

Tai Chi
Chuan

37

Fall - Winter
2015

国际杨氏太极拳杂志

Journal of the International Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan Association

MASTER'S *Degree*

Sports Pedagogue - Yang Style Tai Chi Chuan



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

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PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Transcribed by Carolyn Fung



Yang Jun
President

Dear Member, our International Association's China trip took place this summer. I am happy to share some of the trip's highlights with you.

We visited many interesting places, one being Jiuzhaigou. This was the first time I visited Jiuzhaigou. I was really impressed by the clean water and the beautiful scenery. The water was so clear I could see the bottom of the lake and it appeared to have different layers and colors due to mineral deposits. It was very unique. Wherever I looked, there was something beautiful to see at Jiuzhaigou. I believe you would enjoy it too and highly recommend that you visit sometime.

Later, we met other tour members in Xi'an, a 2000-year-old historical capital city. We visited the site of the ancient terracotta warriors. We also visited the famous Night Market on Muslim Street and enjoyed the local culture and sampling different food. It is easy to be impressed by the history in Xi'an. It is a city where you can experience, and truly feel China's history and culture.

We travelled to Luoyang and toured the Longmen Grottoes. It was evident how important Buddhism was to the Wei Dynasty (386 to 585 AD). Thousands of Buddha statues were carved right into the rock along the river. Even today, many are kept in good condition with the original color on them.

We also visited two historical martial arts places: Shaolin Temple and my hometown of Guangfu. We have a saying in China that all Chinese martial arts originate from or have a connection to Shaolin. Since Tai Chi Chuan is a Chinese martial art, it felt special to be there. We saw the old training hall where the monks trained. We could see indents in the floor made over time due to their powerful stomping. Seeing this, we understood how hard the monks trained and were very impressed.



When our group arrived in Guangfu Town in Yongnian County, the first thing we did was visit the Yang family tombs. Local government officials were waiting for us to arrive and were organized and prepared for the ceremony. We had also prepared the people in our group for the ceremony. Everyone quietly walked into the memorial park and the ceremony took place in front of Yang Luchan's tomb. First, the family bowed and presented incense. Then the disciples presented incense and saluted, followed by international groups presenting incense and saluting. Everyone felt a great connection with the Yang family ancestors.

Something else occurred that made the ceremony very special to us. The night before, we learned that heavy rain was forecasted. We were concerned that we might have to delay the ceremony and this would affect our travel schedule. But at the time of the ceremony, the weather was fine, just a little bit cloudy, which helped create a solemn, serious, respectful feeling. When we were reading through the memorial part of the ceremony and burning incense, we could feel just a few drops of rain. When the ceremony finished, the rain stopped.

There is a local saying that when you memorialize ancestors and have a cloudy sky with a few light drops of rain, it is a sign that the ancestors are there with you and can hear you. It was so special and everyone felt very moved.

One of the most important parts of our China trip was my grandfather Yang Zhenduo's 90th birthday celebration, successfully organized by my brother Yang Bin. It was held in the city of Taiyuan and over 500 people attended, many travelling a great distance to attend. Grandmasters Chen Zhenglei, Ma Hailong, Zhong Zhenshan, and Sun Yongtian attended as well as Handan government officials. I would like to thank everyone who attended, including our international group.





My grandfather has dedicated his life to Tai Chi Chuan, worked hard to promote the art, and has been highly influential locally, nationally, and internationally. It was incredibly rewarding for him to see at this celebration how much people appreciate all his effort and dedication. He was so grateful to everyone for attending that he, despite being 90 years old, spontaneously decided to walk through the huge party area to each table to thank everyone instead of just thanking people from the stage and returning to his seat as planned. Audience members were very moved by his kind gesture and it became a special highlight of the party.

Also, I would like to thank those who organized and participated in the “Cha Cha Slide” dance at the birthday celebration. During the trip, some members of our international group found time to practice this dance for the party. In the beginning, I was a little worried because the Chinese planners were preparing a more traditional, serious program of opera and traditional singing. I wondered if our dance was serious enough and appropriate for the evening’s entertainment program. But our international group practiced hard and performed very well at the party. After the group performed, the dancers came down to the floor area and invited everyone to participate. Everyone had fun dancing. It was a great success! This performance became a highlight of my grandfather’s birthday party. Thank you to Therese Teo Mei Mei and Pam Boyde for this idea and helping to make it a success.

Our association had another recent success I would like to share with you. In the spring of this year, we signed an agreement with Veliko Turnovo University in Bulgaria to offer a Master’s degree program in Tai Chi Chuan. We have been working on this program



for more than two years. Making this kind of connection with a university is a great opportunity for us. The program will begin next spring. A Bachelor's degree is required to qualify for this program. This is a 2-year program with four semesters. Students will receive the curriculum online, study long-distance, and write an exam on the curriculum subjects at the end of each semester. They will be required to attend a 10-day in-person training at the university each semester where they will receive training in physical education theory and practical training in Tai Chi Chuan.

I believe this is the first time that a Master's degree in Tai Chi Chuan has been offered in an official university and I hope that through this program we can promote Tai Chi Chuan into many universities as part of their physical education programs. I hope that many people will participate in this program. I am willing to work with more universities so that more people around the world can receive this type of education. Thank you to Tihomir Todorov for all his hard work in making this connection for us with Veliko Turnovo University.

Finally, we will be redesigning our association's website. We look forward to having a fresh new website designed by Marco Gagnon that improves service for our members and the general public.

Overall, I think the main event for our association this year was my grandfather's 90th birthday celebration. This is the first time a Yang family member has lived into their 90's. His long life and health is a blessing to Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan. I sincerely hope he continues to be healthy for many years to come. We look forward to celebrating his 100th birthday! Thank you again to everyone who was able to attend his party. ☯



楊華






DAVE BARRETT

Editor

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

It was, without a doubt, the biggest party I've ever been to. The ingredients were epic. Take an enormous, 3-story high ballroom in Taiyuan's grandest hotel. Set up 50 round tables each seating 12 and decorate with white tablecloths and immaculate place settings. Festoon the entire room with red and yellow bunting, ribbons and balloons. Strategically place at each table a bottle of super special Fen Jiao, trucked in from Fenyang by Song Bin, whose family has been capturing lightning in a bottle for centuries. Introduce 600 people from all over China and the world, dressed to the nines. Add a beloved guest of honor and his equally beloved wife and family. Simmer for 3 hours of entertainment, speeches, singing, dancing, and increasing levels of merriment. Top off with a 9-story mango frosted cake and a rousing round of "Happy Birthday" and Voila!! I present you with Grandmaster Yang Zhen duo's 90th Birthday Party!!!

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



Forgive me, Gentle Reader, if my specific recollection of this amazing event is a bit hazy. I can still feel the goodwill, the bonhomie, the love for G.M. Yang Zhenduo's place in each of our lives. To be able to celebrate with him, his disciples, their students and families was to feel part of a movement dedicated towards the greater good. There is no way to estimate how many lives the Yang family has touched. It is the nature of our practice to create and nourish social learning circles and nowhere is this more evident than in Taiyuan.

As the evening progressed there were speeches from a variety of dignitaries including a lengthy harangue by a party official from Guangfu, the Yang family's ancestral hometown. The gentleman went on at such strident length that I noticed the air go out of the entire room. Everyone at my table assumed the expression of an errant schoolchild being lectured by the principal.

As if in response, after the speeches, G.M. Yang rose from his table and escorted by his grandsons on either side began to work the room. My table was at the back, so I had a clear view of his progress as he walked down one side and back up the other. It was a slow motion tornado! I remember a whirlwind of applause, delight, handshakes and waves. When he passed by our table, Mei Mei and Han Hoong threw themselves onto him bodily and hugged him. He maintained his root and delighted smile throughout.

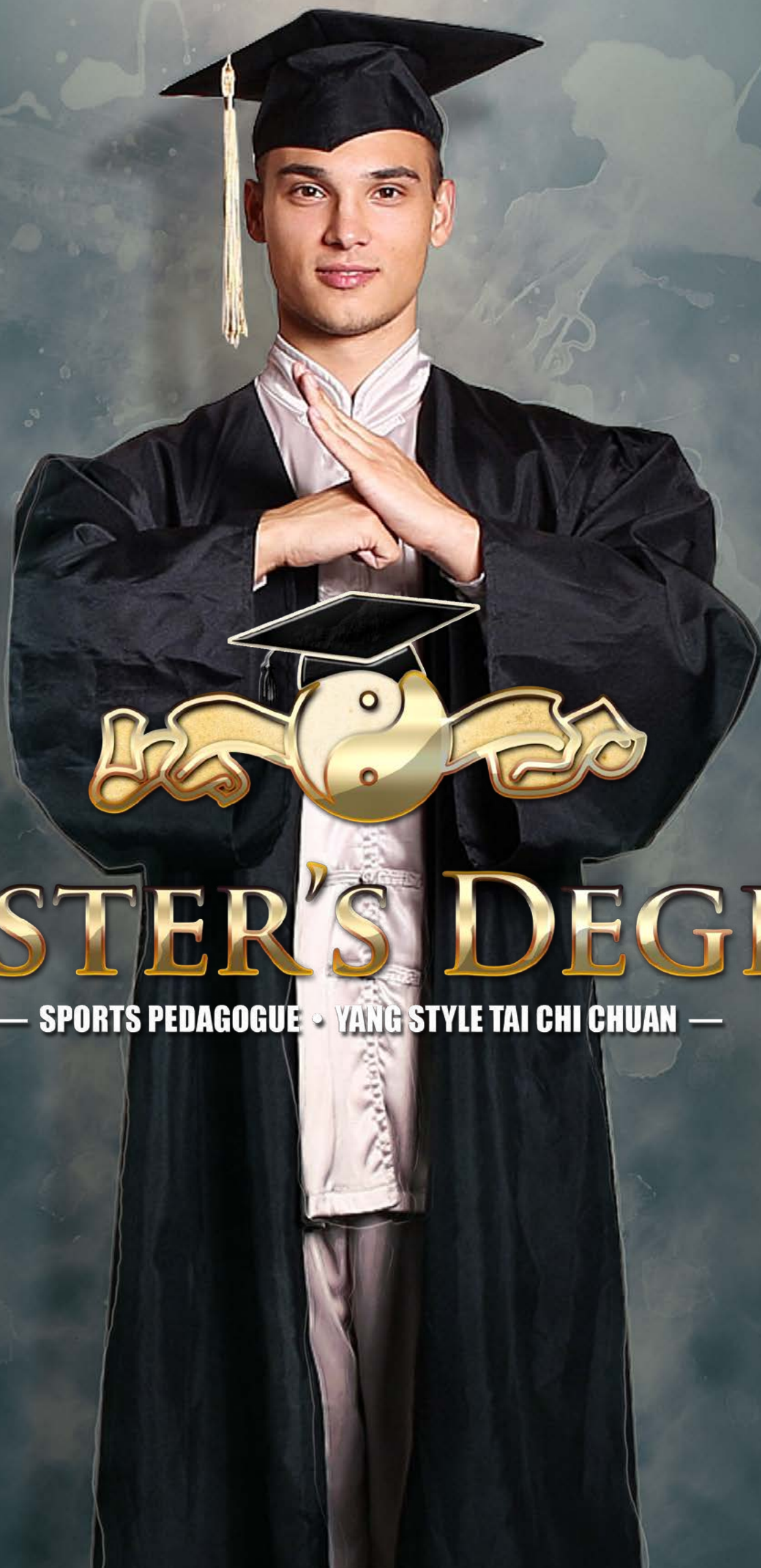
Having revived the assembly, revelers set to the important work of toasting: going from table to table pouring white lightning and having it poured for them. General bemused pandemonium ensued.

