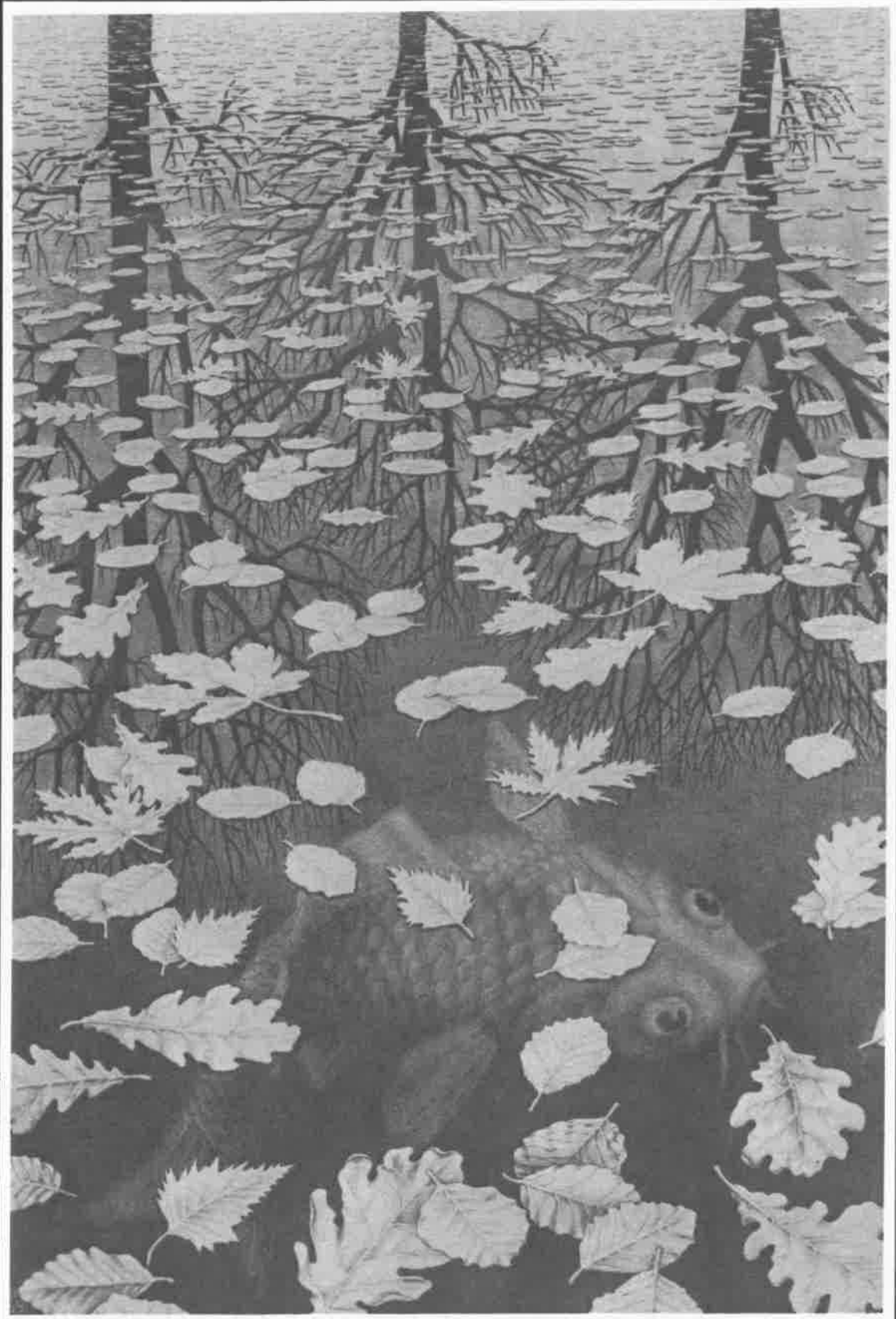


YANG FAMILY HIDDEN TRADITION



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WINTER 2006

VOLUME 14 NO 2

AYMTA

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Editors' Notes

Christian writes "Some mistakes in my article about the precise names of the different associations and the officers from the ROC national YMT association: WYN is current President and Julia + M. Yeh are Vice Presidents."

Cover: M. C. Escher's *Three Worlds* (with permission of The M.C. Escher Company BV), often interpreted as water, land and sky, or as the world, the intersection (the *liàngyì* in the *tàijítú*) and the reflection (which is which?). But it also brings various other Daoist interpretations to mind, especially because of the carp, which after 1000 years will transform into a dragon as *K'un* transforms into *P'ung* in its flight from the Northern Darkness to the Southern Darkness, the Heavenly Pond (*The Butterfly as Companion: Meditations on the First Three Chapters of the CHUANG TZU*, Wu Kuang-ming, Albany, N.Y., 1990). And recall the *Sāncái* of which Claudy wrote (*AYMTA Journal*, Vol. 11, No. 1).
--Don

President's Message

Welcome everyone to the Winter 2006 edition of the *AYMTA Journal*. I think *The Year of the Boar, 2007*, will be called a year of good fortune if everyone gets to enjoy practicing their art to the fullest.

During the previous year I did manage to follow such an idea by going out to the ocean on a regular basis to practice taiji. I live only fifteen miles from Ocean Beach which is on the western edge of San Francisco. Here in northern California, there is a lot of variety in terms of natural settings quite conducive to making a special event out of practicing taiji but, I wanted to make a form out of going to the ocean.

Daoist arts, especially taiji, have made endless references to the power and properties of water. I have a preference for the ocean but, I think that all of the shaped settings in which water exists are worth spending a little time being in their company. They teach the same way taiji is taught, by example. So I'm not quite sure exactly how much I really did learn but, I certainly would enjoy the days after an ocean visit when I could still feel the roar of pounding surf reverberating through my own salty contents.

On one occasion I got to thinking about the idea of doing the form slowly (a subject never exhausted in the study of taiji). I would tune in to my rate of breathing, and then I would extend my ear to the ocean's rate of breathing. The seemingly cacophonous shoreline of Ocean Beach does not make a such clear distinctions very easy. But it certainly did seem that by midway through section two of the form I was moving through postures in about two of three wave intervals. So does this mean that if someone wants to find that awe-inspiring breath usually associated with the ocean they should pitch their beach umbrella in a little encampment next to me. I can plainly say that has never happened. So I don't feel that the rate of movement is a worthwhile comparison to the ocean's grandeur but, I seems that there is a comparable speed of thinking.

But Charlie, the ocean doesn't think: Yes, I am quite aware that for all it's amazing qualities that the ocean does not think. Which is okay as I certainly do more than enough for both us. Also, while in action the ocean does not daydream, and daydreaming while doing taiji is one area that I can truly claim great mastery.

For example, I recall one day while I was imitating a taiji posture called "AN". I let my attention drift. Although it went just a little ways down the beach to a family trying to figure out how to set up a badminton net, it was thousands of miles from my root.

The ocean, never disconnected from thousands of miles of root, up heaves sedimentary rock beds to shape mountains.

Another time while pretending to mimic a Green Dragon emerging from the sea, with internal ricochet of unfinished grocery list leading the Qi, I can only imagine that to the passing joggers I must have looked like a stage actor rehearsing for a part in "Seaweed zombies from the deep."

The ocean, with the clear composure of liquid glass, arrives at the shore with no hesitation, and resounds like a clap of low-lying thunder.

Limpid to the sway of the moon and planets, the ocean reaches every continent without a single projection, and accommodates every situation with out a single hollow. The ocean, at every moment speaks of perfect natural attunement that seems to resolve distinctions of speed. I, who without much effort could easily be just as attuned, hold fast to the slowness of form as all that is often left in the wake of a thought-driven tsunami.

In the Daoist view of physiology thinking is often regarded as a form of fire and our own vital liquids are regarded as own waters. In an optimum internal situation this kind of fire would infuse our resident waters with a vitality that, in short, is Qi. Any thoughts can affect this dynamic interplay of elements. Daydreaming scatters this fire off into the wind. This does not mean instant death but definitely diminishes the lustrous quality that our taiji should naturally emit.

Recently a friend of mine commented that he did his best thinking while practicing taiji. What could I say to him, as I know that I constructed most of this article while practicing taiji. When the heads top is suspended and the blood, which is pumped by the rhythmic diaphragm breathing, reaches the brain we have a situation so conducive to clear thinking of a perhaps too uplifting nature. This becomes like burning firewood the moment you collect it without considering the notion that perhaps stockpiling a little could at some point come in very handy. We constantly have to make that choice.

Everyday can't be a day at the beach but, I also do enjoy my regular taiji practice at the park down the street from my house. It seems like not a session goes by without me noticing a passerby stretch out their shoulder, give their elbow a little shaking off, or even just a slight adjustment in their composure that allows the heart to be in the moment.

I don't think that it's necessarily the pace at which I practice my form that incites people in such a way but the sheer enthusiasm for doing just exactly what I am doing at that moment. This kind of situation, in it's own small way, is comparable to the effect that the ocean has on people. What a wonderful thing to be able to share with the world.

Well, I hope this article has given folks something to think about while practicing their form ... and, again, I hope everyone gets to spend the *Year of the Boar* enjoying their art to the fullest.

--Charlie Adamec

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Basic Requirements for Reaching the Higher Level in Tao and Taiji

By George C. T. Lin

In 1999, I wrote a short article regarding the 4 basic requirements to reach the higher level in Taiji and Tao, published in the *AYMTA Journal* appended below. These 4 basic things are (1) **Money 財**, (2) **Companion 侶**, (3) **Teaching 法**, and (4) **Location 地**. But after many years of pursuing Tao, I realized that these 4 things cannot be attained easily nor controlled by us. Hence, I group them together as **fate 命运** or **destiny 天生註定**, for they govern our life unconsciously and make our fortune only by the mercy of Heaven—until we become a True Taoist who escapes the karma and turns life around. Yet for many years, I've observed people who've reached these 4 requirements but are still unable to elevate themselves to the higher stage of Tao or Taiji. Why? It seems to me there are 4 more additional requirements as follows:

恆 (5) Perseverance:

Without perseverance, a person gets easily frustrated and gives up what he learned, which may have taken a long time to accumulate. Think of the Chinese adage: “Dripping water from roof can run through stone steps.” It's a good example of why we should never stop pursuing until we reach our goal. If you want to learn the highest secret of Tao or Taiji, never be afraid of walking in the wind, rain or snow.

耐 (6) Patience:

When we learn Taiji or study Tao we should not expect results right away, because the universe is fluid, and does not work that way. If we try hard to learn with patience, we will cherish the outcome more. On the same token, when you teach your students, have the same patience toward them too. I have some students who can't catch up and want to throw in the towel, but when I tell them about the race between turtle and rabbit, they change their attitude. If you have patience with hardworking spirit without being too proud like the rabbit, you still can beat the opponent by walking one step at a time to the finish line.

时 (7) Time:

Finding time for your self is the crucial factor to success in Tao and Taiji. You know that it is beneficial for you long term, but if you don't spend time to learn, effort is wasted. I have seen many people who say they will learn once they have the time or when they retire. But once you decide to work hard again, the time is short and you are old already.

智 (8) Wisdom:

Wisdom will let you make the right judgment for everything. It will let you do things properly and navigate which way to go; including choosing the right teacher, companion, location, and finding the time to learn under your personal situation and environment. This wisdom is not from smarts, but mainly from the effort of experience accumulated in your lifetime, which lets you do the right thing at right time. Of course, wisdom should be also honest and righteous which is basic spirit of being a good Taoist.

FOUR BASIC REQUIREMENTS TO REACH HIGHER LEVEL

On the road to learning Taiji Quan or Taoism, there are four basic requirements needed if one wishes to become a Master.

(1) Money

Without enough financial support or job security, learning the study of Taiji will be delayed. During ancient China, only rich people could afford to hire the best Taiji teachers.

Poor people were always under heavy financial burden, leaving them with little time and money in order to pursue long-term training. However, Taiji Quan has become popular and costs less to learn nowadays. Yet you still need time and expenses to stay with a good Master for a long period of time, thus developing the highest level of power. I have seen many of my classmates quit Taiji due to financial crisis, which is quite disheartening.

(2) Companion

Good friends enrich your life. A close classmate can share in the Taiji experience, correct your mistakes, enhance your confidence, broaden your viewpoints, and build up mutual trust. Normally particularly in the “pushing hands” exercise, you need a good partner to practice with. In Taoism, when you decide to retreat to a closed room, a reliable partner is needed to provide you with daily personal needs. In addition, your partner will guard you day and night to prevent any interruptions.

(3) Teaching

Good teaching is the culmination of a good Master, good books, and good methods. The right Master can save you a lot of time. He can guide you through the correct techniques, which take years to learn. Some people make the common mistake of leaving the Master too soon, feeling over confident in their study, and “knowing it all.” Yet the truth is this: The Master has a vast multitude of things to teach the student, which are taught over many years; so departing early is not a wise move. Sometimes, the master will want to test your patience and loyalty, teaching you techniques little by little. Therefore, once you find the right teacher, it is important to respect and stay with him as long as you can.

(4) Location

A favorable location will improve your Taiji and Tao. A bad location will do exactly the opposite. That is why Taoists and those who practice the martial arts are constantly seeking a practice location with good feng shui, which means harmonizing with the earth’s natural movements. In ancient times, Taoists loved to trek up a mountain and dwell in caves, reveling in the glory of fresh air, breathtaking scenery, and peaceful solitude. Those latter elements comprise a good location. If you are lucky enough to reside in such an area, there will be more chances to meet the right Master, be thankful.

It's been frustrating: promised articles didn't show up, one was retracted,
so this might not be the biggest Journal yet.

Call for Submissions 洛書

Share with your fellow members as you read more about
Taijiquan, Chinese Culture, etc.
Share your own experience and practice.

No one has yet taken us up on *Luòshū*—the magic square that appeared on the back of a tortoise from the Luo River to the Sage Emperor Lu. Every row, column and diagonal sum to 15 and it became an integral part of Chinese culture, Daoism and fengshui. Among available resources, the *Journal of Asian Martial Arts* had an article on Luoshu in 1996 and Frank J. Swertz has just published *Legacy of the Luoshu*. The Luoshu is also associated with taijiquan—in particular through our ancestor Yang Jianhou according to Chen Weiming. Many of the postures can be described by one of the additions, i.e., 852 can describe Single Whip where energy spirals from the rooted leg through the waist to the emitting hand.

We also invite a review of Lu Shengli's *Combat Techniques of Taiji, Xingyi, and Bagua*, and on the lighter side, A. Zee's *Swallowing: A Playful Journey through Chinese Culture, Language, and Cuisine*. Both books will be provided.

For a more informal sharing, consider the Members' Section of the website:

Now it's up to you!

A Letter from Wang Yen-nien

By Journal Staff

In April 2006, Le College Europeen Des Enseignants Du Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan (European College of Teachers of YMT) held its Spring meeting, reporting at length to Wang Laoshi, taking note of the foundation of the new organization in Taiwan, National Association of Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan of Taiwan, ROC, and voicing concern about the new new European group Association Europeen de Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan, that was somehow associated with the Yen-nien Dagouan but about which no European had been consulted and whose purpose was unclear.

This letter was read to Wang Laoshi by Manuel and Cici Solnon, who then sent the following to all the organizations, including AYMTA:

Rain and sun come and disappear. Laoshi is sometimes in good health and at other moments tired. I saw him couple of days ago with Sissi and he told us something very important. It is about the situation of Yang Jia Michuan. He said

- 1) That every country is allowed to create an association with the name of MICHUAN inside, it is not only for Taiwan
- 2) Every teacher represents the michuan taichi chuan in his school and there is NOT one teacher who is in charge for the form, the sword, the tuishou, the, the ...
- 3) The European association of Yangjia michuan created by the daoguan ... DOESN'T represent the form of Wang Laoshi in France or in Europe.

Based on this, the European College asked AYMTA and AMICALE to join in a letter requesting clarification from Wang Laoshi (AMICALE responded separately):

Dear Mister Wang, dear Laoshi,

We learnt that you are back home.

We are happy to receive this good short piece of news. It is the proof that you get better.

It must be a great reassurance to find yourself in the peace of your own house.

Recently the European School sent you a letter that was read to you by Cici and Manu.

That day you said extremely important things for all the teachers whom you formed and for the future of the transmission of Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan.

We wish that your words are known by all of the teachers and who follow your teachings. Your letter would dissipate the clouds that threaten the unity of Yangjia Michuan and enlighten each on the role that she or he has to play.

The Board of Directors of the American Yangjia Michquan Association joins the Teachers' College in the same request to you.

Receive, dear Laoshi, our warm messages and our profound respect.

For the European College

s/Nicole Henriod

Again Manuel and Cici as well as Mark and Wendy Linnett read this letter to Wang Laoshi. Mark wrote to AYMTA:

But to the letter ... he said he had mentioned several times both here in Taiwan and in Europe that everyone could teach as they pleased and there was no one authority and there was really no need for such a letter .. Finally, Laoshi asked that each association both in Europe and in the states send him a letter with their chop on it. He was not interested in email copies but so-called official documents. Laoshi's grandson was there and he assured us that he would read a Chinese version to Laoshi.

So the College and AYMTA composed separate letters in response.

The College's stated that it wished "that Laoshi send a letter defining the role of their association (and others) in the transmission of his teaching. The Collège is maintained as a place of exchange, of openness and of reflection to pass on a high-quality education. Laoshi has said that each professor is responsible for his/her

school. This rule seems suitable to maintain the cohesion of the school and serenity of the Collège.”AYMTA wrote the following:

Dear Wang Laoshi –

We are happy you are so enlivened about food: your *guqi* must be flowing.

Mark has told us that you wish an official letter from AYMTA.

After Manuel and CiCi read you the initial letter from the European College, Manuel reported that you said very important things about the future and heritage of Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan, including that every country, not only Taiwan, may create an association with the name of MICHUAN inside and that every teacher represents the Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan in her or his school and there is not one teacher who is in charge of the form, the sword, the tuishou, and so on.

Mark has said that after Wendy and Cici read you the letter from the European College in which AYMTA concurred, you have reiterated that you have mentioned several times both in Taiwan and in Europe that everyone could teach as they pleased, that there was no one authority and there was really no need for you to state this in writing.

Unfortunately few from our association have been present to hear you, and we have heard rumors that, based on some technical and administrative criteria, some will legally be able to represent Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan and all others would have no legitimacy; further that our organization (AYMTA) has no weight since it represents only a few persons.

We hope that this is a mis-reporting and false, but it would reassure all if you could write your verbal assurances.

As Nicole wrote "your letter would help to dissipate the clouds which threaten the unity of Yangjia Michuan and to clarify all on the role that they have to play."

We believe that your *yi* continues to be strong and will lead your *qi* to where is it most beneficial.

