



The Second International Tai Chi Chuan Symposium

天下太極是一家

All Tai Chi Chuan is One Family

Traditional Tai Chi Chuan "Directly from the Source"



Wu Style
Ma Hailong

Wu(Hao) Style
Zhong Zhenshan

Sun Style
Sun Yongtian

Chen Style
Chen Zhenglei

Yang Style
Yang Jun

Tai Chi Chuan

The Journal of The International Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan Association

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President's Letter



Dear Member:

Recently, I travelled to Romania and Slovakia. This trip gave me a lot of information about Eastern Europe. Besides teaching Tai Chi Chuan, I also learned about local history and culture, saw beautiful sights, and tasted their delicious food. As a bridge between different cultures, Tai Chi Chuan educates many people about Chinese culture. Tai Chi Chuan comes from China but it belongs to the entire world. My grandfather always says, "I hope Tai Chi Chuan can contribute its health benefits to the entire world." How can we make this happen? We need more instructors to keep developing and carrying forward Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan. We need high-level instructors to improve the practitioners' level. To help everyone improve their skill levels, we need to deepen our knowledge of Tai Chi Chuan by studying from different perspectives. Each Tai Chi style has special features and methods. Our goal in hosting the 2nd International Tai Chi Chuan Symposium is to provide a forum for the effective teaching of these skills and to promote the benefits of practicing Tai Chi Chuan.

As the CEO of the Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan Foundation, I went to Louisville last December. During our meeting with Louisville's Mayor, Greg Fischer, I was awarded the key to the city in recognition of our commitment to promoting a healthy lifestyle and the alignment of the mission of the Symposium with that of the Mayor's "Healthy Hometown Movement". Mayor Fischer expressed his enthusiastic support for this Symposium. Earlier this year, I communicated with the representatives of the other four major styles and received their support. My hope is to get all the styles to develop Tai Chi Chuan together, and let everyone know that all styles are part of one Tai Chi family. There are many challenges in producing and hosting such an event: organizing, marketing, fundraising, all of which need to be supported with your help. I am so lucky to have many Tai Chi friends who want to volunteer their time and energy to promote this event. As a 501(c) (3) corporation, the Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan Foundation is now accepting donations to help bring the Masters to the Symposium. The International Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan Association is one of the sponsors for this event. Being a Tai Chi instructor, being a Tai Chi practitioner, I hope everyone can support this event, and I hope to see you in Louisville, July 6-11, 2014.

So far this year, the International Association has finished two things. The first one is that we have upgraded our membership system and brought it online with a variety of important features. We will gradually put the ranking system, Judge data, Instructor data, and Tai Chi Academy credits online in order for members to check all of their information. Secondly, we have finished the Yang Family Tai Chi Student Handbook after more than two years of hard work. Many volunteers spent many hours on it. Their hard work will bring a lot of benefits to Tai Chi practitioners.

Following the trend to "go green", we will publish our journal as an e-file. All current members can view the journal archive in the members-only area of our website. Use the same credentials as when you login to your membership system account. Please feel free to email us: info@yangfamilytaichi.com if you have any questions.

Yang Jun, President
Translated by Fang Hong

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Introducing Master Zhong Zhenshan



Zhong Zhenshan was born in the town of Guangfu, Yongnian county, Hebei province, in 1949. He became a formal disciple to Yao Jizu at the age of 13. Strictly following the Taiji principles, his performance is relaxed and natural, and full of the beauty of tranquility; his push hands is upright and exquisite. He has great attainments in both Taijiquan theory and practice.

A prolific author, Master Zhong has published more than 20 essays about Taijiquan, such as "On Listening Jin and Understanding Jin", "The Softness and Hardness of Taijiquan", "On Adhering, Connecting, Sticking and Following", "The Mechanical Tenets of Listening Jin and Understanding Jin", "A Brief Talk on Life Cultivation and Fighting of Wu-Style Taijiquan", among others.

In 1996, he was one of the compilers for "The Contest Form of Wu-Style Taijiquan". In 1998, he helped Yao Jizu compile "The Complete Book of Wu-Style Taijiquan". In 2006, his "Wu-Style Taijiquan" became part of "The Treasures of Chinese Martial Arts". In 2009, he published "The Course of Wu-Style Taijiquan Duanwei".

Master Zhong has won gold medals in Taijiquan contests many times. He has successively held the post of general instructor for the one thousand-person Taijiquan performances at the Yongnian International Taijiquan Conference. He was named a great Taijiquan master in 1998 and has performed many demonstrations for various Taijiquan conferences.



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INTERNATIONAL YANG FAMILY TAI CHI CHUAN ASSOCIATION

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

HOME OFFICE

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

SOUTH AMERICA OFFICE

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

EUROPE OFFICE

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

CHINA OFFICE

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



On Listening Jin and Understanding Jin: My view on Listening Energy and Understanding Energy in Tai Chi Chuan

By Master Zhong Zhenshan

In the Tai Chi Treatise, Wang Zongyue has clearly identified the path to achieving a high level of Tai Chi Chuan: "From familiarity with the practice of Tai Chi Chuan, one gradually attains "understanding energy" (*dong jin*); from the understanding of energy, one can reach profound wisdom (*shen ming*)."
Thus, understanding energy is an important stage in Tai Chi. In fact, among martial arts, only Tai Chi Chuan considers "understanding energy" as the highest level of learning. If you practice push hands without understanding energy, you are not applying the Tai Chi principles correctly. The main Tai Chi principle is to follow your opponent's movements: "If he bends, you bend, if he retreats, you extend." It is based on how to detect changes and react accordingly - "If you know the opponent and yourself, you can win a hundred battles."

To apply Tai Chi principles during push hands, you need to understand both yourself and your opponent. In order to win, the first premise is to correctly recognize the opponent's energy. By making contact with your opponent, you are able to detect his movement's direction, speed, and power. This is called "listening energy" (*ting jin*). Once you can recognize your opponent's intention and moving direction, you can come up with a strategy to defend or attack, and control your opponent before he even initiates the movement. This is called "understanding energy". Understanding energy is based on adhering and yielding. In the Tai Chi Treatise mentioned, we find: "To adhere means to yield, to yield means to adhere." When the opponent is hard and I am soft, it is called yielding. When I follow the opponent and he becomes backed up, it is called adhering.

When an opponent pushes with strong force, I connect with circular movement. Not only do I change his direction, I also avoid being controlled by his energy. This is called yielding. This means to neutralize the opponent's energy with softness. To adhere is to gain control. When I follow the opponent and his weight is back, I take control of the opponent. When I am in the advantageous opportunity and situation, I can make the initiative and gain control. This is

called "follow" (*shun*). In the opposite, if the opponent has the advantage and controls the situation, I will be pushed around and my weight will be back.

To obtain an advantageous position, we gather information and make a decision using Sticking, Adhering, Connecting, and Following. This can also be called "attaching". Fully apply the attaching *jin* to detect the opponent's movement and energy, as if gluing material or fitting gears together. Once contact is made, follow the opponent's movement to either bend or extend with circular movements. Use yielding *jin* to balance yourself and detect the opponent's intention. React accordingly and neutralize the opponent's *jin*.

During the attaching process, don't separate and don't resist. When the opponent misses the target, he will either continue to advance or withdraw. In any case, he will shift his center. At this point you have a chance to make him lose balance. By applying attaching and yielding techniques, you can control hardness with softness, and neutralize a large force with a small energy. This can also enable a weak person to take over a strong opponent. The key point is: "Don't separate and don't resist". Apply attaching *jin* and yielding energy to "know your opponent and yourself". Taking control of the situation is what we call "understanding *jin*".

"To adhere means to yield. To yield means to adhere. Neutralizing is the cause of controlling, controlling is the result from neutralizing. To neutralize means to gain control." Adhere/yield and neutralize/control are what we call a cause and effect relationship. If we neutralize without gaining control or vice versa, we could not defeat our opponent. Being double-weighted, too inflexible to turn, too stiff to neutralize, or too slow in responding could cause this. When you put too much weight on one side and don't provide enough energy to keep your balance, you can only follow but cannot control your opponent. The root cause is that adhering and yielding are disconnected, and yin and yang are not in harmony. If you understand your opponent but fail to understand yourself, you don't understand *jin* and will not be able to find your opponent's center consistently.



The Tai Chi Treatise points out: "Within *yin* there is *yang*, within *yang* there is *yin*. *Yin* and *yang* mutually aid and change with each other. If you understand this, you can say you understand Jin". In Tai Chi Chuan, *yin* and *yang* represent opposite objects/situations. For example: front/back, left/right, inside/outside, inhale/exhale, store/explode, empty/full, hard/soft, open/close, etc. The *yin* and *yang* relationship is against each other and at the same time mutually benefiting each other. They have to co-exist together. For example, we need to inhale before exhaling, to store energy before exploding energy, etc. Front, left, outside, exhale, explode, full, hard, open are *yang*. Back, right, inside, inhale, store, empty, soft, close are *yin*.

In Tai Chi Chuan, the human body is like a ball. During stillness or movement, there is no weakness. There is also no convexity or concavity and no breaks. There is no emptiness or stiffness, no leaning on one side, no repeating, and no ending. Therefore, in Tai Chi Chuan there is soft within hard, and hard within soft. There is opening within closing, closing within opening, empty within full, full within empty, *yin* within *yang*, and *yang* within *yin*.

When practicing Tai Chi forms, you need to change from being completely empty or completely full, to empty within full, or full within empty. When practicing push hands, you need to change from fully *yin* or fully *yang* in order to keep *yin* and *yang* in harmony. This way, you will be able to maintain a good balance to face any changes. When you fully understand *yin* and *yang* and master adhering and yielding, then you can achieve the method of "understanding energy".

Tai Chi Chuan requires you to be able to understand your opponent. "Detect the opponent's changes and surprise the opponent with a counter attack". This is based on adhering and yielding. When you are not sure about the opponent's motives, you could apply the *wen jin*, (inquiring energy). Actively look for the strength, direction, and contact point of the opponent's energy. You can then utilize this information to gain advantage. "Always pay close attention, detect the connection, and

concentrate on the contact point". "When connected to the opponent's energy, the mind (*yi*) will stay with the contact point". Pay attention to "determine exactly how strong the opponent's energy is, and measure his distance accurately".

Listening energy requires a quantitative concept. This enhances the understanding energy to help in making the correct judgment and preparing an objective counter strategy without making mistakes.

Using the laws of physics, we can analyze listening energy and understanding energy. Force contains three basic components: magnitude, direction, and a contact point. In physics, we represent force as a vector. To understand a force, we first connect to this force to feel its magnitude and direction, otherwise, we are making a subjective guess. Then, we apply listening energy to estimate the force from the contact point and not from other areas. "When connecting to the opponent's energy, my mind (*yi*) will stay with the contact point". To measure the energy's empty and full changes, the most important key is the contact point. Concentrate your thought and mind (*yi*) on this contact point. Carefully determine the magnitude and direction of the opponent's energy.