There was a variety show on the main stage, produced by local groups in the Shanxi Association. I seem to remember a very fine costumed group of Beijing Opera re-enactors, who in the middle of an aria started in on the most exquisite Taiji sequences. These were G.M. Yang's most senior disciples, who know how much he loves opera. I definitely remember the "Cha-Cha Slide" performance. Everyone rushed the stage to get in on the encore, including Master Yang Jun and Fang Hong who, as the kids say, danced their pants off. I glanced at the head table and all the Grandmasters were beside themselves with laughter.

I barely remember the interminable picture taking and G.M. Yang Zhenduo's patient, eternal smile as hundreds upon hundreds in various groups came on stage to memorialize this special event. Thinking to myself now, I don't remember the walk back to the hotel.

A good time was had by all.





MASTER'S DEGREE

— SPORTS PEDAGOGUE • YANG STYLE TAI CHI CHUAN —



The first Master's degree program in Yang Style Tai Chi Chuan ever created in the world was opened in Bulgaria at St. Cyril & Methodius University of Veliko Turnovo, School of Pedagogy.



MASTER'S DEGREE

— SPORTS PEDAGOGUE • YANG STYLE TAI CHI CHUAN —

BY TIHOMIR TODOROV

with Carolyn Fung

The Master's degree "Sports Pedagogue - Yang Style Tai Chi Chuan" will be sponsored by the International Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan Association, which has its headquarters in Redmond, WA, USA. The following article is an interview with Professor Hristo Iliev Bondzholov, PhD., Rector of the University of Veliko Turnovo and Grand Master Yang Jun, President of the International Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan Association:

Why is the University of Veliko Turnovo, in cooperation with the International Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan Association, opening a Master's degree program in Tai Chi Chuan, and what are the program's goals?

Prof. Bondzholov: The Master's degree program is a natural consequence of our cooperation with the International Yang Family TCC Association and a step forward in the right direction when it comes to offering opportunities for contemporary higher education. Studies show the need for qualified staff at clubs and as members of associations who can teach through new, innovative methods. There are qualified professors working at our university who can teach such subjects.



Who are the professors who are going to teach the different courses?

Prof. Bondzholov: Our professors are highly qualified with a great amount of work experience not only in Bulgaria but also abroad. They also speak multiple languages and are absolutely prepared to work with foreign students. The courses have been designed to be consistent with the specifics of the teaching.

Grand Master Yang Jun: The program is divided into two areas. One is academic teaching. The university's physical education professors will provide this. The other is practical training in Tai Chi Chuan. This will be provided by me and one or two assistant instructional professors from our international association who will teach with me.

What are the courses that are going to be taught?

Grand Master Yang Jun: The International Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan Association will teach theory and practical training of our hand form, weapons, push hands, and the 2-person form. Basically our whole system will be taught.

Prof. Bondzholov: The subjects that are going to be taught in the Master's degree program are especially chosen in order to give the students the needed pedagogical qualification. We also aim at giving the students the needed preparation when it comes to knowledge about the human body and psyche. This will be done through related subjects such as anatomy, physiology, psychology and pedagogy. The focus, of course, falls on the practice because this is the best way to master the methods of teaching. Our goal is

to prepare future pedagogues who would be able to teach in every single stage of school education and social educational institutions. The Master's degree program "Sports Pedagogue - Yang Style Tai Chi Chuan" also aims at giving the students a deep theoretical and practical knowledge to be used in their future practice as pedagogues. The educational content of the courses, included in the Master's degree program is designed to give the students the specific knowledge and skills connected not only with the health benefits of sports but also with the disciplinary ones.

- Deep knowledge in methodological, medical, sports, pedagogical and also managerial aspects of the sports training and physical education
- Deepening the knowledge of the teaching methods of physical education and sports
- Deepening the knowledge of the therapeutic functions of physical education, applied in the right educational conditions
- Mastering the pedagogical skills for making professional decisions
- Mastering skills for developing and adopting different projects in the field of physical education and sport

To whom is the Master's degree program addressed?

Prof. Bondzholov: It is addressed to every student who is willing to take part in the program, no matter what the specialty of their Bachelor's degree is. The courses are designed to be available even for students who have no previous knowledge in the field of the physical education and sports training.



Grand Master Yang Jun: People who have a Bachelor's degree from any country and are members of the International Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan Association are qualified to apply to the program. The University's academic committee will look at applications and decide whether or not to accept an applicant. The University will make the final decision. People who want a higher level of understanding, including a Western and Eastern perspective of Tai Chi Chuan may be interested in this program. Tai Chi Chuan is a traditional Chinese martial art that has been taught for hundreds of years. It has always been taught in the traditional way. Teaching Tai Chi Chuan within a university as a formal area of study will bring a new, higher level of teaching and understanding for students. Students will be able to understand the art from an academic perspective and also a more traditional Chinese perspective. Their knowledge of Tai Chi Chuan will be expanded beyond what is commonly learned elsewhere.

What is the duration of the Master's degree program?

Prof. Bondzholov: The Master's degree program's duration is 4 semesters of theoretical and practical courses.



What is the fee for this program?

Prof. Bondzholov: 1690 Euro per semester.

When will the Master's degree program begin?

Prof. Bondzholov: We are ready to start the program in March/April 2016. We would like to indicate that the procedures of the foreign diploma accreditations take a bit longer. They will take up to 3 months.

Where will the foreign students stay, train and study?

Prof. Bondzholov: The courses will take place at the University of Veliko Turnovo, to be more precise, at the renovated sports complex. The students will stay either on campus or in hotels near the University. The hotels will have pricing designed for students.

What is the diploma that the students will get at the end of the Master's degree program of "Sport Pedagogue - Yang Style Tai Chi Chuan" and how can they use it for their careers?

Prof. Bondzholov: The Master's degree program will give the students a lot of information about the innovations in the theory and practice in the field of sports training. New skills will be mastered which guarantee a highly professional level of the preparation of future physical education teachers. The students will also have the

needed knowledge and skills for research in the field of sports pedagogy. The alumni students will get a Master's degree diploma in Sports Pedagogy, and will have the following opportunities for future realization:

- Teachers in the fields of physical education and sports in every level of the educational system.
- Experts in MI, Bulgarian army and tourist sports sites.
- Managers, teachers, coaches and instructors in sport clubs, fitness clubs or other educational or public sports associations.

The students will also have the opportunity to continue their education and apply for a Doctorate degree in Sports Pedagogy.

The students, who have completed the Master's degree "Sports Pedagogue Yang Style Tai Chi Chuan" will be authorized to work in the following fields:

- Educational and disciplinary field
- Organizational, advisory and diagnostic field
- Advisory work with students, parents and teachers
- Coaching positions in various sports and recreational institutions



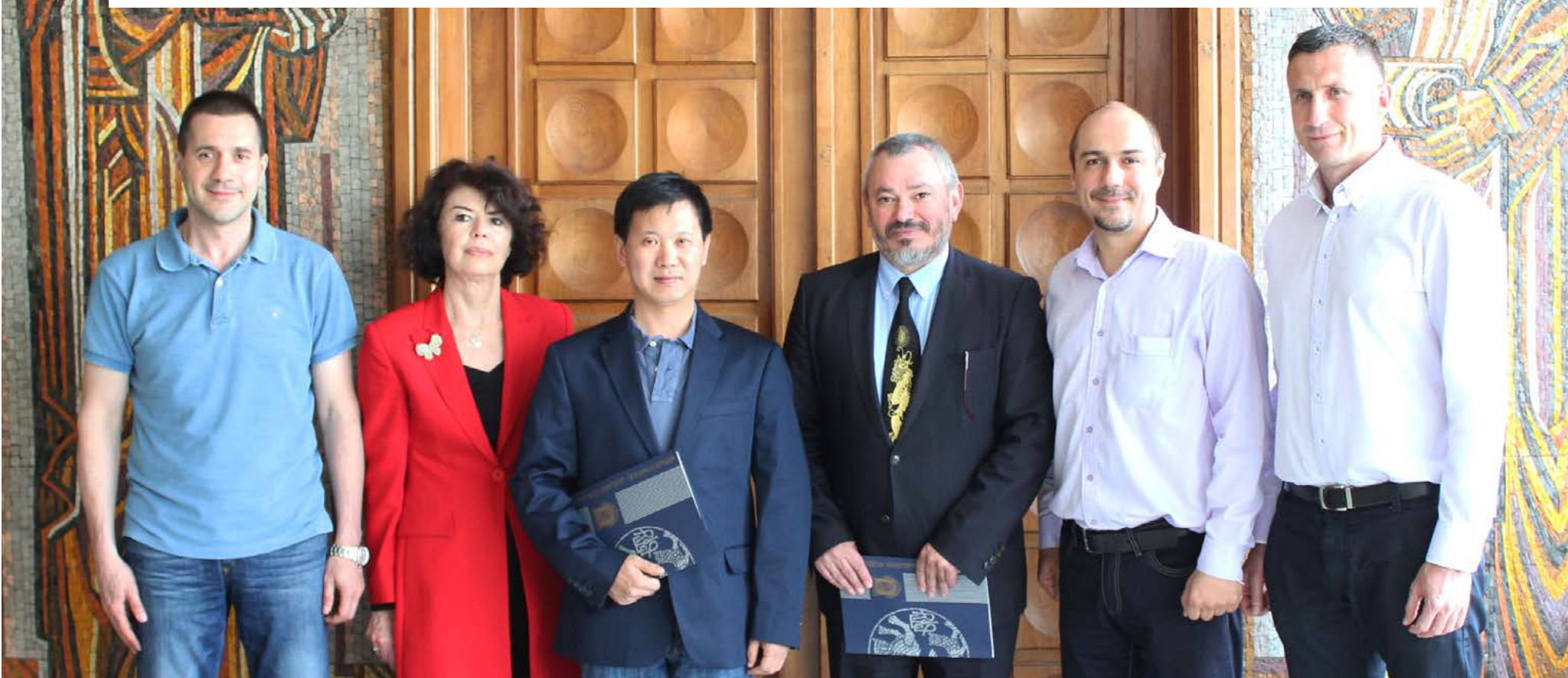
Grand Master Yang Jun, President of International Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan Association and Prof. Dr. Habil Plamen Legkostup, Former Rector of University of Veliko Turnovo .

Grand Master Yang Jun: After they graduate, students will receive an official Master's degree from the University. This will prove that they have received a high level of both academic and practical education. No matter what route they choose in their careers, the degree will be proof of advanced knowledge in Tai Chi Chuan from both a Western and traditional Chinese perspective.

Will the Master's degree program alumni be able to continue to master their skills in Yang Style TCC?

Grand Master Yang Jun: The University program will provide a great education, but Tai Chi Chuan's practice takes time and experience for a fuller understanding, so continuing education is needed to build one's skill in the art. Students will continue to be supported in studying Tai Chi Chuan through their membership in the International Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan Association, including our journal, seminars, and more. From what I understand, if we run this Master's degree program successfully, it may be possible to develop a Doctorate (PhD) program through the University. This would provide further opportunity for students to continue their education in Tai Chi Chuan.

Tihomir Todorov, Marketing Department, IYFTCCA, **Teresa Zuniga**, IYFTCCA, **Grand Master Yang Jun**, President IYFTCCA; Prof. **Dr. Habil Plamen Legkostup**, Former Rector of University of Veliko Turnovo, **Stanislav Bagalev**, IYFTCCA, Assoc. Prof. **Svetoslav Stefanov**, Tai Chi Chuan Master Degree Chief Officer, University of Veliko Turnovo



University of Veliko Turnovo

What are the historical, cultural and tourist places in the region that the students could visit?