You are forever in our hearts and thoughts.

s/Don Klein, Secretary for the AYMTA Board of Directors

Both the European College and AYMTA received identical responses from Wang Laoshi:

I received your letter and thank you very much for paying your respects to me.

As a teacher, I'm very happy for all the trainers and groups that promote Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan, and for your great enthusiasm and achievements.

I'm using this letter to send my affirmation, praise, and encouragement.

To promote Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan from the religious angle is work that aims at people's salvation. As a leader, you must possess benevolence, and continual enthusiasm, and when speaking to and doing things with group members and non-members alike you have to be tolerant, forgiving, and have a spirit of service to the group as the fundamental principle. You must make all the people who participate in the group get fired up with a feeling of treasuring the group to which they belong. Only the spirit of reciprocal gratitude between the leader and his group is the way to run a group.

Everyone ages, and as the several thousand years old ancient Chinese saying has it: "Just as the back waves of the YangzeRiver push forward the waves in front, every generation passes on its knowledge to the next." If a leader demands of himself the three qualities of "benevolence", "enthusiasm", and "tolerance", then he will definitely attain real glory and receive other people's affirmation and respect. In other words Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan is not a group where people fight for power or benefits, and it is also not a group where people try to control others to gain fame and benefits.

It really should be a big family that tries as much as possible to be convenient to its students, and when there is someone with talent to help that person develop that talent as much as possible.

Anyone who participates in Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan as a trainer or member of a group, as long as you promote the "yang" school according to the teacher's guidance, then you should not be concerned about authorization. To obtain authorization does not mean you obtain the means to control others. Only to carefully practice and train with all your heart, and cultivate yourself, and teach taijiquan, these three things are what matter.

It is best to focus on the big picture and not be petty, and be sure to not obsess on splitting hairs about authorization. That can only result in wasting your life.

As a teacher I already entrusted Fei Yihua [Julia Fisher Fairchild] to be my Assistant General Trainer (Coach) with the full power to handle the selling of training materials for many years now.

Besides, the content of Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan is very complete. In addition, only in the Yannian [Yen-nien] Daoguan Zongguan can the discipline of taijiquan be completely learned. Any student or trainer, if he or she has not completely mastered the form, can come any time to study it. You do not need to learn the forms of other schools. If you study other schools or branches of taijiquan, your form will not be pure, and you will be led astray. Then you will not achieve any real results. That is why in China since ancient times we have recognized that "if you participate in one school or form, you do not participate in any other schools or forms. Moreover other schools (of taijiquan) will actually not accept students from a school other than their own." Therefore I especially remind you people who participate in other schools or forms that you should immediately return to the correct way.

Since last year my health has met its greatest challenge. I have received care and concern from many students from all over the world. Some of them even came to Taiwan especially to see me. Now I have passed the worst time and my health is in the recovery stage. Please do not worry about me!

I only wish the artistry of your taijiquan improves greatly in the future.

s/ Wang Yen-nien
2006.07.27

*There are various translations to and from French and Chinese. Originals of some of the letters may be found on the website:
<http://aymta.org/home/members/file-pdf.php?file_location=document&file_id=2006Minutes>

This and That ...That or This? "It's better to see clearly!"

By Christian Bernapel
Translated by Stéphanie Polatsik

In this "pivot" time in between two years, I can't resist the pleasure of sharing this wonderful text of Tchouang-Tseu extracted from the *Studies on Tchouang-Tseu*, the masterly [French] translation by Jean François Billeter [*Études sur Tchouang-Tseu*], éditions Allia. It seems particularly suited at a time that attracts us in the pernicious threads of its controversies: How come the path disappears and oppositions arise between true and false? How come the language obscures itself and oppositions arise between right and wrong? How can the path go and not be there anymore? How can the language be there and not mean anything anymore?

The path is obscured by particular views, the language disappears under its own luxuriance and then conflicts are developing ... where some hold for right what others hold for wrong and vice versa. Therefore, rather than defending the point of view that the other rejects or rejecting the one that the other defends, it's better to see clearly!

Everything is either a "that" or a "this." If I adopt the point of view of the "that," I don't see this thing as it appeared to me from my first point of view. If I'm back on the point of view of the "this," I perceive it

again as before. Therefore a "that" leads to a "this" and a "this" comes from a "that." It explains why we say that "this" and "that" are born at the same time... At the moment a denomination is still receivable, it isn't anymore. So, a denomination is sometimes right and wrong, another is sometimes wrong and right and we pronounce ourselves on one or another direction depending on the case. That's why the wise doesn't follow the language, but let himself be guided by the manifestation of things: he adapts his language according to changes.

A "this" is therefore a "that," a "that" is therefore also a "this." There is a right and wrong in the point of view of "that," there is also the right and wrong in the point of view of "this." But then, is there or is there not, in itself, some "this" and some "that"?

The place where, neither "this" nor "that" meet their opposite, I call it the Pivot. When this Pivot changes, I respond with one or another without ever being caught out and there is no limit anymore to the usage of either the right or the wrong.

It's why I said: It's better to see clearly!

Best wishes to everyone

Youth Chinese Swordsmanship Camp a Very Successful First

Collectively written by Great River students.

The last three years have seen a tremendous growth in Chinese swordsmanship. In this short time, the art moved literally from the precipice of extinction to having a worldwide following. One spark for this expansion was a pivotal work, *Chinese Swordsmanship—The Yang Family Taiji Jian*

Tradition, by Scott M. Rodell. Rodell is a disciple student of Wang Yen-nien and also studied *taiji jian* with T.T. Liang (Zheng Manqing's senior student). The wide popularity of *Chinese Swordsmanship* naturally led to the author receiving multiple invitations to present seminars at home and abroad. Teaching seminars on three different continents, Teacher Rodell's efforts helped carry the art of Chinese swordsmanship from obscurity and near extinction to wide recognition as a powerful and effective sword art. Most recently (July '06), Rodell began a new phase in his teaching program, instructing children. Along with his 8½-year-old son, Feihong, he traveled Down Under to help create a children's swordsmanship program in Australia.

One could say that Feihong's training started in the womb. His mother practiced Yangjia Michuan Taiji-quan right up until his birth and still practices. His father told him about the eight basic movements and basic sword cuts while he was still in his mother's belly. Not surprisingly, Feihong had a sword in his hand before he could walk properly. As he grew, Feihong received instruction from his father in the basic cuts of the Yangjia Michuan Taiji Jian system, as well as two-man drills and free swordplay. Like all boys, Feihong prefers the latter. Teacher Rodell also taught him the use of the Chinese two-handed



GRTC Children's Sword Camp, Katoomba, Australia

saber (*miaodao*) and saber and shield work to broaden his understanding of swordsmanship. At 7 years old Feihong began sport foil fencing at a local academy, as his father felt he needed to play kids his own age and not just adults. So when the opportunity to help his fa-

ther lead a seminar arose, Feihong was ready.

Linda Heenan, one of Rodell's students, organized the Children's Sword Camp. She also organizes the Australian Branch of Great River Taoist Center. GRTC's Children's Program started an after-school club with a small core group of boys and girls. Mrs. Heenan's experience as a grade-school teacher provided her with the knowledge and experience needed for teaching the children. Her training in Yangjia Michuan Taiji Jian under Rodell gave her the material she needed for a curriculum. But she had other problems to work out, such as creating safe equipment for the children to use for their training. With the help of classmates from as far away as Estonia, she was able to find the right fencing masks and other safety equipment. However, no padded *jian* appropriate for children are commercially available, so Mrs. Heenan created them herself.

One evening she and her classmate, Tashi James, got together to solve the problem of a safe, children's *jian*. Hilts were created using a practice *jian* as a template. The design was cut from thick leather with glued inserts between the two halves to build up a pommel. Lengths of dowel, padded with closed-cell camping-mat foam glued around them, were used to form the blade. Electrical tape provided stability for

the padding. This padded blade was covered with a sock that was taped in place. This cloth covering was essential for allowing the swords to slide against each other as true steel swords would. The leather hilts were glued and riveted around the protruding dowel end, which acted as a *tang*. The hilts were finally fixed into position and made strong and slip-proof by means of split pins. The final stage was to wrap the hilts with cloth and then electrical tape. This covered the split pins and gave the familiar oval shape to the grip. Even though the swords were small and padded, they needed to have a good balance and the right feel in the hand. A correct grip is important for wrist flexibility and accurate cuts. Where children are concerned, small, easily damaged wrists need to be considered.

Mrs. Heenan strongly believes that training children is one little thing she can do to strengthen the future of the lineage from which she has gained so much. She feels it is a way of giving back some of the countless hours her teacher has spent on her training. Those who attended the club sessions prior to the camp were taught correct grip, stances and most of the basic cuts. They did precision work; played games that emphasized correct movements, and engaged in free swordplay as often as they could persuade Mrs. Heenan they were ready for it.

It had been no easy task to persuade parents that swordsmanship was a worthwhile pursuit for their children. Sports such as soccer have a firm hold on the thinking of Australian families. Most had to choose one or the other, and the attraction of activities friends were already involved in was too much for some. Yet the rewards of young students joining the program balanced out the disappointments and the club grew. Linda enjoyed many special moments, such as when an 11-year-old girl announced that she planned to be the first child to learn the Yangjia Michuan Taiji Jian form. As far as she knows, Mrs. Heenan is the only Australian to practice all eight sections of the *jian* form, and it will be interesting to see if her child student can become the second.

On the first day of the children's sword camp, Rodell and his son assistant, Feihong, found themselves faced with a room full of enthusiastic young Australians. The Rodells began with the program they worked out at home in America. "We'll teach by me and my dad demonstrating," Feihong explained.

Teaching children historical swordsmanship is quite different from teaching adults. Kids obviously aren't going to focus long enough to learn forms or even do the taiji basic exercises to stretch out. Instead of more traditional *taijiquan* basic exercises, the Rodells led the group in stretching exercises common to many gym classes. Once stretched out, they moved right into simple calisthenic-like sit-ups and push-ups. Teacher Rodell was concerned to find that many children had a fair deal of trouble with 20 sit-ups and so was happy they decided to include calisthenics in the swordsmanship program. "Obesity is a real problem amongst children today," said Rodell, "none of our kids were seriously overweight and we want to keep it that way."



After deflecting, Feihong Rodell, on left, steps forward to deliver a thrust.

In order to keep things simple and to produce real results, the program focused on three basic cuts from the Yangjia Michuan Taiji Jian system. Teacher Rodell chose the *ci* (thrust), *pi* (split) and *liao* (upward slice) cuts. He chose these three for two reasons. The first reason is they are cuts that are quite effective in many situations and facing a variety of weapons. The second is they are fairly easy to learn while developing important skills that will take students further. They are also cuts common to most systems of Chinese *jian* swordsmanship.

In many ways, the format of the instruction was parallel to that of the adult Chinese swordsmanship seminars Rodell regularly leads. The major difference between the children's training and that of adults is the length of time spent on each segment of the training. Also, one just has to use games when teaching children. They are very competitive, so one has to find ways to use this creatively, in a healthy fashion.



Learning to yield

star jumps or sit-ups. Avoiding the amusement of the winners, who mercilessly counted each and every sit-up the last place team performed, was also a large incentive. They loved the relays, despite the penalties, collapsing into giggles with one too many push-ups and cheering when it was the other team's turn.

Children regularly attending the swordsmanship club enjoy precision games such as the ring toss. Each child attempts to catch 10 rope rings spun into the air by using *ci* to thrust the sword through the center. A beginner player is considered successful when he or she can catch eight out of 10 with the stronger hand and six out of 10 with the weaker. The aim is to gradually reach 100 percent accuracy.

The universally best-loved competition during the seminar was a daily tournament. Children were paired in short matches that ended when one side scored three clear points. Many of these matches went down to the last point at two-all, generating animated encouragement from the audience. Sometimes Teacher Rodell would pause the action after a point to instruct on better deflections, more useful strikes and good body mechanics, making the exercise useful to the watchers as well as the participants. He found himself most often asking, "How should we move the sword to deflect?" to which the students replied in chorus, "With the waist!" Winners of the beginning rounds were then matched until the competition narrowed to a final pair. Feihong Rodell, despite being one of the youngest, won these competitions repeatedly. This did not put the others off. They knew where his training had come from and

Stepping relays combined the training of necessary movements with enthusiasm and sportsmanship. The children quickly learnt the difference between a half step with a thrust and galloping thoughtlessly up the court. Incorrect stepping was met with calls of, "No, go back and start again," from Rodell. The young students knew the penalty for coming last in such a relay was push-ups,

seen him as a challenge, eagerly volunteering to play him. In response to requests and prodding from the children, Linda and her teacher, Rodell, faced each other with full-weight wooden swords. Perhaps it is part of the Australian way, but just as the children choose to be matched with Feihong, Linda, with no chance of winning, relished the opportunity of sword-play with her teacher simply for its learning value.

Much was achieved during the Youth Camp. Feihong noted, "The kids learned not to hit the sword," but to deflect and go for a cut to the body. He also wrote it was interesting because it was summer, but winter there. "It was fun because it was my first time teaching." "In a few short days, these kids really did learn the basics of *jian* swordsmanship," noted Scott Rodell. "They have nothing in the way, so they learn very quickly."

It is unfortunate that many Chinese martial arts, once carefully preserved in the lives of well-trained disciples, have vanished irretrievably from our world. The art of Chinese swordsmanship in particular has wavered precariously on the brink of extinction. Given the inconsistency of human nature, wisdom dictates more than passing on a tradition to one's immediate students. A visionary teacher may feel his job is done when the students of his students are teaching the art correctly to their own students; a bridge created from not one, but four generations. These children taking the first steps into our revived tradition of Chinese swordsmanship are a small part today but a huge leap towards the future preservation of Yangjia Michuan Taiji Jian and Chinese swordsmanship



Feihong Rodell, on right, deflects & circles his jian forward to score with a zha cut.

The First World T'ai Chi Tournament

By Mark A. Linett

On the first weekend of November groups from as faraway as Brazil and Argentina gathered here in Taipei for the First World T'ai Chi Tournament. The event was sponsored by the ROC-Taiwan National Tai Chi Chuan Association <<http://www.cttaiichi.org>>.

On the first day of the competition, approaching the entrance to competition hall, large groups were seen outside practicing various forms. Everyone seemed quite serious and intent on putting on a strong performance. During the performances large groups practicing different styles were moving precisely and softly together looking like a huge wave. The first section of the Yangjia Michuan form was demonstrated by a group of 350 participants moving to Wang Laoshi's recording of the breathing.

It was interesting to see how groups continued to enter and exit the performance area in a military-style quick march. Alongside the groups performing various styles of form were smaller groups performing Samba T'ai Chi, Yoga T'ai Chi and Aerobic T'ai Chi. Notably there were some very powerful individual demonstrations by well-known masters here in Taiwan.

Along with the routine competitions, separate competitions were held in Tuishou. In this tournament, fixed-step and moving-step competitions were separate. In past tournaments fixed step was for the most part a qualifying event for moving step. But in this tournament, participants could choose one event or both. Competitors stood on raised platforms in the shape of small bricks that made it relatively easy for the referees to spot when someone was knocked off. The moving-step was practiced in a large circle. It often looked a bit like something other than Tuishou but there were obviously some skilled participants. It was good to see that the referees were quick to warn competitors when they attempted to use tripping techniques.

On Sunday the tournament wrapped up with the finals in the Tuishou. Competitors in the fixed step were obviously quite adept at neutralizing quick powerful pushes while at the same time maintaining their balance and stability. A group from Janghwa Taiwan was strongly represented. They were obviously very well trained with excellent rooting and good technique. Many of them faced each other in the finals.

In the various categories of the Yangjia Michuan individual routine competition 31 women and 27 men from the U.S.A., Japan, England, Germany and Israel participated, as well as

2006年第一屆世界盃 太極拳錦標賽

The First World Cup Tai Chi Chuan Championship in 2006

2006/11/4-5 臺北小巨蛋 Taipei Arena



Taiwanese practitioners. Du Yu tied for a first place finish; Michel Douiller received a second place and Gil Egozi a fifth place. Students of Lin Wen-xiong registered under the Taipei City Taijiquan Association finished in second-, third-, fourth-, and fifth-places. Claire Tyrell from England also participated in the routine competition. In the group routine competition nine teams of 20 competitors participated. Only Taiwanese teams competed in this event.

Judging from the level of enthusiasm and participation in this First World T'ai Chi Competition it is clear that Taijiquan is both growing and changing. We will all be looking forward to the next World Cup in November of 2008.

Routine Judging Points

FAULTS IN STRENGTH:

1. Tense and stiff
2. Loose and weak
3. Superficial
4. Movements lacking variation in the energy preserving and releasing
5. Transition from one strength to another not natural
6. Showing disconnection in the application of strength

FAULTS IN HARMONY:

1. Hand and foot not coinciding
2. No coordination between the torso and limbs
3. Movements not continuous
4. Transition and connection of movements tend to be stiff
5. Eye work and head not in agreement with body movements

FAULTS IN SPIRIT:

1. Tense
2. Torpid
3. Strained
4. Mind not concentrated
5. Spiritless
6. Affected

FAULTS IN SPEED:

1. Movements sometime fast, sometime slow

FAULTS IN STYLE:

1. Rhythm too fast and too strong
2. Movements on and off

3. Movements forceful and monotonous

4. Both open and close largely
5. Lack of softness, roundness, easiness and flexibility

FAULTS IN SUBSTANCE:

1. Monotonous and short of variation
2. Movements repeated too much
3. Lack of basic technical substance

FAULTS IN COMPOSITION:

1. Transition not smooth
2. Movements repeated too much in a section
3. Substance not well distributed

FAULTS IN MOVEMENT:

1. Movements not even
2. The field not well used or the area not large enough for movements

Eight Techniques: Bafa

Or

Eight Doors: Bamen

By Claudy Jeanmougin

Translated by Don Klein

This is the first article in a discussion differentiating the energies *Peng, Lü, An, Ji, Cai, Lieh, Zhou, Kao* from the postures with the same names.

Peng, Lü, An, Ji, Cai, Lieh, Zhou and *Kao* are the eight hand techniques or *Bafa*. It pleases me to term the techniques *Bamen* although I never heard Laoshi use this term. Indeed, piercing the secret of energies developed by these techniques, is it not the way to cross the door that leads to further knowledge and, especially, to another practice?

How to translate these words into English or into French? Translations exist yet none of them seem appropriate to me. It is for that reason that I prefer to develop the concept of each of the doors, not leaving the reader with faulty images. Even without being very knowledgeable of the Chinese language, every follower of our discipline can retain these eight terms without too much difficulty.

