

Amicale

Yangjia Michuan Taiji Quan

January 2015 - No. 78

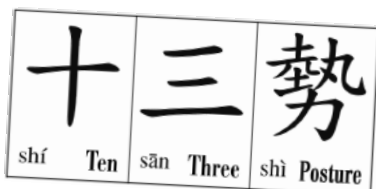
**Thirteen
Postures
Special issue**

十三式



楊家秘傳





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If If the thousand-li journey starts with the first step, then all the Yangjia Michuan practitioners have this common vocabulary that is the first step in the Shi San Shi.

On receiving Serge Dreyer's letter a few months ago -the introduction of this bulletin- I had the idea of interviewing the community of practitioners about this short form, in order to assess its practice, its teaching and its history.

It is recognized that what goes without saying, goes even better when you say it: yet, if the 13 postures are still "popular" in associations, to talk about this issue showed that the 13 postures are more than a simple form for beginners and that by discussing it, we touched upon an issue as fundamental as anything can be, not to say the very essence of our discipline.

An inexhaustible source of inspiration and a "pedagogical tool" [*sic*] essential for teachers, the "ABC" [*sic*] for beginners, everybody was more or less aware about those aspects.

But the surprise came from this bulletin, discovering that the 13 postures turned out to be an inextinguishable source of inspiration for the confirmed practitioner, that the "wonder" [*sic*] was settling down for good, long after the meanderings of the great adventure of the Long Form had been digested.

It's as if, after having gone through all the twist and turns of the long form, this return to the core -and the Shi San Shi- had made us more "modest" but nonetheless richer.

"If you can move molehills you can move mountains", this is what our little form (and the writers of this bulletin) seems to teach us, conversely to the saying, small form at the time of its very initial stages which turns out to be just as mature.

Françoise Cordaro

Translated by Louise Brodie

From the President's Desk

Translated by Monique Brodie

I have been re-elected president of the Amicale for the fourth year running.

As I have done for the last years, I will strive to ensure that the Amicale is up and running for the well being of everyone, in relation to the associations and members.

The Amicale keeps growing; we now have 90 associations, i.e. over 2000 members. Our annual meetings are more and more successful. Communication between associations or groups is increasing as well, through the organisation of common workshops. It shows the intensity and solidarity that exists within our practice.

At the last yearly meeting of the Amicale organized by Aramis in Sablé-sur-Sarthe near le Mans, 190 participants came to enjoy the warm and friendly atmosphere of the Rencontres.

The next ones will be organized by the association "Animation Tai Chi Chuan" from Cran-Gevrier and will take place in "Aux Balcons du Lac" in Sévrier, near Annecy.

Thank you ever so much to the organizers.

Be sure that, along with the newly elected team, from the Board of Directors and the Executive Board, we will see to maintain the good spirit, which links us to each other. We will also be there to help you, if it is within our capacity, for any problems you may encounter. Don't hesitate to contact us.

With the help of the various commissions, we will also be there to provide the services and publications we owe you:

– Administrative notes, monthly information notes, free online access to our bulletins, maintenance and sustainability of the website, publication of Wang Yen-nien's style archives, involvement in the Annual Rencontres' logistic, outward communication, together

with the European College of Teachers, for the development of our style.

The Bulletin and Website committees will see to improve the quality of both supports that are our media for internal communication as well as our window in relation to the outside world.

A special thank to the bulletin chief editor Françoise Cordaro, to the layout specialist Michel Ségal as well as the to reading, proofing and translating teams. Thanks to Claudy Jeanmougin who's in charge of the relations with the printer and Yves Février, responsible for the mailing.

Send your articles, any sources are welcome, for a rich, diversified and eclectic Bulletin.

We recognize the efforts of the website committee for enhancing it day after day with events, workshops, online bulletins, the associations referencing and so on. As you will see, many workshops are already scheduled from January to August.

I would like to thank all the members; thus allowing the logistics for the Amicale, its Board of Directors, committees and Executive Board to run smoothly thanks to the pooling of resources.

I wish you all a happy new year 2015 and a beautiful practice.

I would recommend and urge you to practice even more during this year in order to share these moments of common practice, which are moments of quality of living together, of solidarity, of social ties. Let our Taiji Quan be and remain this humanistic and rare pearl, which unites us all!

May this coming year of the Goat bring us courage and serenity!

Long live the Amicale and all its members!

Jean-Michel Fraigneau

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Thirteen Postures and their history in our style of taiji quan

by Serge Dreyer

Translated by Simonette Verbrugge

THE pictures of Mr Wang practicing 13 postures are, to my knowledge, the only documents available on this subject. In fact, I learned the sequence of the 13 postures (Shi San Shi) with Li Jin Chuan, my first taiji quan teacher, himself being Mr Wang's first pupil.

It is also this sequence that has been taught first in France since I started with it in the fall 1978 in Le Mans on my return to France. According to an interview of Li Jin Chuan, he would have invented this sequence with Master Wang's agreement in order to teach it to the students of the National University of Taiwan who did not have the time to learn our entire form. From what I remember of Master Wang's words, this particular sequence was invented in Taiwan and not transmitted in China during his years as a student of Zhang Qin lin, between 1945 and 1949.

Before inviting M. Wang to France in the fall 1981, I asked him during a time off (I was working in Saudi Arabia at the time), to take a series of pictures to fix my memory, especially since I learned this sequence with his student. I had also asked him to teach this sequence in France as my most advanced students in Le Mans knew it entirely. The Parisian students of Charles Li did not know it and I don't think that Guo Chi ever taught it in Belgium (?) if he knew it at all. In fact, it seems that only Li Jin Chuan's students knew this sequence at the time and Mr Wang never taught it in Yuan Shan. It is in France that it has really taken root, Roland Habersetzer (Strasbourg) having included it for two thirds in his book on taiji quan and later Christian Bernapel used it as the main topic of a book. Meanwhile I asked Mr Wang to teach it in Taipei to all the foreign students present at his classes so that this sequence would become a common good as I find it a lot of advantages. Nowadays in Taiwan, very few of the practitioners of our style know the 13 postures (I never saw it in a demonstration). I am curious to know which associations still teach it in Europe and elsewhere in the world. Thank you for keeping me informed.

SHÍ
SĀN
SHÌ

1. SHI SAN SHI IN EUROPE TODAY

The 13 postures, Shi San Shi 十三勢

by Zouzou Vallotton

Translated by Monique Brodie

GETTING THE HANG OF YANGJIA MICHUAN TAIJI QUAN

楊家秘傳太極拳

The particulars of our form.

Most of the time, weight on the back full leg, the front empty leg with the free heel.

Sometimes the opposite, weight on the full front leg, the back empty leg with the free heel.

The heel which follows the movements of rotations of the waist and of the light pelvis tilt, as well as the standing leg which straightens or bends.

A short distance between the back foot and the front foot.

A choreography like a chorus.

Change of direction: ¼ turn right, ½ turn left, ¼ turn right, ½ turn left, on so on... and in the centre between two directions.

The eight movements of hands and the five directions: the thirteen postures.

Three small sequences, each in the four directions and back to the centre: the thirteen postures.

two times four cardinals, once four diagonals, and one back to the centre: the thirteen postures.

The basic movements of our sequence, like the alphabet.

The third sequence when the body moves forward then backward.

Move forward:

Pluck, CAI 採 – split, LIE 換 – elbow, ZHOU 肘 – lean, KAO 靠

Move backward :

Ward off, PENG 棚 – roll back, LU 履 – squeeze, AN 按 – press JI 擠

To practice without moderation.

This is how I introduce the 13 postures, the Shi San Shi, in the little book with the DVD produced by A.P.R.E.T. (small publicity stunt!)

I studied the 13 postures with Luc Defago and I am thankful for that, knowing that several teachers have given up teaching them.

Since I have been teaching, never have I allowed myself to “miss” the teaching of the 13 postures to beginners, not even for a year!

Apart from the odd time when a new student would arrive on his own in a group of older ones who were taking on the 1st duan. The new student would get on the train in the 1st duan carriage. Well? I must say that during his learning of the 1st duan, I could see that he had not got on the engine! Not only because he had to learn the movements from the 13 postures that can be found in the 1st duan, not that he was beginning as the others who already had the study of the sequence behind them, because he had not learnt either the alphabet nor the bases, that something was missing.

The 13 postures are “straightforward” in their choreography, you go from one point to the other like horses in a school !

You keep turning the movement to your heart’s content.

“Twenty times on the loom, put back your work” in simple and repetitive patterns.

If the students find it hard to take in the ¼ and ½ turns (which seems strange considering the regularity

of the changes of direction), it seems to me that they free themselves in this way from the difficulty of the movements themselves.

One gets organised in the 13 postures, then frees oneself from squaring the circle by taking on the long form.

I must admit that throughout my practice I sometimes hated them, got bored, had enough and they went out of the window when practicing alone.

But never did I get tired of teaching them.

Many years ago, I found them back again and since then I've kept experimenting with things in them.

Three years ago, I found a different way to the one I used to practice before, (to) start the PENG in the 13 postures, since then I've been enjoying this moment.

I've heard many stories about the birth of the 13 postures... which one is true, I don't know.