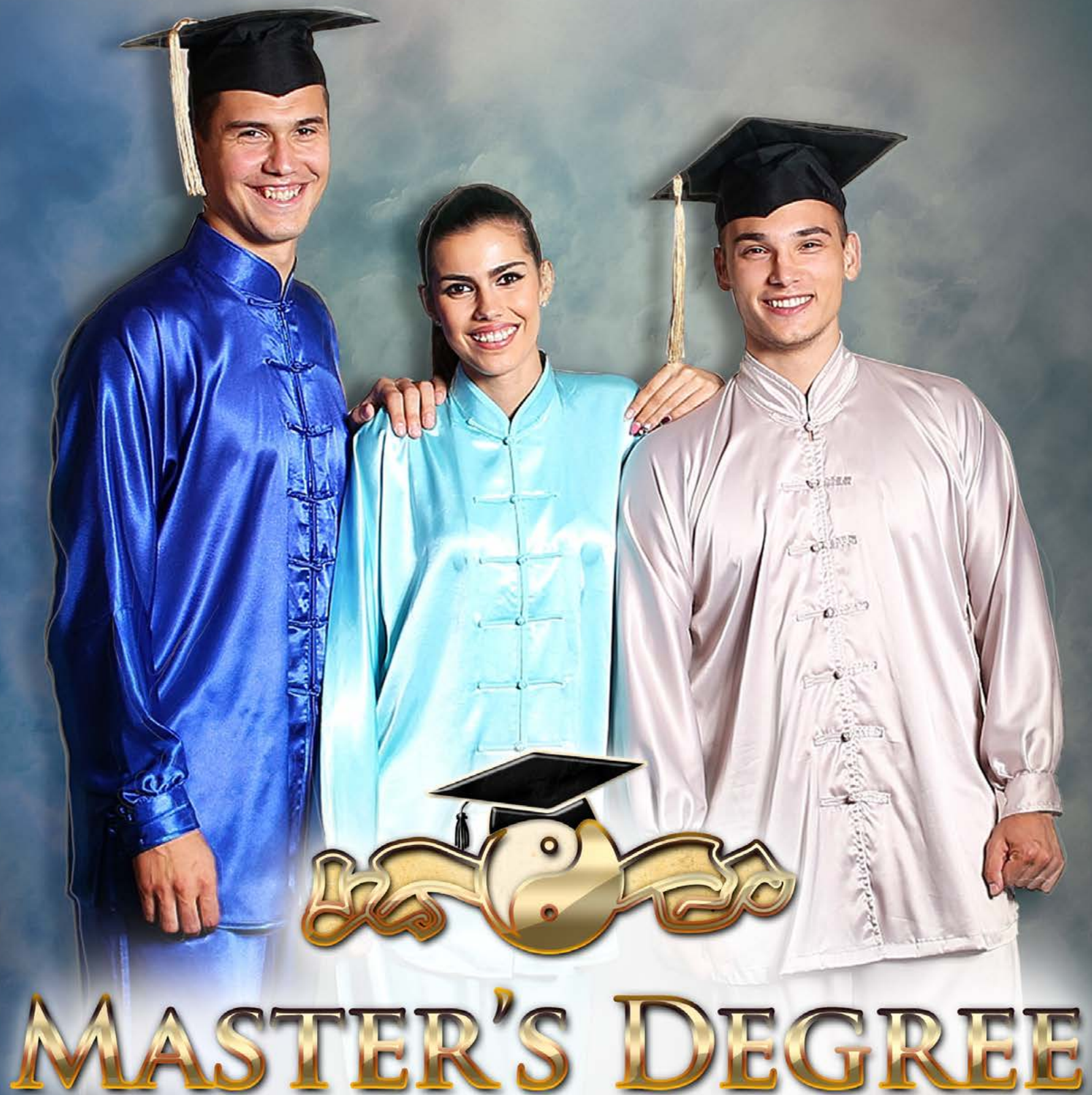
Prof. Bondzholov: Veliko Tarnovo is the old spiritual capital of Bulgaria. Different types of trips could be organized during their stay here: museum visits, historical sites visits, ethnographic complex visits. The town is situated in the heart of Bulgaria and the students could easily travel to different parts of the country.

How will transportation be organized?

Prof. Bondzholov: There is no need for special transportation. The halls and auditoriums of the University of Veliko Tarnovo are situated on campus and there is public transportation available.

Who should prospective students contact if they would like to enroll in the Master's degree program?

Prof. Bondzholov: There is a Special Inspector appointed to work with foreign students. He will take care of their administrative and household needs. Apart from this, we've appointed a Special Inspector in the Faculty of Pedagogy to organize the educational program, and also a Director of the Educational Department.



MASTER'S DEGREE

— SPORTS PEDAGOGUE • YANG STYLE TAI CHI CHUAN —

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mankind through
Tai Chi Chuan*



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Memories of TAIYUAN PAST

BY J.M. GEERING

DISCIPLE OF G.M. YANG ZHENDUO
Lausanne, Switzerland

1988 was the year.

Two years after I met G.M. Yang Zhenduo in Paris, Master Kou organized a 6 week stay in Taiyuan to practice with Master Yang Zhenduo .

We were helped by Mme. Liang and Mme. Yao. Master Yang Jun was a young man of 20 who joined us after his classes at the University.

There was a couple: Jacques and Jaki Paquet (who have since gone their separate ways) and two whose names I don't remember.

Left to Right:

Back Row:

Chantal Winter,
Phillipe,
Jacques Paquet,
Yang Zhenduo,
Jackie Paquet,
Jean-Marc Geering,
Pat Rice,
Mr. Wong

Front Row:

Mme. Yao, Yang Jun,
Mme. Liang



Memories of Taiyuan Past

Later, Pat Rice joined us. This was her first experience studying Traditional Yang Family Taijiquan.

G.M. Yang Zhenduo's assistants were charming and we are friends to this day.

The training took place near the Sports Hotel where we were lodging. The hotel was dark, cold and didn't bear any relation to modern standards today .

It was cold. Taiyuan's main fuel is soft coal. I remember that after using my handkerchief, it was dark from coal dust.

Sunday was the big day when G.M. Yang Zhenduo held his public lesson in Yingze Park.


The building from which he taught still exists. I was told it is an ancient library. In front was a terrace where G.M. Yang Zhenduo was overseeing a group of about 100 people. His loud and majestic voice gave the instructions for the practice.

I enjoyed staying in Yingze Park which seemed to me like an oasis of calmness. It's still the same today.

Taiyuan was a real provincial town with no street lights after 10pm.

A nice spot I discovered was called "restaurant street" which seemed to me to be the only lively place in town. Along the street were merchants who sold little toys they had made (I still have some).

Today I don't recognize my old Taiyuan any more. It seems to me that only Yang Family Taijiquan has remained the same.

I'd like to thank again our French-Chinese translator, Mr. Wang, who was very kind. Thanks to him, a little Taiyuan girl could be adopted by a Lausanne family. After all these years, I still meet her now and then. 

***I enjoyed
staying in
Yingze Park
which seemed
to me like an
oasis of
calmness.
It's still the
same
today.***



Hangzhou,
LONG AGO
Meeting Grand Master
Yang Zhen duo

BY PAT RICE

Center Director, Winchester, Virginia

It had to be Fate — that powerful word that covers the seemingly inexplicable. At the time it seemed simply a coincidence that I was introduced to Yang Zhen duo. Our meeting swept us into a series of events that could not have been foreseen or planned but in retrospect appear almost inevitable.

I first met G.M. Yang Zhen duo in Hangzhou at the International Wushu Tournament in October of 1988. I was there to compete as a member of the U.S. Wushu Team. He was there as an honored guest.



Hangzhou, Long Ago

During a break in the tournament activities, Steve Rhodes and I saw Master Chen Xiaowang sitting in the VIP section. Steve and I had worked together to bring him to A Taste of China's Summer Seminars earlier that year, and we wanted to greet him. As we made our way up the steps, we also nodded to our good friend Master Jou Tsung-hwa, who was in an animated conversation with a very distinguished looking gentleman. After we had exchanged greetings with Master Chen and were returning to the arena floor, Master Jou grabbed my sleeve to get my full attention and introduced me to G.M. Yang.

After I greeted the gentleman, Master Jou inquired, "Would you like to study with him?" I responded, "Of course! Is it possible?" Master Jou said simply, "I'll ask." G.M. Yang's reply was, "Yes, it's possible!" A group of students from France and Switzerland was in Taiyuan and had just finished the first week of a six-week training session with him. He invited me to join that group. I had been studying Taijiquan for more than ten years by then. He gave me his card and told me to notify him when I had completed my previously arranged trip to Beijing and had a flight to Taiyuan. Four days later I was there.

I studied with him for a month. We trained every day, morning and afternoon. In good weather, we were using an outdoor area near an arena, a few minutes walk from our hotel. G.M. Yang would arrive on his bicycle for each session. On rainy days we trained in a small area of the hotel dining hall.

I was delighted to meet the other folks in this special class. Jean-Marc Geering was one of them. He and the others were really helpful to me. I remember the couple: Jacques and Jackie Paquet, Chantal Winter from Lyon, Philippe.

G.M. Yang has a straightforward and very clear method of presenting instruction that many of us have been fortunate to experience. He has taught with the same methodology for a long time; it's very successful.

We had a lot of individual attention and corrections. I had previously learned two versions from different lineages of Yang style instructors. I was familiar with the basic long form format. I struggled like a novice for many hours to re-train myself to attain the proper qualities and characteristics. The skill sets of traditional Taijiquan are so marvelous when they are taught by the exemplar of the family. I was excited every single day and looked forward to each lesson.

Hangzhou, Long Ago

He taught with great precision using many repetitions. He so gently demanded and expected adherence to the standard forms that we practiced that much harder. It was a fabulous experience for me to learn during those sessions.

G.M. Yang had two assistants, Mme. Liang and Mme. Yao. They are now his disciples and long-time advanced students. They helped me catch up to where the group was in the form. One memorable aspect of my learning experience was that there was almost no English. All the others spoke French and a little English. A gentleman had been hired to translate from Chinese to French. Since I don't understand French, most of the time one of the others would be kind enough to tell me a bit of what was said. By the way, this Chinese gentleman had good

French, but he didn't know Taijiquan! Master Yang would talk at length; the translator would tell us, "He's talking about the waist area." We'd ask eagerly, "What about it?" After another lengthy explanation from G.M. Yang with significant gestures, the translation would be: "He says you should use it."

Master Yang Jun joined us for the afternoon sessions. He was in college classes during the earlier part of the day. It was obvious even then—he was about 19 years old—that he was highly skilled. He participated by leading the practices, which was great. He didn't know any English then.

We were all staying at the old Sports Hotel. The food was quite good. Because the cooks thought the French liked frog legs, they served those nearly every day at lunch. The others had grown tired of them, so I feasted happily. Taiyuan did not have full-time electric supply in those days. Sometimes we were scheduled for electric (lights, hot bath water, television) and sometimes not. Chantal and I liked to take walks during the afternoon "rest time," so we explored Taiyuan. This was after we were told that it was "not suitable" for foreign women to walk around by themselves. Of course, we'd promised not to do so.

We had a driver to take us on Sunday mornings to Yingze Park to participate in the public Taijiquan practices led by G.M. Yang. One of my favorite lifetime memories is of being in that park early on cold November mornings, actually participating in a traditional Taijiquan-in-the-park scene. There were many students, bundled in heavy coats, hats, gloves, and scarves. We gathered at the Ming Library, on the esplanade, the steps, and the approaching walkways,

It was a fabulous experience for me to learn during those sessions.




Hangzhou, Long Ago

spread out many ranks deep. G.M. Yang positioned himself on the terrace at the top of that imposing set of steps, from where he led our practice. He called the moves in his booming voice that carried across the park. I used to pinch myself to be sure I wasn't merely dreaming.

Somehow a local college had discovered that Jacques had been the coach of the national French basketball team, and the college had invited him to come in the evenings to coach "the basketball girls". These were young women who were training to be teachers and coaches themselves. Jacques used the skills that he had learned studying Taijiquan, such as staying focused; being more aware of their footwork; moving while taking in cues both close and far; breathing to stay calm; relaxing to maintain stamina. He combined all of these with his repertoire of basketball drills. I went along to watch. It was fascinating to see how well he—and they—incorporated Taijiquan principles into the game. At the end of the coaching sessions, they played a demonstration game with another team, and they won, using their new skill sets. Later, I interviewed Jacques about this unique interchange, and I wrote an article for *Internal Arts* magazine about that experience.