To pursue this article, it is advisable to differentiate the gestural shape of a door from the energy expression. For example, the gestural *An* shape, often shown as a push with one or two hands, is very often used to express the energy of *Peng* in the practice of Tuishou. In *Shi San Shi*, the gestural forms of doors are very clearly indicated because they are certainly the most suited to express the type of energy that their name indicates. Where confusion between the gestural shape and energy expression exist, the confusion is reinforced because the names are the same. To avoid mixing two notions, we refer to PENG-JIN when it is about the energy expression and *Peng* when it is about the gestural shape.

In spite of a relatively long stay in Taiwan, I received not the least information from Laoshi on this

subject. Perhaps it was so evident to him that he overlooked informing us about it. What I advance is only my personal view. If any reader can provide further information, it will be received with welcome.

In support of this article, I use the songs on *Bafa* from *The Tao of Tai-chi Chuan* by Jou Tsung Hwa (Warwick, N.Y., 1988).* If anyone has access to the original Chinese texts, I again would be very happy to receive them. I also use some elements of the first two volumes that I helped produce on Yangjia Michuan Taiji Quan [the Big Red Books].

I. Energy of *Peng*: PENG-JIN

According to my Chinese pupils, *Peng* is also the bamboo fence that served as a surrounding wall to protect villages. It offers at the same moment resistance and elasticity. This is all the more interesting as *Peng's* image develops a force of rebounding. Imagine an enormous balloon towards which you run at top speed. At contact, it absorbs your running before sending you back on your posterior. In the force of compression, *Peng* reacts by a global expansion propulsive.

The song:

Peng is somehow like the
water buoying a moving
boat.

First you must sink qi to the
Dantien,

Then set the head upright as if
suspended from above.

The whole body should be full
of elastic energy,

"Opening and closing" in just
one moment.

Even if there is a thousand
pounds force,

It is easy to float without
difficulty.

A boat in the water permanently undergoes Archimedes's push: as soon as it is pushed a little more, it is at once pushed away. On the other hand, if it sinks too much it risks water pouring in, and that often occurs in the practice of Tuishou when the push of the *duifang* is absorbed too much by excessive bending. In that case, the force of elasticity is broken and PENG-JIN cannot express himself. This demonstrates a lack of understanding of the notion "opening-closing." For there to be elasticized expansion, it is first necessary to be an expansion. It is this that will allow the further development to a compression (closing or shrinkage).

PENG-JIN's transformation

The most classic transformation is that from the PENG-JIN to LÜ-JIN. Keep the image of the compressed balloon in mind. It is enough that the center of the balloon be slightly unbalanced with regard to the force so that one is diverted into the space. In that case, the PENG-JIN is not expressed: transformation takes place immediately at the time of the compression.

Once space is created, any of the other the other seven doors can be generated without any difficulty.

Form *Peng*

Having understood the preceding, it is obvious that the realization of the gestural shape of *Peng* must include the movement of preliminary

expansion but not the absorption. This is very evident in the third sequence of *Shi San Shi* where *Peng* precedes *Lü*: during the first step, the expansion of *Peng* must be born so that the *Lü* is generated naturally.

Conclusions

- PENG-JIN develops a force of new development.
- During the expansion of the shape *Peng*, the center may be moved to generate a *Lü* (or any other door) easily.
- The posture *Peng* in the preparatory phase of PENG-JIN is a technique of dodging—a preparatory phase or prelude to a transformation—while PENG-JIN itself is offensive.

II. Energy of Lü: LÜ-JIN

Obviously, the first image is that of space. Beyond all the false translations, let us understand that space does not exist without another. Yes, to create space, an entourage is needed! What nature can that be? We indicated that *Peng* was a major entrance to *Lü*. Is it the only one? Any simple movement of dodging can offer an environment favorable to *Lü*, from the very moment where there is no resistance.

The song concerning this door is very suggestive:

Let your opponent come in;
Then rotate with his force.
Do not resist, but do not lose
contact.
You must be light and agile.
Let his force go its full range;
Then it will be exhausted.
When his force is empty,
You may let him fall
Or you may attack if you wish,
But you must keep your
balance
And not give your opponent a
chance to take advantage.

Naturally, we notice what was expressed for PENG-JIN. LÜ-JIN appears as a logical result of the shape *Peng*, but not only of it as we see in the study of the other doors. If we still use the example of water, it is the whirlpool that gobbles up. The

force of LÜ-JIN is still in rotation at the time of the dodge. Let us hold on to two essential principles in LÜ-JIN: make space (dodge) and use the force of the opponent to return it, or plunge it further.

LÜ-JIN's transformation

As the opponent falls in the space, it is time to take the advantage by making a transformation: a generation of another door. Once more, it is possible to generate any of the seven other doors but the one that is most apparent is AN-JIN. Or repeat PENG-JIN, as is done in some basic Tuishou exercises.

You might be amazed that I often refer to Tuishou, but is not it the place where it is possible to verify the quality of practice? Every follower of our discipline who does not acquaint himself with Tuishou risks deceiving himself in a practice that will remain sterile.

Form Lü

The conventional gestural shape of *Lü* that we find in *Shi San Shi* shows an important point: take away the center of gravity in order not to be taken by the opposite force. Once more, in the dodge, expansion precedes shrinkage: open in order to close. In the *Lü*, is not it necessary to gather in the expansion in order to empty in the relaxation? All the translations—French, English—are totally inappropriate.

Conclusions

- LÜ-JIN is a force which drags or draws in space.
- Preceding *Lü*, *Peng* is of an inestimable quality.
- Lü* is also the door opened to all others from the very moment where one understands what was a transformation.
- The posture *Lü* is a preparation to an expansion: contraction being offered space.

III. Other Approaches

Obviously, it is not possible to envisage Eight Doors, or Eight

Techniques, without making reference to trigrams although, as Mister Wang asserts, this notion is intellectual exercise.

Peng is connected with the trigramme *Qian*, the Sky, while *Lü* relates to the trigramme *Kun*, the Earth (Ground). From the extreme Yang to the extreme Yin, there is between the two a man. It is the two opposites that complement each other according to the law of the *San Cai*. Curiously, we shall find always this same report in the Sky and in the Earth: PENG-JIN, extreme Yang, set against LÜ-JIN, extreme Yin, establishing yet an additional opposite according to the law of Taiji.

In practice, we find these two doors regularly in opposition. It is sufficient to attend Rencontres Jasnières to make this simple observation. But a visit to Rencontres Jasnières is not required. For example, Aikido makes enormous use of *Lü*, with the addition of some *Peng*, or *Zhou*, and for the most fearless, follow-ups of *Lieh*.

You will notice in the reading of articles on this subject that all the pairs have as their center MAN, with a power of decision that belongs to him. Is not it not the proof of a great freedom of expression that our Art can offer?

Finally ...

The remainder of this article will appear in further issues. I sincerely hope that this first paper begins a dialogue to develop this mute subject within our style. When asked to address this subject, it was clear: ensure that our style evolves in spite of "academic" holdings. Mister Wang did not tell us everything: we have the duty to pursue this quest in respect for him.

*Currently, *The Dao of Taijiquan*, Jou, Tsung Hwa, published by the Tai Chi Foundation, Scottsdale, Arizona.

Lauren Smith and Rencontres Jasnières 2006:

An introduction for those who don't know him and an account of what he taught at the three-day festival in France.

By Jim Best



Someday I would like to be as good at tuishou as Lauren Smith is. An instructor at Rencontres Jasnières '06 said that when pushing with Lauren: "To change a thought is to change a posture." I couldn't agree more with that statement. It was quite remarkable to push with someone as talented as Lauren. It seemed as if Lauren uprooted me more with his mind than with his body. However, after three days of study with Lauren, I learned firsthand that the mind is the body. They are one.

Lauren's taijiquan journey began at an early age. He was a wrestler while growing up in New York and, like many of us taijiquan players, he possessed a desire for "something deeper" in his life. This quest began for Lauren in high school with an investigation into Buddha and Zen Buddhism.

At Brown University he studied Chinese to supplement his inner quest. He also gained a little experience with judo and taekwondo. However, "the moment" for Lauren happened when he was an exchange student in Taiwan. He had heard

about Taijiquan but didn't have a clear idea of what it was or how it was different from other martial arts. There was an older man who was teaching at the university where he was studying (Donghai University, Taizhong). One early morning he got up, went to the park, saw the man moving and knew "this is it." He became the man's student and for one year of "crazy training in the morning," with little explanation from the man, he began to learn a long Yang form. The form came to his teacher, master Zhong, through Chen Panling who studied with the very famous teachers Wu Jianquan, Yang Shaohou, Xu Yusheng and Ji Zixiu. When Lauren returned to Brown, he studied with a man named Ken Duhamel who taught a mixed form of Taijiquan created by Bow Sim Mark.

By 1989, Lauren was back in Taiwan. It was there that he met and became a student of Serge Dreyer. Lauren described his introduction and study with Serge as a "sweet meeting." He found Serge to be a caring Westerner, very skilled and very willing to teach tuishou. Lauren still considers Serge to be one of the most talented people he has ever pushed with.

Serge's class was heaven for Lauren. He studied daily with several very dedicated classmates. He learned the Michuan form from the thirteen postures up to the early part of the third duan. He learned the Michuan stick form as well as Michuan's approach to tuishou. Lauren recounted that Serge just gave and gave and gave. He encouraged Lauren and his classmates to enter tournaments and they did. Lauren stood out by taking first place in tournaments in Hong Kong and Taizhong. Lauren found these tournaments to be a great reality check for his tuishou gongfu. He had to deal with his fears, technique and other issues that come up when one decides to put to the test something they have invested a lot of time and effort into.

Lauren's quest did not end with his victories in tuishou tournaments. He traveled to Buddhist temples in Thailand and Hindu Ashrams in Malaysia to deepen his spiritual self. His tuishou journey continued as well. He pushed wherever he could, primarily in the Chinese communities in these countries. However, lot of politics came with these tuishou encounters. Saving face is very important in Chinese culture so one had to be connected to be able to have tuishou contests with credible practitioners. Lauren had a friend who was connected in this way and continually set up matches for him along his travels. He was successful in almost all of these. Sometimes there were journalists and cameramen there to take pictures and report on whether or not the Westerner had been bested. Sometimes there were crowds. On one occasion the contest took place in a bunker to protect the face of the local hero just in case he lost. Although these contests in far off, exotic lands presented Lauren with a wide variety of forms to deal with, and jettisoned him into an

incredible expansion of experience, Lauren asserts that the quintessential elements of tuishou were always there for him to rely upon and to apply.

After this incredible adventure came to an end, Lauren competed in tournaments in the United States where he won some and lost some. He won most of the European tournaments that he entered during this period including the 2000 European Championship. He is quick to point out that his European tuishou experience began at Jasnières. He also gives much praise to teachers of the Cheng Man-Ching form who instructed him everywhere that he went.

More recently, Lauren has continued his inner journey by studying Western movement forms. Feldenkrais and the Alexander Method have been very beneficial to him. Lauren is clearly not someone who advocates sticking to just one form. He feels that studying many forms is fine, just as long as the student seeks the universal principles that exist in all of these types of practice. In his thinking, these fundamental principles are here for all of us to discover, explore, utilize and enjoy.

Aside from his epiphany in that park in Taiwan with the old man playing taijiquan, there have been no other grand awakenings for him since. He didn't one day discover something and say to himself: "Now I've got it! I know how to excel at tuishou." Instead, he maintains that he has approached tuishou and all the other forms of movement he studies with a joy that mirrors his enthusiasm for gaining inner knowledge. He compared this joy to the way he felt when he would wrestle with his brothers when they were kids. They would kick and push each other and "crack up" doing it. That's how he feels about doing tuishou. This joy came through loud and clear at Jasnières.

It would be quite understandable for one to think that when scores of people gather for a tuishou festival, many just to have a chance to learn from Lauren, that he would choose to demonstrate how one could master the finer details of arm locks, throws, what one needs to do to win tuishou tournaments or how to fajing like you've never "fajinged" before. But alas, no. Lauren was not passing on any macho tips to us. Lauren's teaching did however begin with one of the most difficult activities many of us can attempt to succeed at. This activity was relaxation. Relax to "find your mind" and the intentions it (or something else) has in store for you. Relax to find in yourself yin, yang and your center. Relax to feel the space around you. And although I never even came close to actually pushing someone in Lauren's workshops, I feel like I learned invaluable lessons that will hopefully stay with me for a very long time.

The topic of Friday morning's workshop was intention. When we arrived at the workshop spot, Lauren sat in silence while everyone chatted and mulled around. He was "intentionally" calming himself. After a few minutes the group of 30 or so people settled down and became quiet. Lauren then got up and asked us to get into comfortable positions and calm ourselves. After several minutes a collective calm came over us. Lauren asked us to lie on our backs to calm ourselves even more. While on our backs we



were instructed to slowly lift a finger and examine what it took to do that. For me, I found that it took intention to move my finger. I discovered that my mind was continually giving my finger an order to raise and lower itself. It was really quite enlightening. When I took the time to consider a simple action like lifting a finger, I realized that my mind "moved" first. This was a very powerful moment for me. I knew that the mind was stressed in the taijiquan classics and Lauren had hooked me with this simple, but powerful activity.

While still lying down, Lauren told us to lift our bodies off the ground. He asked us what it took to move this "big fucking piece of meat!" (The English speakers found this hilarious; the French speakers missed out due to a loss in translation.) The analogy was great. Our self-awareness was such that "a big fucking piece of meat" felt like a perfect description for our bodies at that time.

Lauren coached us through all of these activities. "Begin ... stop! *Calme ... calme ... reste ... reste ... start ... stop ...* what does it take to move? Calm, relaaaaaaax ... relaaaaaaax ... what did the mind tell you first?" I found these initial activities to be profound. However, the activities that paired us up were equally as profound, if not more so.

While we were paired up, one person lay on their backs. The other person would move toward the person on their backs with their hands or foot and stop just shy of actual contact. Next, the "pusher" would make contact with their hand and hold it there for a period of time. Lauren then asked both people to discuss what they experienced during this activity. I pushed first in this activity and my partner said he expressed an ever so slight tightening of his frontal muscles

in an attempt to deal with the “push” that was coming at him. He said he felt it was a rather natural reaction to a movement coming into his space. When I was the receiver I found my mind sending me information about the “push” that was coming. My mind was predicting where it thought my partner’s hand was going. My mind would say: “Here it comes ... I think it’s going to my shoulder ... oh ... there it goes ... here it comes again ... I think for my nose ... no, my left chest ... there it goes ... here it comes ... “ When my partner made contact and held it there, my mind keyed in on the temperature increase, the warmth of my partner’s hand. My senses were definitely elevated.

The next two-person activity required one person to lay on their backs while their partner moved parts of their body. Lauren instructed us to think about what it took to let go in order for our various body parts to be moved and what it took to move just where we were being moved. Then we were allowed to move a body part where we wanted and the pusher had to follow our movement, keeping in constant contact. All the while Lauren moved among us calmly issuing the directives, “to be calm ... relaxing ... *reste ... calme.*”

We then got up and stood facing a partner. One person gently pushed the other. Lauren asked the pushers to think about what it took to perform the push. The mind of course! The receivers were asked to think about what they heard in this relaxed state before the actual push.

Then it got really interesting. Lauren directed us to sit facing a partner. We were asked to just sit there and accept the other person. This was so amazingly difficult for me to do. I was paired with this lovely woman from Holland named Anna Marie. I had been with her in a three-person group during Serge’s workshop earlier that morning. So much was going on inside my mind during this activity. It was so intimate. I’m a New Yorker; you don’t just get into someone’s space and accept them. We call that sexual harassment. If you follow them, we call it stalking. I found myself looking down at the ground, afraid to look at Anna Marie. (A therapist would have a field day with me.) Thankfully, Anna Marie gently reached over with her hand, raised my chin so my eyes met hers, and she said: “It’s okay, you can look at me. I won’t bite.” From there on I began to relax and then I began to truly accept her presence. It became a really enjoyable experience. Then we talked about it for a few minutes.

The next activity had us doing the same thing with another partner, but after accepting the person for a while, one person would ask the other: “What do you want?” I ended up having the loveliest conversation with the Scottish woman I was paired with. It started with a glass of water, for it was a sunny summer day, and it wove its way through the themes of contentment, world peace, war and the Tao. Lauren wanted us to do another activity but it seemed as if there was a collective blowing off of him. We were way too relaxed at this point. There were 20 wonderful connections being made by then.

So what in the world did Friday’s workshop have to do with tuishou? I don’t think Lauren even mentioned the term. Well, Friday’s workshop had everything to do with tuishou. Personally speaking, I was so ready to practice tuishou at that point. My mind was focused. My body was calm and ultra-sensitive to what was going on around me. It reminded me of the line from the classics: “You are so sensitive, not a feather can alight.” For Lauren, tuishou is all about “the connection,” and the connection begins with the mind. He told me that “without using the mind to really accept your tuishou partner, tuishou will never rise to anything more than a physical act or routine. He/she pushes, I respond with a technique. That’s it.” But for Lauren, there’s so much more.

Perhaps at this point one may be thinking that Lauren’s teaching approach might be a bit too “crunchy.” I could see myself falling into this line of thinking as well. However, I was lucky enough to get an opportunity to push with Lauren later that day. There was nothing “granola” about his tuishou. It was quite incredible actually. It was as if I was uprooted before we made contact. His mind was on another plane. It was obvious that he was using something other than his arms and body to get me off balance. As I write though, I realize that he was using his body. He was just using a part of the body that I have barely tapped into: the mind. I now know, thanks to Lauren, the mind is the body. They are one and tuishou begins with the mind.

His technique, ability and the material he presented in the morning workshops were completely rooted in the taijiquan classics. (By the way, he has written master’s theses on the taijiquan classics.) As many of us know, in relation to the mind the classics say:

When moving forward or backward, up or down, left or right, the principle is the same. All movements are directed by yi (mind) and not by something external.

Eventually you will be able to do whatever the mind wills.

In the body, yi (mind) and qi, the rulers, command. The muscles and bones, the subjects, obey.

The first of Li Yixu’s five secrets of success is to calm the mind:

#1—Without a calm mind, you cannot concentrate. One raise of the arm and front, back, left and right become disoriented. For this reason it is necessary to keep your mind tranquil. ... If the other has strength, I have strength too, but my strength comes first. If the other is without strength, I am also without strength, but my yi (mind) arrives first. ... Listen attentively at all times. Concentrate, your yi (mind) on the place where you are touched. Work according to this idea, and in a year or half year, when the opportunity arises, you will have this ability in your body. All of this applies to using yi (mind) and not jin. After a long

time, the other person will be controlled by you and you will not be controlled by him.