As for me, this is the ultimate basic exercise of our school and if it is true that it requires endurance in the teaching and learning, nobody can disregard the difficulties in the learning of the so demanding Yangjia Michuan.

If one doesn't encounter these in the 13 postures, one just postpones the moment when one fails there.

Then I voted for the 13 postures and perhaps one day I will speak differently!

While revisiting them with you, I wish you a good practice of the 13 postures...

Friendly yours,

Zouzou

The Shi San Chi: a wonderful teaching tool

by Marie-Christine Moutault

Translated by Sylvain Maillot

START my beginner's classes with the SHI SAN SHI, often translated as "the thirteen postures". When I introduce it to the students, I tell them it is a kind of "compilation", a summary of the basics of our form. It allows to present and experiment with the eight ways of expressing energy: PENG, LÜ, AN, JI, CAI, LIE, ZHOU, KAO, and to explore the five directions: moving forward, moving backward, looking right, looking left and centering.

1. Structuring the student's space

Indeed, it provides an entry point into our Form by structuring the student's space, vertically as well as horizontally, and letting *themselves* be the reference point, not the structured space of the room they are in... As a matter of fact, right from the beginning, I complicate matters a bit in order to simplify them afterwards: as the students repeat ad infinitum the few movements they have learned, I ask them to start again from the beginning, but not in the initial direction; instead, they start again from their current direction.

For example, suppose they have just learned the opening movements and the right turn with recentering, which is a ZHONG DING. From there, by taking a step forward and then bringing the other foot close to the front one, letting the hands drop along the body, they find themselves in the neutral starting position. Then they start again from this new direction.

Then I teach them the direction changes (90 degrees right and 180 degrees left) before they even learn the complete sequence Peng Shou/Lan Qiao Wei/ Ru Feng Si Bi. I use two sets of instructions: in the first, they are to loop through the movement they are currently learning, each time starting off from the final position of the previous repetition, even if it is not the usual direction used in the form; they should do this until the new movement is memorized. Then, towards the end of the class, they are to practise the portion of the form they know, in the four directions. They have to do this until the diagonals come into play. At that point I do not ask them to start again in a diagonal direction! (I am not sure that many advanced practitioners

would be able to do it, although it would be an excellent exercise!) The starting direction is always a cardinal one.

Some benefits of this teaching method:

■ Some sense of continuity comes through ever since the learning phase of a new movement, as the students do not have to interrupt it in order to get back to the original position. Thus they do not lose focus: they close the movement calmly and then start afresh.

■ Changing direction at each new start during the learning phase of a new movement enables them to avoid getting bored by the repetition process.

■ Right from the start, and even more as they progress in their study, their reference mark is not the space around them (doors, windows, carpets...) but themselves, whatever lies around them.

■ It is also interesting to note that the “beginners” group can very quickly work autonomously and without getting bored.

■ They have the impression that they are doing a FORM which is coherent from the start; right from the second lesson, they enter a “Form” that has a beginning and an end.

The advantage of the Shi San Shi form is that it is structured around straightforward direction changes, first involving only cardinals, and then, only in the third part, the diagonals. Many beginners have orientation problems; in addition to the intrinsic rigour of the Shi San Shi (right turns of 90 degrees and left turns of 180 degrees) our proposal allows to discover a true relationship with space where the reference mark is the practitioner in space. Then it becomes fairly easy to change location and be able to practice on one's own without being lost...

For a first approach of our style, I find beginning with a “formal” form particularly interesting. The Centre is the person themselves, and at the same time, they must integrate the idea that the “Form” has its own centering: each Zhong Ding (i.e. recentering move, which is to be found before each change of direction) opens new potentialities, either for repeating the same series of moves or changing it. Besides, some coherence must be found, since the practitioner can only change the series of moves if they have performed the previous series in the four cardinal (or diagonal) directions. Thanks to this, they also learn the three-part division of the Shi San Shi, which connects it with the three Duans since the first sequence of of the Shi San Shi is connected to the Earth (1st Duan), the second one with Man (2nd Duan), the third one –the diagonals– with the Sky (3rd Duan).

Therefore, the notion of centering is very important: with respect to oneself, with respect to each sequence inside a series, with respect to each series (Earth, Man, Sky), and finally in the unity of this coherence: beginning-end, where the practitioner has come back to the starting point, but is now different, having experienced the (whole or partial) Form they just did.

2. To enter gradually the energetic logic

The Shi San Shi also allows the beginners to enter gradually the energetic logic which is to be developed in many ways in the three Duan(s). Indeed, the “Gates” are to be experienced; as ways of expressing energy, they each have their specificity, their coherence, and it is necessary that the individual who expresses them should keep their own coherence, without getting lost in the “opening of the Gate”... In his Third Tome, Claudy Jeanmougin recorded, throughout the form, 15 PENG, 44 LÜ, 23 AN, 1 JI, 25 CAI, 3 LIE, 7 ZHOU, 2 KAO.

Therefore I take advantage of the logic of the class in order to allow the students to learn the meaning of these gates. As they gradually occur in the Shi San Shi, I teach them in the second part of the warming-up, where we tackle the tui shou basic exercises. Then I discuss more specifically the meaning of each “Gate”, the posture it involves, the relaxation which is specific to it, the openings which are needed even within apparent closures... Working more in-depth in this way allows exploring each gate's specificity.

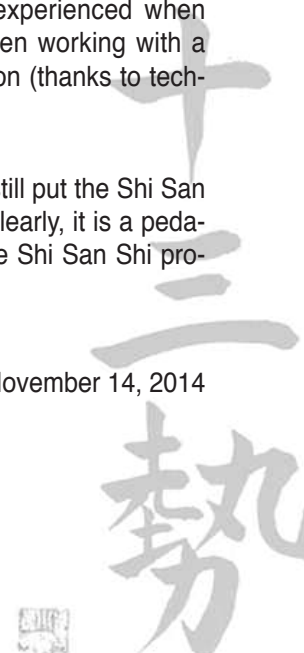
Thus connections are made between the Shi San Shi and the tui shou basic exercises. Accordingly, I teach only a selection of them to first year students, ending the season with the 15th exercise (BA FA) and eschewing some of the other basic exercises... Of course the programme is not etched in stone, and depends on the group of students.

The advantages I see to this way of teaching are:

- Giving meaning to the movements which are learned.
- Deepening the understanding of the expression of energy.
- Implementing within the body the coherence of placement needed to express the “Gate”.
- Learning not to mix up what is experienced when working alone with what is at stake when working with a partner, alternating fluidity with expression (thanks to technical applications) while staying relaxed.

I have explained the reasons why I still put the Shi San Shi at the beginning of the curriculum. Clearly, it is a pedagogical choice. To sum up, I find that the Shi San Shi provides nice entry “Gates”...

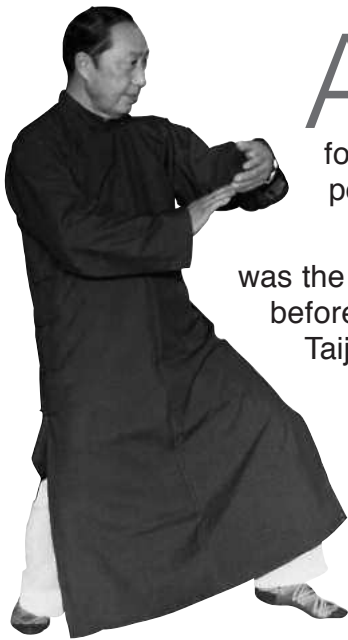
Thorigné d'Anjou, November 14, 2014



Thirteen Postures

by Jean-Luc Perot

Translated by Thomas Cuvelier



A LONG TIME has passed since I have learnt the form described in this proposal.

Apparently, “13 postures” was the usual name of this practice before we started to talk about Taiji Quan.

I need to use French in order to find the appropriate words in my native language to be able to share my Taijiquan – I have called it “BASE 13” and “BASIC 13”.

“BASE 13” because it is about the foundations of the practice, and also because 13 equal to 8 + 5. We therefore have a theory that in its condensed “form 13” is seeking for maximum effect.

8 ways of expressing energy (not “force”, which refers to muscular force, muscle volume and its powerful contractions).

5 movements that refer to the way space is filled from the centre and the four quadrants; the 4 areas where one can come and go. The situation is within the movement, and within the interaction between each others.

8 WAYS TO EXPRESS ENERGY

It’s up to you to choose which one depending on the situation. It’s essentially about listening and understanding the intention.

Managing the unexpected will determine which particular posture and method one will adopt.

First of all, the fundamental yin / yang rhythm : PENG / LU

Yang the expression , the expansion , the filling of space, the attack

Yin the attraction, seduction, the return to the earth or emptiness, the withdrawal.

Peng: the intention , energy or strength comes from the feet, grows through the legs, is then condensed and focused in the pelvis, develops throughout the vertebral axis and is then expressed through the eyes and the hand... the internal references feet/knees – hip/sacrum – lumbar spine and back – head posture/neck and eyes are create the expression from the “within” toward the “outside”.

Lu: it follows the same pattern; that is, from the foot and going up, going back to the earth to become centred , drawing , pulling into a vacuum. From the distant to the closer, intimacy.