There are two ways to use listening energy to determine the magnitude of an opponent's force:

1. Increase the traveling path of his energy
2. Improve your sensitivity to incoming energy

Utilize the Tai Chi Chuan principle of "use intention (*yi*), not force" to improve your sensitivity to incoming energy. Use circular motions to increase the path of his energy. Change from circular movement to straight-line movement when switching from defense to attack.

In Tai Chi Chuan, flexibility is determined by how the body turns and rolls and is able to switch between convex and concave shapes, and empty and full. "The body turns" is the turning of the waist left and right. "Rolling" means rotating the wrists, arms, elbows, or shoulders. Both the turns and the rolls follow circular paths. As



Editor-in-chief
Yang Jun

Editor
Dave Barrett

Assistant Editors
Edward Moore
Bruno Repetto

Graphic Design
Jing Li

Contributors
Yang Jun
Mui Gek Chan
Edward Moore
Mike Lucero
Holly Sweeney-Hillman
Gong Baiyu
Dave Barrett
Zhong Zhenshan
Bruno W. Repetto
Eric Madsen
Carl Meeks
Pam Boyde
Fang Hong

Proofreaders
Carolyn Fung
Mike Lucero

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

or mail to:

**International Yang Family
Tai Chi Chuan Association**
P.O. Box 786
Bothell, WA 98041 USA
Tel: +1 (425) 869-1185
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the contact point moves along these circular paths, the opponent's energy loses its effectiveness. The switching between convex and concave shapes move along a straight line, causing the contact point to travel forward or backward in a straight line. Apply these body movements according to the situation. The purpose is to lead the opponent's energy to emptiness and defeat the opponent's intention. To neutralize the opponent's energy with the body turning or rolling and avoid being controlled by the opponent is what we call "flexibility".

Tai Chi Chuan uses many turning movements. We first turn with the direction of an opponent's energy to neutralize it, and then turn against the opponent for the counter attack. Ward-off, roll-back, press, and push should be combined with the waist's rotation. Grab and pull, split, elbow, and shoulder energies use not only waist rotation, but also empty and full step movements. When an opponent applies strong force upon you, as long as the contact point is not on your body center, you could neutralize his force with waist rotation and maintain your balance. Because of your

body movement, the contact point changes position and will not affect your center. As the contact point shifts, the opponent's force misses and his body becomes empty. At this instant, you can follow his body movement and change from defending to attacking his body center. This is what we call "Lead the opponent to emptiness. Combine the energy and then immediately send it out".

Rolling also uses the same circular motion to neutralize the opponent's energy. Rolling uses the opponent's energy to achieve "Lift up opponent's body by borrowing his energy". Suppose the opponent is using force to grab my arm. I would use my shoulder, elbow, or wrist from the same arm as an axle and roll with the opponent's force. This would change the contact point. When he misses the target, his body continues to move forwards and his center also moves. At this time, I could roll in the opposite direction to attack or up-root him. To follow the opponent's energy is to store and connect. To reverse the opponent's energy is to explode and open.

Besides using circular movements to change the contact point, you also can use a straight-line movement (practically speaking, it is vertical circular movement).

This technique is used when the contact point is along your body center. First you sink your chest and round your back, lower your waist and sit your kua. This moves the contact point slightly backwards and neutralizes opponent's energy. You can follow with a counter attack.

If the opponent's energy reaches your body, you need to circle the contact part – especially in the waist and kua area – to match the speed with the incoming force. It is either rotated horizontally or rolled vertically. First, follow by circling with the opponent's energy to make a good

connection, then shift the contact point and change the direction of his force. Store your energy and get ready to strike back. When your opponent loses his balance and is uprooted, you can emit your energy. With enough practice, when the opponent is committed but has not yet delivered his energy, you can step forward and explode with ward-off energy to send the opponent off, just like bouncing a ball away. In order to achieve this high level, you need to train your listening energy and understanding energy for a long time, skillfully master Tai Chi movements and energy

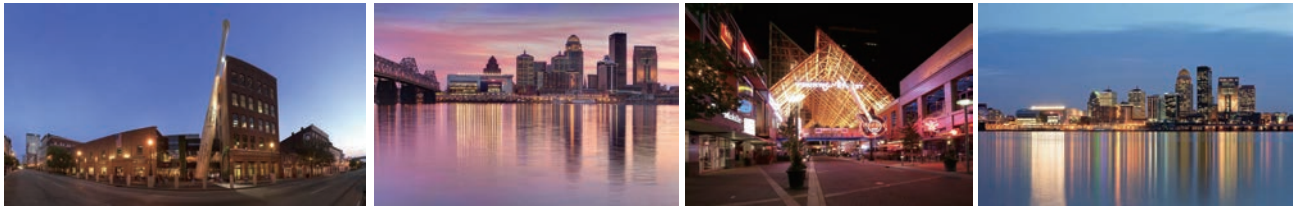
rhythm, and accurately anticipate changes between empty and full. You need to practice the Tai Chi forms diligently to build up power generated from your waist, kua, and from the whole body movements.

In Tai Chi Chuan, the palms move in eight directions and the legs step in five directions. Master the eight energies: ward-off, roll-back, press, push, grab and pull, split, elbow, and body-strike. Through the Tai Chi forms, study all the methods to attack, grab the opponent, and emit energy. You will then understand various forms of fighting. Always follow these two strategies: "Conceal the hard inside the soft" and "Make the best of the situation". This will ensure that you can win the fight. Apply the same basic strategies to counter various other kinds of attacks. Practice listening energy and understanding energy in real situations to fully understand yourself and your opponent. You will be able to resolve conflicting information and speed up your reaction. Listening energy and understanding energy distinguish Tai Chi from other martial arts. This special reason is what makes Tai Chi Chuan so fascinating!



2014 International Tai Chi Chuan Symposium July 6 – 11, 2014, Spalding University Louisville, Kentucky

*By Carl Meeks
Symposium vice-president*



Tai Chi Chuan has become one of the most, if not the most, practiced martial art and form of exercise throughout the world today. The desire to learn how Tai Chi exercise can benefit the mind and body has led to ever-increasing scientific research and the blossoming of classes and instructors in every facet of society. The popularity of Tai Chi makes it necessary to continuously inform the public of advances in research and training and to provide those interested with the knowledge and means to enjoy the many health benefits that Tai Chi can bring.

In 2009, the first Symposium brought traditional Tai Chi masters from China to the United States, joining as one family to connect Eastern theory with Western science and explore the benefits of practicing Tai Chi Chuan. During an event-filled week in Nashville, Tennessee these distinguished masters taught the various aspects of their respective styles of Tai Chi. They shared their knowledge with researchers, scholars, beginning and advanced practitioners in practical workshops and academic discussion sessions. Soon after the 2009 Symposium ended, talk began concerning the timing, location and format of a second such event.

The International Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan Foundation will host the 2nd International Tai Chi Symposium with Master Yang Jun leading the planning and organizing efforts. The mission of the Foundation is to promote health and longevity to all through the practice of Tai Chi. This Symposium will provide an historic opportunity to study and practice with the leading proponents of Tai Chi Chuan and to gain insights into the latest research linking Tai Chi to the human brain.

Location

In selecting the location for the 2014 Symposium, Master Yang Jun considered access to transportation, practice facilities, cost and climate. Local support from the community and proximity to a Yang Chengfu Tai Chi Chuan Center were important factors in the selection of the location. Consideration of these factors led to the decision to choose Louisville, Kentucky as the site for the Symposium. When approached with the proposal to be the host city for the Symposium, Mayor Greg Fischer expressed his personal enthusiasm and pledged the support of the community.

Mayor Fischer met with Master Yang Jun and Fang Hong in December, 2012 where he presented Master Yang with a key to the city to show his appreciation of what the Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan Foundation and the Symposium means to the advancement of health in the world community.

Louisville is centrally located, within a one-day's drive for nearly half of the US population. Developed as a major shipping port along the Ohio River, it features a vibrant arts scene, an expansive riverfront park as well as one of the nation's largest urban park systems. Louisville is a balanced blend of laid-back Southern hospitality, combining a rich historical and modern art scene, unique and lively entertainment and some of the best dining available anywhere. Famous for Churchill Downs and the Kentucky Derby, Louisville is also home to Kentucky Fried Chicken, the Louisville Slugger Museum & Factory, and Muhammad Ali. The site of the 2014 Symposium is within walking distance to Fourth Street Live, Louisville's



premier entertainment district, museums, and some of the best hotels and dining to fit every taste and budget. Three major Interstate highways and the Louisville International Airport with over 100 flights daily make travel to and from the city accessible for all travelling to the Symposium.

Spalding University is the site of the Symposium. It features dining, residence halls, gymnasiums, classrooms and auditorium all within a five-minute walk. Spalding is an urban, co-educational institution offering more than twenty-four degree programs at the bachelor's, master's and doctoral levels. It provides quality, real-world learning in liberal and professional studies to over 2500 students. Originally founded in 1814 by the Sisters of Charity of the Nazareth, Spalding is one of the most historic institutions of higher education in the Commonwealth of Kentucky. The campus is nestled between the primary business and entertainment districts of the city and the charming neighborhood of Old Louisville, proudly displaying its elegant Victorian mansions of a bygone era.

Spalding University offers Symposium attendees the option of staying in newly renovated residence rooms on campus. Two and four bedroom suites are available with individual bathrooms, living and kitchen spaces. The Masters workshops will take place in gymnasiums located in Spalding University Center.

Program

The 2014 Symposium will officially begin with an opening ceremony on Sunday, July 6 in the Spalding University Center Auditorium. During the opening ceremony, the Masters will give brief introductions to their respective styles of Tai Chi. The daily schedule begins on Monday with an early morning practice session that is led by one of the five Masters each day. Breakfast at the campus dining room is followed by a talk on the theory, development and practice by the Master representing each style.

Two Masters' workshops are scheduled simultaneously each morning and afternoon. One workshop is conducted in the gymnasium at the Spalding University Center and the other in the gymnasium of Presentation Academy. These are within a couple of hundred feet of each other. During registration, Symposium attendees will be assigned a group that will allow everyone to participate in all scheduled workshops with each Master.

Academic sessions are held during the times between the Masters' workshops. The theme of the academic program for the 2014 Symposium is "Tai Chi and the Brain". It will feature educational lectures that explore the impact of Tai Chi on brain function. The lectures will be based on original research linking Tai Chi as a prevention or intervention

strategy for brain disorders. There is no area of biological science that has equaled the advances achieved in the past decade in the neuroscience of the brain. New developments concerning brain physiology have great relevance to the potential benefits of the practice of Tai Chi. The academic program for the 2014 Symposium will serve to educate participants about current understandings as to how our brains develop and function across our life span and the relevance of Tai Chi to brain health.

The academic lectures will present the latest research on neurological disorders such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's disease, Autism and Attention Deficit Disorders. Question/answer and discussion time will be a part of every lecture, giving participants the opportunity to share insights and experiences relating to the various presentation topics. Research team leaders Holly Sweeney-Hillman, Dave Barrett, Sergio Arione and Angela Soci will facilitate the academic presentations and discussions.