When I asked Lauren over tea why he chose the topics that he did for his workshops, he wasn't as calculating as my interpretation of his teaching and its relationship to taijiquan theory. His first reply was that he didn't know. Then he reflected for a moment and said he guessed it was the Tao. The topics that he chose to teach were manifestations of a truthful statement of this moment on his journey along the Tao. He said there was no "b.s." in what he taught, it was all in the classics. He wanted us to discover these topics together and collectively get in tune with the inner alchemy that taijiquan and tuishou provide.

The theme of Saturday morning's workshop was yin, yang and the center. From a standing position we found the center point in our solar plexus. To one side of that point was yin, to the other side, yang. We tried to feel this, to listen for the differences between these distinctions, to relax. We positioned our palms facing sideways. One facing right, the other facing left. One hand was in front of our solar plexus; the other hand was in front of our navel. Both hands were in line with each other. Then we were told to move our hands from yin to yang and back to center. All the while we were instructed to be calm, relax.

The next activity required a partner. We stood facing each other. One person was told to move from yin to yang in their mind. The partner was to observe and stop the person when they thought that happened. A discussion followed. I could see my partner's neck muscles move ever so slightly when he changed thoughts. We then switched partners and instead of changing from yin to yang sideways, we did it up and down. Prior to each of these activities, Lauren emphasized that each person had to agree on a space between each partner that was comfortable for both participants. In other words, one person was yin, the other yang and the comfort zone or space in between was the center. So not only were we sensing yin, yang and center in ourselves, we were sensing it in regard to external space in a face-to-face encounter.

We then sat facing a partner and one person sent "very yang" thoughts at their partner. The partner accepted these and tried to interpret them. We were instructed to stop the sender if his/her thoughts were becoming too intense.

Saturday's workshop ended with a fun circle activity. (One of the really nice things about Lauren was that he was all about having a good time.) We formed a huge circle of 30 or so people and we moved in and out simultaneously to feel the collective changing of the center. We came all the way in until we were squashed together and then we expanded again to our full diameter of about 30 or 40 yards. Finally, due to Lauren's calming directions, his hilarious sound effects and general good vibes that he sent our way, a wave broke out in our circle. Then Lauren got us ricocheting energy rapidly from person to person around the circle by slapping one palm against the other and pointing in the direction that the energy was being sent. It was a lot of fun. The weather was perfect, we were relaxed, our consciousness was elevated, connections were being made.



Later that day, pushing with Lauren for a few minutes was once again inspirational. It wasn't like the pushing I was doing with other people. It was more like receiving a very generous tutorial from a highly skilled individual. Lots of laughs were shared. It was a real treat. Most of the tips he gave me related to the topics in the workshops; in other words, sensation before actual physical contact. He would compliment me if I set up in a centered and therefore formidable posture. He would compliment me when my posture was rooted but my spirit was raised as well. He called this the "noble position." When he pulled my arm he explained the correct response was down, not back. When I watched him push with others, you could tell that he was completely locked in mentally in a way that others weren't.

I tried to employ Lauren's tips with the next person. It was one of the most pleasurable experiences I had that weekend. I was calm, relaxed, centered and nobly postured. It seemed easy to uproot my partner. Feeling proud of myself, I went over to Serge to impress him with my progress. I can't say that Serge was impressed but he was kind enough to try the same move on me a dozen or so times until I finally deflected correctly. I was really enjoying myself at Jasnières.

I was late for Sunday's workshop. Anna Marie had invited me to her tent for tea and a delicious breakfast of yogurt, fruit juice, brown bread and wonderful French cheese. What can I say; Lauren had helped to put us in a relaxed state where it was easy to connect with strangers in meaningful ways. If Anna Marie hadn't noticed the campsite emptying out, we

may have sat there for hours continuing our discussion on life, art, democracy, spatial theories and the like. I'm glad she did. Jasnières was like a small Woodstock without the drugs and Lauren was Hendrix. We had to catch the third and final act.

Sunday's workshop was concerned with feeling space. It seemed to reflect Lauren's experiences with Western movement techniques. While standing, we went through a series of arm extensions: straight above our heads with palms facing each other like the apex of the upward stretch in Embrace the Tiger Return to the Mountain, shoulder height with palms facing upward and then palms facing downward. In each position Lauren encouraged us to feel the space. With our arms extended to each side at shoulder level, palms up, he told us to imagine the energy as being like holding massive plates of pancakes. When we rotated our palms to face the earth, Lauren would issue a "sploooosh" sound effect and urge us to feel how the space had just changed. It really did. We then extended our arms in front of us with palms down. Lauren directed us to feel the space as if we were gliding our palms over it. Then we brought our hands toward our solar plexus and circled out, all the while sensing the smooth space in front of us. Then we turned our palms over, facing the sky. Lauren told us to caress that "juicy piece of meat" in front of us. (Carnivore that I am, I loved the meat analogies. I envisioned a massive pork loin that I smoothly rubbed from below.) We lowered our extended arms to hip level to become a bunch of "hippies." "Palms up ... feel the space. Sploooosh ... palms down ... feel the space." We raised our arms to eye level, to the top of the head, all the while sensing, feeling the space. We extended our arms directly above our heads again with palms facing. We made huge circles with our arms as we walked forward, one arm circling clockwise, the other counterclockwise. Then we walked backward still circling our arms. Watching Lauren do this made me think of Da Vinci's diagrams of the human anatomy with the circles assigned to the different appendages. All the while we were directed to sense the space around us, to be calm, to be aware, to notice the changes in the space around us.

We came back to a stance with our feet shoulder-width apart, arms to our sides, no tension in our shoulders. He referred us to the line in the taijiquan classics about the suspended head. He asked us to imagine that the tops of our heads were hanging from a cord that extended millions of miles away in the heavens. From our minds eye a cord extended just as far directly in front of us as well as directly behind us. We were connected to the earth, our roots extended deep to its core. We felt the space. We squatted all the way down and were urged to feel the rush of space up. As we extended to rise, we were told to sense the space rushing down. (This reminded me of a neigong workshop that Master Wang gave when he talked of feeling heavenly qi flow down into the body filling the dantian on inhales and earthly qi flow up through the body on exhales. Sometimes he said the heavenly flow was almost too much to bear, like a flood gushing down through his body.)

We partnered up and mirrored each other's movements from side to side. We faced off and one person would enter the other person's space while their eyes were open and then when they were closed. We discussed the sensations we felt for each of these activities. Finally, we went back to back with our partner and tried to move close to each other but without touching. That was the final activity.

Heavy rain began to fall late Sunday morning and through lunch. It didn't look like it was going to let up. Some people, including myself, started to head for home. My hotel was 40 minutes away in Tours. By 5:30 in the evening the rain had cleared and it was a beautiful evening in that city by the Loire. I'm not sure if the free pushing took place at Jasnières that afternoon. While strolling around Tours I bumped into a Swiss couple that had been at Jasnières. We toured the beautiful cathedral there, took a few snapshots and parted ways.

So what lessons did I come away with from Lauren's workshops in regard to tuishou? Well, first off, if I don't relax, I can't hear. That's not new information to me. What's new is that I thought I was pretty relaxed prior to Jasnières. Now I know that there is relaxed ... and then there is relaxed! I have a lot of room for improvement in this field. The first step in improving my relaxation should be to work more on calming my mind. It's not outside my body. It's not a separate entity. It is part of my body, just like my waist, legs or arms. Now that I think about it, my mind races quite a bit. It's time to calm my mind more. Second, if my mind is calmer I can hear my body better. My body has yin, yang and center. My body is surrounded by space. I should use my mind to get more in touch with the space around me, to interact with that space on a deeper level. This will make me a better listener, a better feeler, a better tuishou player hopefully. Lauren knows that there are many levels of listening. I think it's safe to say that most of us have never gone to the depths of listening the way he has. Therefore, most of us are not as skilled at tuishou as he is. Lauren helped me to see that I can go a lot further when it comes to relaxing and listening. Hopefully I'll get better at tuishou in the process.

The morning after Jasnières I was in front of that beautiful cathedral in Tours doing my basic exercises and practicing the second duan. The sun was slowly brightening the blue gray light of the early morning. I was trying to apply what I had learned and relearned in the preceding days. I spoke to myself as I practiced: "Don't let your knees go past your toes, it's all in the waist, don't raise your shoulders prior to dragging down or before coming into the elbow strike, *calme, calme ...*" I was moving slower than usual. There seemed to be more purpose in my movements, yet I felt freer. I tried to walk like a cat. I kept my shoulders relaxed. My posture was more erect. My head hung from a cord a million miles away in the universe. I felt the space around me. The next day in Paris I did tuishou with a bagua player named Frederique in the Jardin du Luxembourg. When we first made contact he laughed and said: "Wow! ... You're so soft." Thank you Lauren. *Merci Jasnières.*



感恩

滄海桑田幻無常

無端福星從天降

多年心事今成就

笑逐顏開謝天恩

感恩
蒼海桑田幻無常
無端福星從天降
多年心事今成就
笑逐顏開謝天恩

Gǎn'ēn

cānghǎi sāngtián huàn wúcháng
wúduān fúxīng cóng tiān jiàng
duōnián xīnshì jīn chéngjiù
xiàozhúyánkāi xiè tiān'ēn

ED: Before Ann submitted “Gǎn'ēn” I had emailed her a Wu Kuang-Ming quote that included “As Buddhism originated in India and deconstructionism in the West, so metaphor thrives in China ...” and concluding “Grateful smiles remain.”¹ So when I received Ann’s piece I thought perhaps it was in response, but no: the two had crossed paths. Still my interpretation is shaded by Kuang-Ming’s words and also his interpretations of the Daoist *Chuang Tzu*.

The classical four-line/seven-syllable “Gǎn'ēn” opens with a familiar Chinese idiom “blue sea, mulberry fields” which implies that over time each changes into the other and back again over and over—*Yīn* → *Yáng*, *Yáng* → *Yīn*, *wùhùà*², the Chinese concept of continuous process (“processive” in Ames and Hall’s words³) vs. such Western concepts as stasis, action-reaction, thesis-antithesis-synthesis. This idiom is attributed to Magu, the female Daoist Immortal of Longevity. Then Ann immediately follows *cāng hǎi sāng tián* with two *wú* forms, *wúcháng* and *wúduān*. These amend the collection of *wu* forms of the Daoist classic the *Dao de Jing*: *wúmíng*, *wúshí*, *wúxīn*, *wúyù*, *wúzhēng*, *wúzhī*, and most familiar, *wúwéi*⁴ and together they inform the remainder of the poem. So what happens, happens—happens without directed intervention (*wuwei*)—something that had been troubling no longer is. What are left but joy and appreciation without the need to wonder why?

Worlds wheel with recondite flux
Absent action change recurs
Ancient problems disappear
Grateful smiles remain

1 “Response To Robert Magliola’s Review Article On My View Of Madhyamika Buddhism,” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, Vol 33 p. 299.

2 This character *wù*, 物 *thing*, is not related to the *wú* forms mentioned later, 無 *without*.

3 *Dao de Jing*, tr., Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, Ballantine Books, N.Y., 2003, p. 50.

4 *Ibid*, pp. 48-53, 67-68.

Daoist Body Cultivation: Traditional Models and Contemporary Practices

Livia Kohn, Editor, Three Pines Press, Magdalena, New Mexico, 2006

Reviewed by Mary Loesch

Nine rings—the first eight, similar yet unique all held in place by the ninth. Acting as an equator, the ninth ring holds the longitudinal “meridian” rings an equidistance apart, forming one whole sphere.

(The first eight are the eight body Chapters, and the ninth is the Introduction)

Chapter 1. *Acupuncture and Spiritual Realization.*

By Lonny Jarrett.

Jarrett gives a clear description of the philosophy of balance in terms of the human condition and its place in the universe. The original, pure condition, lost to living itself, can be found and regained through the healing of TCM, acupuncture, alchemy and balanced living. The relationships of the one, the two, the eight, the five phases, the twelve organs and meridians to the human condition determine what is real or unreal, healthy or diseased, flowing correctly or stagnant in the individual. Through the case history, Lonny Jarrett explicates the concept well. The Dao is out there, and in here.

Chapter 2. *The Six Healing Breaths.*

By Catherine Despeux.

From Dao and TCM/acupuncture of the last chapter, Catherine Despeux, writes flowingly about breath, specifically different manners of breathing. She defines the six most basic types: Si, He/xu, Hu, Xu, Chui, and Xi. She describes and traces the techniques of these six through the past. The descriptions of the techniques and their purposes are so vivid, one could actually attempt each without the frustration of failing. Despeux discusses modern applications of the breathing types in terms of the five phases, and additionally, discusses appropriate exercises. She concludes, with support from Western medicinal science in

terms of the stress hormones and concomitant disruptive breathing patterns, that the deep and various rhythmic breathing patterns of the six breaths do act to “distress.” It is easy to see that this informative chapter is important for its content, but I won’t go as far as saying it is a breath of fresh air.

Chapter 3. *Ingestion, Digestion, and Regestion: The Complexity of Qi-Absorption.*

By Stephen Jackowicz.

From the breath and qi absorption in Chapter 2, Stephen Jackowicz discusses qi in terms of it being a substance that can be packaged and taken in in a variety of ways. Its nourishing goodness is on the physical and spiritual levels. Jackowicz follows all the references through Chinese history about qi-as-nourishment in a very comprehensive manner. He continues discussing qi as being both primordial and ambient. It all can be absorbed and moved about inside one’s self. The more it circulates the more refined it becomes, to a point where it becomes the food of the spirit. The more the qi is internalized and refined, the closer one gets to Daoist spiritual oneness. This chapter is quite densely written, there is a lot of information in it. Thanks to the fine diagrams I was able to understand much more than the words alone.

Chapter 4. *Life Without Grains: Bigu and the Daoist Body.*

By Shawn Arthur.

“Life Without Grains” is not merely a chapter on diet control. Shawn

Arthur’s main thesis is the intentional circulation of qi. The goal is longevity with health and cultivated harmony with all surroundings. Arthur writes an excellent review of the literature concerning the practice of life without grains. He traces it from its first appearance (1112-771 B.C.E.), through its many, many interpretations of health, longevity, how to get it and how to keep it, and finishes the discussion with the concept in modern times. In modern times, Daoist practices continue, with more emphasis placed on inner-alchemy/qi absorption and inner refinement of qi, and less emphasis on longevity. This is very interesting and informative, but probably it is best not to try the diet supplements at home. Leave alchemy to the experts.

Chapter 5. *Yoga and Daoyin.*

By Livia Kohn.

Moving from eating (Chapter 4) and on to exercise, Livia Kohn compares and contrasts Yoga with Daoyin. We mostly all know what Yoga is, but not Daoyin. Kohn gives us the definition of Daoyin as “...the Daoist practice of guiding (dao) the qi and stretching (yin) the body...” (p.123). On the surface, both forms of exercise seem similar; however, Kohn shows us there is much more going on in the depths of the past of these two disciplines and in the breadth of how they were and are practiced. And it is always back to breath, and the array of manipulations of it. She gives a succinct explanation of both Daoyin and Yogic breathing techniques, and how each benefits the human system. For the contrast, in

Yoga most of the exercises are stationary poses as is the quest for the spiritual path is internal and looking for a stable self. Daoyin exercises are mostly moving sequences as the quest for the spiritual path is to become part of nature/the environment seeking harmony with all. However, there are some exercises shared by both! Livia Kohn's final deduction is the these two systems of health and spiritual growth are indeed different in practice and point of view, and, in every likelihood, are of independent invention. This clearly written chapter elucidates Kohn's points well and is quite enlightening.

Chapter 6. *Transforming Sexual Energy With Water-and-Fire Alchemy.*

By Michael Winn.

Starting off with verse that is a good reminder to us of the importance of an aspect of our existence as humans, Michael Winn continues with a well-researched document on the Daoist methods of handling sexual energies. He discusses various of sexual techniques in the Daoist literature and explains some of the exercises pertinent to shared energy flow. It's nice that Michael Winn has himself experimented with these techniques and exercises. It's a verification that they work as well today as reported from long ago; however, for me it came under the category of "too much information" and it distracted from the otherwise informative body of the text. I also wondered why Kenneth S. Cohen's, *The Way of Qigong*, Chapter 20, "The Art of Clouds and Rain," was not included in the discussion or bibliography. It is also a very good explanation of Daoist sexual energy techniques.

Chapter 7. *Taiji Quan: Forms, Visions, and Effects.*

By Bede Bidlack.

When a beautiful poem written in the 19th century describes the essence

and action of Taiji Quan so accurately, it almost seems superfluous to continue with any explanation of it. Bede Bidlack, however, takes this poem as only a start into an excellent description of the Taiji Quan experience in the West. He describes Taiji Quan in context of Daoist terminology and Neo-Confucian thought and then follows the growth through history. The "how-to" prose, though never being able to be as lucid, fluid and succinct as the poem, explains on a practical level just that: how-to. Using the four basic principles he also explains "why" as well: energy flow, on the levels of the physical, the mental and the spiritual. Bidlack gives an excellent comparison of the many styles of Taiji Quan and how they came to be. He briefly goes into the health benefits, which are becoming more known and studied by scientists and medical practitioners of the West. With this, Bede Bidlack leads right into an in-depth review of Daoism and Taiji Quan, with prime consideration to the divisions: yin-yang and earth-heaven, using the metaphor of the wheelwright. Overall, this chapter is a very clear, very straightforward review of Taiji Quan, an energy moving exercise for many purposes.

Chapter 8: *Qigong in America.*

By Louis Komjathy.

Louis Komjathy follows the short history (20th century to date) of Qigong from China to the West. Then he shows how the many movements now part of Qigong may be grouped into four major categories, and understood better. These categories are: martial, medical, Buddhist and Daoist. There appears to be confusion in the divisions as individual teachers may claim their own "position" within these four categories, and these positions may be challenging to the categories, and there is always a discrepancy in descriptions of anything when comparing emic (insider) and etic (outsider)

points of view. All this aside, Komjathy does an excellent job at the task of explaining the "East meets West" perspectives in terms of one of the Western views: the mystical magic of all things Asian. He gives short but very interesting biographies of the early major Qigong teachers as well as the present teachers in the United States. He concludes with a discussion of essentially Qigong meets United States capitalism and materialism. Komjathy's final words are about a newer New Age population and why this group may have the "energy" to be seeking a health-spiritual path. This chapter cleared up some of the confusions I had with Qigong and I found it very helpful.

Introduction.

By Livia Kohn.