The expression can manifest itself in two ways: a “a long, extended flow” or a “tight burst”

An: the flow of energy follows the ground, goes around the obstacle, and overcomes the opposition without losing its purpose and original target.

Ji: the tip is somewhat incisive, penetrating just like an arrow, or hitting like a hammer.

Both allow the expression of energy

Cai destabilises, removes the connection with the earth and breaks the root thanks to its lever effect.

Lie involves rotating and twisting the body, but can also act like a swallowing or sweeping tornado

These energy movements are also expressed in the hand (the hand that has the know how and expertise), but, as those movements originate from the centre, they are also expressed through the shoulders and the hips (Kao), elbows and knees (Zhou) before manifesting themselves through the hand.

THE CENTRE AND THE CONQUEST OF SPACE AND TIME

The centre is where you are, your “landing point” to the earth, your space and your present moment.

It all starts with you!

You can move to reach out

You can step back to withdraw,

You can go left or right using your two legs, just like a pedestrian who knows which way to turn and how to change direction.

But in addition, you can choose to be skewed, oblique, or diagonal.

All of this is combined and is being refined: stability and mobility, moving and not moving, reaching and evading, flowing and still.

Also, the circling motion will add roundness, smoothness so that the the flow, cycle and process is able to run properly.

BASIC 13

This choreography explains the theory called “moving and movements”.

The start: YOU in the CENTRE, a landing POINT on the ground, and a still point towards the sun; a vertical AXIS, standing still in a posture that is neither arrogant or shy.

You are the center of the world, at least YOUR world.

You manage the surrounding area from this key position.

At the crossroads, you follow a direction. Where will you turn your heart and your purpose?

The cardinal points serve as support. The right and the right angle are there to help you to clarify the oblique and the diagonal.

Wherever you go, you go with the center, which is the pivotal point in all your developments.

Do not get confused: four quarters make a turn, two quarters half a turn; the right angle can be divided into an eight of a turn, all directions are possible.

A martial art, an artistic expression

–*The musicality of a sonnet*

If the sonnet is a poetic form, musical, fun to recite, the basic 13 is similar: a poetic form, musical, pleasant to dance to.

Two tercets –the two cardinal sequences.

two quatrains –the two diagonal sequences back and forth.

–*Mastery*

This is about understanding the basics, and being able to practice them again and again.

Put yourself in new situations.

- start in other cardinal or diagonal directions,
- mix the sequences as they come, in another order,
- play a duet: C / C, W / F, Ds / Ds, in reverse order,
- in order or at random,
- vary the pace depending on the situation, or in agreement with the music that is being played for us,
- practicing tui shou in pairs, from the center point, back and forth following the 4 diagonals: Peng / Lu / An / Ji, Cai / Lie / Zhou / Kao.

During my time spent training with Mr. Kuo Chi, he had composed a matrix of the basic 13; 2 short forms including movements form the 2nd and 3rd duans.

Are there any other extensions of basic 13?

Namur, November 2014.

The Thirteen Postures

by Mark A. Linett

THE Thirteen postures in the Yangjia Michuan Style is a wonderfully compact and concise form that introduces the practitioner to the basic movements of the long form. Obviously there is no substitute for fine detailed teaching of the form which can serve to highlight important aspects such proper positioning of the body and hands, martial art applications and the breathing.

Grasp the Sparrows Tail, for example, is one movement that needs to be demonstrated and practiced with the aid of a teacher. Here we can only mention some of the details and directions to keep in mind.

By going deeply into the finer details of the form as well as the applications, learning the long form can certainly become much easier. One benefit of practicing this form is that we practice both the right and the left side. This can be helpful in our push hands practice since people tend to favor the right side over the left side.

The final section of the Thirteen postures was taught by Wang Laoshi as a separate twoperson moving form/exercise. Practicing this moving form can help us develop a sense of enemy and a beginning understanding of listening energy (*Jing*). Also we develop a deep familiarity with the changes in directions and transitions.

Obviously, the form can only be refined and deepened through continued and continuous practice.

The First Section

After completing the opening/ beginning movements of the first section, you will begin to practice **Ward off, Grasp the Sparrows Tail, Seal it Closed** in four directions, first turning 90 degrees, then 180, then 90 and finally 180 degrees.

When starting the first **Grasp the Sparrows Tail**, Wang Laoshi sometimes showed the position of the hands as follows: both hands form a ball with the left hand (at heart level) on top of the ball and the right hand (at Dantien level) on the bottom. We slowly sink down stepping out and bringing the right arm up into **Ward Off** position. With the weight on the left

leg slowly turn the body to the right while preparing to do one of the basic movements in the form which is **Ward off, Grasp the Sparrow's tail, Seal it Closed**.

After completing the final movement in **Seal It Closed (Push)**, the arms remain in a level position while turning 180 degrees to the left on the heel of your right foot. In this direction the left hand is at the bottom of the ball and the right hand on the top. Then making a half step out and lowering the right hand, raising the left arm into **Ward Off** position and then turning the waist to the left and continuing to do **Ward off, Grasp the Sparrow's Tail, Seal it Closed**.

After completing **An (Push)**, maintain the arm position and turn 90 degrees to the right. We have returned to direction that we started from when we practiced the opening movements of the form. After making the turn you may have to bring the right foot into alignment so that your feet are in the correct position.

Again sinking down on the left leg and forming a ball with the right hand (at Dantien level) on the bottom and the left on top at heart level. Make a half step out and rise up in right hand in **Ward Off** position. Turn the waist and complete the movements as before.

In the fourth part of the opening section, we again turn 180 degrees to the left while keeping both our arms in the two hand **Push** position. We then move on as before with the left arm in **Ward off** position.

So in the first section we make four turns and with each change in direction we change sides; starting off on the right side and then turning left, right, left.

The Second Section

In the second section of the form, we proceed from **An (Push)** position and turn 90 degrees to the right. We start off by doing **Tsai (Drag Down)**. Turning slowly and sinking down on the left leg with the left hand sweeping an elbow away.

In **Brush Knee to a Twist Step**, raise the right hand that has been pushing out at the *Dantien* level and block an incoming push, punch or kick.

This yielding movement can open up an opportunity to push at the chest or the side of the body. The push is made while sinking down on the right leg with the left hand pushing out.

Play the Pipa is the last movement in the second section of the form. The movement starts with a large open **Sweep (Lu)** which sweeps away an attack at the elbow. When using **Lu** to prevent an attack, it is important to attach to the elbow to make the sweep. If you sweep at the forearm or upper arm then the attacker can still use his/her elbow. The final movement here is a push with the forearm with the palm facing the body. The forearm is almost in a vertical position. This push can be directed at the shoulder or the chest.

We continue the form by practicing the sequence of **Drag Down, Brush Knee to a Twist Step** and **Play the Pipa** in four different directions. The second change is made by turning 180° and then 90° and then finally 180°. Again each time that we make a change of direction we also change the side that we are working on. The first time that we practice these movements we are on the right side then we change directions and start off with **Cai (Drag Down)** on the left side. So when there is a change of direction, there is also a change in the position of the feet and hands.

The Third Section

In the third section we practice **Cai (Drag Down)**, **Lie (Twist the Joint)**, **Zhou (Elbow Stroke)**, **Kao (Shoulder Stroke)** walking forward and then returning with **Peng (Hold off)**, **Lu (Sweep)**, **An (Push)**, **Ji (Compression Strike)**.

When Wang Laoshi taught the third section of the form as a separate two person exercise/form, each partner takes turns attacking and retreating using the eight techniques and moving in the four diagonal directions.

With this in mind we can take a closer look at the offensive techniques (**Cai, Lie, Zhou, Kao**) and their corresponding yielding/defensive, (**Peng, Lu, An, Ji**) techniques.

In this third section of the form, we move on from the **Play the Pipa** position and turn right 135° onto the diagonal, taking a half step with **Cai (Drag Down)** with the right hand pushing out. Then stepping out with the left leg while maintaining the weight on right leg and twisting the elbow joint of your partner's right arm with the left hand at the elbow and the right hand at the wrist.

Lie (Twisting of the Joint) opens up an opportunity to attack your partner's chest with **Zhou (Elbow Strike)**.

The final attacking movement comes in the form of **Kao** or **Shoulder Strike**. After completing the **Kao**,

raise the arm in **Shang Peng**. Generally, the **Peng** is positioned at heart level, but this movement is different since the **Peng** moves up above the head to protect against an attack coming from above.

The practitioner then takes on the defensive role, lowering his/her arm and retreating by taking a step back in **Peng (Hold off)**, then another large sweeping step back in **Lu (Sweep)**, continuing to another large sweeping step back in **An (Push)** and finally a **Ji (Compression Strike)**.

* **Peng (hold off)** defends against **Cai (Drag Down)**,

* **Lu (Sweep)** defends against **Lie (Twist the Joint)**,

* **An (Push)** defends against **Zhou (Elbow Strike)**,

* **Ji (Compression Strike)** defends against **Kao (Shoulder Strike)**.