I requested an interview with G.M. Yang, which was granted, to my great satisfaction. In attendance, besides the translator, were a couple of party officials. Marvin Smalheiser published that interview in *Tai Chi* magazine in June, 1989. As always, G.M. Yang spoke brilliantly, going straight to the heart of Taijiquan, its purposes and benefits.

During that interview, I issued a firm invitation for him to come to the United States, to be featured as the special guest instructor for A Taste of China. I wanted him—and the officials—to understand that our organization was an established business since 1983. We would provide for him an appropriate venue, invite a large number of students, and make all necessary arrangements for his travel and accommodations and safety, as well as his visa to the US. The fact that we'd already brought in Grandmaster Chen Xiaowang was a point in our favor.

Although we couldn't set a satisfactory date for 1989, we pursued the invitation. Heaven smiled on me and we were delighted and highly honored to sponsor G.M. Yang's first visit to the U.S.A. in 1990. 

***I used to
pinch myself
to be sure I
wasn't merely
dreaming.***



THE LEARNING BRAIN

Part 2

A link between the brain mechanisms underlying motor learning
as described by modern Neuroscience and strategies for learning,
practicing and teaching Taijiquan.



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and DAVE BARRETT





THE MIRACLE OF MOTION

In Part 1 of this series, we explored the mechanisms of neuronal plasticity that allow us to learn. **Recent research indicates that a great level of residual plasticity is present in the adult brain.** This allows older individuals to learn new skills, like Taijiquan, and this learning process contributes significantly to better brain health.

What are the neural and muscular processes that are involved in executing a movement?

Consider this example: I am having breakfast with my wife and she holds out her teacup. I reach for the teapot and pour her a cup without spilling a drop, then refill my cup as well before setting it down. How does my brain organize and execute this complex motion? It has to evaluate the weight of the teapot, the trajectory of the reach to her cup, flow rate of the tea, path to my own cup and then back to the table. This is done in the blink of an eye.

Likewise, when we practice Taijiquan, movements are continuously planned and controlled by the brain and executed by a complex motor system that includes muscles, tendons, bones, and joints. What is known about this amazing capacity that involves so many components?

We still do not have a definite answer to the question of how we perform a movement because of the complexity of the neuromuscular system of the human body. There are more than 600 skeletal muscles in the body that one can move voluntarily. Moreover, there are multiple ways for humans to contract those muscles in order to achieve the same goal. In other words, there is no simple correspondence between a motor problem (like pouring tea) and a motor solution. This is due to the abundance of degrees of freedom (DOF) in the system. These variables are anatomical: moving muscles, bones and joints; physical: kinematic-like trajectories, velocity and acceleration; neurophysiological: multiple motoneurons can innervate one single muscle.

As the number of degrees of freedom increases, the difficulty in controlling the motor system increases exponentially. Consequently, while the human motor system is able to successfully and reliably accomplish a motor task, it rarely does so by reproducing again and again the details of a particular movement. The details vary from one time to the next, due to the internal noise of the system and variability of external circumstances. Nevertheless, the system is reliable in producing the motor task efficiently.



THE LEARNING BRAIN

How does the nervous system control freedom of motion?

There are several theories but let's explore very briefly two of those that seem to pertain to learning and teaching Taijiquan. The first is called "**Optimal Control**". This proposes that the choice of a given motor solution, for example, choosing a motor path for executing "grasping the bird's tail", is guided by optimally reducing the value of a pertinent variable, for example: the energy cost associated with the movement. The Russian neurophysiologist Nikolai Bernstein proposed that humans learn a movement by reducing the degrees of freedom. *This is done by stiffening the musculature in order to have tighter control and simplify the dynamics of the body.*¹

Taijiquan students may recall when they first started to practice how stiff their bodies were. One beginner asked recently, "Why do I feel like Frankenstein?" Once we gain some proficiency, we gradually "loosen up" i.e. relax restrictions. We explore the available freedom of motion to find the full potential of our bodies. We search to find the pathways that will relax the musculature to the minimum tension necessary for control.

The second theory is called "**Uncontrolled Manifold**". Let's explore it through an example: When we stand up from a chair, the head and the position of the center of mass are more tightly controlled than other more irrelevant variables like the motion of the hands. So during the learning of a movement, the central nervous system is limited to controlling variables relevant to the task performance and drops other irrelevant variables. This is very interesting for Taijiquan practice. At the beginning, one

has the tendency to control every muscle. As we progress, more and more muscular variables are left uncontrolled or "loosened" (in our Taijiquan slang). This may also explain why, as we learn, concentrating on one aspect of the motion (foot work) makes it harder to perform another task (hand work).

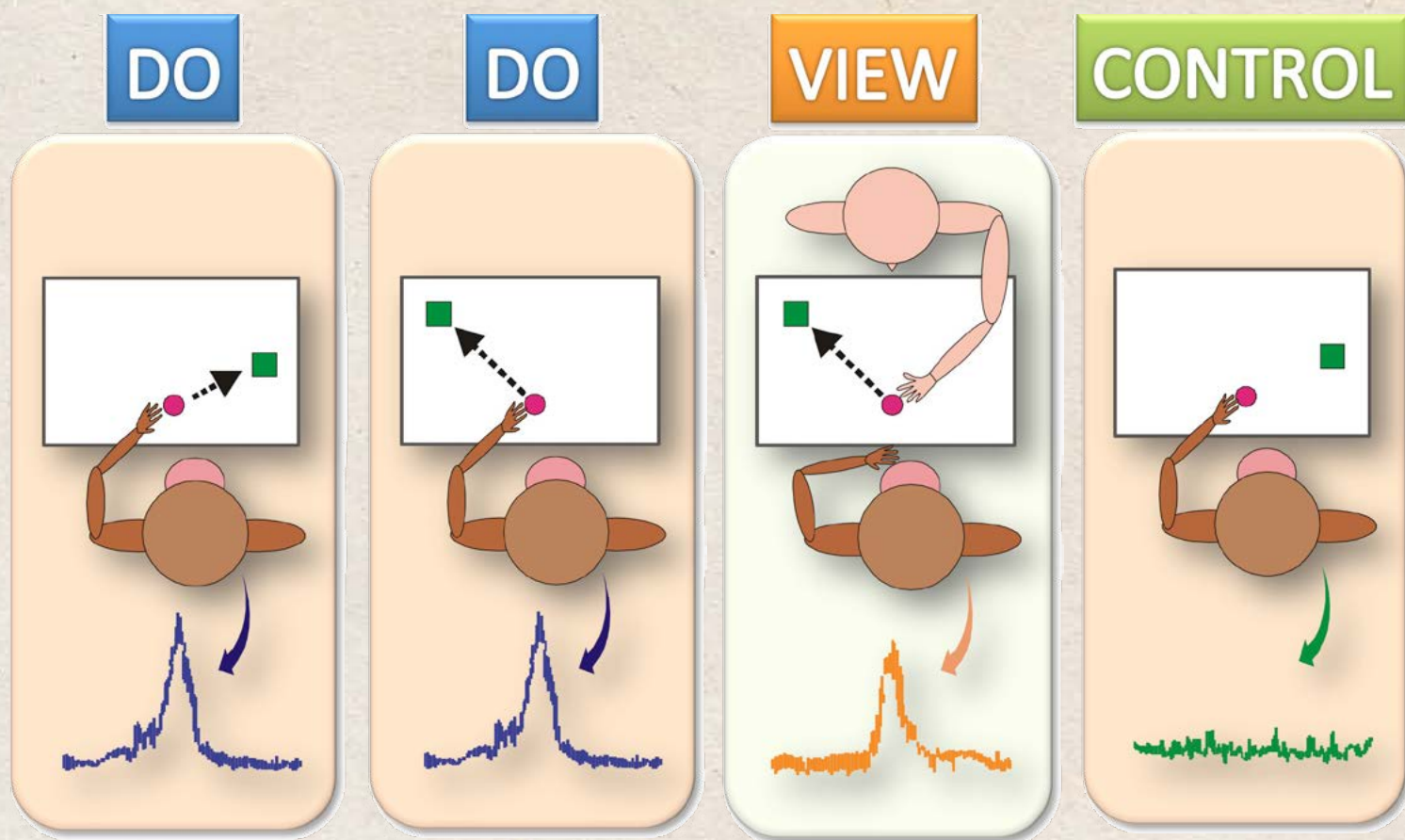
These theories are valuable to both student and teacher. As we learn Taijiquan, muscular tension and stiffness are the strategic methods the brain uses to control unfamiliar motions. It is counterproductive for the teacher to tell the student to "relax", indeed this can cause more tension. A better approach is to teach the methods of loosening and extending (*fang song-fang kai*) and show the student how to relax.

These theories are not mutually exclusive but the DOF problem will continue to be relevant as long as the functioning of the nervous system is not fully understood. One of the areas in which great progress has been made in this direction is the description of the neurophysiological properties of motor neurons. These are nerve cells that directly or indirectly control muscles.

How do single motor neurons sitting in particular areas of the brain activate at different phases of the execution of a movement? The best described motor neurons are the so called somatic motoneurons, which originate in the brain and project their axons to the skeletal muscles that we referred to above (such as the muscles of the arms and legs). However, more recently, a peculiar class of neurons has been described that are linked both to motor and visual functions, the "mirror" neurons.



THE LEARNING BRAIN



Mirror neurons are activated both when the monkey does a particular action (DO) and when it observes another individual (monkey or human) doing a similar action (VIEW). If no action is made by the monkey, mirror neurons are not active (CONTROL).

Mirror neurons: Monkey see, Monkey do

Mirror neurons are a particular class of visuomotor nerve cells, discovered 20 years ago in a frontal region of the monkey brain, namely the premotor cortex, that are activated both when the monkey does a particular action and when it observes another individual (a monkey or a human) doing a similar action.² Since then, experimental evidence has come forward establishing the existence of similar neurons in the human brain.³

What are these mirror neurons good for in the context of producing motion? Two theories, not exclusive of each other, are prevalent today. The first poses that the activity of mirror neurons mediates imitation: imitation of movements present in the observer's repertoire and/or imitation as a means of learning a new movement. As we have seen in Part 1, children learn new movements through a long period of imitation using a trial and error strategy. This is the case in the adult as well. Mimicking the instructor's movements is an important component of the learning process of Taijiquan. We will come back to this point later.

The second hypothesis proposes that mirror neurons are the basis for understanding the actions and intentions of another.⁴

Let's return to my breakfast table. As I grasp the teapot to pour some tea in my cup, my wife extends her cup and I know almost instantaneously what she is doing and why she is doing it. All this takes a few seconds, but how do I understand her action and intention so rapidly and seemingly without effort?



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The proposed mechanism that unifies action perception and action understanding is as follows. When observing an action being done by someone else, a group of mirror neurons that is usually linked to the programming of that action is activated in the observer's motor system. Since the observer is aware of the outcome of his motor acts, he also immediately understands what the other individual is doing and why she is doing it.

In monkeys, intransitive movements (i.e. movements that are not directed towards an object) do not produce mirror system activation. Mirror neurons selectively discharge when the animal observes an action (e.g. grasping grapes) within a given specific action (e.g. grasping grapes for eating but not grasping grapes for moving them from one place to another).

It is counterproductive for the teacher to tell the student to “relax”, indeed this can cause more tension.

Therefore, the neural activities of those mirror neurons code not only for the motor act of grasping but also for the motor act implied by an action (grasping for eating). The monkey sees someone else grasping grapes. She not only understands that motor act but also is able to predict the next movement (e.g. bringing the grapes to the mouth). This means that when monkeys see someone else grabbing grapes, they not only understand that motor act but also are able to predict the next movement, bringing the grapes to the mouth. They understand the intentions of the observed motion.