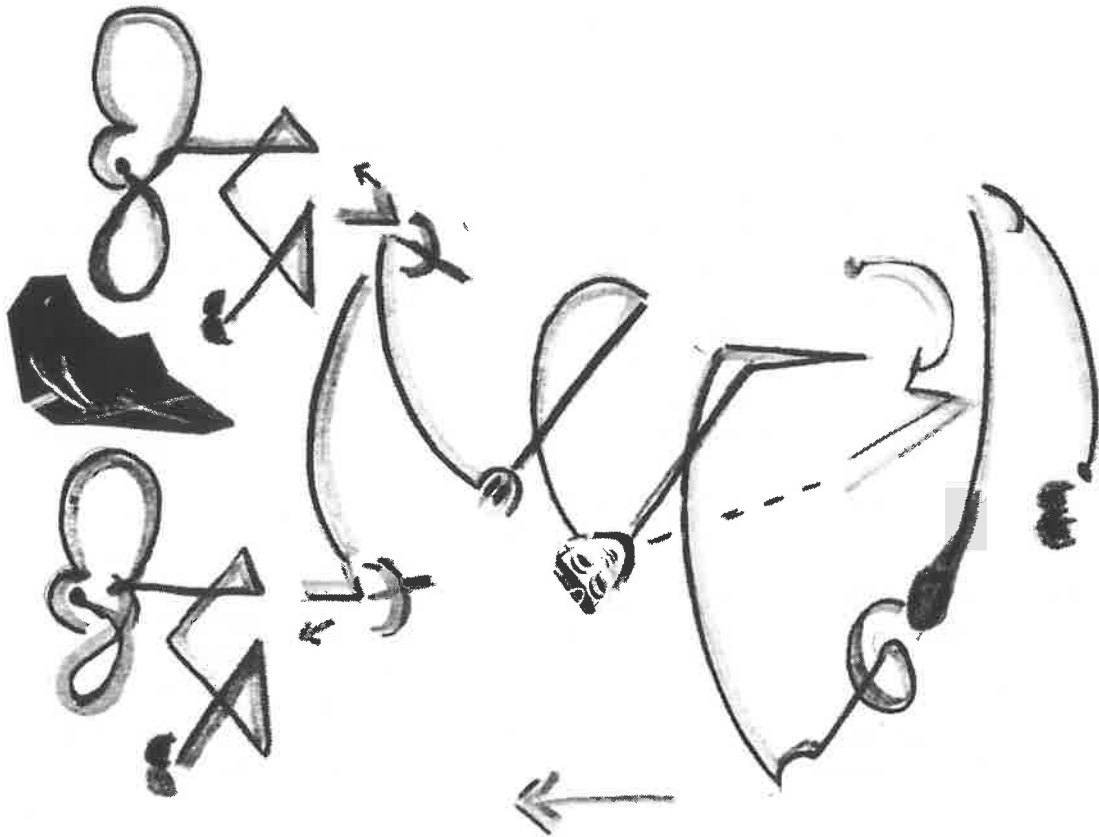
An introduction is what lets the reader know what they are about to read, or to at least prepare the way for the reader. Livia Kohn does more than that, and that is a good thing. After a bit of a comparison with Buddhist philosophy, Kohn gives one of the best primers on Daoism that I've ever read. She then explains the purpose of this book is not the ultimate enlightenment, but the path along the way, that is to say the various means of manipulation of qi energy in accordance or comparison to Daoism. She summarizes each of the chapters with a brief introduction to the author and how his or her work fits into the scheme of Daoist body cultivation. Her introduction is what holds all of the chapters together as a whole, one sphere ready to sprout the seeds each chapter has tilled in to the earth.

The point of reading a book is to learn, to cultivate the mind, to grow, and then to share with others. I am satisfied the book does just this. I recommend it for all interested in elucidation of energy and the Dao.

Mary teaches in Big Rapids, Michigan.

The First Duan

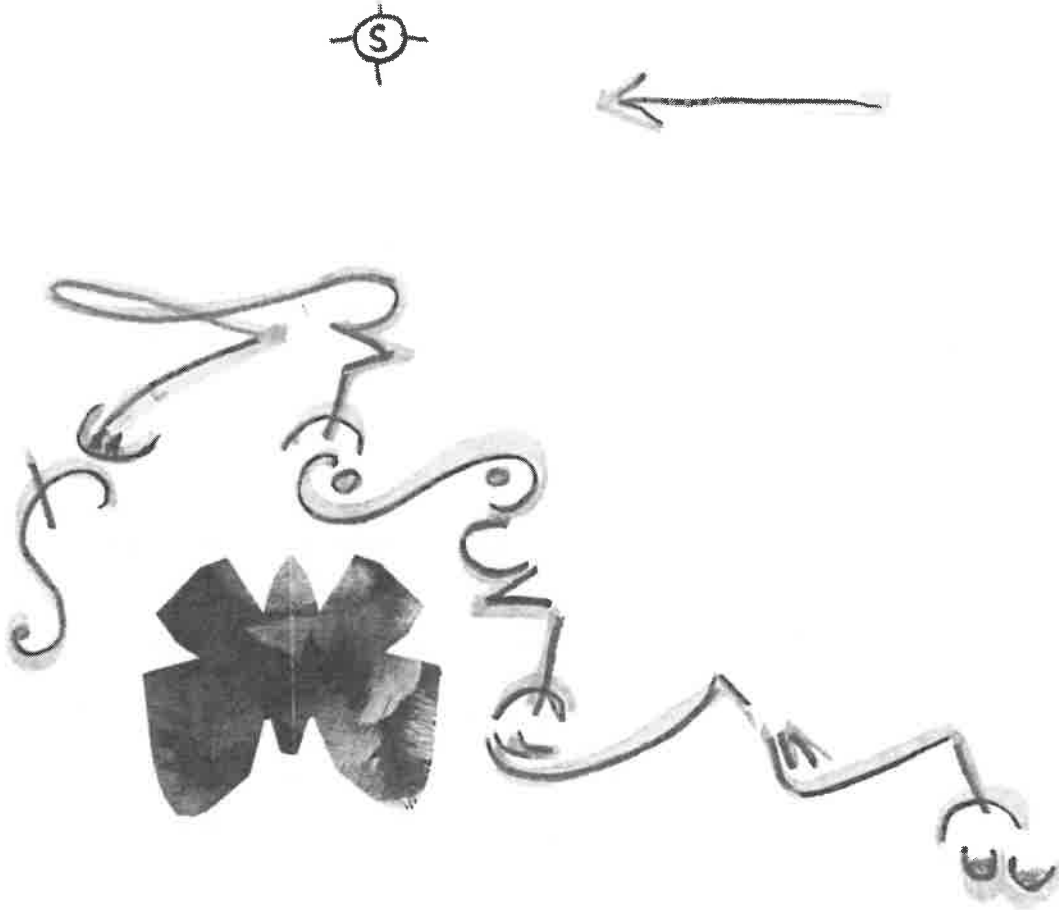
Illustrated by Marie-Jeanne Berges
Originally appeared in the *Bulletin of Amicale*, Mau 2006, No 52.



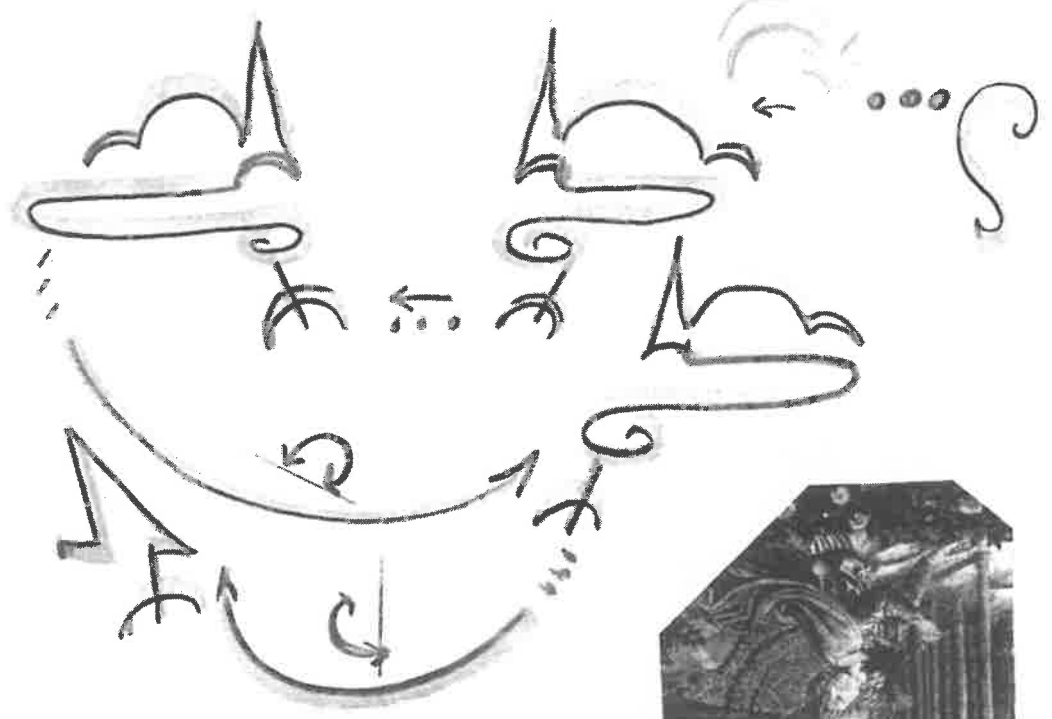
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H5 1^



H5 2



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
































































	AN refousser.		brumen tekillen
	tonn flappen		PUNCH
	figuer		TAN BIEN ramble faret
	trancher espace		n'omiesin et elecrisoin
	tekillon		cewde
			tourner orue

For the Linguistically Impaired & Challenged:

AN / push back
fend off strike
Stick (Cai)
chop space
butterfly

brush butterfly
Punch
Tan Bian / Single Whip
sit down and to unfold
elbow
turn / to arm

Marie-Jeanne practices in Belgium

Why?

Because of the clouds
Which rise and fall
Because of the clouds
Which turn to leave again
With a fluorescent pen point
I wanted to retain them
On the right-hand side they appeared
On the left they are going to return

Why?

To capture the preciseness of the form
To grasp the meaning and place it within the whole of the chain

Why?

A small drawing can say more than a long speech
But especially: a "coming back" to the creative function

Thank you to M.APPELMANS for his science of the movement
Thank you to R.LJÉGEOIS for his DVD
Thank you to the Small Red Book
Thank you to all

MJ BERGES -

Traveling to Taiwan for the Spring Tea Harvest

By Andrew Nugent-Head

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Each Spring around QingMing festival, when families go to sweep the graves of their ancestors, “Tea Pilgrims” head into the Taiwan mountains seeking to taste the Spring harvest. Spring tea is the best tea of all seasons, the very term inspiring a reverent state in any tea aficionado. To be there for the picking and preparing of the Spring tea, to sample it in the mountains and take it home straight from the source draws people from all classes and countries on this pilgrimage.

We were no exception, a caravan of five cars leaving at dawn for the mountains near a place known as Deer Valley. Though several of us were strangers in the group, there was an immediate camaraderie and lack of shyness or stiffness characteristic in the East: we were each Tea Aficionados compelled to drive for hours and hours into the high mountains to see and drink from the source. The love of tea is infectious in a crowd of

serious tea drinkers. My love began when I was a student living in Taipei in 1986 and learned that Lipton or Chinese restaurant tea was about as representative of true tea as jug wine is to the fine vintages of France. Our caravan leader was a Taiwanese whose first pilgrimage was probably before I was born. He knew many of the tea growers in the region and had his favorite: A man who not only produced excellent tea, but was an excellent host to Tea Pilgrims like ourselves.

Chen Fengjun was busy with the tea spread out in his courtyard when we arrived. He welcomed us warmly while continuing to keep an eye on his workers, obviously pleased but used to arrivals like ours. After a quick tour of his tea garden, which is a traditional name for a place which grows and processes tea, we found ourselves at his tea table and Mr. Chen warming to his subject. The first and most important point he made was that it is a long, multi-step process to create the tea

we were drinking, and that at any step, the tea could be ruined and made unusable. Each step was equally important, each step must be done with full focus of heart and mind and without thought of the other steps to be successful.

First one had to select the best place on the mountain to grow tea. Then one had to understand the characteristics of that place to understand how to best help the tea grow there. Once growing, one had to know how to “read the tea leaves” to know how they were growing and when they would be ready. At harvest time it was important to pick correctly and at the proper time of day to ensure the maximum “essence” was in the leaves. From there, the unbelievably crucial art of processing the tea, further made difficult in that tea picked on any day must be processed before the following sunrise or be ruined. But all of this would be for not if the person drinking the tea did not know the art of drinking tea.

All the while Mr. Chen’s hands danced around his tea table, working with the kettle, the small pots, the “tea oceans,” the fragrance cups and our small drinking cups as we sampled and re-sampled yesterday’s harvest. I was again reminded of how different the art of tea is in Japan versus Taiwan. Tea traveled back to Japan with its monks who came to China to study Buddhism. In that context, tea was viewed as an extension of the religion, and became a ceremonial process. Not so in the land of tea, however. The drinking of tea in China was an informal, bonding-with-friends affair, the high art of relaxing while having the skill to make the perfect pot of tea. It was in that spirit Mr. Chen gave us the fresh tea, conversations straying, laughter and questions issuing, the hands ever moving, sometimes purposely, sometimes to simply touch, always to a harmony that became more and more tangible with each cup drunk.

And then suddenly we were up and climbing onto his mountain truck, heading up into the high regions to his tea bushes. The whole area was a mix of tall betel nut trees and row after row of tea. Slightly overcast, the mist mixed into the green of the land, reminding one that Chinese paintings are, above all else, landscape paintings reflecting what they saw. But at harvest time the land was also covered with women in colorful clothes, completely wrapped under wide hats to prevent exposure to the sun and the insects—these are the tea pickers, once upon a time the sole province of young mountain girls and the subject of poem and song but now mostly made up of middle- and older-aged women. They moved up the rows of tea with tiny snippers, clipping the leaves that were at the perfect size.

Looking over his tea fields, Mr. Chen spoke about the importance of understanding the land where the tea

grows. The tea on this side of the mountain had to be watched carefully, as the sun hit it very early in the morning and had exposure all day, while another patch was in the shadow of a mountain across the way, thus



only receiving sunshine a good three hours later. The key to understanding tea is understanding the moisture both within the leaf and left by the dew. The ideal tea clipping should be two leaves and a sprout, as allowed to grow any bigger, they become dry. The dew? Well, the amount of moisture the tea leaf has is critical to the processing of the tea. Picked too soon while too moist, and the tea will not bake right; picked too late when already dry, and the baking process will burn the tea. I watched the workers’ fingers move nimbly through the bushes and commented on their picking skill.

With a wry laugh, Mr. Chen told me that having good workers was the hardest part. No longer young women bound to the land and the tea garden, the workers were migrant workers paid by the kilo. They played a fine line of mixing bigger, and thus heavier leaves within the “two leaf and a sprout” requirement, but never enough to lose their jobs. Due to the need to pick the leaves at the precise time as well as day, bosses lived with the fear of losing their workers to a rival who suddenly offered a bit more per kilo, or a better lunch and snack breaks. This, he told me, was where the biggest headaches came from. And then off he went to check their bags, a mix of firmness and friendliness with the pickers.

Driving the day’s pick back to his courtyard, the tea was spread out on tarps, evenly distributed so that each would be exposed to the sun. This carefully watched process is called “killing the green,” which I came to understand as the first step in removing the chlorophyll green plant taste from the leaves. Again talking to us casually while steadily watching the leaves, Mr. Chen told us about the difficulty in knowing when the leaves had been out there long enough but not too long. Too

little time and the flavor would have a taste of green plants, too much and the important moisture factor would become too dry and ruin the tea in the baking process. Suddenly up and padding gently between the tea leaves, he and his workers dragged the tarps into the dark warehouse next to the yard. Here the tea was weighed onto large straw panniers and placed in racks to rest. The warehouse was left dark for the tea to sleep.

One of the brief quiet moments each day during the harvest season, we found ourselves at his tea table again. Tea names can be quite confusing, as there has to be a distinction made between types of tea, and types of tea plants. Teas are generally categorized the following way: green, which means unfermented leaves; Wulong (Oolong), which is semi-fermented; and red, which is completely fermented and known as black tea in the West. Thus these names denote the process the tea underwent, not the type of tea it came from. There are many different types of tea plants, and, for the most part, each could be prepared in the above three processes. What makes this all hard to remember is the names teas carry. Teas are often sold under old names with stories behind them, sometimes from the type of tea, sometimes from the process, but most of the time from the area in which it became famous. Long Jing tea, often spelled Lung-Ching and translated as Dragon's Well, originally came from the mountains outside of Hangzhou in Zhejiang province and derived its name from a tale dating back to 250 A.D. During a time a drought in the mountains, a Daoist appeared and divined that a dragon lived in a spring somewhere on the mountains. Praying to the dragon to help the farmers, clouds appeared and rain came down to save the crop. Due to this miracle, the temple near the spring was called Dragon's Well, and the tea growing in the region followed suit and took that name—but that is just one version of how it derived its name. The name Wulong, however, originally referred to the process, not the tea leaf. Children picking tea destined for that process would often find and be frightened by black snakes coiled in the branches, only to be told they were baby black dragons there to protect the tea. Over time and with the incredible domination of the Wulong type teas in Taiwan, it has come also to be a common reference for the tea leaf most commonly used in the Wulong process.

Names, however, can't be trusted anymore. Nowadays, tea grown out of the region it originally came from if it is the same plant or produces a similar taste. But more commonly, Mr. Chen told us, was deliberate falsehood when it comes to types of teas. In Taiwan, the most highly prized Wulong is called "High Mountain" tea,

as they come from the very peaks of the tall mountains there. Simply due to the lack of space on the top of a mountain and the finite number of tea-growing mountains in Taiwan, there is only a small crop of true High Mountain tea. Yet, if you walk into any tea store and ask if they have some of the very high mountain tea, they will answer, "Of course!" Shopping in all the tea stores, you could easily buy 10 times the amount of high mountain tea actually harvested. The higher the elevation of the tea or the fame of its peak, the greater the price. Thus most people are paying for a name attached to a tea from a less sought-after elevation or mountain. Thus a true tea person doesn't judge a tea by its price or its name. The key to buying tea is to purchase what you like, what tastes good to you, not what you are told is good. As you drink more and more tea and spend more and more money, you will develop the judgment scale from your own palate. Forgetting the name or the elevation, you ask yourself if you are happy to pay the requested amount for that flavor of tea. Any good tea store selling expensive teas expects to prepare samples for your tasting. In the end, one sign of a true tea master is someone who knows what they like in a tea, not what teas they are supposed to like. Of course, unscrupulous tea vendors will have you sample one tea and sell you another in its place, but that can be avoided by becoming a regular in a good tea store or, better yet, by making the pilgrimage to the source.