After completing the first sequence in this third section, we make a 180° turn onto another diagonal and again start the sequence by stepping forward with **Cai, Lie, Zhou, Kao** and returning with **Peng, Lu, An, Ji** on the left side.

The next change in direction is a 90° turn onto the diagonal and again taking a beginning step in **Cai**, with the right hand leading and pushing out and continuing the sequence as we mentioned above.

The final turn in the sequence is a 180° turn onto the diagonal with the left hand leading with **Cai**; then continuing to step with **Lie, Zhou** and **Kao**.

We return to the opening direction with a 135° turn to the right and complete the form with **Carry the Tiger Back to the Mountain**.



It might be helpful to those practitioners who are interested in investigating some of the finer details of the movements to refer to:

–Wang Laoshi's book *Taiji Quan, Yang Family Hidden Tradition, An Explanation through Photos*.

–Wang Laoshi's *Yangjia Michuan Taiji Quan, Martial Applications, Volume 2*.

Movements in the Thirteen Postures

First Section. – Peng (Hold Off), Grasp the Sparrow's Tail, Seal It Closed.

Second Section. – Cai (Drag Down), Brush Knee to a Twist Step, Play the Pipa.

Third Section. – Cai (Drag Down), Lie (Twist the Joint), Zhou (Elbow Stroke), Kao (Shoulder Stroke). Peng (Hold Off), Lu (Sweep), An (Push), Ji (Compression Strike). Completing the form with Carry the Tiger Back to the Mountain.

The Thirteen Postures

Shi San Shi

by Christian Bernapel

Translated by Gretchen McLane

WELL beyond the questions about its origins, these “Thirteen” have a resonance most particular in our practice and in the use that each of us may make in the discovery of the fundamentals and their development. All together, the introduction, synthesis and conclusion, it is a perfect “Form,” as much sealed as it is open, which each one can work and refine to their fashion. It is the archetype referencing our progression.

Of this multitude, reunited in the unity of a form that has become a vessel, each resonates little by little the potentials hidden in Taiji Quan, in Yangjia Michuan, and in the magic of gesture returned to consciousness. A space covered methodically, slowly, in grace and gravitas, which reveals bit by bit the weight, the density and the consciousness of those who invest in it. A space that takes form from the center, in the pelvis, calm and mobile between high and low, alternately straightening and relaxing, oscillating in gravity’s pregnant and invisible energy.

By its symmetries it is a unique form that explores the view of the four aspects and their center. The slow gestures of the three sequences, repeated right and left, front and back, methodically structure one’s comprehension of the gesture and of the space that one defines, crosses, surpasses and reintegrates.

Eight potentials: the essence of Taiji, four complementary directions, right and left, front and back. Space is created little by little, around yourself, as if spinning a cocoon. Between sky and earth the center turns, it lifts and lowers, creating ascending and descending spirals like the scepter of caduceus.

What a marvel!

Three sequences described in the four aspects and their diagonals between sky and earth. One ultimate, like a majestic gesture, that encompasses and concludes.

The first builds space like a protective cocoon: high, low, all around oneself: conscious of the space between each aspect by attentive rotation. Discovering the first three potentials in a song of allegories: “Grasp the Sparrow’s Tail—*lan qiao wei*, and Seal it Closed—*ru feng si bi*.”

At the beginning “**peng**” the center axis is contained and manifested. One examines, protects, absorbs, defines and repels. Potential is contained in the other, in one’s empty and in one’s full.

Then “**lu**” appears: that turns around oneself and protects the center with rising and descending spirals. Discovery of gravity and of recovery.

Third “**an**” which is a way to secure from the inside an interior delimited space, without going over it.

The second crosses a defined space, discovery of an unknown who appears, interior music born of a bow rubbing the string, going and coming between low and high. Again the spiral.

In the beginning “**tsai**” which gathers, uproots, insinuates and pierces the defined space.

Then “**an, lu and peng**” in a masterly composition that is “Brush the Knee, Twist Step—*lou xi ao bu*, and Wield the Pipa—*hui pipa*.” Basic stepping appears: the first step resolutely advances, the second step pivots and revolves while stepping back.

The third pierces the space again, advancing then tacking a withdrawal in a complementarity that matches one with the other. One advances, the other retreats and vice versa: training the techniques, “**Ba Fa**,” to be in agreement and completely in unison.

The first “**tsai**” again, which punctuates the rotations.

Then “**lie**” which destructs and breaks, and “**dzo to kao**” advancing in a duet to the conquest, shattering and jostling.

Their alter egos “**peng, lu, an**,” which contain and strike twice in ingenious retreat, with sinuous stepping, before the invasion.

At last “**dji**” which concludes and seals, combining the qualities of “**peng and an**.”

The last one, “Embrace the Tiger, Return to the Mountain, *Bao hu gui shan*”! It returns to the origin like the book we close to find ourselves face to face with ourselves.

In the totality that unites the interior and the exterior, the distinct, determined space liberates.

Thus it appears “**Wuji**” the serene fullness. The pearl of pearls!

Thirteen doors open, one after the other, perhaps you will travel further than before ...

December 15, 2014

Shi San Shi, Good for Everything and for Everyone

by Michel Séqal

Translated by Ronan Pellen

A LONG with the many honorable authorized opinions about Shi San Shi, here are some comments of a “young” practitioner.

For all...

I joined Françoise Cordaro’s (and Jean-Paul Allmang’s) Taiji Quan class a few years ago, and this year she decided to officially ask me to be an assistant. All this happened quite naturally in a way that perfectly suits me: I only teach Shi San Shi to newcomers.

The expression I use most to introduce it is “the ABCs of Yangjia Michuan”. I also explain that since I have studied Chinese language a bit in the past, I noticed that the third character is often used today to form words that have the general meaning of *model*, as well as those of posture and position.

Let’s come back to these ABCs. All forms have their own ABCs that have to be learned and that is the same for all forms: how to change the supporting foot in order to change direction, without watching the feet. In short, after a few weeks or months, the practitioner’s eyes should only be focused on the movements. since looking at the feet can become like a crutch.... I think that Shi San Shi is good for learning this. It is still a vivid memory to me that, after a year of learning the traditional Yang form, I had no idea of the directions. (And my teacher used to say “Do not frown, Michel”...)

I still should say it’s a damn good –and ambitious– task for an assistant to send new practitioners to his own teacher⁽¹⁾. After only a year, thanks to this mini-form (which reveals itself much more than just ABCs), they are ready to start the adventure of the three parts.

Yes, Shi San Shi is good for an assistant, and therefore, for transmission⁽²⁾.

...and for yourself

It is also simply THE CHANCE for all of us to practice this mini-form. Look: I am very sick for now. hospital, care protocol, chemo. side effects. weakness... Whenever my energy is back (before the next chemo treatment!) I will choose to practice “my” Shi San Shi rather than “my first part”, or “my Beijing form”. Why? My answer is that the inner logic of

Shi San Shi makes it a perfect form. With the same inner logic, at the end of the first part, something has to happen and if it does not happen, we are not satisfied.

Let’s stay with the point of view of disease. One of my readings about Taiji stays somewhere in my puzzled mind: an American man⁽³⁾ tells us that “T’ai-chi-ch’uan [long live pinyin!] uses images as a game [...] For instance, you can remember a scene from a movie showing a tiger hunting its prey. You start to abandon the image you have of yourself and replace it with that of the tiger, and try to imitate its behavior in the specific framework of the movements of the form. If you are no longer there, then who is practicing the form? It is the Spirit of the Body. It does not care who is here and when it is here.”

And this school practices seven or eight forms: the oblique shape, the shape of the snake, monkey, etc., and... “form of the old man”! “It is done as if the student is in a state of great weakness. Its movements are delicate and not very short. [...] It mainly aims to teach that inner power development does not come from huge physical movements, but from concentration and relaxation.”

I fight this bitch of a disease by *enjoying her* and trying new ways of doing and having fun, and not holding back! And here again, Shi San Shi seems better to me for relaxing than the Beijing form, for instance.

As a conclusion, there is nothing more original to say:

Shi San Shi is cool!

December, 2014

1) Our beloved teachers, who gave us so much (Hi Matthieu! Hi Françoise! You both know that “beloved teacher” means much more than the expression of pale sentimentalism to me... but gratitude for what has been given to us.)

2) In my opinion, transmission may be a problem in the future (though I hope I am wrong) and could be the subject of such a file.

3) Bob Klein, *The spirit of Tai Chi Ch’uan*, Ed Alpheus, 2005. A book one says “It is a bit delirium, guy”, and then still guards next to Despeux and Cortais, feeling that there is still something to glean...