Contrary to monkeys, movements with no explicit purpose or object do activate a subpopulation of mirror neurons in humans. However, movements with particular goals activate most of the human mirror system. This is important in developing effective teaching strategies for Taijiquan. As we learn the empty hand form the martial applications and meaning of the movements are not always clear. Many movements appear devoid of any purpose.

As the motions are taught it is important to explain each movement by showing its martial application. This promotes the optimal activation of the mirror neuron system. This gives the student intrinsic meaning to the movements and an explicit goal to their execution.

“You can observe a lot just by watching”

Yogi Berra (1925 - 2015)

Since their discovery, mirror neurons are being studied in the laboratory using real actors performing a movement in front of a monkey or a person. It was unclear until recently if the visual responses to the same motor act presented in movies on a screen were the same as for a live action. Recordings of the responses of mirror neurons to the presentation of real-time and filmed actions showed that responses were similar.⁵



THE LEARNING BRAIN

In both cases, the strength of the neuronal discharge was virtually the same. In addition to their interest for neuroscience research, these results clearly indicate that **watching Taijiquan on a screen is an efficient way for activating the mirror system and acquiring the movements.** We shall see next that practicing along with an instructor can bring further improvements in the learning process.

Activation of mirror neurons depends on the point of view.

Having established that filmed stimuli activate mirror neurons in a similar manner as real stimuli, the researchers from Tübingen (Germany) and Parma (Italy) Universities investigated the influence of the view angle on their visual responses.⁶ They presented movies that showed the same motor act (grasping a fruit) seen from three different viewpoints: from the monkey's perspective, from a side view, and from the frontal view. Two thirds of the neurons showed a preference for one of the three viewpoints. The remaining neurons exhibited view-independent responses.

These results are important with respect to the spatial relationship between the Taijiquan teacher and the student. It can be inferred that **teachers should not stay always in the same place while showing the sequence.** They should change their location with respect to the students so that they can observe the teacher from different angles of view. In this way the number of activated mirror neurons is maximized.

Mirror neurons are involved in learning new movements.

The possibility that the mirror system is involved in the building of motor memories is of particular interest to the study of Taijiquan. Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation is a very new non-invasive technique where a device is used to activate particular regions of the brain. A few years ago, scientists from the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda (USA), Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore (USA) and the University of Wuerzburg (Germany) showed

that observation of another person's movements induces plastic changes in the brain area controlling movements. Moreover, if instead of observing a movement, the subjects are asked to perform the movement by themselves, the plastic changes are even larger. This research clearly indicates that **lasting changes in the motor cortex can be preferentially induced by practice rather than merely by observation.**⁷

What happens if practice and observation are combined together? This question is important for learning Taijiquan since it is the usual situation in class. The answer is that in the case of a period of practice and simultaneous observation, the learning of these movements is facilitated when compared to learning through motor practice alone. Interestingly, this improvement is only recorded if the observed and the practiced movements are the same.

Teachers should not stay always in the same place while showing the sequence.



THE LEARNING BRAIN

Patience is an essential element, especially at the beginning, as the brain resolves contradictions between the observed motion and the practiced form.

1 Bernstein, N., 1967, The Coordination and Regulation of Movements. Oxford: Pergamon Press

2 See a review in Rizzolatti G, Fogassi L. 2014, The mirror mechanism: recent findings and perspectives. Phil. Trans. R. Soc. B 369: 20130420.

3 Mukamel R, Ekstrom AD, Kaplan J, Iacoboni M, Fried I. 2010, Single-Neuron Responses in Humans during Execution and Observation of Actions. Current Biology 20:750-756.

4 Rizzolatti, G., Fabbri-Destro, M. and Cattaneo, L. 2009. Mirror neurons and their clinical relevance, Nature clinical practice - Neurology vol 5 no 1: 24-34; Rizzolatti G, Fogassi L, Gallese V., Mirrors of the mind. Scientific American. 2006, 295:54-61.

5 Caggiano V, Fogassi L, Rizzolatti G, Pomper JK, Their P, Giese MA, and Casile A. 2011, View-Based Encoding of Actions in Mirror Neurons of Area F5 in Macaque Premotor Cortex. Current Biology 21, 144-148.)

6 Ibid.

7 Stefan K, Classen J, Celnik P, Cohen LG, 2008, Concurrent action observation modulates practice-induced motor memory formation. European Journal of Neuroscience 27:730-738.

These findings indicate that coupling observation with execution facilitates the formation of motor memories. The take home message here is important: practicing is good, watching is good, practicing while watching is better.

Sadly, the results of these experiments also point out a major problem. If what one is practicing does not match the observed motions, motor learning is impaired. This is the case most of the time at the beginning of the learning phase. How many of us can remember being mystified by the teacher's motions while trying to learn them in class? If the observed instructions and the physical practice are opposing each other, learning can be mighty slow going. Once the student's performance more accurately matches the teacher's, there is a synergy between observation and execution and learning is facilitated. Thus the speed of improvement depends on the phase of the learning process: slow at the beginning, faster as students advance.

Conclusion

In the Part 1 of this series we concluded that learning through mimicking and negative feedback (the Chinese way) and incremental learning through positive reinforcement (the Western way) should be unified in a balanced teaching strategy. In Part 2, we have shown that recent advances in neuroscience's understanding of the motor neuron system can be used for improving both learning and teaching Taijiquan. We have suggested that teachers should not ask/expect beginning students to relax since the muscles stiffen to decrease the degrees of freedom inherent in any motion. The techniques of loosening and extending (*fang song-fang kai*) should be taught to help resolve excess tension. Instructors should explain the martial application of the movements. When demonstrating, they should change their positions in the classroom so that the sequence can be observed from different perspectives. Patience is an essential element, especially at the beginning, as the brain resolves contradictions between the observed motion and the practiced form.

Producing a movement is not just programming a motor action. It involves sensory information and sensory feedback: visual, tactile, and proprioceptive. In the third and last article of this series we will explore the involvement of sensory feedback in the practice of Taijiquan and especially Push Hands (Tui Shou). We will try to answer the question of how does sensory feedback affect the way we produce a movement.





The Annotated Lexicon:
MIRROR NEURONS

BY HOLLY SWEENEY-HILLMAN

“Without a doubt this is one of the **most important discoveries ever made about the brain. Mirror neurons will do for psychology what **DNA did for biology**: They will provide a unifying framework and help explain a host of mental abilities that have hitherto remained mysterious and inaccessible to experiments.”**

Dr. V.S. Ramachandran



Mirror neurons link perception, action and intention. They bring together two complex areas of brain function: **sensory detection and motor planning.**

Researchers have discovered that complex motor actions, like classical dance or martial arts, are coded differently by an observer, depending on the observer's own expertise executing the specific movements.



Knowing about mirror neurons helps to explain strange aspects of human behavior like loving to watch sports. Imagine you are in a sports bar when the World Cup games are playing. People are riveted to the TV screens, whooping and hollering, reacting so personally to the movement of the players on the screen. The same goes for golf, tennis, football, baseball, car racing and all the rest. For each spectator's brain, seeing IS doing, and if they have actually practiced the sport they are watching, their brains are even more stimulated and their attention is even more rapt.

Researchers have discovered that complex motor actions, like classical dance or martial arts, are coded differently by an observer, depending on the observer's own expertise executing the specific movements. Human mirror neurons appear to code for "complete action pattern" based on experiments that compare mirror neuron activity in professional performers and non-performers.

An example of such an experiment compared mirror neuron activity within three subject groups: professional ballet dancers, professional capoeira martial artists, and control subjects with no specific movement expertise. Mirror neuron activity was monitored as the three subject groups watched videotaped movements of both ballet and capoeira. If the participants were expert performers, such as ballet dancers, their brains had a greater response to viewing ballet videos compared to viewing capoeira videos even though there is similarity in the types of movement in both disciplines. This particular experiment demonstrated that the expert brain is more stimulated by movements that have been studied and practiced with a given discipline.

The researchers who conducted this study argued that there is a difference in activity between the brain of a professional dancer and an avid dance enthusiast who watches dance but has not acquired the motor skills of dance.¹ Personal experience with performing specialized movement patterns appears to be critical in the difference of response levels of mirror neurons within the brain. (See Chapters 4 and 37, *The Cambridge Handbook of Expertise and Expert Performance*, edited by Ericsson, Charness, Feltovitch and Hoffman; Cambridge University Press, 2009)




Photo by Isabel Munoz

Knowing about mirror neurons has helped me to understand why my husband enjoys watching golf matches on TV. “Enjoys” is an understatement. He watches in a trance-like state. I come into the room, watch with moderate interest for a few minutes. I check out what people are wearing. I appreciate the beauty of the landscape. My interest, unlike my husband’s, is not glued to the TV screen. Here’s the difference: my husband plays golf and I do not. His mirror neurons are much more active when he watches golf because he is a golfer.

This aspect of mirror neurons implies that after we learn a new motor skill, we see the world differently and we understand actions differently. For those of us who feel transformed by the practice of Tai Chi, we can be reassured that there is real science that validates this transformation.

Mirror neurons help people coordinate joint actions swiftly and accurately. They provide a “we-centric” space for doing things together. When engaged in a cooperative task, your mirror neurons help you anticipate the actions of other people. When practicing Tai Chi forms in a group, you are in a shared peripersonal space with mirror neurons mapping the interaction.²

All Tai Chi players have experienced this unique pleasure. It’s a type of brain stimulation that occurs when practicing in a group. It is uniquely fulfilling and leads to long friendships within the practice groups as well. It transmits Tai Chi’s cultural values such as equanimity, patience and perseverance.

Moving skillfully and peacefully together seems to be something the whole world needs right now to create more harmonious and benevolent cultural bonds. Growing more Tai Chi groups around the world is our mission. (See: *The Body Has a Mind of Its Own*, S. Blakeslee and M. Blakeslee, Random House 2008) 

Suggestions for further inquiry:

- <http://www.npr.org/2011/02/14/133026897/v-s-ramachandrans-ales-of-the-tell-tale-brain>
- <http://nautil.us/blog/mirror-neurons-are-essential-but-not-in-the-way-you-think>
- Where do Mirror Neurons come from?
- <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0149763409001730>
- The mirror neuron system: How cognitive functions emerge from motor organization:
- <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0167268110001770>
- Mesmerising mirror neurons:
- <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1053811910002028>

1 Calvo-Merino, B., Glaser, D.E., Grezes, J., Passingham, R.E., and Haggard, P. (2005) Action observation and acquired motor skills: An fMRI study with expert dancers. *Cerebral Cortex*, 15, 1243-1249.

2 “The invisible volume of space around your body out to about arm’s length – what neuroscientists call peripersonal space – is a part of you. This is not a metaphor but a recently discovered physiological fact.” *The Body has a Mind of Its Own* , pg.3

BY JUDITH REW

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FINDING INNER PEACE





TEACHING TAI CHI IN PRISON

Once or twice a week for the past year I've made the 25-minute drive from the leafy, wealthy suburb of Montclair, New Jersey, to teach **Tai Chi at a men's prison in Newark**. Delaney Hall sits next door to maximum security Essex County Jail, a huge complex of buildings, catwalks, and razor wire, painted a cheerful teal green. Delaney Hall is a much smaller, 1,200-man facility, made of greystone that except for the razor wire could be a hospital or orphanage. These are two of the eight prisons inside Newark alone, a city with about 278,000 residents—50% African American and 25% Hispanic, with a medium income of \$33,000, and a crime rate, though dropping, high above national or New Jersey levels.

I was hired to teach Tai Chi as part of the "**Inner Peace Program**", the brainchild of the prison's Family Services Program manager, Dr. Erin Walker. Delaney Hall is a privately owned, medium security prison that, like a halfway house, offers drug and alcohol abuse counseling, parenting classes, and couples counseling. It has special events that allow the families of the men, especially their children, to visit often. Dr. Walker thought it would be beneficial to add meditation and Tai Chi classes to help the residents work on their "inner life." She and interns from a local university teach the meditation classes. I teach the Yang Style 16-movement hand form.