Scheduled evening events include the Symposium opening ceremony, a Symposium banquet and an evening panel discussion with the five Masters and researchers. A performance showcase that will feature demonstrations of Tai Chi Chuan by each of the five Masters, and a closing friendship party are also included.



Pre-Symposium Workshop for Beginners

A special part of the Symposium is the addition of two days of workshops scheduled on Saturday, July 5 and Sunday, July 6, 2014. The pre-Symposium workshop is intended to provide those new to Tai Chi with the foundation necessary for continued development. These workshops will take place in the Spalding University Center gymnasium from 9:00 AM – Noon and 2:00 – 4:00 PM each day.

The workshop schedule does not interfere with Symposium activities, allowing everyone to attend. Taught by Han Hoong Wang, Center Director in Troy, Michigan, this workshop will also offer insights for experienced practitioners.

The Masters

Five leading Tai Chi Masters representing the traditional styles of Chen, Yang, Wu/Hao, Wu and Sun Tai Chi Chuan will once again share their unparalleled experience and skill so that we can continue to benefit from the practice of this unique art and spread what we learn to those around us.

Master Chen Zhenglei will once again represent the Chen family and provide insight into the style recognized as the original form of Tai Chi Chuan. Master Chen is the 11th generation direct-line inheritor of Chen Tai Chi Chuan, the head coach at the Chen Village National Tai Chi Center and vice-president of Henan Wushu Stadium. He has been recognized by the government as one of “China’s Top Ten Contemporary Martial Arts Masters”.

Master Yang Jun is the 5th generation inheritor of Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan and will represent the Yang Family at the Symposium. Master Yang is also the President of the Symposium and the Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan Foundation. He was recently appointed a Professor in Handan University’s Tai Chi program in China.

Master Zhong Zhenshan is one of the 5th generation representatives of Wu/Hao Tai Chi. Master Zhong is from Guangfu and has authored many books on Tai Chi Chuan. He was named a “Famous Tai Chi Master” in 1998 and has many students both inside and outside of China.

Master Ma Hailong, 4th generation Wu family, will return to the Symposium and represent the Wu family style. Master Ma is the great-grandson of the founder, Wu Quanyu, and president of the Shanghai Wu Style Tai Chi Chuan Association.

Master Sun Yongtian, the 3rd generation representative of Sun Family Tai Chi Chuan, will also return for the second Symposium. Master Sun is the Vice-chair of Beijing Martial Arts Association, Standing Vice-president of Sun Tai Chi Research Institute, and permanent Honorary President of American and Hong Kong Sun Tai Chi Research Institute.

The opportunity to learn from each of these accomplished Tai Chi Masters is an experience that you will cherish for years to come.

Special Events

The 2014 Symposium includes special events to bring everyone together in social settings, providing both entertainment and additional opportunities to practice Tai Chi, spend time with old friends and to make new ones.

The Symposium officially begins with a grand opening ceremony on Sunday, July 6. The opening ceremony takes place in the 800-seat auditorium at the Spalding University Center. Monday evening will feature the Symposium banquet at the famous Seelbach Hotel, located just six city blocks from Spalding University. There will be a panel discussion with the Tai Chi Masters and researchers to compare the development of Tai Chi through traditional and modern methods and how both complement each other. A grand showcase will feature demonstrations of Tai Chi hand and weapons forms and push hands by the Masters and others. The Symposium will finish with an informal friendship party at the Muhammad Ali Museum where we will relax and enjoy our time together. The Ali Museum is a partner of the Symposium and will provide everyone with tickets to the museum. There you will enjoy a tour through the Champ’s history, his legendary boxing career and philanthropic activities.

Volunteers

The success of the Symposium will rely on a staff of dedicated volunteers to play essential roles from providing transportation to and from the airport, assisting the Masters, registration of attendees and aiding attendees new to the area in finding their way around. Allowing volunteers to also participate in Symposium activities is a key consideration that will be made easier with a large staff. Pam Boyde, volunteer coordinator for the Symposium, has prepared a detailed application form for all interested in playing important roles in this historic event. Those interested in filling a volunteer position can complete and submit the application form online at the Symposium website, www.taichisymposium.com. Volunteers will enjoy an appreciation breakfast with the five Masters on Saturday, July 12 at the Seelbach Hotel.

The second Symposium is an event that will build a bridge from the East to the West through Tai Chi. It will provide educational and healthy living opportunities for all who practice Tai Chi and link the cultures of people throughout the world. The common bond of Tai Chi truly brings us all together as one family and the Symposium is instrumental in assuring its continued growth for future generations. It promises to be a full and exciting week for everyone.

News and information of the Symposium including schedule, the Masters, registration information and items of interest during your visit will be continuously updated on the Symposium website, through newsletters and press releases.





The Second International Tai Chi Chuan Symposium

Calling All Volunteers!

Pam Boyde
Symposium Volunteer Coordinator

We're less than one year out from next year's International Tai Chi Chuan Symposium in Louisville, Kentucky, U.S.A. Pretty exciting, eh!

For those of you who do not know me, I'm Pam Boyde, a certified instructor with the International Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan Association. I hail from Yukon, Canada. I have been asked to coordinate the volunteers for the 2014 symposium and it is in that capacity that I am reaching out to you.

We are now recruiting for volunteers to help with the Symposium. From my personal experiences in special events such as this, be they large or small, international or local, the success of the event is totally contingent on the engagement of volunteers. That is why I am appealing to you. What better corps of volunteers can there be for our Symposium than our own brothers and sisters in the International Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan Association? We are the ones who have a strong interest in this art form, who seek to broaden our horizons and understanding of it, and who have a vested interest in the success of the Symposium and Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan.



Our system for volunteer sign-up is now ready. The Symposium website includes a volunteer recruitment page where the Volunteer Application Form may be completed and submitted. Please look closely at the section of the application that details the many volunteer opportunities.

You will see that there is an array of volunteer duties and tasks from which to select what you'd like to do. Some examples of volunteer jobs are helping with participant registration; setting up the venues for the Grandmaster workshops; greeting and ushering guests at the Grand Showcase and other such things. We cannot guarantee that volunteers will get the exact job they ask for 100% of the time. However, we will do our best to match assignments with requested duties.

If you are planning to attend the Symposium and can lend a hand, please complete the form and send it back to me at pamboyde@taichisymposium.com. EVERYONE helping with the Symposium including those involved with planning the event and doing the literature search and reviews for the Academic Program, needs to submit a completed form. We are all volunteers.

Now, I know some of you might be thinking, "If I volunteer to help out at the Symposium, I'm not going to be able to attend some sessions and I don't want to miss a second of it." I totally understand.

Our objective with volunteer assignments is to ensure that all volunteers will be able to participate in most of the Symposium proceedings. Volunteers will be able to take classes with the Masters and gain insights of the impact of Tai Chi Chuan on the brain in the academic forums. They will also meet many new colleagues, thus adding to their Tai Chi Chuan network. Remember, many hands make light work! The more volunteers we have the less any one person will have to do.

One more thing, if you are planning to bring spouses, partners, and/or significant others to the Symposium who are not necessarily Tai Chi players and probably will not participate in the Symposium sessions but would like to be involved in some manner, we'd love for them to be volunteers. They are more than welcome to complete a form and send it in.

By helping with the Symposium, you will have the opportunity to facilitate a unique event. The Symposium brings the top Tai Chi Chuan masters from China together to share their vast knowledge and experience in the art with the West. In addition, respected Tai Chi scholars will present some of the latest research on Tai Chi Chuan and the brain, an area of study with vast potential. You'll be rubbing shoulders with wonderful Tai Chi players and making new friends from all over the world.

So please lend us a bit of your time to help with the Symposium and make this an overwhelming success. By the way, all volunteers will receive a special volunteer t-shirt. Also, on the morning of Saturday, July 12 there will be a special Volunteers Appreciation Breakfast with the Grandmasters - just for volunteers. This will be an opportunity for volunteers to meet the Grandmasters personally and have pictures taken with them.

If you have any questions about volunteering, volunteer recruitment, or volunteer positions please don't hesitate to contact me at pamboyde@taichisymposium.com.



Mind and Intention (Yi)

By Bruno W. Repetto, PhD

Introduction

When studying the 10 Principles of Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan, we come across several practical and fundamental rules, such as “Relax the Waist” (3rd Principle), and “Sink the Shoulders and Drop the Elbows” (5th Principle). But then, we find the very abstract 6th Principle, “Use Intent Rather than Force (用意不用力)”. In truth, all principles, including the two mentioned as examples have many nuances that give them very deep meanings. But it is the 6th Principle which has the most depth, with ramifications that touch on many aspects of the martial art of Tai Chi Chuan, on Traditional Chinese Medicine, as well as on our own awareness of how we move and use our bodies in space and time. This article touches on those concepts.

The Principle

The 6th Principle is actually the one with the longest description in the translation by Jerry Karin of Grandmaster Yang Chengfu’s Principles by Chen Weiming [3]. Therein it is explained that the body needs to be relaxed and extended, and that coarse strength should not be used, lest there exist a musculo-skeletal blockage that would result in restraining or inhibiting oneself. Many have struggled with interpreting what this means, and an interesting discussion about the precise meaning of the words can be found in these fascinating threads on our discussion board: [1] & [2].

What is Intention (Yi)?

To begin to understand the 6th Principle, a definition of Intention is needed. One such definition of Intention can be ‘an act or instance of determining mentally upon some action or result.’ However, it is not always clear what that action is, or what a result should look like, when applied to Tai Chi Chuan. Yi “does not stop with an initial idea, image, or mental impulse. It includes the feedback experience of the neurons, muscles, joints, and bones

interacting with gravity, the immediate environment, and/or an opponent” (Louis Swaim [2].) In the context of Tai Chi Chuan, the concept of proprioception can help us understand the traditional meaning of Yi.

A definition of proprioception is the ‘unconscious perception of movement and spatial orientation arising from stimuli within the body itself.’ In other words, it is our perception of where our body is in space and time. In the act of walking,

for instance, we have learned from an early age how to place one foot in front of the other and balance our bodies while one foot is on the ground and the other is advancing to take the next step. We do not have to think about how our entire body (not just the legs) is working to achieve the act of walking. At some point we had to learn it, and after a while of practicing and getting it wrong (i.e., stumbling and falling), and learning from our mistakes, we now just do it without thinking. In practicing Tai Chi Chuan, we learn to perform a sequence of postures; we learn from feedback from our teachers and fellow students where we are making mistakes, and we endeavor to correct them. While we keep practicing some of the harder postures

in order to get them right, as with walking, we perhaps can already perform some postures nearly flawlessly, and what’s better, we might already be able to perform those without thinking.