Of Shi San Shi and what I know of it

by Claudy Jeanmougin

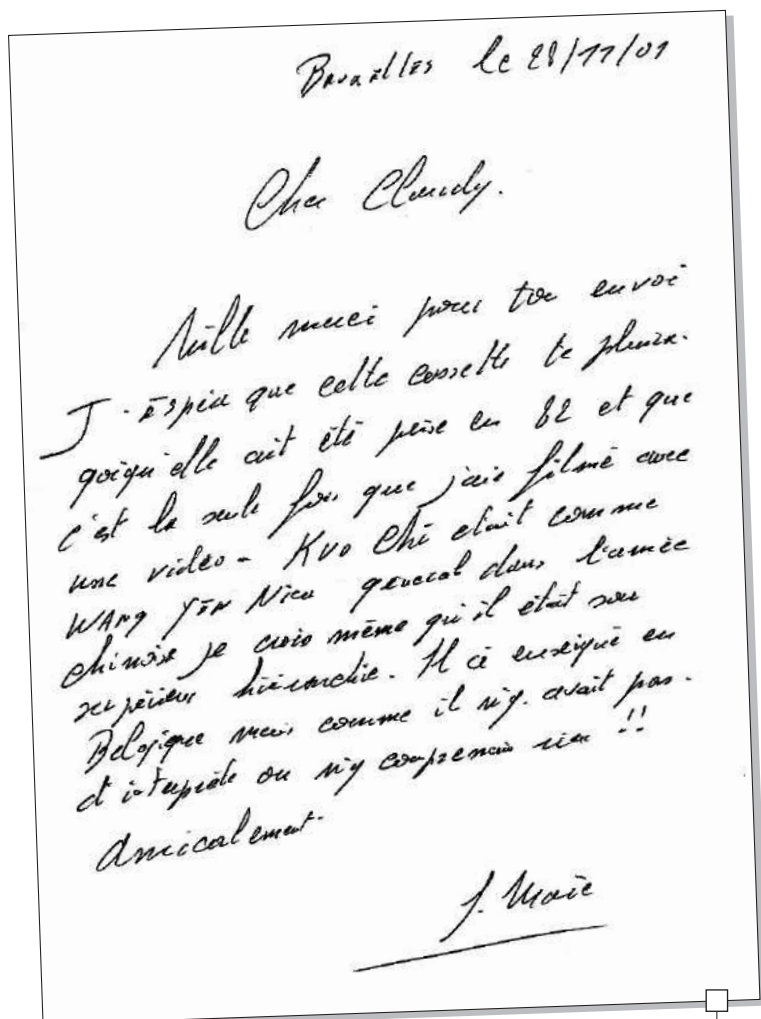
Translated by Louise Brodie

DURING my stay in Taiwan, I was never taught Shi San Shi, nor did I ever see anyone practice it in Yuan shan, whether in the morning or afternoon. I only learnt Shi San Shi when I got back, while visiting Maryse Fourgeaud in Fouras. I met Maryse, who has now sadly passed away, in Taipei, at one of Laoshi's classes. She would often visit us in our Dexing dong lu flat, to take our baby Gabriel in her arms. One day, Maryse mentioned this form I had never heard of. The following day, she taught it to me. It was not too complicated since I already knew all the different elements.

Then, I came across Shi San Shi in Rolland Aber-setzer's book "Taiji quan sport et culture", Amphora, Paris 1983. The book only shows the first two duans, illustrated with drawings after photographs of Master Wang. Before embarking on the writing of the first volume of the Yangjia michuan taiji quan series, which deals with the first four of the eight doors, I had already written down all the movements of the Shi San Shi form. I had mistakenly named the last movement, which follows the Cai, Lie, Zhou and Kao series, "The White crane spreads its wings". This error was later on amended by Laoshi who was adamant that it was not "the White crane spread its wings" but "Zhong Ding", "Central Equilibrium".

I am merely recounting this anecdote about Zhong Ding to indicate that Shi San Shi was not mentioned in what would become the little red book. The first edition of this book, with a blue cover and published in 1976, did not mention Shi San Shi. It's only in the 1992 edition that the names of the various forms appear, along with the disappearance of others such as the Taiji sabre. I only managed to get hold of this 1992 Chinese edition after 1994, hence the mistake in volume 1. The first volume to be translated into French was the 2003 Chinese edition. This shows how Shi San Shi was neglected in Taiwan between 1985 and 1992. Why 1992? Simply because I wanted Shi San Shi to be the main theme of a summer course in Châtillon in 1992. As for Maryse, she knew the form because she had learnt it prior to 1985, year when I arrived in Taipei.

In 1992, I wanted the foundations of our Taiji quan style to be seen over again during Laoshi's courses in Châtillon, near Angers. It was actually also the first time that several courses organised by different associations occurred in the same place. And, for the anecdote, Laoshi refused my invitation to lead a course in Angers, for reasons that will remain unknown to me. Three weeks later however, he asked me to organise three courses in my area, including the one I had invited him for. Why this change of mind? I am not sure. In the past, I had advised him to teach several courses



III. 1.

within the same place, to avoid unnecessary travelling. Hence, a whole course was dedicated to Shi San Shi, and this definitely set back on tracks the teaching of this form.

Of course, I didn't wait for 1992 to teach Shi San Shi in my regular lessons. As soon as 1997, Shi San Shi was taught as a priority in all my classes. Thus explaining that the first two volumes of my series on Yangjia michuan are devoted to it.

In his article, Serge Dreyer wonders if Guo Chi (ill. 2) taught Shi San Shi in Belgium. I confirm that he did teach this form in Belgium and that the Amicale owns a film showing him teach to a group of students. What's more, this video is relevant from a historical perspective since it shows the evolution of Shi San Shi, providing Guo Chi remained faithful to Master Wang. This video was given to me by Jean-Marie from Brussels and was made in 1982 (ill. 1). One of Kuo Chi's famous students, Vlady Stevanovitch, never taught Shi San Shi, whilst he transmitted his own interpretation of our long 127-movement form.

Going back to the red book, but without going too far from our subject, there were only 14 basic tuishu exercises in the editions prior to 2003. This last edition has had 15th exercises added to it, the Bafa, or Eight Techniques, which is actually the third sequence of the two people Shi San Shi, or a Duida. This Duida enables to place the form and to express the eight basic doors as fajin.

And since we're talking about "transformations", I would like to mention the ones concerning the Ji in the third Shi San Shi sequence. I remember a seminar at the College when Michel Douiller, having just got back from Taipei, told us about this transformation that needed to be taken on board. I believe it was in 2006; Laoshi would have been 92 years old and had stopped teaching Taichi quan. This transformation requires transferring the weight of the body on the front foot while inverting the Ji. I always wondered why such a transformation existed in Shi San Shi and not in the long form. And why do it in the Shi San Shi when we could do it this way in the Bafa, a sequence of movement which is really more suited to fajin or the expressions of energy. For now, I don't have answers to these questions and that is why I keep transmitting Shi San Shi as Laoshi extensively taught it in Châtillon in 1992.

Shi San Shi is a form which stands on its own since it contains everything, contrarily to the short Beijing form which forgot the Kao. It has a lot to offer in addition to being only 12 mn long, making it easy to perform. All the doors are there, all the movements can

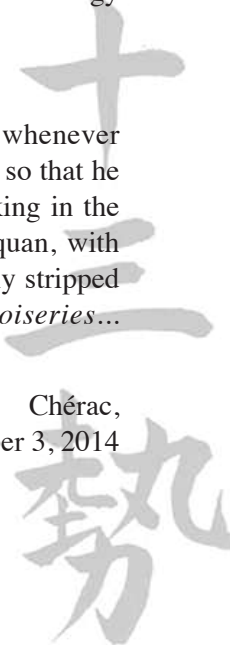


Ill. 2. – Guo Chi with Fan.

be executed the same way on both sides, all the principles can be put into practice. It can be practiced by two people, such as the Duida, which enables the development of Dong jin (understanding energy), Ting jin (listening energy), and Fajin (expression of the energy of the movements).

Finally, to reassure Serge, I invite him, whenever possible, to come to the Rencontres Amicales so that he can realise that Shi San Shi is alive and kicking in the European schools of Yangjia Michuan taiji quan, with the European particularity of being completely stripped of all its western, and maybe eastern *chinoiseries*...

Chérac,
December 3, 2014



2. SOME OF HISTORY

Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan: 13 Postures As handed down by Wang Yen-nien (1914-2008)

by Julia Fairchild

Translated by Du Yu

NOTE: Master Wang Yen-nien learned the Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan 13 Postures from his teacher Zhang Qinlin in Taiyuan, Shanxi Province, China, in the mid-1940s.

IN 1949, near the end of the Civil War in China, Master Wang fled China and followed Premier and Minister of National Defense Yan Xishan, a native of Shanxi, to Taiwan. When Mr. Yan Xishan was forced out of office by Mr. Chiang Kai-shek in 1950, all those loyal to Mr. Yan Xishan, including Master Wang, stepped down with him and retired from military service.

Now, no longer part of the military, Master Wang, still young (36 years old,) began teaching Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan in a park near his house. Eventually he met other martial artists, both young and old, who had also fled China to Taiwan. Together, in 1960, they established the first taijiquan association in Taiwan: the China Taijiquan Club (*Zhongguo Taijiquan Julebu*). Then, in the mid-1970s, during the early developmental years of Taijiquan

in Taiwan, a national taijiquan association, representing all styles of taijiquan in Taiwan, gradually evolved and eventually received government recognition (1975).



Master Wang, as a founding member of this association, was vice-chairman under Chairman Shi Jue when he was put in charge of forming a committee to develop a short form suitable for all members to practice when meeting for demonstrations and other large (national) group activities. Among the members of this committee were the chief teachers of the major styles represented in the association, such as Wu Style, Chen Style, Yang Style, etc. Each one was asked to choose a short sequence represent-

ing the essence of their style to be included in this short national form.