We hold a "graduation," about every two months, recognizing men who have attended at least four Tai Chi and three meditation classes. We honor them with a certificate, a letter to the judge that attests to their commitment and participation, some mala beads (from the yoga meditation tradition), and a little party including cake and picture taking. So far we've graduated about 60 men.





FINDING INNER PEACE

WELCOME TO OUR BIG FAMILY

The four classes required to “graduate” provide only the most basic introduction to Tai Chi. But because of the shortness of many sentences and the unpredictability of release we made it an attainable goal for nearly everyone. Most men are sent to Delaney Hall for one of three reasons: they have been charged with or convicted of relatively minor crimes (drugs, traffic offenses, parole violations), are unable to pay the bail and are awaiting a court hearing that can take six months or more, or need services not offered at Essex County Jail.

The graduation ceremony is quite moving. For some, this is probably the first time they have graduated from anything. I begin with a little speech about the lifelong benefits of Tai Chi practice and tell them that they are now part of the “big family” (the “da jia” in da jia hao) of Yang tai chi practitioners across the world. Many of these men have never even left the city of Newark. This is a source of inspiration, imagination, and a feeling of belonging to something other than the general population of a prison—or a gang. My welcome is sincere and they know it.

THE FIRST MEETING

Dr. Walker found me on the Bedminster-Montclair Center website. She thought that since I was from Montclair it wouldn't be too inconvenient, and that because I

practiced karate for several years before Tai Chi, I could work with men. After a couple of interviews, background check, urine test for drugs, and a note from my doctor confirming that I don't have TB, I signed a one-year contract and was issued a picture ID.

The program began one week after I returned from the Louisville Symposium. I was filled with ideas from the Master seminars, keynotes, and the QICP, which convinced me that teaching the 16 form would be the best approach.

We decided that I would begin with an introductory presentation. I prepared a little speech about Tai Chi, weaving in some history, the legend of Chang San Feng (the snake and crane story has become a staple), an explanation of “internal arts” and soft energy, and the health benefits of regular practice. I brought color blow-up photos of Tai Chi players in Chinese parks, Kung Fu movie posters, our own Yang Masters, and a big poster I created myself of the 16 movements. I also brought some CDs of Chinese music as I was given the use of a boom box. I'm not allowed to bring anything “electronic” into the prison. I enter with nothing but my Tai Chi shoes.

The class is held in the “large lecture hall,” a cavernous, echo-y room set up with rows of plastic chairs for presentations





FINDING INNER PEACE

and meetings, and cleared for activities like Tai Chi. The first time I walked in, about 60 men were seated and waiting and I summoned something in me I didn't know was there. About five years of Tai Chi teaching and a bit of other teaching experience have somewhat prepared me for public speaking, and of course I love to talk about and demonstrate Tai Chi. But this was something altogether different.

I made them stand and salute me with a "Laoshi Hao," which got their attention to be sure, and I started talking. They were quiet, respectful, genuinely impressed with my little demonstration. They asked questions that were so intelligent I had to go do research to come back the next week with answers. Afterwards, one man came up to show me the sketches he had done of me doing the form. Several asked how to spell and pronounce the Chinese words I used. I have since added to our vocabulary "Da Jia Hao," "Zai Jian," and "Xie Xie Ni," and I wouldn't be surprised if some of the Chinese characters have turned up on tattoos. Many took notes. Some told me about medical issues, their own experience with martial arts, and their military backgrounds. Much of their knowledge comes from *The Karate Kid* and other Kung Fu movies.

After about a half-hour presentation Dr. Walker said, "Well, let's just clear away the chairs and try it!" I found myself, a 60-something-year old, 4'11" white lady, staring out at 60 men, 90% African American, most under 30 years old, who were quietly and intently trying to wave hands like clouds...like me! It was a very emotional moment. I knew this could work.

"LAO SHI HAO!"

I decided that running the class in a very formal way would help create an atmosphere of mutual respect, learning, and calm. I have taken many of my cues from Grandmaster Yang Jun's seminars. We begin with a bow, at which they say "Lao Shi Hao, and I say "Da Jia Hao," though this gets complicated as the men don't all arrive at once. There is a fair amount of noise and chaos both inside and outside the doors of the lecture hall before things settle down. We play Chinese music, which they sometimes ask me to turn up in order to block out the noise from the hallway.

We begin with a short routine of warm-ups. These are a mixture of qigong and stretching and breathing exercises I've learned from Association teachers, *The Harvard Medical School Guide to Tai Chi*, and Arthur Rosenfeld's *Tai Chi The Perfect Exercise*. All emphasize Tai Chi principles like empty and full, breathing, and waist turning. It is an easy routine and there is no pressure to learn it. I find this gets students relaxed and in the "zone."

I made them stand and salute me with a "Laoshi Hao," which got their attention to be sure, and I started talking.





FINDING INNER PEACE

We always begin with Standing Meditation (I look across the room to many closed eyes), and one of my blow-up pictures is of Yang Jun performing it. Then we start in on the 16. Because of the challenges of a constantly shifting population, I can't really teach Tai Chi in the careful, slow way most of us prefer. We usually go through the whole thing every class with me talking them through it. I demonstrate and move around the room, making corrections. We do this a few times.

I try to arrange the "experienced" guys around the edge like any class. I've seen some men turn from being quiet and sullen who kept their heads down and eyes averted to confident and smiling just by being told they were doing it right and were "good examples". Though many do learn the sequence, their biggest problem is stance. Standing up straight but relaxed with heads high, eyes looking forward, and hands reaching out in that "big frame" way is just not the usual posture of men who have lived on the streets, felt always on guard, spent a lot of time in prison.

"WHAT IS THE 17TH MOVE?"

After our weekly one-hour class I stay an extra 20 minutes to "bond" with the men. After the first two classes at which we had 40-50 participants (a real teaching challenge!) it started leveling off to about 20 and has pretty much stayed there. Although 20 is a lot to teach, I've found that when the class gets any smaller many guys are more distracted and self-conscious. The "group energy" isn't there.

Some men have emerged who really excel at the form and want to learn more. I've tried to cultivate a small group of "senior students" to help teach. Being singled out as a potential leader has given some a bit of an incentive to keep coming. I feel I have made some actual friends among these men. Although the prison has a "no touch" policy I am exempt as a part-time contractor. It hasn't been unusual to receive hugs and handshakes and lots of "laoshi hao" with salutes as I walk down the hall! Anthony, one of the few older men, said to me at the second class, "You have no idea how much good you are doing. We're not all bad here, you know."

They seem to trust me and will open up about their concerns and complaints, politics, police, relationships, economics. Occasionally they have talked about what got them arrested. Some are convinced they are 100% innocent, which makes them bitter and scared; some admit they made a mistake and need to make the best of it. When I was teaching one day and started reverting to teaching the 103 first section, I apologized for confusing them and a voice rang out: "That's alright. We all screw up. That's why we're all here."





FINDING INNER PEACE

One young man, Akeem, came up to me after several classes and said, “Ms. Rew—what is the 17th move?” So I explained that the 16 was created from the 103 in order to get a feel for the form in a relatively short time, adding that it was developed for college students. Since many of these men haven’t even graduated from high school, I can see the level of new respect for the practice when I say this. I told him that if he was willing to hang around after class until “the count”, when they all have to return to their rooms, I would begin teaching him the 103. I did that for a while. Then he got released or sent onto somewhere else. I don’t know. I rarely do.

Once I saw how much interest was there, I decided to bring a printed handout, a weekly newsletter of sorts, on a whole range of topics. We stack them next to the sign-in sheet and I see the men search for the ones they don’t have and read them carefully. One might think some of my topics are way beyond a beginner’s class level and it’s true. I never do this with normal beginning classes. But there’s not much time and why not challenge them with concepts like soft energy, Tai Chi history, Chinese language lessons (a big hit!), tips on practicing, meanings of the movements, meanings of the symbols, the “wu de” and a version of the ten essentials? Dr. Walker gave me a copy of a lovely little book called *The Yoga Prison Project* and I’ve had the idea ever since to edit my handouts into something like this for Tai Chi.

PUSH HANDS

I know it’s not customary to teach push hands to beginners. One might think it downright foolish to do so in a prison setting. But some of the men had heard of it and Dr. Walker loved the idea. I thought, what better skills for these men to learn than to stick, adhere, yield, and follow? Just touching each other for a cooperative purpose is a new experience. We don’t go past Water Pushes the Boat and the first horizontal circle and probably never will. But they really “get” the ward off and the importance of the waist in Tai Chi as a result. It improves stance problems as well. I tell them something Holly Sweeney-Hillman once said to me, “Tai Chi begins as something you learn mostly with your eyes. With push hands you begin to understand Tai Chi internally.” Like other push hands classes, they all clamor to practice with me! It’s always more fun with someone with experience.

CAN I GET A WITNESS?

As part of our periodic “introduction” sessions, we invite the men to give testimonials about the Tai Chi and meditation classes. When given a podium these men will testify!

One young man, Daniel, said that Tai Chi along with meditation and course readings made him realize that transformation of one’s life is possible. His goal when he got out was to start a support group for men like himself who would like to get their kids out of foster care. He did get out and I hope he was able to realize his plan.





FINDING INNER PEACE

Many have said the classes give them a sense of “escape”. The irony of that word isn’t lost on me! It has helped them sleep, and calmed their anxieties about their situation after they get released, which for many are more worrisome than life in the jail.

A man named Troy reviewed his history during his talk. He is 53 years old. This is his third time “in”: first for attempted murder, second for assault, third time for a parole violation. “I came with what you would call an attitude problem. Nobody could tell me anything. I started with meditation class. That’s like really getting in your own head. And that’s a scary place. I was at first embarrassed to be here at Tai Chi class. Embarrassed by the movements. But it has really helped me. I’m not angry anymore. I don’t keep to myself. I say hi to everyone. As long as you stay just outside my circle I’m cool.” Then he gave me a big hug, clearly inside his circle, lots of laughter and applause. The counselors have noticed a real change in his attitude. He is relaxed and smiling. I ask him to call out the form. He and another guy sometimes compete for who can call the form the best. He is looking forward to getting out and attending my classes in Montclair. I hope he does.

Carl was at first reluctant to talk, but once he got started had plenty to say. “I’m not going to lie to you--I started the meditation and Tai Chi classes to get out of group. But soon I realized how much peace and calm and you know, like, tranquility I

felt. I’m on my third graduation and I’m going to keep going as long as I’m here. It’s helping me make something of my stay here. Why sleep through it? Know what I’m saying? Learn something. It’s crazy upstairs. This really helps.”

TAI CHI POST-RELEASE

Many men have come to me and asked about my classes “outside”. I’ve handed out flyers, drawn maps on the backs of handouts, researched bus routes from Newark to Montclair, and even declared it was free to any Delaney Hall graduate. Many have vowed they were coming but only one has come—one time. I knew who it was when I answered my phone to, “um, um, laoshi hao”.

One man, Clinton, who told me he had been incarcerated for six months for drunken driving, said, “I’ve lost my car, my apartment, my job—really everything.” Although he would have liked to continue with Tai Chi I can imagine it was way down on his list of priorities. And the practice probably diminishes in importance outside the confines of jail.

I see such a potential for “post-release Tai Chi.” I would like to see Tai Chi practice be a condition of parole, along with AA and the weekly visit to the parole officer. I was stunned when a man I didn’t really remember said to me, “You know I was one of your first graduates, almost a year ago.” I said I was pleased he was still coming. “Yeah, well,” he said, “If I had gotten over to



FINDING INNER PEACE

Montclair for classes when I had the chance I might not even be back here.” Can Tai Chi help decrease recidivism?

LIVING IN THE MOMENT

Dr. Walker hired me not knowing much about Tai Chi but had a hunch it might captivate the guys more than yoga, which they offered for five years, before there was an Inner Peace Program. I believe she is correct.