This act of performing any posture necessarily requires that we know exactly where our body is in time and space at all times. As with walking, we strive to not have the need to look where one foot is going, if we have our hip correctly open and oriented, if our shoulders are located right. And when we shift our body, we no longer need to check that our knee advances in the direction that our toes are pointing. So we know how far to shift our body weight so that our center of gravity is in the right location just behind





the ball of our supporting foot. And thus, after many such minute details, we complete the posture. So have we really thought about it? Perhaps, when we learned the posture, we did. If our claim that we can execute the posture (nearly) flawlessly is valid, then we don't really think anymore. And what's most critical, we can react almost automatically in, say, a Ward-Off Left when somebody comes at us, and that is the energy that is called for in that particular situation. We have the intention of defending ourselves and of controlling our opponent's attack. So we act. Our mind's intention carries us there, and proprioception allows us to successfully execute the posture, i.e., correctly and efficiently.

Furthermore, the Tai Chi Classics say that, "Only by being extremely soft are you able to achieve extreme hardness." This is achieved by not applying force in the least. If we do, we generate blockages within our body, and the force we generate can be easily redirected and controlled. So the 6th Principle is directing us to use our intention without applying force so as to flawlessly execute the appropriate motions to successfully control an incoming threat.

Conclusion

The automatic acts of responding to an attack, or of simply practicing a posture, are attained over years of constant practice so that it is internalized (muscle memory). Proprioception is guiding the development of any and

all of the postures, and the mind makes them automatic. More precisely, it is the mind's intention (*Yi*) that makes a response automatic.

"The word '*Yi*' denotes intent or thought, or thinking, or idea. In practicing Tai Chi Chuan, "to let '*Yi*' conduct the body" means that you must first have a clear idea and a definite intent of what you are going to do in your mind and to let the body do it accordingly. Sometimes, it just indicates which part of the body the mind should be thinking of, or your attention should be focused on." - Teachings of Yang Yuting (1887-1982), Master of Northern Wu Style Tai Chi Chuan. Quoted by Horacio Lopez in [2].

So we see that the mind directs our body to take a certain action, which we visualize and observe as we perform it, taking in feedback about where it's going, and we make adjustments, all with the intention of achieving a goal. Muscle memory achieved by long practice makes us automatically execute the necessary sequence of movements, and it is proprioception that informs us how well we are performing those movements.

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Bruno Repetto, PhD is a student of Master Yang Jun. He moved from Seattle, WA to Omaha, NE in 2011, and is a teacher of Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan. He has 10 years of practicing and continues to learn Tai Chi. He is an editor of the Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan Student Handbook.



Looking Through the Lens of Science: Tai Chi and The Dao of Brain-Building

By Holly Sweeney-Hillman
Bedminster/Montclair Center Director

*"Each day, each class, each practice session is a step toward a different future."
Daniel Coyle, The Little Book of Talent*

Introduction

I live in New Jersey. An odd fact about this state has to do with Albert Einstein's brain. Opinions vary as to whether Albert Einstein's brain was lost or deliberately hidden in New Jersey, but it did reside undiscovered here for several decades after Einstein's death in 1955. A journalist named Steven Levy was given an assignment to find the missing brain and find it he did, in 1978, in the office that belonged to the pathologist who had conducted Einstein's autopsy. The discovery of the preserved brain created excitement among neurologists and samples of Einstein's brain were sent to Dr. Marian Diamond, a neuroanatomist at University of California. Dr. Diamond hoped to find a cellular explanation for Einstein's brilliance. Dr. Diamond compared Einstein's brain samples to tissue samples from "normal brains" and found only one significant difference: the proportion of white matter to grey matter was much higher in Einstein's brain than in the control samples. At the time of Dr. Diamond's research, grey matter reigned supreme in our understanding of how the brain worked and white matter was viewed as relatively unimportant packaging material in the brain. So Dr. Diamond's findings were disappointing to the medical community and the hope of discovering an anatomical explanation for Einstein's genius faded away. ^[1,2]

Grey Matter

It's peculiar that the anatomists who bestowed beautifully descriptive Latin and Greek names upon our body parts gave the name "grey matter" to our brain. Grey matter seems a shockingly general term for the command center of our body and isn't even accurate as the color of our living brains is pink.

The general nature of the name does accurately express centuries of frustration in trying to understand how the rather mushy stuff that fills our skulls works. We had no clue until the dawn of the 20th century when Santiago

Ramon y Cajal applied the Golgi method of staining tissue samples to grey matter.

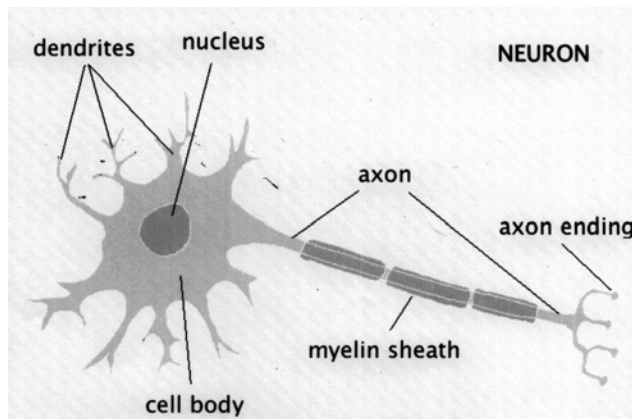


Figure 1

By staining very thin samples of brain tissue, Ramon was able to reveal discreet cells within the tissue that had a distinctive and identical structure. (Figure 1) He proposed a theory for the function of these cells, which came to be known as "neuron doctrine". ^[3]

Ramon's theory maintained that each neuron was an independent unit through which a signal passed in one direction only, like a car driven on a one-way street. When the car reached the end of one neuron street, it was able to jump across the small space that separated one neuron from another and travel along the next neuron. The tiny space between one neuron and the next became known as a "synapse". By passing or not passing signals across synapses, grey matter can direct information in a continuous complex flow in our brains rather like a telephone switchboard. ^[4]

We now know that the signal between neurons is an electrical impulse and that molecular activity in the synapses will pass or block the impulse to the next neuron. This means that our every thought and action is dependent

on impulses sent along specific chains of neurons. Any thought or movement can be described as a specific chain of neurons. These neuron chains can be imagined as circuits with tremendous specificity built into them that will

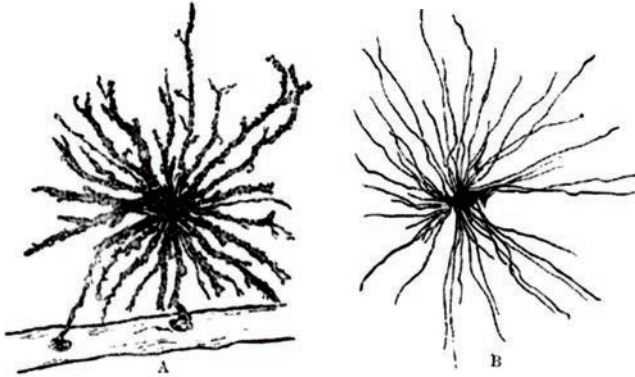


Figure 2

dictate timing and force of movements, coherence of thought, or fluency of spoken language. The more a circuit is used, the more developed it becomes and the less we are aware of using it. It becomes “automatic”. Once a movement skill is learned or a language mastered, it flows naturally from us, as if we had been born with it, even though we know we were not. Skills we take for granted, such as walking, were gained through extensive practice when we were infants. [5]

White Matter

In addition to neurons, Ramon y Cajal saw something else in his stained samples of brain tissue. He filled notebooks with drawings of strange cells he called “spider cells”. They looked like bullet holes shot through glass with fracture-like extensions radiating outward like a halo or like branching sea coral, or perhaps plump sausages strung on a string, or maybe a squid. (Figure 2) Even though these odd cells were as prevalent as neurons in the brain tissue, Ramon could not theorize a function for them. Like Einstein’s brain, they were forgotten for decades. [6]

At the dawn of the 21st century, a new technology came along: diffusion tensor imaging. It allowed neuroscientists to measure and map brain development in living brains. Suddenly, the significance of Ramon’s strange “spider cells” literally came into focus. [7]

What researchers saw with advanced imaging techniques seemed like something from a science fiction movie. They could see “myelination” in action: when a nerve cell fires,

squid-like looking cells (known as “oligodendrocytes”, or “oligos”) grab the firing neuron and wrap around it. Each tentacle of the “oligo” cells curl around the neuron and squeeze a shiny white coating over the nerve cell. This white coating is known as myelin, an insulator for the nerve, helping the electrical impulse to flow through the neuron. In the process of myelination, the oligo cells wrap over and over nerve fibers as they fire, thus forming a complete neural circuit over time. [8]

Myelination is a slow process. Each filament of myelin can wrap around a single nerve fiber forty to fifty times. Myelination requires extended periods of repeatedly firing the same chain of neurons to complete a circuit with “automatic” capabilities. Aside from myelin production, it has been discovered that white matter cells, named glial

Glial cells, sometimes called neuroglia or simply glia (Greek γλία, γλοία "glue"; pronounced in English as either / gli-ə/ or / glaiə/), are non-neuronal cells that maintain homeostasis, form myelin, and provide support and protection for neurons in the brain. They similarly interact with neurons in other parts of the nervous system such as in the autonomic nervous system.

As the Greek name implies, glia are commonly known as the glue of the nervous system; however, this is not fully accurate. Neuroscience currently identifies four main functions of glial cells:

- To surround neurons and hold them in place,
- To supply nutrients and oxygen to neurons,
- To insulate one neuron from another,
- To destroy pathogens and remove dead neurons.

For over a century, it was believed that they did not play any role in neurotransmission. That idea is now discredited. They do modulate neurotransmission, although the mechanisms are not yet well understood

Figure 3

cells, perform other critical jobs in our brains. (Figure 3) For the purposes of this article, we will focus on the importance of myelin formation.

Why Myelin Matters

People use the term “muscle memory” to describe the ability to perform skillful actions seemingly without thought. Muscle memory could be more accurately termed “myelinated neural circuits” that allow us to move in precise and effortlessly remembered ways.

If you ever wondered why a baby horse can stand and walk within minutes of its birth, the answer is myelin. A baby horse is born with key survival circuits already myelinated, unlike human babies who will have to practice for months to myelinate the neural circuits necessary to stand or walk. [9]

It is now known that myelin deficiencies are the underlying



factor in many disorders of the nervous system such as dyslexia, autism, attention deficit disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, and multiple sclerosis. ^[10]

If we look at the way multiple sclerosis first reveals itself, it seems rather obvious that neural circuits are “shorting out”: your coffee cup slips out of your hand for no reason; a blank spot appears in your vision; your balance is not reliable. Multiple sclerosis (MS) attacks the nervous system in a very specific way. It targets oligodendrocytes, the glial cells that create myelin. This leads to the destruction of myelin throughout the nervous system and eventually causes the death of neurons. The progression of MS suggests that the myelinating glial cells do more to maintain the health of neurons than just creating insulation, but not all of their functions are understood at this time. The dependence of neurons on glial cells providing protective insulation raises the question of whether glia might need to experience impulse activity in neurons to function properly. It has been observed that stimulating impulse activity in neurons, which stimulates myelination, appears to be one of the ways to benefit patients with demyelinating diseases such as MS. ^[11]

The Relationship Between Myelination, Learning and Skill Building

While some researchers have focused on myelin’s link to diseases of the nervous system, others have become interested in the role myelin may play in normal and high functioning people. As more and more brain imaging studies have been conducted, it has become clear that the more myelin is present, the more neural traffic can be directed through the brain. Myelination increases the overall information-processing capability in the brain. Increases in myelin, accompany learning and skill-building activities carried out over time.