Darkness had fallen, and it was time to wake the tea. The long hard night of harvest time begins here. The tea is put into a long, wide rattan cylinder and is gently turned to wake up the leaves. This is a delicate process, as the leaves must be freshened without being bruised or damaged. After they are awake, the tea is put back onto the panniers and brought into the work room. Here the room is full of the ovens, rollers, dryers and compactors for the mechanics of the tea process to happen. The tea is placed into a cylindrical oven that turns like a cement mixer, so that the leaves are exposed to the 330 degree heat without sticking to the sides and becoming burned. The cooking of the tea is another art, Mr. Chen carefully watching the clock and thermometer but more carefully paying attention to the smell wafting from the open hole of the oven. A mistake here means the tea will be burned, the flavor ruined. Poured back onto the pannier, the tea is carried over to the rolling machine, which begins the process of giving Wulong its characteristic shape. Again, the rolling must be done just right to ensure the leaves take on the shape without becoming damaged and thus losing value. After this, the tea, cooked, rolled, but still moist, is spread out in front of a fan to remove dampness before being placed on the drying belt. This is a long belt that runs back and forth, top to bottom within a big drying machine, to

come out at the bottom onto the ever-present panniers. Judging the tea picked that day and its response to the previous steps, Mr. Chen picks the heat and length of time it takes the tea to move through the machine. There are no set values or times, temperatures or techniques in processing tea. Everything counts on the skill of the tea person understanding what that particular batch of tea needs to reach its optimum flavor. The entire time, each step of the way, Mr. Chen's eyes would spot some of the too-large tea leaves picked by the workers and toss them to the floor.

When we had arrived that day, there were perhaps seven or eight people working the leaves and the machines with Mr. Chen. As the evening grew into night, they began to disappear until I looked up at the clock and realized it was 1:30 a.m. and there were only the two of us left working the tea. It was sometime after 3:00 when I truly realized the love and responsibility a tea garden owner has for the tea. All of the tea picked that day must be processed before the sun comes back out and alters its flavor. Hour after hour amidst the loud machines while others sleep, the tea owner working alone to finish the tea, is never allowed to slacken his alertness or tea skills during the process. At a certain point, he told me, the loneliness disappears as your entire attention becomes absorbed by the intricacies of preparing tea. It becomes your friend and you care for it throughout the long night. I realized, as I worked each step of the process under his guidance, that only the owner, who has a bond and a need for the tea, could be expected to maintain that type of vigilance throughout the night each night of the harvest season. And it is in those long nights listening to the needs of your companion that you become an artist at processing tea.

I became very curious about how Mr. Chen came to be a tea grower, a lover of the full spectrum of tea. As the second male child in his family, he was given to his father's older brother who had a childless marriage. A common practice in old China and still in existence today, this ensures that the oldest male member of the family has a male child to carry on the name and responsibilities of the clan. During Mr. Chen's military duty and then working in the city, his uncle and father, who had worked in the mountains, began to buy their own land to grow tea. When they became too old to run gardens themselves, he returned to manage for them. He knew nothing of tea then, but, unlike many of the other tea garden owners, he had an education that allowed him to better understand the soil, the climate, and what was old farmer's knowledge and what was superstition. As time went by, he developed a scholar's passion for the process of tea, from the planting and

growing, to the processing and pouring. Here was a good man, a filial son and a person who truly understood tea.

It is 4:30 a.m., the machines had been shut down, and Mr. Chen carried in two handfuls of the tea we had worked on all night. His hands worked a slower more thoughtful rhythm with the kettle, pot and cups. We were going to taste the fruit of our labors; he was going to judge how this day's tea was. Here Mr. Chen talked about the most famous part of tea: the preparing and pouring of tea in order to maximize its flavor. The wrong amount in a teapot will make it bitter or insipid. Too hot water will burn tea, but if not hot enough, the tea will not release the hidden flavors that appear in the mouth and throat long after the cup is empty. The water must be left inside of the pot of tea for just the right amount of time, as too long would make it bitter, and too short make it weak. The steps to making a good pot of tea are the subject of books and classes, and are considered a major art form in almost every Asian country. A skilled practitioner can make medium-grade tea taste much better than one might expect, and a novice can make the highest-grade tea unpalatable. As we put down a first then a second pot, a twinkle came into his eyes as he took in the flavor and aroma of the fresh tea. "We picked the leaves from the bushes in the morning, worked all day and all night, and now we have tea that is ready to drink, ready to leave for market. There is something magical about that."

Was it the hard work? ... The long night together becoming tea friends? Was the tea a perfect batch? ... Or his pouring techniques? ... Or the fabled third pot? In truth, the art of drinking tea is creating a circumstance when you taste the tea and think to yourself, "This is a very special pot of tea, indeed."



Andrew Nugent-Head is President of ATS, an organization "dedicated to the preservation, documentation and dissemination of China's Traditional arts and knowledge." He is also the TCM heir to Xie Pie Qi and currently studying under Li Hongxiang and Chen Tongyiun.

節氣 中氣 Jieqi and Zhongqi for 2007

In his talks on Taoist neigong Wang Laoshi especially recommends sitting for 20 minutes before and after the times the sun enters a new 15 degree ecliptic, called Jiéqi (minor or sectional term) and Zhōngqi (major or principal term).¹

The Meeting of Heaven and Earth

There are places where spiritual atmosphere remains such as rivers with clear water and the springs in the mountains. If there are no moss or other plants and no creatures on a stone, the stone is not shrouded in spiritual atmosphere. A place having tall trees with luxuriant branches and leaves is replete with spiritual atmosphere. A place with spiritual atmosphere usually has water, mountains and clean air. In such a place, auspicious light comes down from heaven. You know there is convection of atmosphere between heaven and earth to produce atmospheric pressure and wind. According to the lunar calendar, there are two days marking the beginning of solar terms in each month (solar term or **Jiéqi**: one of the 24 periods, of approximately 15 days each, into which the lunar year is divided, corresponding to the day on which the sun enters the 1st or 15th degree of one of the 12 zodiacal signs; each period being given an appropriate

name indicating the obvious changes in nature at the time it comes round). On these two days in each month, the meeting or convection of the atmosphere of heaven and earth is most obvious. Meditation practitioners like to sit meditation on those days because the effect of meditation is especially strong then. But those who do not practice meditation, particularly older people or sick people, are more vulnerable on those days than on the other days. It is because at the meeting of atmospheres, the *qi* in nature is withdrawn in a flash. As a result, the *qi* outside our body is stronger than that within our body and the *qi* outside thus draws the *qi* inside away. If you practice meditation and know the way of breathing, the *qi* inside your body will be stronger than the *qi* outside. Moreover, you can make use of the spiritual atmosphere of heaven and earth to nourish your body.²

Zhōngqi and Jiéqi for 2007³			
	Chinese Name	English Name	UTC (GMT)
23	Xiǎo Hán	Small Cold	01/05/2006 17:39:37
24	Dà Hán	Great Cold	01/20/2006 11:20:20
1	Lì Chūn	Beginning of Spring	02/04/2007 05:17:48
2	Yǔ Shuǐ	Rain Water	02/19/2007 01:08:28
3	Jǐng Zhé	Awakening of Insects	03/05/2007 23:17:39
4	Chūn Fēn	Division of Spring (Spring Equinox)	03/21/2007 00:06:55
5	Qīng Míng	Pure Brightness	04/05/2007 04:04:18
6	Gǔ Yǔ	Corn Rain	04/20/2007 11:06:35
7	Lì Xià	Beginning of Summer	05/05/2007 21:20:01
8	Xiǎo Mǎn	Ripening Grain	05/21/2007 10:11:29
9	Máng Zhǒng	Corn in Ear	06/06/2007 01:26:37
10	Xià Zhì	Arrival of Summer (Summer Solstice)	06/21/2007 18:05:46
11	Xiǎo Shǔ	Small Heat	07/07/2007 11:41:02
12	Dà Shǔ	Big Heat	07/23/2007 04:59:22
13	Lì Qiū	Beginning of Autumn	08/07/2007 21:30:37
14	Chù Shǔ	Limit of Heat	08/23/2007 12:07:12
15	Bái Lù	White Dew	09/08/2007 00:29:02
16	Qiū Fēn	Division of Autumn (Autumn Equinox)	09/23/2007 09:50:37
17	Hán Lù	Cold Dew	10/08/2007 16:11:05
18	Shuāng Jiàng	Hoar Frost	10/23/2007 19:14:46
19	Lì Dōng	Beginning of Winter	11/07/2007 19:23:25
20	Xiǎo Xuě	Small Snow	11/22/2007 16:49:04
21	Dà Xuě	Big Snow	12/07/2007 12:13:16
22	Dōng Zhì	Arrival of Winter (Winter Solstice)	12/22/2007 06:06:58

Add your Time Zone to UTC to arrive at local time and date:
+8 for Taipei (Standard Time), -5 For EST, -4 for EDT, -8 for PST, -7 for PDT

¹ See previous issues of the Journal for elaboration of Zhōngqi and Jiéqi, Spring 1998, Fall 1999, Winter 2004.

² Wú jué miào tiān, *The Wisdom of Zen*, Dec. 18, 1990, http://www.uta.edu/student_orgs/zen/J/J_4.htm.

³ See www.asia-home.com/china_solterms_files.php for this and

Teacher Profile

Sam Tomarchio



Sometime around 1970 while working in Massachusetts as a Rehabilitation Counselor I began my introduction into martial arts. It was a 10 weeks self-defense course that combined Karate and Judo. Looking back, I can't remember why I took it or how I became interested in it. As for "Kung Fu" (gong fu)—I had never even heard of it. What I remember most about this short class was the "final exam"—breaking a board. While students had their choice of hands or feet, most chose the hand, as did I. Ten weeks didn't seem like much time to develop the ability to break a board, but the instructor assured us that with concentration and focus, we could do it. He was right. I left smiling, having learned a valuable lesson and taking the broken board home with me as a memento.

While the class was fun, it didn't excite me. Karate and judo were okay, but something was missing at least for me.

In the summer of 1971 I moved to California and any exploration of martial-arts training was put on hold. After a series of temporary jobs, I started working full time and things settled down.

Then in early 1972 came the television series that was like nothing I had ever heard about or seen before: this thing called Kung Fu at a place called the Shaolin Temple. It comprised the disciplines of the Tiger, Crane, Dragon, Snake and Praying Mantis.¹ Surprisingly, it wasn't just fighting or self-defense, but also a compilation of both Buddhist and Daoist

philosophy with guidelines on how to live life. I have to admit that I was completely taken in, and with it began my search for a gong fu teacher.

Soon thereafter, I started classes in White Crane Gong Fu with George Long. Mr. Long was somewhat short, powerfully built and very quick on his feet. He had a fondness for trying to intimidate new students, but as a teaching tool. I remember that while I was in the horse stance doing my warm-up workout, he came up to me and brought his fist to within an inch or two from my chest. I had heard of the devastating power this type of punch had, and needless to say I was a lot more than apprehensive. Fear was setting in, and I was starting to sweat. With eyes of steel and a stern look on his face, he slightly flexed his wrist and then it burst suddenly toward me. I flinched, and as he walked away he said: "Relax, don't move." I was devastated—not because of the pain (thankfully the punch had been controlled), but because I had failed the test. This happened several times, sometimes without being hit, but I still flinched. Each time I vowed not move the next time. One day, while in the horse stance again, I saw him approaching and could see his eyes and expression changing. Something inside me changed. There was no apprehension or fear. It was test time, and I was ready. Again, he stood in front of me and brought his fist up. This time I looked him squarely in those steely eyes and thought, let it fly. He did, and this time I didn't budge. I felt no fear and felt rooted like a rock. He smiled brightly, nodded and walked away without a word. A very valuable lesson learned.

While learning different crane form sets, I heard about the most advanced level called the Cotton Needle. I was told that it was soft like "tai chi." Okay, what was this stuff called tai chi? I started asking questions and going to bookstores to do research (no computers back then). As I learned more about it, I started asking the question: If the highest level of White Crane is a soft form, wouldn't it be better to start with a soft form? Also, the idea of deflecting force without using force was very appealing. Around this time I was also in the process of moving from San Francisco to Santa Rosa (approximately 55 miles and one hour north of S.F.).

When hearing that I was interested in taijiquan, another White Crane practitioner told me of a teacher in San Francisco's Chinatown. He said he was trying to get a group of people together to start a class during a weekday evening, and that I should go take a look to

¹ Many resources do not include the Mantis, but the Leopard/Panther instead.

see if I was interested. While his description of this teacher intrigued me there was a major obstacle—a hellish commute and trying to leave work early enough to get to class on time. Since this was a new job, the odds were stacked against me. I went to observe the class anyway. It was what I was looking for. The teacher introduced himself saying his name was Tsuei Wei and that I was welcome to join his class. As it so happened, I went a second time and “Sifu” as he was called, recognized me and brought me over to a sign-up sheet on the wall. To my surprise, he was starting a new Sunday morning class. Problem solved. In January 1975 I began.

While I thoroughly enjoyed White Crane, taijiquan was something special. Watching Sifu Tsuei’s soft, gentle yet somehow powerful movements was uplifting and kindled my desire to learn as much as I could.

During the next eight years I not only studied taijiquan with Sifu Tsuei but also meditation and acupuncture. After a three-year preceptorship I received my acupuncture license from the state of California in August 1983.

I was now ready for my next challenge, and I moved to Taiwan in February 1984. I signed up for Mandarin Chinese classes at Taiwan Normal University and went looking for Sifu Tsuei’s teacher: Wang Yen-nien. I knew that morning practice was at a place called Yuanshan, but initially I couldn’t attend because my Mandarin classes were also in the morning. However, I adjusted my schedule at the end of the first term (around May–June) and started attending morning workouts. Practice began at 6:00 a.m. (6:30 in the winter) with Laoshi leading the class.

When I first met Wang Laoshi I was impressed by his youthful and robust appearance. He did not look nor move, like someone who was 70 years old. Although he was soft-spoken with a warm engaging smile, his voice commanded attention. Seeing him in action, whether doing the form or pushing hands, you knew he was thereal deal.

The tuishou classes, which I started attending within the first month of my arrival, were three times per week: Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 7 to 9 p.m. and usually crowded. At first I didn’t know quite what to expect as there had been very little tuishou with Sifu Tsuei, except for some of the basic exercises. Laoshi directed us in the tuishou basic exercises and then fixed or moving step push-hands practice. Afterward students would begin free-sparing. Free-sparing was new to me. For some, it was very controlled and easygoing. For others, it was more aggressive. Through it all, Wang Laoshi would consistently say

“*Bu yong li, yong yi*” (don’t use force, use intent). Of course, we all thought we were not using strength until we pushed with Master Wang. Then it became quite clear what he meant by not using force. It was a thrill to push with him, especially because it didn’t happen all that often. Wang Laoshi was always soft, fluid and full. Everything he did seemed effortless, no matter how aggressive you were or how much strength you used. Then without knowing how it happened you either lost your balance or occasionally found yourself on the mat wondering how you got there. The strange thing, especially in the early months, was you never felt it. Then as we progressed, first we would know when it was happening, then why it was happening, but in either case unable to stop it.

In practicing tuishou you learn many things: how to yield, how not to use force, the art of deflecting, being rooted, just to name a few. But tuishou also teaches you things about yourself. One incident stands out during my stay in Taiwan. During one particular tuishou class my partner was able to uproot me with the same movement over and over again. The more I tried to prevent it, the more I failed and the angrier I got. Being uprooted or knocked off balance by a partner was something that happened to everyone in class and then used as a learning tool to progress. But on that day, my mind was not buying it. Each time it happened I would get more frustrated and more angry until—like a light bulb going on—I was no longer frustrated or angry. Wining or losing was unimportant. I felt free. I started laughing uncontrollably. My partner looked at me as if I had lost my mind.

In a way I had. I had come to the realization that I was not angry at my partner; she was doing what she needed to do. I was angry at myself for not being able to correct the mistakes that I was making to cause me being uprooted. I had found the source of my anger, let go of my ego and started to understand on a deeper level what *ting* (listening) *jin* and *dong* (understanding) *jin* meant. This was quite a revelation. But like all revelations, you must continually work on their meaning or you start to lose what you gained—usually a lot faster.

Living in Taiwan was a wonderful experience in itself, but studying with Wang Laoshi was something special. After two years I left Taiwan and returned to the San Francisco Bay Area in 1986. I subsequently started my own acupuncture practice and began teaching taijiquan.

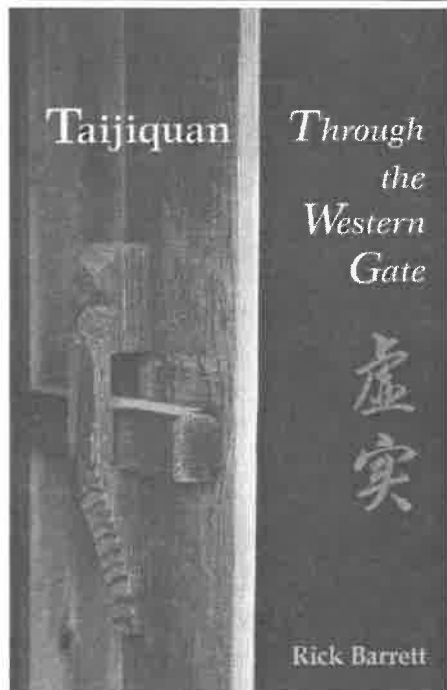
I now live and practice in Oakland, California, where I continue to provide acupuncture and taijiquan as ways toward attaining vibrant health and longevity.

¹ Many resources do not include the Mantis, but the Leopard/Panther instead.

Review: Taijiquan Through the Western Gate

By Rick Barrett

Reviewed by Steve Peplin



About the Author: Rick Barrett has studied and practiced martial arts and energy healing for more than 25 years. He teaches taijiquan workshops around the country and practices polarity therapy in New York City. He won national championships in taijiquan tuishou in 1996, 1997 and 1998. Since retiring from tournament competition, Barrett has been active as a forms judge and tuishou referee and has written frequently for martial-arts magazines. Barrett's writing skills are as formidable as his martial/healing skills. The language is poetic, yet direct. His allusions and metaphors are clear and concise. The book, aside from being an important addition to the taijiquan canon, is a pleasure to read.

Let me preface the review of Barrett's important work *Taijiquan: Through the Western Gate* by acknowledging that Barrett's theories and methods

found herein have doubled my taijiquan tuishou skills in a single day when I attended a four-hour seminar at Dave Kuske's Quest Self Defense center in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where I live. Barrett is a senior disciple of William C.C. Chen and has studied with many great taijiquan masters including Wang Yen-nien, Waysun Liao, William De Thouars and a great many others. He cuts through the exterior husk of styles and forms and gets straight to the meat of the matter, which is not matter at all, actually. His concepts are grounded in empirical evidence that you can and will learn if you simply try to apply them.

First things first, Barrett acknowledges inspirational figures and contributors that aided in his work, followed by a note on transliteration and pinyin romanization, which Barrett adopts here as opposed to the Wade-Giles romanization system (which is rapidly becoming antiquated). Barrett includes a glossary for the reader's convenience.