When it came down to putting a unified form together, committee members decided to use Master Wang's Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan 13 Postures as a foundation. The committee then edited and added sequences: the first four cardinal axis movements of the Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan 13 Postures were edited; the second set of cardinal axis movements were deleted; and the last set of diagonal movements were kept more or less intact.

The last set of diagonal movements includes examples of taijiquan's eight basic hand movements: *peng, lu, an, ji, cai, lie, zhou* and *kao*; and examples of taijiquan's five basic feet movements: moving forward, stepping back, turning right, turning left and staying centered—in essence, the soul of taijiquan is contained in this last set of diagonal movements. In addition, these diagonal movements can be practiced with a partner as a separate set, called *Ba Fa*, the 15th of the Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan *Tuishou* Basic Exercises.

Upon the death of Shi Jue, the ROC-Taiwan National Tai Ch'i Ch'uan Association Chairman in 1986, Master Wang was elected the association's new chairman. In that role, Master Wang helped promote and demonstrate this new form, which emanated from the Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan 13 Postures. Under its new name, "Simplified 13 Postures" it has been further modified, promoted and demonstrated by Mr. Chan Te-sheng, the current president, and one of Master Wang's students.

Since the ROC-Taiwan National Tai Ch'i Ch'uan Association's simplified Taijiquan style (13 Postures) is based on the Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan 13 Postures, many people confuse the two or mistakenly believe Master Wang created Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan's 13 Postures. To add to the confusion, Mr. Chan Te-sheng, after adding his own modifications, is mistakenly credited as being the originator of the ROC-Taiwan National Tai Ch'i Ch'uan Association's 13 Postures.

The number "13" and the name "13 Postures", or "Shi San Shi" in Pinyin, is not unique to Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan. Historically, many different styles of martial arts, both internal and external, used the number thirteen to designate one of the sets of movements practiced within their system. For example:

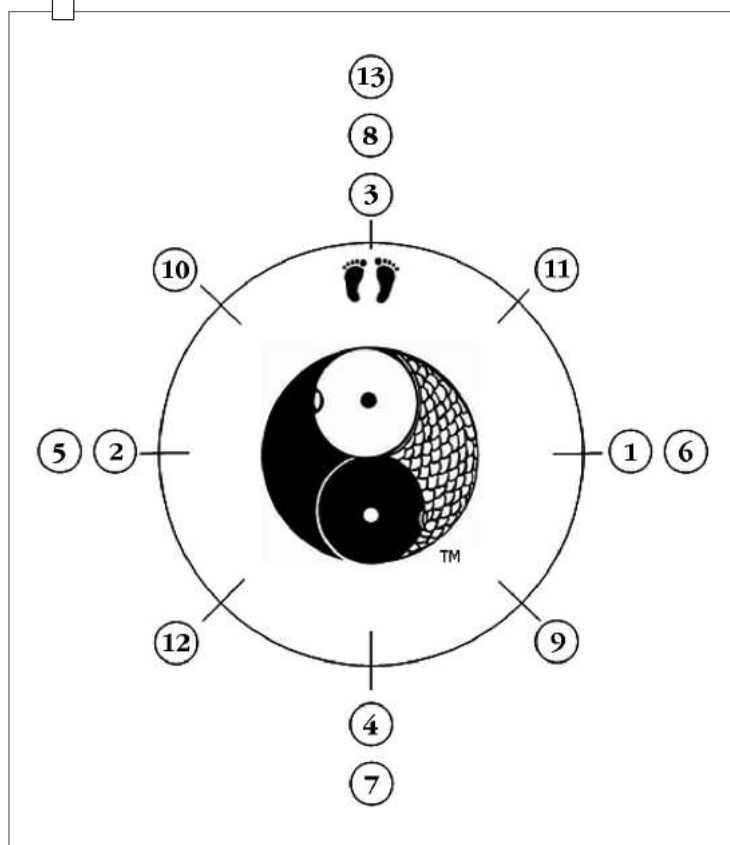
- Zhang Sanfeng is said to have transmitted his teachings, including a 13 Postures form, to Ming Dynasty Wang Zong (also known as Wang Zongyue.)

- In the book in Chinese titled *Chen Shi Taijiquan Tu Jie (Chen Style Taijiquan Illustrated and Explained)*, there is chapter describing Chen Style Taijiquan 13 Postures.

- Cheng Man-ch'ing wrote a book in Chinese titled: *Taijiquan Shi San Pian (Thirteen Chapters on T'ai-Chi Ch'uan)*;

- Chen Style Martial Art included two different spear forms, both called "Shi San Qiang" ("Spear in Thirteen Movements");

Ill. 1: The following diagram depicts the directions referred to in the table below.



The 13 Postures described below (Ill. 1) was taught to Master Wang (Yen-nien) by his teacher, Zhang Qinlin, in the 1940's. It has been handed down and is currently taught in our Yen-nien Daoguan affiliate schools.

- Wu Style Taijiquan included two different pole forms, both called “Shi San Gan” (“Pole in Thirteen Movements”);

- Li Yingang wrote a book in Chinese titled: *Taijiquan Shi San Qiang Pu Zhu* (*Comments on Spear-in-Thirteen-Movements in Taijiquan*).

One of the two most significant contributions to the understanding of Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan over the last half century was a clarification of the “Ji” hand position in the 13 Postures by Master Wang Yen-nien in the late 1990s. In 2003, after

several years of honing and refining by Master Wang, the Ji clarification, which has ramifications throughout the entire Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan system, was formally introduced to teachers in Taipei.

(In the photo at the top of this article, taken during the 2003 Teachers’ Workshop in Taipei, Master Wang (right) demonstrates the clarified Ji position in the YMT 13 Postures. Looking carefully, we see his right foot forward, his left arm forward and his weight is on his right leg.)

Old and new form

by George Lin

AS FAR 13 POSTURES, I think Master Wang made this form during the time when he was the third term president of National Tai Chi Association, Taiwan, R.O.C. (中華民國太極拳總會). At that time, he was in charge of making a standard 13 postures form for all members to practice. Inevitably, he had to compromise the movements with others Tai Chi teachers who were practicing different styles, especially, 37 form. That is why the old 13 postures of Master Wang film made in Taiwan of 1982, is different from what we are practicing now. As I remember after I came back Taiwan from United States, Master Wang had asked me to help Julia Fairchild to teach new 13 postures form in American High School, Taipei. Because Master Wang was no longer as the president of National Tai Chi Association, therefore, he started to teach the new form without considering others’ opinion. Subsequently, this new 13 posture form also had the revisions for two movements such as ELBOW (肘) and JI (擠), when we got called back by master Wang to practice the Eight Basic Movements Applications (八法應用法).

Commentary on the first form of Shi San Shi

Françoise Cordaro

Translated by Maud Trolliet

I had been already able to watch the first sequence of 13 Postures, composed by Master Wang for the National Tai Chi Association (Taiwan, ROCK) ⁽¹⁾, on the video made in 1982 and transferred on a DVD, sold at the Amicale Association. I had always wondered what this “strange” sequence was, and why it was on this compilation of Yangjia Michuan.

And, to tell the truth, I never had the curiosity to look for an answer.

While reading Julia Fairchild’s article on the Yen-nien Daoguan site and also by receiving this email of George Lin ⁽²⁾, I remembered this DVD and, at the time, I went to look at it closer.

What knocks at the first sight, it’s the Yangjia Michuan “mark” who permeates this form, which aimed to be nevertheless at first a “standard”, “unifying” form of the styles. We may look for some Chen or Wu, it’s especially the “Yang” which appears in this Shi San Shi. The back support and the front heel up leave no doubt about the signature which Wang Yen-nien wanted

to leave on this form. I can’t help thinking that this push “upward” had given a hard time to the followers of the other styles, and I’m even surprised that it was accepted by the collective in charge of this form.

It can allow us to think that Wang Yen-nien, at that time, was already famous, otherwise had a certain authority in the world of Taiji.

The first part is roughly speaking a resumption of “Seize the tail of the sparrow” of the form of Beijing (Peng, Lu, Ji, An) in four directions. Only the LÜ keeps a real “Yangjia Michuan” imprint, realized as we do it in the third sequence of the present Shi San Shi, and not by “pulling down and toward the back” as we see it in the other Yang forms.

The first sequence is thus the only concession made to another style than the Yangjia Michuan.

The second (and last one) sequence resumes entirely the third sequence of the present Shi San Shi. It isn’t surprising because this sequence



PENG and LU...



of Yangjia Michuan recapitulates in the continuation the eight basic movements of Taiji (what, according to me, is rather unique in the whole of the Taiji styles), and is quite indicated to be in a “representative” sequence.

Finally, here are few things to say about the composition itself of this sequence.

On the other hand, what amaze me more in this story is this “duo” and no “trio”.

Which Taiji Quan follower, all styles together, can imagine a form in two sequences? Tri-grammes, San, Cai, three duans... Of the Earth, the Sky or the Man, what is the missing element? Because there’s obviously missing something in this sequence. We would almost have the impression that, on this matter, Master Wang didn’t try his hardest.