The process of myelination follows a few fundamental principles:

1. Circuits must be fired. Myelin does not respond to wishing and dreaming and hoping; it responds to actions: electrical impulses traveling along neurons. It needs repetition of actions to happen and it is facilitated by “deep practice” which requires on-going attentiveness and sustained focus.

2. Myelin is universal. Our myelin doesn’t “know” if it

is being used to learn Chinese or how to play tennis: regardless of its use, it grows according to the same rules. Only circuits that are fired get insulated.

3. Myelin wraps, it doesn’t unwrap. Once a circuit is insulated by myelin, consider it permanently installed unless compromised by disease or disuse. Based on this principle, the old adage “practice makes perfect” should be revised. “Practice makes permanent” is more accurate. What and how we practice shapes the outcome of the circuits.

4. Age matters. In children, myelination occurs in a series of waves of peak cellular activity, somewhat dependent on genetics but also on activity and levels of external stimulation. These peaks last into our 30’s, creating a series of optimal learning windows. After age 50, we experience decline in our ability to myelinate but we will always have some active oligo cells producing myelin on demand. The decrease in active oligo cells explains why it is difficult to learn new skills in our senior years, but it also points to the reason why it is so very important to do so and to continue to practice skills that we have already developed in order to maintain as much white matter in our brains as possible. ^[12]

Tai Chi Practice and Brain Development

A brain imaging study conducted in China in 2012 compared brain thickness between two groups of participants. One group was comprised of experienced Tai Chi Chuan practitioners, with median age of 52 and median level of Tai Chi practice 14 years. The other group was matched according to sex, age, and physical stature but were not Tai Chi practitioners. The study found a statistically significant difference in cortical thickness between the Tai Chi group and the control group. The Tai Chi group showed more brain development in the areas of the brain responsible for observation, execution of motor tasks, mediation of visual-motor tasks, sensory perception of body parts, and integration of emotion and cognition. ^[13]

These findings support the discoveries of neuroscientists that practice may not make perfect but it does make myelin. Those who have studied skill-building activities and practice techniques have identified some principles of practice that facilitate myelination. Interestingly, these practice principles draw a perfect blueprint for a student’s journey into the study of traditional Tai Chi Chuan.

1. Skills are learned by repeating small pieces of the overall skill over and over with critical attention paid to correcting errors and perfecting performance until the pieces can be performed with repeatable precision. In Tai Chi parlance, we say this is making your Tai Chi form “standard” and it is understood that this process will take years. The Tai Chi teacher provides students with explanations and demonstrations of every move in the form and divides every move into smaller pieces so that every detail is apparent. The student imitates the teacher and the teacher gives corrections. The student repeats and repeats the learning process until precision is attained in doing every posture.

2. When the standard of precision is reached, the student has developed myelinated neural circuits, “muscle memory” for each movement and posture. In the lexicon of skill development, this type of skill is termed a “hard skill”. Hard skills are learned by being precise and consistent in every practice session. The ABC’s of hard skill development are Always Be Consistent. Hard skills are like a high quality watch; they are accurate and predictable.

3. Soft skills are next in the learning hierarchy. Soft skills add agility, flexibility, and adaptability into the skill mix that results in the ability to make the best choice of action given varying conditions and circumstances. In the Tai Chi world, a little soft skill is added to our solo form when we perform in a group. Here we have to make minute adjustments to the people around us so that our timing and spatial relationships are uniform throughout the group. However, it is push hands practice that really develops our soft skills. Any student who goes from practicing the solo form to practicing push hands knows how steep the learning curve is to attain the adaptability and agility of soft skill. Soft skills require the three R’s: Reading, Recognizing, and Reacting. Attaining soft skill means you can quickly recognize a pattern or a possibility and choose the best action relative to that moment in time. Soft skills require practicing in “real time” with constantly variable conditions.

4. Hard skills and soft skills are developed through different methods of practice and they use different structures within our brains and build different kind of circuits. The payoff for developing as much skill as possible, whether hard or soft, is white matter. Our brain literally grows when we develop skill, via the myelination process.^[14]

Conclusion

Now that brain imaging techniques have been developed so that living brains can be studied, there is no longer any question that the human brain is built, not born. Einstein’s brain is a testament to how active a brain can be, how many different circuits of learning and association, hard skills and soft skills, can be developed and myelinated over the course of a lifetime. For healthy aging, myelin matters. As a natural part of the aging process, myelin starts to split. This is why older people move more slowly than younger people; the speed of nerve impulses slows down as the myelin coating begins to show wear. The good news is: WE ALWAYS RETAIN THE ABILITY TO ADD MORE MYELIN BY FOLLOWING THE RULES OF SKILL DEVELOPMENT. Myelin is alive, it is always being generated and it is always degenerating. Even when myelin is breaking up, we can still build it, right to the end of our lives. The more myelin we have, the healthier our neural circuits are. We can maintain robust brain function throughout our life spans. We need myelin and myelin needs years of deep and skillful practice to grow. What better inspiration do we need to study and practice Tai Chi? ^[15]

Footnotes

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Practice Pages



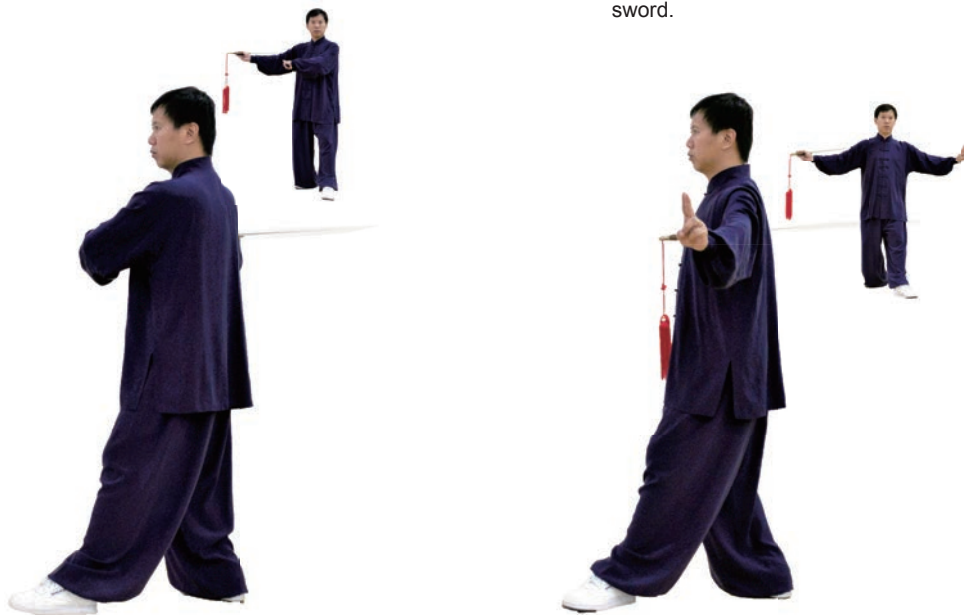
Transition from Lotus Swirls Around in the Wind

Lion Shakes its Head, Left

As the weight shifts back, the sword opens horizontally to the right side.

Continue to move back, sitting on the left leg. Rotate the sword horizontally and open it to the right. The left arm circles down to the left side.

Bring the right foot in, forming an empty stance with the ball of the foot and the centerline to the side of the left foot. At the same time, the sword follows the waist rotation left and slices from right to left in front of the body. Sword fingers circle close in and sit by the right forearm. The body direction is open to the left corner, head up. Look forward through the middle of the sword.



Turning to the right, circle and rotate the sword horizontally until it is sitting on the right side of the body.

The body follows the sword fingers, turning to the left. Open the left toe to the corner.

太極劍



Lion Shakes its Head, Right

Shifting back, circle the sword horizontally to the left side of the body.

Stepping back with the right foot, toe open to corner. At the same time, rotate the sword horizontally and place it on the left side of the body.

Shifting back, turn the upper body to the right and slice the sword to the right side of the body. At the same time, pivot on the heel, turning the left toe to point forward. In the end position, the body is facing to the right corner. The sword is slightly lower than the shoulder, tip turned in and sitting in front of the body.



Tiger Covers its Head



Move forward and stand up, picking up the right leg. At the same time, the arms circle from the side to the front and close in front of the body. The sword position is at the center of the body.

The right leg drops down and then swings forward.





Take a long step forward and keep the toe direction straight. Move the weight into the right leg.



Jump high and far.



Mustang Jumps the Ravine



Shift forward, using both arms to thrust downwards, target knee-high.



Move back and rotate the body to the left, turning the right toe in 135°. Pull the sword from down to up, the sword edge is vertical. Keep the sword horizontal. The head turns to look back at the sword tip.

Reining in the Stallion



Pick up the right foot and step to the right side of left foot.

太極劍



Land on the ball of the left foot. The sword handle follows the center, moving up and down. When the handle is up, the tip will go down, when the handle is down the tip will go up. When the left foot lands, both arms are rounded and in front of the body. Keep the sword pointing forward with the tip up.



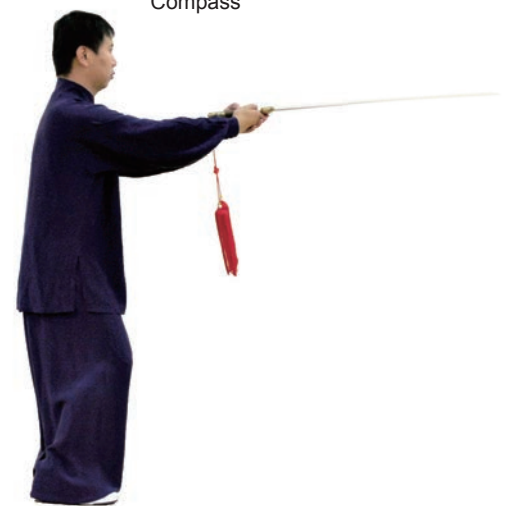
Step out with the right foot, toe forward to begin forming a bow stance.



Moving back onto the right leg, the sword circles forward first. Continue to shift back, circling both arms back and down towards the hip level. Keep the sword tip up.



Step out with the left foot, toe direction straight.



While shifting forward, bring the right foot alongside the left foot. Keep the toe direction straight and feet shoulder width apart. The sword thrust follows the weight shift, tip at throat level, the sword and the arms in one straight line.





Shift to the right and turn the body to right. Following this rotation, sit the sword to the right, vertically. The sword fingers follow the sword and sits on the right side of the body, left armpit open.



The left foot steps out; the toe direction is less than the corner. The left arm follows the step and body turning, circling down to the left side of the body. The sword rotates and sets up on the right side.



