money. That doesn't make you lose face. I can see Lao Xiong, that you are a clever person. I'm just trying to settle the fight."

"I don't understand, why am I a bastard? If I pay or not, what is it to you? How can you order me to pay?"

Yang Luchan feeling his anger rising indignantly answered, "What it is to me is the inner principle of it." At that moment, the china seller pipes up from the crowd, "That's right! You break people's wares, don't pay, and whip an old man! Is this how your mother raised you? Acting so tough!"

The rider waves his whip. "How dare you. You still scold me. I'll kill you, you too-many-mouths, you too-many-tongues, you grandson of a turtle!"

The whip swishes and the old man ducks. Yang Luchan laughs coldly. "A real hero, a real man! You have a whip, and use it on an old man!"

The rider turns on Yang Luchan. "I will not pay! I do beat people. So you think this is unfair? What are you going to do about it? I am waiting for you right here, right now! Or are you the grandson of a turtle?"

Yang Luchan steps towards the rider. "My friend, you shouldn't use that foul language. You broke his things. This is not fair. Even an outsider like me can see this. That's why I involved myself in this unimportant matter! So, you like to beat people? All right! In my body are a couple of cheap bones that I am willing to substitute for that other man!" Luchan points to his head. "Mr. Fang, if you want to whip someone, please strike here. Show everyone what a big man you are!" Yang Luchan bows, lowering his head.

The rider pauses and looks around. He begins to chuckle and then laughs out loud. He throws down the whip and bows to Luchan.

"Ha, ha! I knew, Xiao Xiong Di, that you have skill. If you are kind enough to be a friend, please follow me. Let's leave here, for a more open place!" The rider's left hand holding the reins, he pointed his right hand at Luchan, and then pointed to the south.

"That direction, at the end of the street is an open space."

\*Jianghu – The term "Jianghu" literally means "rivers and lakes"; however, it often refers metaphorically to the parallel and mostly fictional and romantic world of itinerant tradesmen and martial chivalry that was once associated with the "wild" rivers and lakes in the borderlands of south China. See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jianghu> for more information.

Translated by Yang Jun  
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# 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

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### SAO PAULO, BRAZIL

Nov 15, 2012 Saber Form (MYJ)  
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