Doesn’t it remind you of this other story, passed on from generation to generation, and which Laoshi tells in his biopic of Zhang Qinlin? *“Yang Jianhou explained that Yang Luchan, because of his fame, was forced by the Manchus to teach his art at the imperial palace. But, not wishing to put in the hands of another clan the secrets of his family, he taught the nobility another form [...]”*

The scenario looks like it well, nevertheless, it’s difficult to imagine such a trick of Master Wang, because at that time –George Lin confirms it–, he had already opened his edu-

cation beyond an any clan, and he was about to bring the good word to the “Manchus” of the American High School.

The fact remains that the figure “two” means symbolically the incompleteness in an obvious manner. We have thus difficulty in thinking that it can be involuntary, especially from a Master for whom, according to those who were next to him, the order of things had so big importance.

So, a second sequence missing, which of the Man? The absence of transmission between the sky and the earth? A pure form, “except transmission”, “except School”, dedicated to consumer demonstrations.

It’s only in his president’s “role” (elected then re-elected) of the National Tai Chi Association that he pursued the promotion of the form in two sequences, as specifies Julia Fairchild. Actually, George Lin tells us that, as soon as freed from this official responsibility, Master Wang didn’t stop teaching 13 Postures anymore which Zhang Qinlin had passed on to him, this sequence which today still, is nourishing the inspiration of the teachers, guide the first steps of the learners, on this three-sound rhythm that we all know, and without which, it is certain, we couldn’t dance as well...

1. See Julia Fairchild’s article p. 14.
2. See George Lin’s article p. 16.

...JI, AN.



3. WHAT ABOUT OTHER SCHOOLS?

A point of vue on the Shí Sān Shì

by Jean-Jacques Sagot

Translated by Simonette Verbrugge

THE form in Thirteen Postures (Shí Sān Shì) is a form taught by many schools of taiji, of the most diverse styles, with, most of the time, common theoretical reasons adduced.

It is an evidence when we attribute the authorship of this sequence to the mythical Zhang San Feng, or, after refining history, to the Chen family.

If we listen to savvy sinologists, no doubt Shí Sān (十三) means 13, of course, but we can look at Shì, a term more complex to consider (勢 in traditional Chinese, or 十三势 in simplified Chinese).

We translate it by “Posture” or “Step” closer to the English conception, but we should keep the multiple acceptances, following today’s sinologists slingers (J.F. Billeter, J. Lévi).

So Shì can be considered, depending on the context, as “potential” or “power”, as “positioning” or “mode” or also “effect”. We are not far from the contemporary philosophy imbued with the powerful concept of Heidegger the *Da sein*, the Being here.

To my opinion, if we are aware of all that is contained in potential, precisely, in this term, it is equal to use a generic and consensus translation. So let’s go for “form of the thirteen postures”. Sequence or form, it does not matter either, if we know well that “Forme”, term used in French in all schools, is a basic translation of the English *Form*.

If we look at the various versions of the innumerable schools of taijiquan, and if we count well, we think that, to count 13 postures, one is often forced to do the splits, to cheat a bit by counting on one’s fingers. Of course, because the Chinese tradition, like many others besides, uses numbers as symbols in a context other than the quantitative numbering. Thus, the number 13 can be seen as the bearer of complex and varied symbolic reflections, which still allow us once again to

realize that the Chinese world is not a continent cut off from the rest of the world and that Chinese thought should not be seen as ontologically different from Western thought. Thanks again to the likes of Jean-François Billeter, Catherine Despeux, Jean Lévi, Romain Graziani who free us from the haughty monologue of François Jullien and the ravings of apprentices Orientalists.

So, we are confronted with the most diffused version that presents the 13 postures as an assemblage of the 8 basic postures of taijiquan with the 5 fundamental movements.

This vision is well argued and well explained: the 8 basic postures (also called the 8 doors) are 4 cardinals: Péng 勁 (Ward off), Lǚ 擻 (Pull), Jǐ 挤 (Press), Àn 按 (Push), completed by the 4 obliques: Cǎi 采 (Pull down), Liè 裂 (Split), Zhǒu 肘 (Elbow strike), Kào 靠 (Shoulder strike).

The 5 movements are Jìn Bù 进步 (advance), Tuì Bù 退步 (move back), Zuǒ Gù 左顾 (watch your right side), Yòu Pàn 右盼 (watch your left side) and the famous Zhōng Dìng 中定 (keep the center).



J.-J. Sagot learning with Master Fu Zhong Wen, Shanghai, 1992.

We also know the symbolism related to the number 8 linked to the *Yi Jing* and the Eight Trigrams (Bā Guà, 八卦): one of the prime texts of taijiquan says: “Your master is the eight directions.” The 8 postures referenced, on one hand, are molded in the ordering of the 8 trigrams, secondly conform to the specific nature of each.

The number 5 is also fundamental in the ordered conception of the cosmos, of the laws and rituals (Confucianism) and the structure of space, it is apprehended from the perspective of Man or that of Heaven, the Emperor is the “bridge” between the two (on this subject, read *The Great Triad* from René Guénon). The particularity of the number 5 is the return to unity: 4 ways to the 4 directions and an immutable way, that of the center, which, in reality is that of the vertical axis, reduced, “integrated” as we say in mathematics, in the central point. The 5 movement sare consistent with this representation and the Zhōng Dìng is indeed the expression of this principle of the center “inhabited” and containing in germ all possible. So in the martial way, Wu Wei, non-action, often understood in the wrong as immobility, is based here in the center of where all expressions are possible. It is the ultimate degree, that of the total availability for the event.

I am skeptical about the conception of the 13 postures as a simple addition of the 8 doors and the 5 movements. I am more inclined to look for in a hierarchy of the two numbers: it is said in some schools that the 8 basic postures relate to the upper limbs, while the 5 movements relate to the lower limbs. I find this point of vue interesting. We could then structure the 13 postures this way: the number 5 is a matter of the earthly world and the center is occupied by the germinating axis of the earth, while the number 8 is a matter of the celestial world whose center is empty (relieved from any physical representation). From this point of vue, the 13 is only a summary and linear addition, but is part of an Earth/Man/Heaven perspective deploying the path of awakening proposed to us. So we can say that the form of the 13 postures contains the Way as a whole.

The symbolism of the number 13 in its innumerable mysteries of the Western tradition is close or similar to that outline. The number 12 is one of Heaven, the temporal dimension “capping” the spatial dimension. The clocks have 12 divisions, the zodiac 12 signs, the sacred buildings 12 doors, etc. The number 13 is reminiscent of the center of which everything comes, it is the symbol of the multiplicity returned to unity. The Last Supper, which comes from the depth of ages, as a ritual banquet where Gods and Men sit together (cfr *The Greek Myths* by Robert Graves) brings

together all men (even vile) and the expression of the upward path (symbolized by Christ). We have exactly the same configuration with the Knights of the Round Table. From this point of vue, 13 is also the manifestation of One and the multiple, justifying the same conception of a form in 13 postures carrying the globality of the Supreme Ultimate Boxing.

On the technical level, I learned several variations of the Shi San Shi, most of them in the Yang style. I am not expert enough in the Chen style to have an opinion on the versions that are taught. The Sun style offers one that is based on exactly the same principles.

I noticed that all the versions I learned or observed are based on Péng Lǚ Jǐ Àn. Few include Cǎi Liè Zhǒu Kào in a clear and exhaustive way. All ad postures like Single Whip and/or White Crane.

For example Chen Man Ching’s style teaches a form that starts with Ward off (left and right), Press, Pull and Push and adds the Single whip and Cross hands. This form, in certain schools, can be performed right and left alternately. The “orthodox” Sun style, in its version of the 13 postures, starts with Lazily tie the coat followed by Single Whip, Raise hands and White Crane. On my own initiative I introduced a version in the Sun style that alternates one expression on the right and one to the left, opening both on the original version in 96 postures and the “modern” one in 73 postures. As for the Wu (Wu/Hao), it is unfortunately endangered if we are not careful, and in what I collected, I have not seen evidence of Shí Sān Shì. Hao Jen Ru, the holder of the style, at the end of his life, had asked his successor in Shanghai, Chen Guo Fu, to compose a shorter form, thinking that the transmission would be less arduous. Chen did so and gave it to me. This form is in 36 postures... Another number, another structure, reminiscent of that composed by Chen Man Ching from the Yang style (37 postures with a lot of interpretations woolier than the others). But that is another story...

From my (totally personal) point of vue, the Shí Sān Shì, or better The Various Shí Sān Shì, are wonderful tools, either to access more multiplied forms we know (and that of Wang Yen Nien is, in my opinion, one of the finest example of this multiplying) or to reconcentrate all the principles of taiji in one compact form, conducive to an effective meditative path. The technique, then, is not only in the service of a “centripetal” way, symmetric to the external “centrifugal” way, whose complementarity is essential to advance in our art. “A Yin and a Yang, that is the Dao”, isn’t it?