The work is gilded with little quotes or poems by important historical figures, the first of which sets the tone of the book nicely:

To see what everyone has seen, to think what no one has thought. Albert Szent-Gyorgyi, 1937 Nobel laureate in physiology and medicine.

In his introduction, Barrett defines the Western Gate as "scientific materialism, the material assumptions of Western science and society." The Western Gate is the place where magic and science meet. Only those who understand

both may pass. Science fiction writer Arthur C. Clarke said, "Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic." Barrett's research blends these disparate sensibilities in ways that the Western Gate cannot dispute. His three primary inspirations contributing to the book's multidisciplinary approach are, again, taijiquan grandmaster, William C.C. Chen, cell biologist James Oschman and philosopher Ken Wilbur.

He describes Chen as a slight man who could take a jackhammer punch to the jaw from a 250-pound student, make the force from that punch seemingly disappear into his body and calmly comment on the student's technique. Chen, says Barrett, is unquestionably a fighter. His simple, pragmatic approach to the art is seminal to Barrett's work.

"James Oschman is a 20-year veteran of the research laboratory, where he made an important discovery about the body's connective tissue system—the ligaments, tendons, cartilage, fascia, membranes and ground substance that link all the cells in the body." Taiji literature emphasizes the development of the sinews (connective tissue), as opposed to muscular strength. Oschman's research opens doorways to a large body of 'credible' work (in Western Gate terms.)

Ken Wilbur has studied and pioneered developments in the territories of consciousness and meditation as well as philosophy, psychology, theology, metaphysics, systems theory, linguistics,

hermeneutics and more.

Chapter 1: *Entering the Zone*

Here Barrett extrapolates upon visits to the Zone both as a player and a spectator. Barrett describes the Zone as a magical state where everything is working well together. The body almost disappears. His own personal example is a pick-up basketball game on a hot August day in New York City with 15-year-old Iverson wannabes. He tells of a quick trip to and from the Zone. One minute, he's lighting up the court, a water break later and its back to being a 50-plus white guy. Barrett goes into several amazing forays into the mind of the Zone. How can an expert knife thrower stick a speed-bore (drill bit) into a broomstick leaning against a wall 15 feet away? How can taijiquan Master Waysun Liao send a grown man flying with no external physical movement? Well, no one ever learned to hit a curve ball by studying calculus, says Barrett. Most athletes who operate in the Zone can only truly do so in their prime years, rarely past 40. Taijiquan practitioners and other internal martial artists have rich traditions of remarkable feats well into their twilight years.

Yang Chien-Hou (Jian-Hou) once defeated nine opponents at once when almost 80 years old, says Barrett. Clearly this can't be a matter of speed or physical power (*li*). Waysun Liao's fajin ability is empirical proof that the hidden mysteries of taijiquan do not lie in crude external movements alone. Barrett realized this fully after being blasted against a wall from three feet away with only the light touch of Master Liao's fingertips on his chest. While this book doesn't teach us this skill, specifi-

cally, the burden of finding the Zone in taijiquan is lifted significantly in subsequent chapters.

Chapter 2: *Gongfu*

This chapter, like chapter one, offers no real techniques, but gives us a few concepts of what real gongfu is and is not. According to Barrett, gongfu requires knowing what to do and what not to do. As consciousness researcher and Esalen co-founder has said:

"In dedicating ourselves to disciplines that will last many years or the rest of our lives, we need to know why we must avoid certain pitfalls, give up particular habits, learn new skills, cultivate unfamiliar virtues, and develop various attributes. We need to know how the different parts of our practices fit together, how they support each other, and why we need them all."

Chapter 3:

Insubstantial and Substantial

"The discrimination of insubstantial and substantial is the first meaning (i.e., the most important content) in taijiquan."—Yang Cheng-Fu.

Barrett describes his journey through taijiquan throughout the book. He describes his first decade of his gongfu as "traditional." Traditional in that most taijiquan teachers in the United States tell us to practice the form with the promise that wonderful powers will be ours in 14 years. I was told this by my first teacher as well. I didn't believe it. Well, Barrett didn't wholly believe this theory either. This leads me to recall a quote from Chang Naizhou: "Sir, go home and seek it. You will have a surplus of teachers. Men's problem is in not seeking it." (See *AYMTA Journal*,

Summer 2006, "Scholar Boxer" review.) There is also a great quote from T.T. Liang on this subject: "Blind followers are dead, rebels can get something."

Chapter 4: *The Western Gate*

Here Barrett introduces us to the chief obstacle itself: The thought that what science discovers somehow dis-proves what it cannot account for. This chapter is full of great analogies and quotes that perfectly parallel the static encountered by most taiji practitioners. Ken Wilbur as well as Rick Barrett refer to those who cling to the doctrines of the Western Gate as *flatlanders*. Barrett isn't anti-Western Gate, however. He acknowledges its numerous and significant contributions to the world. This book isn't a New Age tirade against science, on the contrary it unearths ways to unite scientific empiricism with the deeper, often unseen, forces of the cosmos, with which we are inextricably linked.

Chapter 5: *Embracing Paradox*

Due to space limitations, I limit my elaborations from here on out.

A Paradox is not a conflict with reality. It is a conflict between reality and your feelings of what reality should be like.—Richard Feynman, physicist.

Chapter 5 probes deeper into the realms of insubstantiality and substance. To me, the most powerful analogy given here is exemplified by the insubstantiality of money. Unintelligible electronic pulses that represent our material wealth dominate our lives. Almost insubstantial by most measurements, yet, as long as it can be measured and located, it becomes substantial enough to work most of our lives (often to our great

dis-pleasure) for it.

Chapter 6:

Seeing With Three Eyes

Here Barrett begins his ascent from history to action. The Three Eyes are explained that we might access them to reach deeper levels of taijiquan. These are The Eye of Flesh, the Eye of Mind and the Eye of Contemplation. The Three Eyes are necessary to observe *injunctions*, the steps we take to produce a particular result (Ken Wilbur). Using the appropriate eye for a particular injunction is very important to be successful in any injunction. Barrett further explains the Three Valid Strands of Knowledge and their application to the aforementioned concepts.

Barrett takes us out of the pages and into the art with the first injunction in the book: Affecting Blood Circulation through Awareness. The exercises, injunctions and experiments compiled in this book are what clearly separate it from many of its predecessors. You can easily apply the knowledge herein.

Barrett's tale of taiji adept Stephen Watson is very enlightening here as well.

Chapter 7:

Ask a Fish About Water

Beyond the veils of our obvious physical world, less substantial than even our breath, atmosphere and sky, lies the quantum vacuum. Even though we call it a vacuum, a cubic meter of this "empty space" is said to contain enough energy to boil all the world's oceans. It is this source of energy that we are inseparable from. Energy healing, taijiquan and quantum physics share a great many parallels that are explored and elaborated upon in this chapter.

Chapters 8 through 12: *Direct Experience of Qi, Coherent Energy, Testing Energetic Coherence, Accessing Energetic Coherence, Force Versus Power*

In these chapters, Barrett takes us through several injunctions, exercises and lessons that may effectively increase our tangible taijiquan abilities by huge percentages. (My tuishou skills almost doubled from his lessons.) The core of Barrett's teachings is as simple as pointing your finger, really, actually pointing your index fingers increases "coherence." I will not go into the minutiae of these chapters, but I will say that pointing the index finger can allow a taijiquan practitioner to increase his/her root, escape from precarious disadvantages, uproot opponents and (in my own experience) prevent traffic accidents by pointing at oblivious drivers. My own grandmother, Leone, has no lymph nodes in her left arm due to a lumpectomy performed many years ago, subsequently, she "can't" lift that arm. I asked her to point with that arm and raise it. To her great surprise, she raised it without the aid of her other arm past shoulder height for the first time in over 10 years. She got the point.

Chapters 13 through 16: *Beyond Relaxation, Tensegrity, The Living Matrix, The Living Matrix in Form and Practice*

These chapters take us from accessing true coherence to actually applying these tangible principles to tuishou. Loaded with gems of information, theory and exercises, this block of chapters could be an entirely separate work.

Chapters 17 & 18: *The Nine-Channeled Pearl, The Kua*

Both key concepts of taijiquan, the Nine-Channeled Pearl and the Kua are very often totally misunderstood or shadowed in a vague half-lesson of cryptic taijiquan canons. Barrett aptly navigates the straits between the two languages and leads the reader to a clear understanding, intellectually and kinesthetically, of what these concepts refer to. While the Pearl is more metaphorical, the joints that comprise it are clearly outlined.

The Kua is defined in greater detail than in most other works other than the works of B. K. Frantzis, who Barrett quotes to further his explanation of the totality of its structure and functions. Again, Barrett gives us exercises to clarify correct Kua folding movement. In addition, William C.C. Chen's Three Nails concept is explained to aid in proper knee-kua relations.

Chapters 19 & 20:

Now and Jin, Turning the Light Around

Barrett doesn't gently land the plane for his readers. He takes it further and further into the aether. The last two chapters of the book delve deeper into the insubstantialities of taijiquan. Meditation, the eternal Now and its effect upon your presence are discussed. Finally, Barrett reveals perhaps his most powerful secret. When asked what tuishou or push hands is, Barrett responded: "Push hands is love. It is the triumph of love over fear."

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Transcript of Robert Politzer Form Applications Workshop

By Tom Campbell

Yesterday we looked at “single whip.” And we also looked at “wield the pipa” and finally we looked at “single arm sweep.” From the point of view of these basic principles of applications these movements are not as different as they might seem. There are many of the same basic elements at work in each of these movements. We will look more at deflection and the importance of using circular motion. In terms of physics using a circular motion to deflect makes perfect sense. The best way to deflect an incoming force is to use a rounded surface rather than a flattened surface. With a flat surface an incoming force at ninety degrees will be deflected straight in. If we want to deflect an incoming force we want to minimize the amount of force entering our body. So using this circle and turning to deflect the incoming force is something that is at work in all these movements in one way or another. So always look for the circle within the deflection.



In terms of the circle there can be a vertical circles.... (demonstrates the use of vertical circles for deflection) There are also horizontal circles, such as we find in “wield the pipa”... Similarly in “single arm sweep” there is a vertical circle (with the inside arm), which is similar in ways to (the inside arm) in “wield the pipa”...

The first part of each of these movements is deflection. We worked more on the deflections yesterday than the strikes. In my humble opinion most people that I see in taiji need to first work on the deflection techniques. That’s really the beginning. If you cannot deflect your taiji is going to be some

variation of Sumo wrestling. It is going to be force against force. If you can’t listen and deflect than the principle of using the other person’s energy is not workable.

We also discussed, really for the first time, the concept of the vital points. We did identify, in a general way, some of the main vital points. For instance the top of the arm here (demonstrates) More importantly the top of the head. The temples. The nose. The chin. The throat. The solar plexus. Then down to the really important points. The genitalia. The base of the feet by the ankles. The knees and shins. It makes sense from a martial arts perspective that in using the circle to deflect we would be defending these vital points.

After the deflection, when we turn the situation around to have the advantageous position., the idea then would be to strike the vital point... One other thing that came up which is important is “How do you know which particular movement to use in any one moment? Obviously a lot of it has to do with the person that you are defending against. But it also has to do with how your feet happen to be situated at the moment. If, for example (demonstrates with a participant) he comes up to me to strike I am not concerned about the position of his feet. I am concerned about the position of my own.

If I am standing like this (with right leg forward) and he throws a punch with his right hand it would make perfect sense to deflect with “grasp the sparrows tail.” Notice that, in “grasp the sparrows tail” I am using my



right arm to deflect his right arm. So it's right arm to right arm here.

(Instructs student to drop his arm and keep in the same position) You'll note that if I happen to be situated like this (adjusts legs so that left leg is forward) and he throws a punch with his right arm then "grasp the sparrow's tail really doesn't work." What would work here, if it is a right arm punch, would be "single whip." What happens if he punches with his left arm and I happen to have my right foot forward and left back? Then what would be most appropriate would be using "single whip" on this side. Of course, I have other options as well... I can use a vertical circle, as we just saw. "Grasp the sparrow's tail", "single whip."



You'll notice, by the way, that most of these (four) movements are designed to defend this part of the body (Gestures to the center of the upper body) in particular the solar plexus. So now he throws a punch with his right hand towards my solar plexus, my feet are squared (more parallel to the sides)—what would work in this case very nicely would be "wield the pipa." Alternatively I could use "single arm sweep." It makes sense that this particular form, as a whole, would give us different options. Going back to the

musical concept it's like having different scale options. If someone is playing a particular chord progression you can play it in a Major scale, an A pentatonic scale and on and on. Same kind of thing, different options.

Again, we are using both vertical circles or horizontal circles.

If I am standing in this position (with my legs squared off) and he punches with his left hand instead of his right hand, you can simply step back with the opposite leg for "roll back" or for "single arm sweep." If he punches with his right hand I am going to step out with my left, if he punches with his left hand I am going to step out with the right. Remember that these are horizontal circles.

Any questions? So get back with your partner and we will start practicing. Remember the idea now is to do drills, One, two, three, four, over and over. We can talk and talk till we are blue in the face but at a certain point in time we have to drill these concepts home... The idea here, as in all athletics, is to take this learning from the cognitive level and bring it down into the lower brain. So things become automatic, autonomic. Not something that you have to cognitively think about to make happen. But that takes a long time to sink this learning down. Many years and a lot of repetition. So for the rest of this hour that's what we want to do. Repetition.

Question—why do we practice against the left punch as much as we do against the right? Won't the punches, the majority of the time, be coming from the right side?

Answer—It really depends, A skilled fighter will not rely on one hand over the other. Boxers, for instance, who are right handed actually uses the left hand more. Jab, jab, jab, punch.

By the way, when you are punching in these exercises, the root would be in the back leg. Have a slight gap in your hand, nice and relaxed. And rotate the wrist. It would be spiral up and punch. But with the right leg back and we are punching with the right hand we are going to come forward and spiral down onto the left leg and again spiral the hand. When you are practicing, and you are punching towards your partner, you need to really work on your punching. Don't just mindlessly be moving forward and back. (Demonstrates to laughter) All right. Get a partner...

Song: Technical Notes

By Serge Dreyer
Translated by Staff

These technical notes aim at a division of knowledge/experiences. They also wish to stimulate reflection within our style of taijiquan. They do not on any account question the education of anyone or impose on others my point of view. The contents of these notes represent only one perspective among many. I wish that this column becomes the occasion to develop a sort of forum, in which no explicit or implicit hierarchy will hinder the efforts of some and others to form their own opinions on the way to practice our style. It is for this price, it seems to me, that we shall progress all together. I shall receive with pleasure and interest your comments <serge.dreyer@gmail.com>; if you will allow these comments to be published, please indicate it explicitly in your messages.

The Notion of *Song*

I begin these technical notes with the reflection that the notion of *song* is present in almost all styles of taijiquan (henceforth TJQ). It is often likened—in the West but also in China—to a state of relaxation, a very restrictive interpretation. To facilitate the understanding of my statement, I divide *song* into three parts but the reader should remember that these parts are strictly linked in the practice.

1. Physical Level

Physically, to realize the state of *song* implies some level of muscle, tendon and tissue relaxation (henceforth *mtt*) that avoids useless tensions in the realization of an effective movement. I listen effectively to carry out a movement in the practice of the sequences that do not break the fluid progress. The other circumstance to achieve this efficiency lies in the just realization of the movement, correctness that is dependent on the martial application(s) that organizes this movement. But this state of *song* should not become confused in any way with a state of lack of inertia or of slowness. To reach the state of *song* there precedes a physical alchemy that consists in gradually dissolving all parasitic tensions *mtt*. Paradoxically, this refining must result in a clearly recognizable residual state, established beyond the body and the mind. Otherwise formulated, any movement practiced in a state of *song* becomes a process of unveiling: behind the tense curtain of our conditionings

variously registered by our body (dismays, sufferings, efforts, forbidden, etc.); the practice causes a state that preserves a memory of tension. But this tension, of elasticized type, represents an opening to outside stimulus and not a shutting out. All the learnings of life include these stages. We felt this internal anxiety in not being able to maintain correct speed during our learning to drive an automobile and consequently the fear of not being able to administer the mastery of the vehicle on the road. On the other hand, when the pleasure of this operation became truly effortless one felt at ease on the road. However, the practice of the TJQ reveals itself more complex than the operating of a motorcar for reasons that useless to enumerate here. One of the important factors which creates a great deal of difficulty in the practice of TJQ, lies in that of identity. A driver does not put into play his physical being in the operating of a motorcar, only his intellectual faculties. He is not there in the same way as is the practitioner of TJQ who exercises under the constant critical glance of his teacher and who exposes himself to judgments of all present. A number of us know the effects in our physical appearance (nervousness, tensing, shivers, brief breath, cold sweats) of these glances, for example, during a public demonstration.

This tensioned state depends on three other extremely sensitive factors defined by the notions of spring (*danxing*), of flow (*linghuo*) and of unity (*heyi*).

A) *Danxing*: the principle that allows us to integrate this notion into the practice turns out to be conceptually very simple. It is practicing every movement as engendering yet another movement in the two levels of contact with foreign bodies: feet (contacting with the ground) and hands (but not only) contacting (real or potential) with the opponent/partner. Not only that, there must no break between the two movements, and every transition also must recover from a state of elasticized availability. By a game of compression/expansion from feet (expression borrowed from Patric Kelly although I prefer to use the notion of “playing with the ground”), the follower must generate an effect of spring that connects any possible break like a rubber band. This spring reveals itself very important in the practice of tuishou because it masks from the opponent/partner the cru-

cial moment or intervening period that would reveal a rigidity which would give him/her access to our balance. At the level of hands, I recommend to my pupils a game of wrists that imparts a movement of waving to the hands and generates at the end of the route a light stretching of the palms as if contact were established with the body of the opponent that the partner sends back immediately. It is that which happens in *tuishou* when a push is successfully made.

In fact, although demonstrations of the state of *danxing* are more perceptible at the level of hands and feet, it is ideally all the body that should be involved because, as Mr. Wang said, “all your body must be consist of hands.”

B) *Linghuo*: this notion is already imbedded in the description of *danxing* because of the necessity to avoid any break between two movements. But flow embraces more than continuance between movements. Indeed, any movement possesses a rhythm, a dimension, an expense of energy and is sub-aimed by a desire for adaptation to a situation—anticipated or not—as well as an intention of action. All these elements have to join a coherence, more easily managed in the practice of the form than in *tuishou* or *sanshou*, but nevertheless even that remains a constant challenge for the practitioner. This coherence will be translated in sequences by the placing of an aesthetic witnessed as preservation of good balance/centering without clashes, the melted/flow of movements, the impression of an energy whose sub-aim is the progress of the sequence, various rhythms which generate without slowing down or speeding up.