The sword strikes to the left side following the weight shift and body turning, in line with the left toe direction. Sword fingers circle up, then down, and sit by the side of your right forearm.

Dusting in the Wind, Two



Shift forward and turn the body, the sword striking to the right, in line with the right toe. Sword fingers sit by the side of the right forearm.



Sink the right arm and bring the sword back to vertical, tip up.



Shift to the right and turn the body to right. Following this rotation, sit the sword to the right, vertically. Bring the left foot in, close to the right. The sword fingers follow the sword and sit on the right side of the body, left armpit open.

太極劍

Dusting in the Wind, One



Sink the right arm and bring the sword back to vertical, tip up.



Turning to the left, shift forward. Bring the right foot in close to the left. The sword keeps pointing up and sitting on the left side.



The right foot steps out to the corner, toe pointing slightly less than 45°. At the same time, rotate the sword, setting your sword up at the left side of your body.



The left foot steps out to the corner, toe pointing slightly less than 45°. At the same time, rotate the sword, setting the sword up at the right side of your body.



Shift forward and turn the body, the sword striking to the left, in line with the left toe. Sword fingers circle up, then down, and sit by the side of your right forearm.

Dusting in the Wind, Three



Sink the right arm and bring the sword back to vertical, tip up.





The Process of Learning Taijiquan: A talk by Master Yang Jun

Transcribed and emended by Eric Madsen

The understanding of Taijiquan theory is connected to personal understanding gained through practice. Learning Taijiquan is not a simple undertaking; it has deep meaning. Some people practice it only for its theory and philosophy. Others practice it for its slow pace, internal technique, and to learn martial arts. Taijiquan has a unique approach to practice that makes it accessible to everyone. Practicing slowly helps people to clear their minds. In this way, Taijiquan is a meditation.

-Master Yang Jun

Introduction

Master Yang Jun posed this question at the instructor's seminar in Italy, "What is the correct way of learning and how can we better study Taijiquan?"

After this question was asked, the room was silent. There was a very long pause before some of the instructors timidly offered answers that Master Yang subsequently dismissed. It can be a maddening experience to answer Master Yang Jun's questions. Anybody who's taken his classes or attended his seminars can tell you this. There is rarely one answer, and the answer that was appropriate last week may not be the answer he's looking for today. Part of the reason for this is because we aren't used to responding to questions from a yin-yang perspective. The following question was used as an example by Master Yang Jun: "Why is it important to follow the first principle, keeping the head erect?" Answering this question from an external (yang) standpoint, one might say that keeping the head erect allows the shoulders to drop and the back to be rounded. Answering this question from an internal (yin) perspective, one might say that keeping the head erect allows the qi to sink and circulate to the tips of the body and allows the spirit to rise. Both responses are correct, but the full answer includes both parts.

Master Yang explained that it is crucial for teachers to understand the learning process. From a teacher's point of view, there are three necessary steps in the development of Taijiquan (由招熟，渐及懂劲，有懂劲渐及神明) (*you zhao shu, jian ji dong jin, you dong jin jian ji shen ming*). All of these steps follow yin-yang philosophy. The first step is to make the Taijiquan movements familiar. The second step is to understand the energy. The third step is to practice letting the mind become calm and the spirit bright. If these steps of study are clear, students will not go astray. If the steps are not clearly taught, students may study a long time and miss crucial points.

Making progress in Taijiquan

The three steps of development in Taijiquan are connected to and supported by each other. Each step is divided into two parts: self-understanding practice (yin), and practice with others (yang). Self-understanding practice has two parts: 文 wen (yin) and 武 wu (yang). Wen practice is quiet, calm, and self-nurturing; wu is faster, more vigorous, and martial.

Wen and wu practice again divide into yin and yang within themselves. There are two kinds of wen practice. One is the hand form, which is yang because of its movement.

The other is zhan zhuang (standing meditation), which builds internal strength, rooting, and energy. Since zhan zhuang is static, it is considered yin.

There are also two types of wu practice. First is push hands, which is considered yin. Second is the practice of applications with a partner and the practice of explosion energy by oneself, both of which are considered yang.

At first glance, these divisions may seem arbitrary. Actually, they arise from Taiji philosophy, which is the foundation for the art of Taijiquan. Wang Zongyue explains that, "Taiji, being born of Wuji, is the mother of yin and yang. In movement it differentiates; in stillness it consolidates." Wuji can be thought of as nothingness, or non-polarity. Wuji divides to become Taiji separating all things into two opposite, but equal, poles: yin and yang. There are five combinations of yin and yang. Three are commonly known:

1. Yin cannot be without yang and yang cannot be without yin.
2. Yin and yang oppose each other.
3. The relationship between yin and yang can change.

First step: Make the movements familiar

"We begin and end with the first step. At no point can someone say they're finished learning the movements because as we age, we practice the same movements but with a different understanding."

-Master Yang Jun

All three steps of learning depend on development of the first step: familiarity with the movements. Practice is the path to becoming familiar with the movements. Each style of Taijiquan has its own requirements regarding the postures. These requirements are based on the style's physical and energetic principles, as found in the Ten Principles of Yang Chengfu. Once the practitioner meets the stylistic requirements of their form, they must find what is natural to them. When the movements are natural, then they become familiar.

Familiarity with the movements starts with imitation. First, learn the movements and then integrate theory, including the Ten Principles. It is a useful guide to help develop the correct understanding. Combine the movements with relaxation. Taijiquan uses relaxation as its method. It is with this premise that the movements are learned and taught. This simple theory is the foundation of our practice. In the beginning, it doesn't matter if people can do it or not. This ability builds gradually.

Movement practice has two benefits. One is to exercise the body and to make the technique alive, able to be applied and useful. The other is to practice with and come to understand a partner. Understanding your opponent is developed through push hands. This practice makes the movements familiar and helps you to understand an opponent's feeling. In the end, push hands becomes similar to free-fighting, where there is no sequence.

Second step: Understand the energy

"Taijiquan is the art of softness containing hardness, like a needle concealed in cotton."

-Yang Chengfu

What does Yang Chengfu mean when he talks about hardness? This hardness is not stiff. The hardness he's referring to comes from softness because when yin reaches its limit, it becomes yang. With your whole body unified together, transform softness into hardness and hardness into softness. Even when you show strength, maintain softness and relaxation. The softer and more unified you are, the stronger you become.

Practicing relaxation over time yields softness and develops a strong root. When the Taijiquan Classics describe energy, they say it "comes from the root, is developed by the legs, controlled by the waist, and shows in the hands". The description is that of a unified, whole body energy with a specific direction, from down to up. As the energy moves upward from the root, it is unified with the physical movement using relaxation. Without familiarity with the movements, coordination and relaxation are not possible.

There are two points to understanding energy. One point is self-understanding and the other point is to understand your opponent. Self-understanding requires familiarity with the form. To understand an opponent, the movements must already be familiar within oneself.

To understand one's own energy, it is important to recognize and avoid two extremes: being limp and being stiff. Somewhere between limp and stiff is Taijiquan energy, which is like water. Water is soft and has no shape. It has the ability to conform to its surroundings.

Taijiquan strategy employs "following", where we follow and then guide an opponent's energy. One can store and release energy, have empty and full energy, and can neutralize and control energy. Ultimately, you must forget yourself and follow the opponent. If you push a ball into the water, the more you push the more pressure is given back. Whatever your opponent gives is returned.

When understanding an opponent's energy, there is a key phrase to know: "擎引松放: *qing yin song fang*". Qing is like a cup that holds water. To know your opponent, you need contact. When their energy comes in, you must be able to receive and contain it. Yin means to lead or guide. Song means relaxed and agile. Fang means to release energy. Let the energy flow and the qi sink to the dantian. By relaxing, one becomes flexible and light when touching an opponent. When you are touching an opponent lightly, empty and full are clear. When empty and full are clear, one becomes agile. Then it is easy to change. With the

ability to change, it is possible to neutralize. With the ability to neutralize, it is possible to release energy.

Once a student starts to develop the second step of learning, two final yin and yang combinations become important.

4. When yin increases, yang is decreased. When yang increases, yin is decreased.

5. When yang increases, yin increases. When yin increases, yang increases.

Third step: Shen Ming (bright spirit)

Shen Ming means having a bright and clear spirit. When the spirit is bright and clear, then a person is balanced and reacts naturally.

There are two aspects to consider when developing the spirit. The first is the spirit's connection to the body. All physical movement reveals spirit. This includes how one moves, including walking and doing everyday things. The second point is the spirit's connection to the heart. This is shown through the eyes; the eyes are the gateway to the heart/mind, and they reflect understanding and expression. There is a saying, "first cultivate the body (修身 *xiu shen*), and then cultivate the heart (修心 *xiu xin*)". Following the principles, adjust the body to be upright. This will nourish and build an upright spirit. When practicing Yang style, make the movements large, simple, and clear so that the spirit shows.

After developing the first and second steps of learning, one begins to gain experience. Experience includes the body and mind. Movements are led by the mind, and mind and body are combined together. The mind is kept calm and centered. This is what is called: 身心合一, "*shen xin he yi*"-body and heart/mind united.

The experience of trial and error reveals the correct method. With enough experience, one doesn't have to make a plan or think about what technique to use. When meeting an opponent, start late but arrive first. It is said, "If the opponent doesn't move, I don't move. When the opponent starts to move, I've already arrived". Build a relationship between self-understanding and understanding the opponent. Then, strategy comes from balancing self and other, without thinking.

The spirit is also connected to morality. Moral standards are a measurement of the understanding one has gained in life. As morality is built up, the spirit develops. In Taijiquan, one isn't just cultivating physical and technical skill. There is also a component of personal development. As an instructor, teaching the form isn't enough. You must have morals, and how you live your life should reflect them. The martial arts embrace yin/yang philosophy and the Confucian moral code encourages us to cultivate our spirits and balance ourselves within society.

Reference:

Fu Zhongwen, *Mastering Yang Family Taijiquan*, trans. Louis Swaim, Berkeley, Ca: Blue Snake Books, 1999, pg. 207



Membership System Update

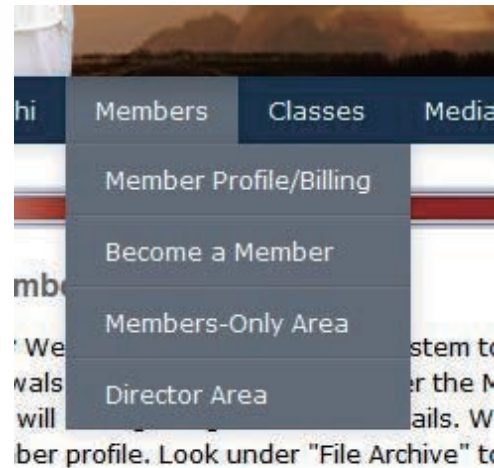
By Mike Lucero

The Association has started to use a new system for managing member profiles and billing. We have three main parts:

Member Profile/Billing: This allows the member to keep their contact information up-to-date and accurate. We will use your email address to send an invoice when it is time to renew.