I can see they are truly getting the benefits of a calm, clear mind, relaxation, and tranquil time away from the stress-filled environment of the residential units. Presumably this calm gives them some skills for making better decisions about their actions, too. And they are getting some good exercise, which even the weight lifter in the group says has helped him.

The concepts of mindfulness and living in the moment have been helpful to me, too, as I move into the second year of teaching. The men come and go and I don't get the satisfaction of knowing what happens next. Occasionally I learn about the “failures”—the recidivists—who reappear. So I teach each week, filled with the same awe I felt the first time. I now walk into a men's prison with complete comfort. I accept my students' trust with gratitude, enjoying their senses of humor and wisdom, trying to live in the moment, loving the practice of Tai Chi together.


As much as this class has been transformational for the men it has been VERY transformational for me.

Just the other day, I was demonstrating a little bit of form after our class had ended and six guys were standing around watching. After I finished one guy said, “This might be a rude question but how old are you?”

“You're right, that's a rude question! But (really, what do I care?) I will be 62 my next birthday.”

I saw six jaws drop and then they applauded!

As much as this class has been transformational for the men it has been VERY transformational for me. I have educated myself about the criminal justice system (very broken in my opinion) and the plight of poor people, who easily become both perpetrators and victims of crime. And I put a lot of thought into my teaching and my own practice. Just the research I do for my weekly handouts has increased my knowledge and understanding.

I don't know what will happen next though I remain hopeful. I'm living in the moment. **This has become my mission and my passion.** 



BY CÉSAR A. ESCALANTE G. M.D.

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DISCOVERING XU LING DING JIN

Yang Chengfu's Ten Essentials are a valuable guide for daily practice. They tell us in a clear and concise way how to arrange every part of our body and coordinate the mind. If we integrate the Ten Essentials during practice, the results are a more refined form, better health and martial accomplishments.

However, some Essentials are more confusing than others, and one of them is the first: "Xu Ling Ding Jin", i.e. **"Empty, lively, pushing up and energetic."**¹

Many people ask, what does "empty" mean in the context of the practice? Other people wonder, is it "energy?" How can it be intangible or empty? I have practiced Tai Chi Chuan for 14 years, and the meaning of this phrase has always puzzled me. Although I know I have to keep my head straight, I had no explanation for "empty" or





XU LING DING JIN

“energy”... until recently. One day I was reading an excerpt from Yang Zhenji’s book² where he wrote about elastic *Jin* (弹劲). Suddenly I had an epiphany: The energy mentioned in “*xu ling ding jin*” is a type of *Jin*! I thought it was some kind of *qi* (energy) or that it was another “cryptic” way to talk about *shen* (spirit) but I was wrong. This *Jin* keeps your head upright and is a refined strength (unlike *Li* or brute force) that is neither stiff nor limp. It makes you feel as if the crown of your head is suspended from above. I ran and called Walther, my teacher. After listening he said, “Of course! It’s intentional; physical yet refined; the result of a lot of practice and therefore intangible. Excellent!”

Let’s examine the literal translation of each of the ideograms that comprise the phrase. In researching these definitions, I consulted with Master Yang Jun and Mr. Edward Moore. Without their help, this translation would not be as accurate since I am not as familiar with the Chinese language as they are. These phrases can be very challenging even for native Chinese speakers to translate and existing translations in English are often very different from Master Yang’s personal understanding.

The four characters function in two short phrases:

虚 (Xū): Empty, insubstantial.

灵 (Líng): An external leading up the top of the head.

These two characters function together and don’t have the same meaning alone.

顶 (Dǐng): A pushing up from within.

劲 (Jìn): Energy.

Master Yang points out, “There is nothing on your head, but you feel that something is leading it upwards. You also push your energy up from the inside. Basically they are talking about the same thing from the inside and outside. Also, when you are leading up the head, you are automatically leading up the *Shen* (spirit). The *Shen* is the internal part that needs to match the physical part.” As the reader can see, the concept of *Jin* (refined energy) is implicit in the phrase, and understanding this concept is key to mastering this skill.

Next, in order to go deeper into the subject, I find it convenient to quote a few masters and authors to present a clearer picture. First and foremost, here is Louis Swaim’s explanation:

What Does “*Xu Ling Ding Jin*” Mean?

One of the most vexing phrases in this body of texts appears in Wang Zongyue’s “The Taijiquan Treatise”. This is the phrase that I’ve translated “An intangible and lively energy lifts the crown of the head”. The actual phrase in Chinese is *xu ling ding jin*. *Xu* means “empty”, “void”, “abstract”, “shapeless”, or “insubstantial”. *Ling* can mean “neck”, “collar”, “to lead”, “to guide”, or “or to receive”. *Ding* here means “the crown of the head”. *Jin* is a word that should be familiar to most Taijiquan practitioners, meaning “energy” or “strength”. To translate this phrase literally in a way that makes sense is seemingly impossible. To complicate matters, an alternate character for the second word in the phrase appears in some versions. This character is also pronounced *ling* but is pronounced with the second tone, while the other is pronounced with the third tone. This alternate character

**“An
intangible
and lively
energy
lifts the
crown
of the
head”**





XU LING DING JIN

has the meanings “spirit”, “wonderful”, “mysterious”, “clever” or “nimble”. The version with this second ling character is notably the one that introduces the first of Yang Chengfu’s “Ten Essentials of Taijiquan Theory”. To demonstrate the difficulties presented in translating the phrase, I’ve assembled for comparison a number of different renderings:

- Yang Jwing-Ming translates *xu ling ding jin* as: “An insubstantial energy leads the head upward”.
- T.T. Liang renders it: “A light and nimble energy should be preserved on the top of the head”.
 - Benjamin Pang Jeng Lo translates the phrase: “Effortlessly the *jin* reaches the headtop”.
 - Douglas Wile translates the phrase variously: “The energy at the top of the head should be light and sensitive” and “Open the energy at the crown of the head”.
 - Guttman gives one rendering as, “...the head is upheld with the intangible spirit.” Elsewhere, he gives it a fairly plausible if incomprehensible literal rendering as a noun phrase: “Empty dexterity’s top energy”.
 - Huang Wen-Shan translates it as: “The head-top should be emptied, alert, and straight”.
 - Robert Smith’s version has it: “The spirit of vitality reaches to the top of the head”.
- Jou Tsung Hwa’s rendering is similar: “The spirit, or *shen*, reaches the top of the head”.

“Pushing up and energetic” means the posture of the head is upright and straight and the spirit is infused into its apex.

- Finally, in one of the freer renderings I’ve seen, T.Y. Pang renders the phrase: “The spine and head are held straight by strength, which is guided by the mind”.

As the reader can see the range of nuance in these diverse translations of this one phrase is considerable. Virtually all of the readings are interpretive; that is, the four-character phrase as it has been handed down will not yield a dependable reading based upon the characters alone. One can only conclude that this phrase is a remnant of an oral formula whose original structure eludes our knowledge... The concept is also linked to differently worded but related phrases appearing in other classics, for example, “the spirit (*shen*) threads to the crown of the head” (*shen guan ding*) in the “Song of the Thirteen Postures” and the phrase about “suspending the crown of the head” (*ding tou xuan*) appearing in both “The Mental Elucidation of The Thirteen Postures” and “Song of the Thirteen Postures.”³

Here we have the commentary of Yang Chengfu:

“Pushing up and energetic” means the posture of the head is upright and straight and the spirit is infused into its apex. You may not use strength. To do so makes the back of the neck stiff, whereupon the chi and blood cannot circulate freely. You must have an intention which is empty, lively (or free) and natural. Without an intention which is empty, lively, pushing up and energetic, you won’t be able to raise your spirit.¹



XU LING DING JIN

Jerry Karin's comment: This four-character phrase is probably the most difficult one in all of Tai Chi literature to translate. I have chosen to regard each of the four words as filling the function of a predicate or verb-phrase. Another fairly obvious approach would be to take the first two as adverbial and the last two as subject-predicate: "Empty and lively, the apex is energetic." Many other interpretations are possible.¹

Similarly, two perspectives from the Chen style:

"...In practicing Tai Chi Chuan, the head is held upright – *xu ling ding jin* (an insubstantial energy lifts the head). Imagine a light object resting on the top of the head, not heavy but always present. The neck is naturally relaxed and is kept flexible, as it must coordinate with the change in the position of the body. Do not focus so intensely that you tighten the muscles of the neck. The chin is pulled in gently. The acupuncture point *baihui*, at the top of the head, is gently pulled upwards (Chen Xin uses the image of a string pulling the *baihui* upwards). This, together with sinking down to the dantian and *huiyin* points (between the legs), creates an elongating and extending effect. The alignment of the *baihui* and *huiyin* points form a centerline around which the body rotates, and helps define the central equilibrium."⁴

"Gently lead the head to press upward (*xu ling ding jin*) and sink the *qi* to the dantian – What is referred to as pushing

up energy and gently lead is to take a forward pressing energy (*ding jin*) and lead it gently upward; sinking the *qi* to the dantian is to take the *qi* and make it sink down toward the dantian; combining these two there is an intent to pull apart in opposite directions, which causes the torso to have a feeling of lengthening."⁵

Tai Chi Chuan has some very abstract concepts, and this is one of them. But with the proper guidance of a good teacher, we will experience in practice what in words is so difficult to explain. It is like Master Chen Xiaowang says: "Why did people feel Tai Chi Chuan as something mysterious in the past? Because they failed to understand it. Truly understand it, and you will not feel it as something mysterious. Understand it, thoroughly understand it, then work hard. Otherwise you are working hard in vain. Tai Chi Chuan is not difficult".

**Imagine
a light
object
resting on
the top of
the head,
not heavy
but always
present.**

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Le Grand Stage

Il revient tous les ans
Comme les hirondelles
Et c'est le cœur battant
Qu'on apprend la nouvelle

The Grand Seminar

As a yearly springtide
Returning like swallows
With a vibrating heart
We are catching the news

En costume de Chine
On répète par cœur,
On bataille, on s'échine
Pour donner le meilleur

Wearing Chinese costumes
We practice endlessly
Tenacious, with ardour,
We strive to give our best

En jouant du pipa,
En caressant l'oiseau,
Coup de poing vers le bas
Mais l'esprit toujours haut

Our hands strumming the lute
Or grasping the bird's tail
Punching down but always
Keeping our spirits high

Aux côtés du Grand Maître
On brosse ses genoux,
On lance des navettes
Vigilants, prêts à tout

Along with Grand Master,
We brush both our knees
We work the four shuttles
Eager, standing ready

À gauche comme à droite,
On avance, on dévie ;
Le coq sur une patte
Voit le tigre endormi

To the left, to the right,
Step parry block and punch
One legged golden rooster
Watches the sleeping tiger



*Que parfois on emporte
Bravant tous les dangers
Dans la montagne, qu'importe !
Le serpent a rampé !*

*Whom we embrace and return,
Defying jeopardies,
To mountains -no matter!-
The snake has crept away*

*Les nuages s'étirent
Dans mes mains vagabondes ;
Je revois vos sourires
Et j'ai l'envie qui gronde*

*Hazy clouds are swirling
In my unfolding hands.
I see your smiles anon
And strong is my desire*

*De chercher avec vous
Tout au fond de la mer,
Par delà les remous
Une aiguille qui erre...*

*To fetch along your moves
Deep in the dark of the sea
At the very bottom
That mysterious needle*

*Luis de la ramener,
Précieuse entre nos mains
Fidèles, passionnées
Dans un nouvel écrin.*

*Then fan it through the back,
Guarding it preciously
In our passionate hands,
To a new sanctuary*

*Ma grue blanche a des sœurs
Amies de mes pensées ;
En Afrique ou ailleurs
Le meilleur, c'est d'aimer.*

*My white crane spreads her wings
Along with her sisters
Everywhere in the world
I hold them in my heart!*

By Sylvie Langlois Marchal

Translation by Françoise Desagnat and Sylvie L. Marchal.