This notion of *linghuo* can be misleading. I have observed many practioners whose natural elegance gave the illusion of flow in the practice of sequences. But when all the elements described above are considered, appreciation becomes more differentiated. Take for example a follower who practices two sequences in an identical rhythm. I would not apply the qualifier of *linghuo* to that demonstration because it ignores the variety of rhythms that inevitably occur within a sequence. This is particularly obvious in our style in the last part of the second *duan* when kicks occur: each one knows by experience that in this part, breath becomes briefer and that one tends to give more intensity to some movements. This section is rarely practiced in public demonstrations.

C) *Heyi*: without getting lost in philosophic quarrels, one can translate this term only as “the preservation

of unity.” This notion is not explained in general under this term in texts on the TJQ but it is placed nevertheless as one of the preoccupations of the experts. “The Treatise on TJQ” asserts in the first sentence that, “From the least movement, the complete body must be light and agile, and all the parts connected.” (French translation, Catherine Despeux). The consequence of this is of extreme importance for all of the form, *tuishou* and *sanshou*. Implicitly, of course when a movement starts in the feet, all the body must continue to move as long as the gesture is carried out. This is that I call “play with the ground” in my teaching. For example observe followers of our style who, in the movement “seize the bird’s tail,” frequently stay in maximum compression on the back leg for some time while waiting to be able to finish the circular figure with hands. Doing so, they disconnect the bottom (the legs) from the top (waist and bust). In this same movement, one can also observe that a great number of followers turn the waist correctly but keep the heel and the ball of the front foot aligned straight in front of them—while the heel should continue to turn by following the waist. This time the disconnection operates on a horizontal plane. Also one observes a disconnection that could qualify as diagonal. During the separation of hands, a number of followers move the upper hand to the diagonal according to the martial application but the lower hand remains vertical downward, obliging them to make an inequitable and small aesthetic adjustment that also disrupts the flow of the execution. In *tuishou*, the lack of preservation of physical unity (evoked later as superstructure in the importance of physical and mental unity) is an unforgivable fault that causes an ineffective push or, worse, a countered push, the opponent having access to our center of gravity thanks to this motionless part of our body. In terms of health, consequences turn out detrimental. For example, a AN push (frontally with two hands) that gets in touch with the opponent while the legs are already tightened cannot anymore take support from the power which should be expressed by the legs. It results in an excessive use of muscular force at the level of shoulders. Weight lifters know this principle by heart.

2. Mental Level

I am conscious of the general character of the term mental, which can lead to various discussions because of its links with terms such as psychological, spiritual, (un)conscious, etc. But for practical reasons I restrict it to that which qualifies as what each

can and believes to perceive empirically as being experienced separate from the body and that plays a role considered as an asset in the execution of movements by the follower of TJQ (one can reasonably think that dreams only very imperfectly answer these criteria). I do not repeat the tripartite distribution of the previous part but am content with presenting the fundamental elements of the mental activity that seem to me to play a very significant and perceptible role by everyone.

I have already evoked an “alchemical” process for the physical level: a refining of sensations. It is the same for mental processes. The state of *song* is dependent on a state of release independent of volition, which appears to our consciousness as an insolvable contradiction. One can draw a parallel with the physical level. It is necessary, ideally, to abandon any volition in controlling a situation. This “incompressible” state requires without compromise a minimum of will, and is the real opponent/partner (in *tuishou* and *sanshou*) or potential opponent (in form sequences). Referring to the Cartesian principle of distinction of opposites, such contradiction seems effectively impossible to resolve but if one utilizes the concepts of the play of yin and yang, the operation becomes possible. One approaches here what the famous historian of religions, Mircea Eliade, raised in his numerous works on Asiatic religions, the “coincidence of opposite” (*coincidentia oppositorum* in the original). It is a state of a perception in which the notion of opposition becomes annulled. There is nothing supernatural or mystic. Everyone is able to experience this phenomenon in situations of “urgency,” able to adapt without the help of reflection. Indeed, does not the amused kid cast a pebble by aiming at a hole far off, without calculating the chances of success and notice in astonishment that the purpose was achieved? Naturally, all following attempts fail! The sportsmen know many of these extraordinary moments of the perfect gesture: the shot in soccer, for example, when one knows that as soon as the shoe touches the ball that the ball has gone on the desired trajectory. Every time when this situation occurs the protagonists are incapable of describing what has occurred, but they notice that their body and their mind entered a state of fusion characterized by a total feeling. This is the sense that the theory of the yin and yang interest us. It would seem that this mental process of releasing could exist only by the minimizing of its opposite: the principle of volition. But what is much more fas-

cinating is the moment when two opposites join; one has the impression of two charged electrical zones which provoke a discharge, a lack of differentiation. It is this state of lack of differentiation from which springs the perfect gestures that one makes periodically in our lives. Now, is it an accident that our daily life can become enlightened by the practice of TJQ, the martial art that I find particularly adapted to this concept?

Slowness, a characteristic trait of the practice of sequences in TJQ, reveals itself in this respect rich in teaching. It allows a constant follow-up of the state of tension of the mind (and the body). It is from this that we can “observe” attentively the different mental progressions (evaluation of distances, distractions, analysis of the dysfunctions, concentration, etc.) that accompany the practice. Now, when the body is prepared, we notice that the mind calms down—but simultaneously its requirements sharpen up the refinement of the slightest detail. I would say that the practice of sequences modifies the physical and mental envelope (which does not exclude the depth) of the individual. It launches the process of self-discovery, which is far from being the easiest of operations. Initiated by chance, this self-discovery requires many mental efforts and extensive risk-taking for the ego, especially when we practice a discipline so destabilizing as TJQ. Indeed, practicing slow movements often gives the beginner the impression of a certain ease of execution that is easily transformed into a sense of guilt or at least of incompetence when he notices difficulties. Each remembers the embarrassment when the teacher indicated the left when we had extended an arm in the opposite direction.

When the process of unveiling is engaged, we quickly observe the identical factor showing itself with the followers. Some remain in known territories with a great deal of precaution: they try hard with much diligence to reproduce the movements shown by the teacher by waiting for the appropriate moment. At this level of development, the notion of *song* is effectively associated with a state of repetitive relaxation, represented in numerous cases as a large collection of efforts and that is thus laudable. The effect can sometimes be remarkable on the aesthetic plane.

But those novice sailors only appear to sail. The other boats are readying to release their ropes. Far from certainty, it will be necessary to suffer storms,

storms that surge up to the names of vessels. The distant places of the quiet quays no longer exist; the big waves wash everyone and knock down all their worlds. A sturdy crew and a more robust vision of the direction are then needed to follow. Passion must very often serve as compass because the tracks of the previous travelers in the long course are now submerged. Indeed, no captain managed to register his name on the salty abysses. Those who navigate in their passion have to rediscover the route each time, the one that leads them toward these disturbing and fascinating archipelagos, these archipelagos of the knowledge which retreats each time as soon as we believe we can land. As we try to put a firm foot down a wave comes to annihilate everything. Victor Hugo said, "it is not the purpose that matters but the road which leads to it."

This allegory of an ocean journey represents to me the progress of the followers of martial arts, including TJQ. Indeed, we have previously indicated that the practice of sequences already allows an approach to the state of *song* with certain happy consequences for the great majority of the followers. But this state of *song* is only enriched periodically by the glances by of the teacher and the other practitioners. Each keeps the mastery of movements and his own progress in sequences, progress that will allow each different degrees of evolution toward the state of *song*. Then, one experiences something different in the practices of tuishou and sanshou. We shall lean on our experience of tuishou in the next section because sanshou, the situation of real fighting, is practiced by a tiny minority of our readers.

3. The State of *Song* in Tuishou, a Challenge to the Understanding

I shall pose as *a priori* the principle that tuishou can be practiced by all levels (slowness/speed, softness/power, non-competitive/competitive, etc.) and its results are major sources of enrichment for the practitioner. This introductory comment avoids my rehearsing justifications throughout this section. I add that all the references to tuishou in this chapter concern its free forms and not its pre-arranged aspects such as the basic exercises. Two factors seem fundamental to understand how tuishou reveals another deep level in the state of *song*: it is practiced by two persons in physical contact and in an informal format. From this situation all the notions evoked in the previous sections are going to have to be adapted to two wills at the same moment, due to the different personalities of the protagonists/antagonists and due

the fact that the rules of the game/fight consist in destabilizing the partner/opponent. Spring, flow and preservation of unity are thus going to have to obey two logics in the process of destabilization of the partner/opponent, which obviously complexify access to the state of *song*.

From observation of most of the situations of free tuishou, it appears that most practitioners confine themselves to the notion of opposition, in spite of the principles expressed in the texts of TJQ classics that laud adaptation. This phenomenon seems to me completely normal in the process of learning. What interests me for *song* are the possibilities that tuishou offers when the advanced follower begins to envisage non-confrontation as a possible and effective alternative in free tuishou.

First of all, he can obviously destabilize at will by seeming to reach the state of "not acting" about which he will have enthusiastically read, for example, in the *Dao De Jing* of Laozi. However, this attitude misses the point because the state of not acting (*wuwei* in Daoist terminology) appears above all from the adaptation to situations that appear in everyone's daily life. In the case of tuishou, it is a situation of opposition that requires a certain level of participation on behalf of the followers. To play the role of the boxer's sandbag would mean opposing exactly this situation and refusing thus to adapt one's self. Does this mean that every follower can play only an active role of opposition to his opponent to maintain effective tuishou? My answer is "no" and it expresses itself largely through the notion of *song*. To illustrate my comment, I am going to concentrate in the following lines on two aspects of tuishou, balance and the initiative of attack/defense. Of course these two aspects constitute only a part of the subject of this section: *song* in the situation of free tuishou.

3.1 The Balance

In the practice of sequences, balance is obviously an important concern to the follower of the form but he is subjected to many fewer factors of disturbance than in tuishou. Tuishou depends in particular on a centered posture, on a mastery of the rhythms and on the flow. Now, in tuishou, if we are ready to look again on its practice, we have to accept that one's own balance depends on the opponent/partner. This dialectical proposition is evident; however we notice that in the heat of the action each tries to destabilize the other one as if everything depended on one's own capacities (speed, power, technique, will, etc.). But if

we replace the phrase “depends on” with “to build with,” the perspective on the relation of opposition changes radically, especially when we consider that this balance is not a harmonious addition of two balances but one that creates a third balance. It is then a game improvised by opposite forces and of force/non-force that is going to regulate a precarious equilibrium between two opponents/partners, a balance that neither of them can claim to own. The break intervenes then as a proposition of missed/successful action by one of the protagonists who appears in a sense to be exhausted by this balance. I propose an attitude in the practice of the free tuishou that is not just hazy speech to justify some incapacity to destabilize an opponent/partner. This attitude is a proposition for the follower of TJQ to deepen the state of *song* in a relation that usually removes it.

3.2 Other One Decides

This conception of the third balance in free tuishou implies a level of desolation of will that seems to me to constitute the biggest challenge to one’s self (ego). Indeed, accept that a balance is partially created without my knowledge and obliges me to consider that this last one is going to decide (as a rule on the unconscious level) the moment and in the way it is going to be destabilized. This proposition costs both, naturally. It is in the complex progress of all the actions/reactions that a situation of break of balance is going to appear by the initiative of both protagonists. When this proposition is accepted, it becomes evident that each does not have only to count on his own will and talent but that he has to “give way” to an global relation in which he is both an actor and a spectator at the same moment. This level of release taken is much more difficult to achieve because it touches the identity of each; moreover I do not believe that it is reproducible at will. It seems to me to be the ultimate state of *song*.

The reader will have understood again the allegory of the sea. The practicer of tuishou appears as the sailor whose existence depends at the same moment on his

will but who also has to give way to the requirements of the ocean. If I evoked the image of the sailor who has only to find his path, at least at certain level, it is to show that in spite of earlier experience, every follower of tuishou meets himself only in the face of adversity. The informed advices certainly played a positive role in its evolution but every urge to act in a situation of free tuishou requests the experiences, the desire for *terre ferme*. Consider that if any situation of destabilization (potential, partial or finished), no matter the level of competence of the opponent/partner, results largely from one’s own blockings, then everyone should commit to an unlimited investigation of the state of *song*. This process also implies a search for the humility that becomes an internal investigation, not a quality to be shown. Indeed, every follower in a situation of free tuishou reveals by his action a state of blocking (physical and/or mental) and commits me to a renewed look to my own limits, even if I seemingly am in control of the situation.

4. Conclusion

One of the consequences that this look on my practice entailed was to focus on certain techniques of our style that have never occasioned to show themselves in my tuishou because of my various blocks. On the spiritual plane, I gradually get rid of the fear of losing and the consequent state of pleasure becomes a sharing with others. I also know that this pleasure will probably never be total and obliges me to maintain a waking state on the quality of my tuishou, and whatever my physical and mental states are. I know henceforth at least that when I lack the principles of tuishou in situations of opposition, I lose my way.

In this examination of *song*, let us remind ourselves that it is only one point of view in which, hopefully, everyone will find some material. Other approaches may answer in different ways what we all call our wishes because as J. W. Goethe asserted, “It is possible that every lapse leads to the inestimable good.”



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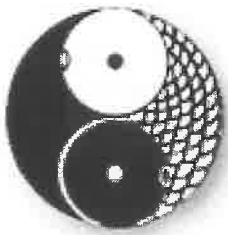
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Vol. I (2 nd Ed.): The basic exercises and all three sections of the form.		
English/French	\$70	\$95
Chinese/Japanese	\$70	\$95
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KUNLUN TAIJI SWORD by Hervé Marest	\$40	\$50
Photos and text fully illustrating Kunlun Jian form with Character-by-Character glossary of the KunLun poem and additional material on the Chinese Sword, the Basic Sword Exercises. 321 photo illustrations, 174 pages.		
LITTLE RED BOOKLET 2003 (3RD) EDITION	\$5	\$10
in Chinese and the Chinese phonetic system "bopomofo"; includes the names of the movements of the Sections 1,2,3, the Yen-nien Fan, the two Sword forms, the Long Pole, the Taiji Classics, and more; small pocket book format, plastic cover.		
YMT BASIC SWORD METHODS	\$10	\$15
Photos and Text on the 8 Basic Sword Cuts; list of WuDang & KunLun Forms in Chinese, Pinyin, English. 56 Pages.		

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BAMBOO FANS, SPECIFY RIGHT-HANDED (STANDARD FORM) OR LEFT-HANDED (MIRRORED FORM)	\$18	\$20
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AUDIOTAPES, CDS

YANGJIA MICHUAN TAIJIQUAN by Wang Yen-nien – Audio Tape, CD	\$16	\$20
Yangjia Michuan Duan by Wang Yen-nien An 80-minute tape/ CD of the breathing and names of the form movements called out in Chinese. The definitive YMT audio tape/CD, recorded in 1996.		
Collection Series, CD Only	\$26	\$30
Set of three Audio CDs of Wang Yen-nien leading the basic exercises at the Grand Hotel teaching area, from the 1970's. One CD for each of the three rotation schedule days. Day 1/4: Basic Exercises (26 min.'s) and Sec.'s 1,2 of Yangjia Michuan Taijiqian (32min.'s). Day 2/5: Basic Exercises (26 min.'s) and Sec.3 of Yangjia Michuan Taijiqian (32 min.'s). Day 3/6: Basic Exercises (30 min.'s); Wudang Sword (9 min.'s); Kunlun Taiji Sword (8 min.'s); Yen-nien Taiji Fan (7 min.'s).		
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Although videos published by YMTI are available in various formats, the catalog only indicates those which AYMTA stocks.

WYN IN TAINAN (early 1970s) VHS, DVD	YMTI	\$35	\$45
Wang Yen-nien demonstrating YMT Sections 1,2,3, Kunlun (Old) Sword, WuDang (New) Sword. A little dark but fun - no sound - looks like a Buster Keaton.			
WYN DEMONSTRATING YANGJIA MICHUAN TAIJIQUAN – VHS, DVD.	YMTI	\$30	\$40
Videotaped in the early 1980s in Japan and in Taiwan, this tape shows Wang Yen-nien demonstrating the following: YMT basic exercises, YMT Sections 1,2,3, Tuishou basic exercises, Fajin exercises, Thirteen Postures and Kunlun (Old) Sword Form. The names of the postures are called out in Japanese. 99 minutes			
NEW WYN IN TAINAN (1980) DVD	YMTI	\$30	\$40
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PUSH HANDS BASIC EXERCISES (1996) DVD TEMPORARILY OUT OF STOCK	NY YMT	\$150	\$205
Record of New York WYN Workshop detailing the 15 tuishou exercises. 5 tapes.			
THIRD DUAN (1996) VHS , DVD	AYMTA	\$90	\$120
This step-by-step instructional video taught by Wang Yen-nien for students new to the 3 rd duan, those who want a review aid, or for instructors who wish to explore all the rich details of the form. 3 tapes.			

JOURNALS

Vol 8 #2 FALL 2000 : Wang Yen-Nien Celebrating Fifty Years of Teaching	\$15	\$25
Vol 4 #1, #2; Vol 5 #1, #2; Vol 6 #2; Vol 7 #1, #2; Vol 9 #1, #2; Vol 10 #1, #2, Vol 11 #1, #2, Vol 12 #1, #2, Vol 13 #1, #2,	\$10	\$15

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- The American Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan Association (AYMTA) is a nonprofit public benefit corporation. The specific purposes for which this corporation is organized are to transmit, perpetuate, promote and further the growth of Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan (YMT) in the United States.

What is Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan?

- YMT (Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan), translated as Yang Family Hidden Tradition, was created by Yang Luchan. Yang Luchan passed it on to his son Yang Jianhou. Yang Jianhou passed it on to Zhang Qinlin. Zhang Qinlin passed it on to Wang Yen-nien. Master Wang, in order to prevent the loss of this art, has passed it on to all who are interested in carrying on the Yangjia Michuan style.

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- Submit a completed and signed application form.
- Pay the annual fee.
- Support the purpose and objectives of AYMTA
- Members need not be YMT practitioners.
- Members are welcome from all over the world

The Objectives of AYMTA

- To promote and respect the quality and integrity of Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan as taught and transmitted by Wang Yen-nien
- To conduct workshops and public demonstrations in YMT.
- To educate the public that the purpose of YMT is to promote health, to prolong the life span, to calm the mind and harmonize the spirit, to develop the art of self-defense, and to provide the entry level to the Great Dao.
- To provide YMT instructors for the public.
- To provide interested members with opportunities to develop the skills necessary to become YMT instructors.
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- To help instructors improve their teaching and build consistency in teaching YMT.
- To publish a journal (twice a year) and newsletter for members

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