Become a Member: Click here to join our Association and help spread Tai Chi Chuan around the world. Members enjoy discounts in our store and discounted seminar fees.

Members-Only Area: This password-protected area is for sharing files with our members. To begin with, we have uploaded all of our past journals. Here you can also find our newest publication, the student handbook. Use the same username/password provided through the Member Profile.



Member Information

A [Change Contact/Profile Info](#)
[Additional Individuals attached to this Membership](#)

[Change Username/Password](#)

Billing Information

B [Membership Status/Billing Info](#)
C [Extend Your Renewal \(post invoice\)](#)
[Pay Membership Dues/Fees](#)

Once you login to the membership system, there are links to (A) view or edit your profile, and (B) look at your billing history. Although it's more convenient to pay through the online system, from the billing info page, you can print your latest invoice and mail your payment. (C) Many people have asked how to pay their renewal before it is due. Before your membership expires, the system will invoice you and mail you a link to pay from. Click this link if you'd rather pay on your own schedule.

Our membership system is capable of serving our members in many other ways we have yet to implement. We will send updates of added features periodically. On that note, also check our website once in a while for news, and get social on our Facebook page.

Stealing Boxing

By Gong Baiyu

Chapter 5: The presented gifts are rejected; feeling dejected, he leaves in haste.

Luchan waits for a long time before Lao Huang finally opens the door. He leans toward Luchan, "Master Yang, our master is here."

Luchan quickly stands up.

The famed martial arts master Chen Qingping, the creator of the school, walks into the room. Luchan looks at Master Chen. He appears to be under sixty, height more than five feet, hair slightly grey, long, thin face, ruddy complexion, and two long eyebrows. He has a nose like a hanging column, and two steely eyes that are full of spirit. He is wearing a blue gown, high white cloth socks, and shoes decorated with embroidered white clouds. Although almost sixty, he has no senior mannerisms, a slim waist and a narrow straight back. Walking into the room, he hesitates at the door, glaring at Yang Luchan.



Yang Luchan dashes forward, greets him with a deep bow and then steps to the side. He says respectfully, "Laoshifu (old master) you're up early. Laoshifu please come; xuesheng (student) Yang Luchan pays a visit!"

Chen Qingping scrutinizes him from head to toe, sizing Yang Luchan up. He immediately greets him with a hand salute and a smile on his face, "Yang xiongdi (brother) you don't have to be courteous; don't address me this way; I wouldn't hear of it! Please sit, please sit."

"Laoshifu is a great martial arts master. Xuesheng has had a heartfelt admiration and respect for a long time. So glad to meet you, xuesheng is extremely lucky. Laoshifu please, allow xuesheng to ..." He takes out his name card, holding it high with both hands, respectfully hands it over, then falls to his knees and begins to kowtow.

Master Chen takes the name card, his eyes widening, and immediately points to the chairs, "Yang xiongdi please sit, let's sit and talk."



Luchan hesitates, taking the seat near the tea table. Chen Qingping repeatedly offers the guest seat, Luchan refusing each time. Master Chen laughs, moves to the side and ends up sitting near the tea table to keep him company. Lao Huang brings the tea.

Master Chen begins, "These past few days because of a private matter, I have been unavailable. I have repeatedly left Yang xiongdi waiting in vain. I am extremely sorry for my lack of hospitality. You, Yang xiongdi, have travelled from hundreds of miles away, to come to this little place. What can I do for you?"

"From a very early age, xuesheng has loved the martial arts. Without meeting any famous teachers, I have wasted several years of training and not achieved anything. I heard from many martial arts teachers that Laoshifu has a secret manual, and has created a type of Taijiquan for which other martial arts are no match. Martial artists, both north and south, don't understand Taijiquan's amazing techniques. To learn such an astounding art, one needs to find a famous teacher. Others have pointed to this famed road. I have come from afar to get here. I hope Laoshifu sees this xuesheng's foolish sincerity, will accept this xuesheng, so that xuesheng will be able to enter these walls and achieve some progress. Xuesheng will be eternally grateful. This xuesheng, Yang Luchan, is from Guangpingfu, Zhili. I am descended from farmers and possess assets, unlike those who have no home, are not employed and of unknown origin."

Chen Qingping laughs, "Yang xiongdi is from far away





Zhili. No wonder you have been deceived. Don't believe any of this nonsense. When did I receive some secret manual? It is all just martial arts talk, to make me into a magical, strange person. Taijiquan is from the creative process of yin and yang, and from soft and hard mutually supporting each other. The reasoning is based in Taoist practice, one needs to have both internal and external. Illiterate martial artists don't quite understand this, so they just make things up. Actually, there is nothing mysterious here. Also, this form has no practical use. I practice it to improve my health and longevity by moving my circulation; just like after having dinner one goes out for a walk. As to thinking that once you learn this Taijiquan for self-defense and achieve victory you will become a martial arts hero, a famous fighter - this is absurd. This form doesn't mean much and is not worth learning. Even if you learn it, it's for nothing, and there is no benefit. If you want to fight, you must be willing to take a beating. You're not the type to make a living out of this, Yang xiongdi. Therefore, I have decided not to take disciples. It's not my place. Yang xiongdi has come from afar and looks up to me. However, I'm just famous with no substance, unable to give you hospitality. Yang xiongdi, go back and scold the people who have misled you. I have nothing to teach you."

Master Chen looks out the window and laughs, "Teach you what? How to take a beating? I'm done teaching."

Yang Luchan listens respectfully, not expecting Chen Qingping to say such words. He feels like he's been hit with a bucket of cold water. His face is turning red.

Chen Qingping takes up his teacup, "Yang xiongdi, please drink some tea. Actually, north of the river there are many martial arts masters. Yang xiongdi, brave and valiant, go find a famous teacher and study under him. Don't worry about becoming famous. Besides, you already have a martial arts foundation. I'm not trying to flatter you, but our small town has rarely seen your kind of ability. I heard that you have been here for more than a few days, searching for a famous teacher of an amazing art. There are famous teachers, but unfortunately I'm not one of them. Yang xiongdi, you had better go back home. Zhili is Yanzhao's

old name. People there are brave and strong, and some are masters. Otherwise, you could look in Caozhoufu, or Shandong."

Chen Qingping obviously had no love for people who came from the outside. Yang Luchan could detect Chen Qingping's tone of dislike for outsiders. But, since he had come from afar, he had to try his luck.

Luchan stands up, takes out a red envelope and presents it with both hands to Master Chen. "Laoshifu, please don't refuse. Xuesheng is sincere and offers this gift. Xuesheng has admired your great reputation for over five years. It



wasn't easy to get here. Laoshifu, I hope you can forgive me for being young and not able to say the right things, I'm sincere, but my words fail me. Learning martial arts is my passion. I don't want to be a hero in the martial arts world, or to use my skills to bully others. Xuesheng only hopes to strengthen his body and improve his health. This will fulfill my wish. In addition, I have brought you a couple of local products from my village. I beg Laoshifu to break tradition and accept me. Every year during festivals, there will be additional gifts. My family is of modest means but we will be paying our respects to Laoshifu. I will strive to be the best." Then he added, "Here is a string of two hundred notes."

Chen Qingping's face falls with the mention of the cash and he becomes irritated. "Yang xiongdi, what is this? When I say something I mean it. When I say I can't accept you as disciple, this is the truth. I'm not being courteous! You can offer a thousand taels of silver. Without a doubt, I like money. I could accept you, but what am I supposed to teach you? So, definitely I wouldn't dare. Especially since Yang xiongdi has such natural abilities and martial art skills. Speaking honestly, you can set up your own place and teach disciples. If I were in my prime years, I would seek you as my teacher."

After these comments, Yang Luchan felt bashful, lowered his head, and didn't dare to look up. Master Chen

continued, "I can be a little temperamental. It is a good thing Yang xiongdi - don't blame me. When fellow martial artists find themselves in need and come to my house, I treat them like guests. I have to be hospitable. If they lack travel money, I arrange for it. However, Yang xiongdi, this is not the case. You are rich, so I'm not inclined to keep you. I have some matters to attend, Yang xiongdi. If you have no other business, let's talk some other day." Master Chen lets his guest know that it's time to go.

"Laoshifu really wants xuesheng to be disappointed and leave?"

Master Chen smiles, "What is there to be disappointed about? For me, martial arts have never been that important. You can find another place to go. In the future, you will be famous, so don't despair."

Feeling dejected, Yang Luchan forces a smile, "Since Laoshifu is unwilling to accept me as disciple, xuesheng is honored just to be able to know Laoshifu of reputed fame. Look upon these gifts as a token of xuesheng's appreciation in meeting you. Laoshifu, please accept them. In addition, here are a variety of our local products, which xuesheng Yang Luchan has brought especially for you. Laoshifu, please kindly accept them."

"Yang xiongdi, you're gracious, I understand. I never accept such gifts. Everyone has aspirations, Yang xiongdi. Aren't you trying to put me in an awkward position? Please take them back! If you get any more courteous, it's going to make me look bad." After saying this, he calls out loudly, "Lao Zhang!"

"What is it?"

Master Chen points, "Help Master Yang carry these things."

Lao Zhang immediately picks them up. Yang Luchan, realizing Master Chen's firm rejection, places the red envelope back in his sleeve. With an embarrassed look, he stands up to end his visit. Master Chen turns to the



side, ready to see him off. Luchan turns to let him go first, saying, "Laoshifu, please stay, I don't want to impose." Master Chen raises his hands, "Well, I'll not see you off then!" He salutes Luchan and turns to go back in.



The servant escorts Yang Luchan to the door. Along the way, Luchan stands for a while and sighs deeply. He suddenly remembers Master Chen's comments about him setting up shop to teach disciples, and that there wasn't any need for him to learn martial arts from others. Those words were totally unexpected. He thought, "All I said was that I had studied martial arts. As to what level I am, how would he know? He must have heard it from that disciple. This old man's refusal of me must be because he believed Fang's malicious talk."

When Lao Huang noticed that the other servant was carrying Luchan's gifts, he realized that he had hit a brick wall. Lao Huang felt sorry for him, walked over and asked, "Master Yang, what happened? You didn't listen to me and wanted to see him anyway. I told you that you would be rejected!"

Luchan sighed, lowered his head, and fell silent. Lao Huang tried to console him, "It's not worth getting angry. There are lots of places with good martial arts. Go find somebody else; perhaps they won't be so unsympathetic! Master Yang, don't be angry, take a break and drink some tea."

"Thank you. I have troubled you. Huang laoxiong, I'd like to ask you something. Not hiding my intentions, I came to Henan to find a teacher to learn some martial arts. All my relatives and friends know about this. Everyone came to send me off and celebrated for a few days. They all hoped that I would return after successfully learning this martial art. Since I have hit this stumbling block, Huang laoxiong, help me think of something! Otherwise, how could I face going home? I think Master Chen must have rejected me because of someone's malicious talk. I've decided to take a few days to remedy the situation. For now, let me leave these local products here. Later, you can bring them back



to the Laoshifu's home. Just say I'm going somewhere else and that these are too troublesome to bring along. Even if he will not be my teacher, at least this shows my respect."