Tai Chi Training Methods:

YANG FAMILY TAI CHI KUNG

Introduced and transcribed by

BRUNO REPETTO

The 2014 International Tai Chi Chuan Symposium on Health, Education and Cultural Exchange, held in Louisville, KY featured Tai Chi Training Method workshops with each of the Grandmasters of the main styles of Tai Chi Chuan. For the Symposium, each Grandmaster designed a 10-movement sequence unique to their style which teaches the essentials of their particular style. This section describes the Yang Family Tai-Chi Kung.

Since it is easy to learn a sequence of only ten postures, the main purpose of this training method is to make it easy to learn by beginners of the Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan or by practitioners of any style.

The list of postures is as follows:

- 1) Opening And Single Whip
- 2) Fist Under Elbow
- 3) Left and Right Repulse the Monkey
- 4) Step Forward, Brush Knee and Push
- 5) Left and Right Parting the Wild Horse's Mane
- 6) Left and Right Fair Lady Works At The Shuttles
- 7) Turn Body, Stand Up, And Left Heel Kick
- 8) Parry, Block, And Punch
- 9) Grasp The Bird's Tail
- 10) Crosshands and Closing





1) Opening and Single Whip.
 Open feet at shoulder-width distance, with toe direction straight, and weight at the Bubbling Well. The legs are naturally straight. Keep the whole body coordinated according to Principles. Hold you head up and looking forward. Arms sitting by the sides of your body with the palms naturally open and touching your legs slightly.

Rotate your arms with your palms facing in and lift up your arms.

Lift your arms to shoulder level, keeping them at a shoulder width separation.



Arms push down, almost to the bottom. Palms follow the push and gradually go into a “sitting” position. At the end, the palms are flat, and the fingers face forward.

Arms circle to the right.

From the right, the arms circle to the left and gradually up.



Follow your arms and circle to the left with your right toes turning in.



Circle arms to the left side corner, about 225 degrees and turn your right toe into the corner.



Shift your weight to the right and at the same time bring your arms close to your body.



Sinking down, turn your body to the right and circle your arms to the right.



Make a hook with the right hand and rotate the left arm with the palm turned in.



Step out with the left foot, with the toe direction pointing straight, and the feet separated by shoulder-width distance. At the same time, stand up your left arm.



Shift your weight forward and rotate the left arm outwards, sitting up the left palm.



Bend the front leg knee into a Bow Stance, and at the same time, strike outwards with your left palm. Your head is straight and looking forward.



Shift your weight forward and bring your right foot in, circling your left arm as if pulling.



2) Fist Under Elbow.

Set your right foot on the ground and shift your weight onto it. Circle your left arm to the left and down, while at the same time you circle your right arm and gradually open the right palm.



Shift your weight back, with the left arm continuing the pulling-down motion,



... and the right arm continuing to circle in.



At the end of the posture, both hands are in the center, and your head is up and looking forward. The fist is slightly lower than your left arm.



3) Left and Right Repulse The Monkey.

Shift your weight back. The right arm circles down while the fist gradually opens, and the left arm gradually rotates so the palm faces upward.



Continue circling your right arm and rotating your left arm while you also pick up your left leg.



Continue circling your right arm.



Step back with your left foot, touching the ground with your toe.



Root your left foot with the whole foot touching the ground, while the right arm continues to circle in and sits in front of your shoulder.



With the weight shifting back, turn your body to the left. The left arm pulls in, to the side of your left hip. The right arm strikes straight out from your shoulder, and at shoulder level. Hold your head up, looking forward.



Shift your weight back while gradually circling your left arm back and up, and the right arm gradually rotating so the palm faces upward.



Pick up your right leg and step back touching the ground with your toe, while at the same time continue circling your left arm and rotating your right arm.



Root the right foot, touching the ground with your whole foot, and sitting your left palm in front of your left shoulder.



With your weight shifting back, turn your body to the right, pull in your right hand to the side of your right hip, following the turning of your body. Strike out with your left palm.



4) Step Forward, Brush Knee And Push.

With your weight shifting back, circle your right arm down, and the left arm circles up.



Step out with your left foot in a shoulder- width separation, with the left toe direction straight, and with both arms sitting in a right-corner direction. Your gaze follows the direction of your right arm.



Shifting your weight forward, circle your left arm towards the left. The right arm closes in and the hand sits in front of your right shoulder.



Continue shifting your weight forward, with the left arm circling to the side of your left knee, and the right arm striking forward straight from your right shoulder.



Shifting your weight back slightly, bring your left arm slightly up.



Following the turning of your body, open your left toe to slightly less than the corner direction. Keep your left palm facing down.



Move your weight forward, picking up your right leg and bringing your right arm in. At the same time, circle your arms.



5) Left and Right Parting the Wild Horse's Mane. Step out with your right foot into a Bow Stance, while at the same time close your arms in front of your body, with the left toe direction less than corner.



With your weight shifting forward, turn the body to the right. Following your body's turning, open your arms. Your right arm is aligned with your right leg, and your left arm is sitting to one side of your hip, although slightly forward. Face forward, looking in the direction of the right arm.



Shift your weight back slightly. Then, following the turning of your body, open your right toe slightly and rotate your arms.



Move your weight forward, pick up your left leg and bring it in, while at the same time circle both arms left to right and right to left.



Stepping out with your left foot, with the toe direction slightly less than corner, close your arms in front of your body.



With your weight shifting forward, turn the body to the left. Following your body's turning, open your arms. Your left arm is aligned with your left leg, and your right arm is sitting to one side of your hip, although slightly forward. The left arm is slightly over your shoulder, with the palm facing up. Face forward, looking in the direction of the left arm.



6) Left and Right Fair Lady Works At The Shuttles.

Shift your weight forward while picking up your right leg and your right arm at the same time.



Turn your body to the right, with the right palm passing under your left arm. At the same time, bring your right foot close to your left foot.



Turn your body to the left. At the same time, open your arms and step out with your right foot in a diagonal direction, slightly less than corner. Your right arm is rounded and slightly over your shoulder. Your left arm sits by the side of your body with the arm pit open.



Shift your weight forward with your body turning to the right. Ward off with the right arm over your head. At the same time, strike with your left palm. [TIP: The direction of the body follows the direction of your right toe, and your left arm strikes straight forward from your left shoulder.]



Move your weight forward, pick up your left leg, and open your left arm, circle towards your right up arm; gradually rotate the right arm.



Continue turning your body to the left, with the left palm passing under your right arm. The right palm continues to rotate until it faces up. At the same time, bring your left foot close to your right foot.



Turn your body to the right. At the same time, open your arms and step out with your left foot in a diagonal direction, slightly less than corner. Your left arm is rounded and slightly over your shoulder. Your right arm sits by the side of your body with the arm pit open.



Shift your weight forward with your body turning to the left. Ward off with the left arm over your head. At the same time, strike with your right palm. [TIP: The direction of the body follows the direction of your left toe, and your right arm strikes straight forward from your right shoulder.]



7) Turn Body, Stand Up, And Left Heel Kick

Move your weight to the left, picking up your right leg, stepping, and turning in your right toe towards the corner direction, and the arms follow the turning of the body. The left arm gradually circles down.



Bend the left leg at the knee, with the toe pointing down.



8) Parry, Block and Punch

Step out with your left foot, with your left toe pointing to the corner, to the side of the centerline. Rotate the left arm, with the palm turned up. The right arm goes up and forward, and then in a down circle. Gradually make a fist with your right hand. Both hands are in front of the body and in the centerline of the body.



Step out with your right foot to the side of the centerline. The right toe points to the corner. At the same time, both arms circle down and then sit, pointing to the left corner.



Shift your weight back to the right while the left arm continues to circle down. Gradually turn your palm facing in. The right arm follows the turning of your body, rotates, and turns in.



Cross the arms while standing up and picking up the left leg, with the left toe pointing down. The left knee points straight.



Kick straight out with the heel. At the same time, open both arms. The left leg and left arm are aligned.



Shifting your weight to the right, follow the body as it turns right, circle your arms from back to front.



Continue turning your body to the right towards the corner direction. At the same time, open your arms and step out with your left foot, with the toe pointing straight ahead. The left arm is straight out from your shoulder, and at shoulder level. The right arm is rounded, and the fist sits on the side of your hip.



Shift your weight forward, turn the body to square, with the right arm punching out, the left arm closing in, sitting on the center of your right forearm.



9) Grasp the Bird's Tail
Shift your weight back slightly.



Turn your body to the left. Follow the turning of your body until the left toe points to the corner. Rotate your left arm in a ward-off motion while the right arm rotates right with your fist slightly down.



Move your weight forward, picking up your right leg and circling and rotating your arms.



Follow the continued turning to the left and step out with your right foot. The right toe points to the corner. Circle your arms: left to the right and right to the left, with both arms close to the right side of your body.



Move your weight forward, with your right arm warding off-right to shoulder level. The left arm pushes down, sitting your palm about one fist distance separating the hand from the center of the forearm, which is the Energy Point.



Follow your body's turning to your right. Open and turn your arms to the right corner.



Turn the body to the left, shifting your weight back. The arms follow the turning of the body from the right to the left. Make sure your crotch is rounded and that you don't lean back.



Turn your body to the right. Rotate and close your arms at the center of your body. Touch the center of your right forearm with your left palm.



Move your weight forward while pressing out. Keep your body open slightly to the left.



Turn your body to square and separate your arms to shoulder-width distance. At the same time, rotate your arms so the palms face down.



While shifting your weight back, bring your arms back to the front of your chest. Make sure your torso does not lean back.



With your weight shifting forward, push out your arms. At the end of the position, your arms are level with your shoulders, and shoulder-width apart.



**10) Crosshands
And Closing**

Rotate your left arm as you follow the turning of your body to the left.



Follow the shifting of your body to the left, continue the turning to the left and swing your left arm to the left corner. At the same time, turn in your right toe 90 degrees.



Move back your weight to the right, with your arms circling down and rotating so your palms face in.



Continue circling your arms down as you bring your right foot in to shoulder-width distance, with a straight direction on the toes.



Shift your weight to the center as both arms cross in ward-off motions in front of your body.



Stand up and extend your arms out, with your palms facing up.



Rotate your arms so your palms now face down. The arms keep a shoulder-width distance between them.



Push down your arms almost to the bottom.



Rotate the arms and move them close to your body so the palms of your hands lightly touch your sides.

« *Since it is easy to learn a sequence of only ten postures, the main purpose of this training method is to make it easy to learn by beginners of the Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan or by practitioners of any style.* »



GRANDMASTER YANG JUN 2016 SEMINARS

Mexico City, Mexico

Hand Form: Feb 26-28
Contact: Daniel Corona
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Cancun, Mexico

Hand Form: March 4-5
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Seattle, USA

Hand Form: March 20-21
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Paris, France

Hand Form: April 22-25
Push Hands: April 26
Saber : April 27
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Veliko Tarnovo , Bulgaria

Push Hands: May 28
Hand Form: May 29-30
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Varese, Italy

Hand Form: June 2-5
Sword Form: June 6-7
Push Hands: June 8
Contact: Francesco Matera
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New York City, USA

QICP Camp: July 22-27
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Troy, USA

Push Hands: Aug 12
Hand Form: Aug 12-14
Sword Form: Aug 15-16
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Novi, USA

Hand Form: Aug 20-21
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Buffalo, USA

Hand Form: Sept 16-18
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Siegen, Germany

Hand Form: Oct 8-10
Push Hands: Oct 11
ulihoffmann@taiji-schule-siegen.de
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Rome, Italy

Instructor seminar: Oct 14-16
Contact: Claudio Mingarini
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Lyon, France

Push Hands: Oct 21
Hand Form: Oct 22-23
Contact: Kea and Florence Suon
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Sao Paulo, Brazil

Sword Form: Nov 11-12
Push Hands: Nov 13
Nov 14-16: Instructor seminar
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Ribeirao Preto, Brazil

Hand Form: Nov 18-20
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Rosario, Argentina

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