Lao Huang hesitates. Luchan doesn't wait for him to reply, "Sorry for the trouble, I'll thank you another day!" He drops his gifts, turns and walks out.

Sad, anxious, and somewhat desperate, Luchan returns to his hotel. Later in the afternoon, the clerk brings in the gifts he tried to give Master Chen. "Master Yang, the Chen family at Nanjie sent these over. The servants said that they were too busy to see you. They said you'd understand and dropped them off. They left without waiting for a reply. I brought them in for you."

Luchan waved his hand, "I know, put them down and leave me!" Pacing the room he mutters spitefully, "He didn't even accept the gifts. What a mean, abominable old man!" The more he thought, the angrier he got. He had been humble and full of respect, offered gifts, and yet was finally refused. He was angry, wishing to return home and find another teacher. Then he would deal with Master Chen.

Then he remembered that his first teacher, Liu Ligong, the old security guard, had told him that it would not be easy to learn Taijiquan. If Luchan were able to master it and return, it would prove that although he was young, he was not to be disrespected. "To learn a skill which amazes people, I need to work hard. Even if Master Chen refuses, I need to be patient. I'll simply wait a few days and then go and plead with him! Sooner or later, he will relent and accept me. I'll go every day and wear him out!"

The servants at the Chen house were full of resentment because they were nearly dismissed by the Master after accepting Yang Luchan's gifts. Lao Huang was even more furious, because Master Chen had beaten him as a result of this incident! Everyone had been reprimanded.

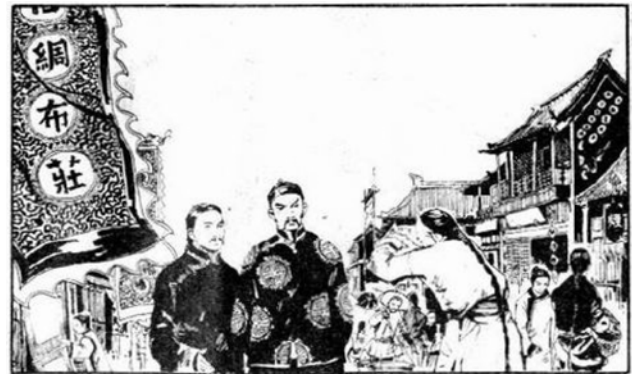
Yang Luchan didn't dare bother them. He could no longer even come to the gate. He realized that he had exhausted that option. He had been in Chenjiagou for more than a month!

Suddenly, Luchan had an idea. "Since the servants refused to deliver my message, even if I go there eight times, it's of no use." However, Luchan had heard of a strategy for dealing with the court system. If one wanted to see the magistrate and the bailiff and clerk refused, there was no choice but to wait outside the court. When the magistrate came out, you would hand him the petition and report your name. Even if the guards chased you away, you could squeeze in a few words.

Thinking of this, his spirits rise. "I won't go to his door no matter what, I'll wait for him in the street. Once I see him, I'll greet him and say hello. It doesn't matter: one day, two days, one month, two months, I will reap what I sow. Even if he is made of iron or stone, I'll wear him down."

The next day, Luchan is up very early and goes to Nanhengjie to wait. He waits from dawn until noon. Then he goes back to the hotel to eat before coming out to wait again. When he gets tired, he paces back and forth. Sometimes he walks past the Chen residence; but if he sees the servants, he quickly turns away. He endures this until nightfall; then he returns to the hotel for dinner. This plan seemed like a good idea. In reality, it is tedious. He stands in the street until his legs are sore and his feet swollen.

The first day, Master Chen did not come out; nor the second, nor the third day either. On the fourth day, about noon, Master Chen emerges with a middle-aged man who



is wearing a long gown. Master Chen is just past the gate when Yang Luchan steps forward, bowing deeply. "Laoshifu gets up early! Xuesheng Yang Luchan greets you!"

Startled, Master Chen stops in his tracks. Looking at Luchan a long while, "Oh, it's you! Why are you still here?" Luchan replies earnestly, "Xuesheng has come from a long way away. I am full of sincerity. Laoshifu's unwillingness to accept xuesheng causes xuesheng to have no face to return to his hometown."

Frowning, Master Chen says forcefully, "This is absurd! I have already told you, I have no intentions of accepting any disciple. Why are you making this difficult, stopping me in the middle of the street, what is this?" He glares at Luchan. Turning to his companion, "This is utterly ridiculous. I don't really know this person! Yet he stubbornly wants me to be his teacher, forcefully blocking my path!"

Yang Luchan raises both hands together, attempting to say more. The companion laughs. Seeing that Master Chen is very angry, he tries to persuade Luchan to go. "Chen

Laoshi doesn't want to accept a disciple, please go." He advises Luchan to come visit if he has matters to discuss, but it's not sensible to block the street just to talk. As they walk away, he tells Master Chen not to hold a grudge because young people these days have no manners.

As they walk off Luchan thinks, "Since he is with someone, obviously he has things to do. I should have waited until he was alone, and then pleaded my case with him."

Everyday Yang Luchan goes to Nanhengjie to wait. After two weeks he had seen him a few times, but always with friends or female relatives, so Luchan didn't dare to approach.

Finally, late in the day, Master Chen walks out of his door all by himself. It looks like he's going for a leisurely walk. Luchan says softly, "At last, here's my chance!"

He slips out from behind the building, falling on his knees to bow. "Laoshifu!"

Master Chen, startled, steps aside muttering, "It's that hateful young pain-in-the-ass who comes to the door with gifts and refuses to leave."



"Yang xiongdi, you are so completely obnoxious! Why do you bother me? I have told you countless times, I will not accept a disciple. Yet still, you hover in front of me? What do you intend to do?"

Luchan restrains himself. He is full of determination, drawn to find this teacher and learn Taijiquan. If he fails he will be unable to face his friends and relatives. "Xuesheng is sincere, has no intention to go home, or to find someone else. Even if I die in Chenjiagou, in search of ..."

Chen Qingping is livid, "You dare to resort to strong-arm tactics to forcefully make me accept you! Tell me something. I don't want to take in a disciple, so how are you going to make me?"

Yang Luchan begs and implores, "Laoshifu, let's walk along. Laoshifu already has a few good skilled disciples. You have accepted others, why not accept me? Why exclude me? Besides, it's not like xuesheng is unwilling to learn..."

Yang Luchan doesn't realize that he is pouring fuel onto the fire of Master Chen's anger.

He suddenly turns and puts his finger right onto Luchan's nose. "Since when do I tolerate people like you who want to force themselves down my throat? It's true; I'm willing to accept disciples. I don't want to accept you! What can you do? Those disciples I accept need to know first of all how to respect a teacher, be dedicated, work hard, and have the ability to read people's minds. Those scoundrels who just eat and laze around, the more they depend on me, the more I won't accept them! Let me tell you, there are all sorts of hoodlums out there. They have heard I have some ability. They love to kowtow and pay respects to me; what peace do I have? Say they learn my art with humility and respect and then turn around and act with evil intent. What then? I will not be duped like this. I have already inquired about your character. No matter what you say, I wouldn't dare to accept you. You think you can wear me down and I will finally accept you; you are sadly mistaken. Go away! If you don't like this, why not fight with me? I don't mind accommodating you. Show off your ability to fight! Maybe my poor old bones can endure your beating!"

Chen Qingping is shouting now. He spreads his arms, "What do you say? What are you going to do? Are you going to move or not!"

Yang Luchan realizes that Master Chen has been hearing malicious talk. "Please, Chen Laoshi, this is too much! I have admired you for a long time. I have come here with the warmest regards to seek your teaching and learn Taijiquan. There is no evil in my heart. It's true that I have offended your disciple, Fang. He was riding quickly on a donkey through the busy market when he broke someone's china. He didn't offer to pay the damages and instead began to beat the old peddler. I did not think this was fair, and tried to mediate. Your disciple, Fang, beat me as well for trying to make things right. I don't know what you have heard about this incident but I swear that this is the truth! What did I do wrong? If you will not accept my honest intentions, I will find someone who will!"

Translated by Mui Gek Chan
Adapted by Dave Barrett





Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan SEMINARS



Master Yang Jun

6th Generation Yang Family and

5th Generation Lineage Holder of Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan



Buffalo, New York

Sept 13-15, 2013 Hand Form
Contact: Robert A. Gott
3701 McKinley Pkwy,
Suite 832
Blasdell, New York 14219
Ph: (716) 822-0222
Fax: (716) 822-0222
bobgott@yangfamilytaichi.com

Rome, Italy

Oct 25-27, 2013 Instructors
Contact: Claudio Mingarini
Via Alfredo Casella 23
00199 Rome RM
Italy
Tel: 39 06 8610590
Cell: 39 347 3635333
claudio@yangfamilytaichi.com

Ribeirão Preto, Brazil

Nov 15-17, 2013 Hand Form
Contact: Fernando De Lazzari
Rua Cerqueira Cesar, 1825
Ribeirão Preto – SP – Brazil
Ph: +55 (16) 3911-1236
fernando@yangfamilytaichi.com
www.taichichuan.com.br

Fenyang, China

Mar 07, 2014 Hand Form
Mar 8-9 Push Hands
Contact: Song Bin
Fenyang Library
Shanxi 032200 China
Phone: 03587222713
songbin@yangfamilytaichi.com
http://www.fybrt.com

Cambridge, United Kingdom

Oct 19-20, 2013 Hand Form
Oct 21 Push Hands
Contact: Mike Taylor
& Martin Fayers
3 Pitfield Close, Fenstanton
Cambridge PE289FE UK
Tel: +44 1480 392534
mike@yangfamilytaichi.com
martin@yangfamilytaichi.com

Sao Paulo, Brazil

Nov 8-10, 2013 Instructors (M Yang Jun)
Nov 8-10 Hand Form (Fang Hong)
Nov 11-12 Sword Form
Contact: Angela and Roque Soci
Rua Jose Maria Lisboa 612, sala 07
Sao Paulo - SP
CEP-01423-000
Brazil
Ph: +55 11 3884.8943
+55 11 4704.6578
angela@yangfamilytaichi.com
www.sbtcc.org.br

Mendoza, Argentina

Nov 23-25, 2013 Hand Form
Contact: Sergio Arione, Victor Velazquez
San Martin 1297
Godoy Cruz
Provincia de Mendoza, Argentina
Phone: (0261) 156 57 21 71
(0261) 431 3982
sergio@yangfamilytaichi.com
victor@yangfamilytaichi.com

Mexico City, Mexico

Mar 21-22, 2014 Sword Form
Mar 23 Push Hands
Contact: Daniel Corona
Acoxpa 343, 3rd Flor
Tlalpan, DF 14370
Mexico DF, Mexico
Phone: +52 5559055963
daniel@yangfamilytaichi.com
http://www.taichilegacy.org/



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