January, 2015

I would like to thank you Michel for that beautiful lesson of life and humanity

by Claudy Jeanmougin

Translated by Martine Larigauderie



I CANNOT remain silent after seeing you and listening to you that night during the Amicale General Assembly at Sablé. Absolutely impossible. I cannot keep quiet since you had consulted me beforehand for the gift that you wanted to offer our style though you did not know how to do it. Meanwhile you had also asked Jean-Michel Fraigneau, the Amicale chairman.

Eventually, you decided to unite Amicale and Collège in

your generous act: that is the reason why I cannot remain indifferent to your decision since I am now the Collège secretary doing whatever is possible to bring together Collège and Amicale. In a short time, you did successfully unite us.

That evening you gave us a great lesson of life, of your life today facing your illness. You are an accomplished warrior, since you do not fight your illness; you tame it transforming it into an everyday relationship, living in a kind of harmony with it. I confess, Michel, nobody felt indifferent when you spoke. I do not only mean indifferent to your generous act, but indifferent to what you personify from now on. When you spoke, you mentioned three lessons you have endeavored to enact. Since I had not jotted down notes and I did not want to make a blunder, I wrote to you so that you could refresh my memory. This is what you answered:

“As I told you, I could hear my mouth speak while I was impressed by the quality of my speech.

First, I felt so surprised by your highly laudatory terms, yours my friend, then Jean-Michel’s, then praise from at least a dozen people. Here is the fruit of my thoughts and experiences.

1° and 2° are my oldest mottos:

1° “Whatever I pay attention to grows.”

For instance, the more I pay attention to the abscess of my tooth, the more it grows and everything else counts for nothing. Alain Hubert, the explorer of both poles, had undertaken the crossing of the North Pole with his friend. An abscess was so painful that he decided to call the helicopter and put an end to the expedition. Meanwhile, because of a storm gust, his friend fell into the water at a temperature of -30°C ($-22^{\circ}\text{Fahrenheit}$). Alain saved his life; his friend suffered from hypothermia and Alan had to deal with everything as fast as possible. A few hours later: his friend was saved and his abscess had disappeared.

2° “Respecting my limits is the basis of my strength.”

This is what I experienced in tui shou: you draw a circle embracing your two feet then you tie a plumb line to “hui yin”.⁽¹⁾ The closer the line to the circle, the nearer you are to the limit of your balance (at least you are strong and efficient). Whenever the plumb line goes out of the circle (your limits), you are out of balance.

3° Chinese proverb:

“People act with you as it is suggested by your own behavior.”

How often did I wonder: what have I done to this person? Why do they treat me so, why do they shun me, approach me, look at me, ask me? Conversely, why do they admire me, esteem me, honor me so? Just take the other person’s place and watch yourself.

4° Concerning “Yong YI, bu yong LI”: (2)

I pondered about the “single whip,” the strength at the end of the whip and the proverb “nothing is softer than true strength and nothing is more than true softness.”

I appreciate the respect you showed to all the people you met and who influenced your journey, such as Master Wang to whom you paid a wonderful tribute.

On the next day, you radiated in the centre of the crowd. Your Taiji was so beautiful! And you were absolutely luminous. And then, I saw you leaving, with your rucksack, just as I left 35 years ago, carrying everything I owned, and wearing the same shirt as yours. At that point I became aware that when you are 76 you can still look as you did when you were 30, with another energy and yet as powerful.

You did not come to say goodbye, instead with a wink to tell us that an illness is not a fate that makes us bow, but a trial we have to overcome. I know how brave you are, so I am quite sure that you will be back at the Amicale annual meetings.

We are so grateful Michel for this great lesson of life.

Chérac, 2 December 2014

¹ The Hui Yin is located between the genitals and the anus; the part of the body called the perineum. When the perineum is strong, the organs remain firm and healthy; when it is weak the organs lose cohesiveness and Ch'i energy drains away. Because this Centre is the gate through which Ch'i energy from the other organs can be either retained or lost, it is called the “Gate of Life and Death.”

Source: <http://kheper.net/topics/chakras/Perineum.htm>
[Note from the translator.]

² Use the mind instead of force. [Note from the translator.]

TRAINING COURSES CALENDAR

MAY

Stage d'épée à deux, Le Mans

Dates : 30-31 mai 2015
Email : aramis72.taichi@free.fr
Contact : 0619822810 ou 0243768808
Animé par : FREDERIC PLEWNIAK
Organisé par : ARAMIS le MANS

JULY

29^{es} rencontres Jasnières internationales, Marçon (Sarthe)

Dates : 24-25-26 juillet 2015
Email : aramis72.taichi@free.fr
Organisé par : ARAMIS le MANS

Stage d'été Forme, Épée, Éventail, Qigong, Forme de Pékin, Le Bugue (Périgord)

Dates : 26-31 juillet 2015
Email : cordaro49@hotmail.fr
Animé par : Françoise Cordaro et Jocelyne Boisseau

AUGUST

Stage «Taiji quan et esthétique, le deuxième duan», dans le Jura.

Dates : du 1^{er} au 7 août 2015
Email : serge.dreyer@gmail.com
Animé par : Serge Dreyer

Stage Tuishou tous niveaux, dans le Jura

Dates : 08 au 10 août 2015
Email : serge.dreyer@gmail.com
Animé par : Serge Dreyer

Apprentissage et Perfectionnement - Forme, Armes, Tuishou, Budapest

Dates : 10 août 2015
Email : chris.moutault@wanadoo.fr
Animé par : Marie-Christine Moutault
Organisé par : Les Nuages du Wudang et Yamitha

The year of the Sheep or the Goat

by Paule-Annick Ben Kemoun - Bénou

On February 18 or 19 2015, we shall leave the year of the horse and enter the year of the sheep or the goat.

Like each year, this annual Chinese course replaces, or plays a large part of, my usual best wishes.

Let us first look at what these animals represent for us westerners.

From our youth come back memories of a fairy tale, clutching our favorite toy tightly to keep from crying, the story of Blanquette (predestined name, for sure) “The Goat of Mr. Seguin”.

Later, we are confronted with the old problem of a peasant who must cross a river with a wolf, a goat and a cabbage (keeping them whole) in a small boat only capable of holding one of three subjects, beside himself (I will not insult anyone by offering a solution to this problem).

The problem will be the origin of the expression “to make the most of the goat and the cabbage”.



The sheep conjures up, mostly, food recipes (even if it is the sheep that is the main ingredient). It is part of recipes for Algerian cous-cous, tajine or, put upon a spit, Mechoui, in which he has the starring role.

Let us go back in time and remember the game of leapfrog, or the fable where counting sheep while they leap over a fence, would help us fall asleep.

A special mention of the video of illuminated sheep.
www.youtube.com/watch?v=C4azlsR5HE.

In addition, especially a mention of my favorite flock of sheep: the one, auto-managed, of the genius from the pasturages de hautes Alpes de F’Murr.

But let’s go back to the Chinese course:

Yáng means the animals of that family. Easy to trace, it is pronounced yang at the second intonation (ascending tone).

Chèvre 山羊 shān yáng. Where shān in the first tone means mountain (careful with the tone because shan yang means to feed, or to provide for).

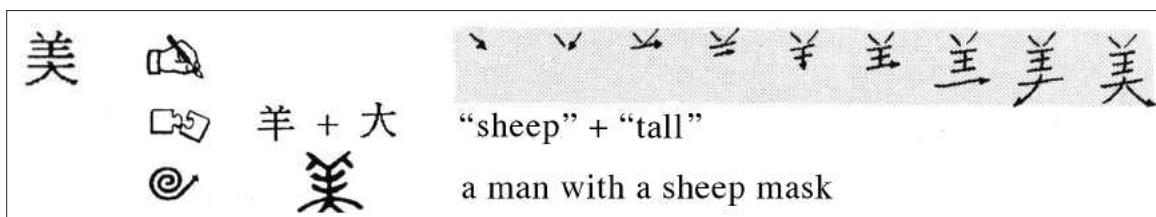
Mouton 绵羊 mián yáng = the animal (because sheep meat is different).

You take your character 羊 yang, you add to it the key of mouth, and you get “miē”, 咩, to bleat, to kid, which is also translated mie mie jiao (the sheep who bleat together).



| | | |
|-----|---------------|--------------------|
| 羊 | yáng sheep | key: 羊 sheep |
| 公羊 | gōngyáng | ram |
| 黄羊 | huángyáng | Tibetan gazelle |
| 母羊 | mǔyáng | ewe |
| 山羊 | shānyáng | goat |
| 羊皮纸 | yángpízhǐ | parchment |

More astonishing still, if one adds under the character meaning sheep, the character 大 dà, which means tall, one ends up with a character 美 pronounced “měi”, which means beautiful, to be beautiful...



And this character “měi”, do you know what it is used for? To mean the United States of America in Měi guó 美国, or an American: 美国人, Měi guó rén.

Already in 2003, last year of the sheep (at the beginning of the Iraq war), I asked myself about the tie between beauty, height and the sheep to represent that country.

As far as I know, there are no sheep nor goat in the movements of tai ji, and it is certainly fortunate for a martial art...

At the onset of this year of the sheep and without meaning to politicize this Chinese course, I am looking at the battles to take on, as a doctor and a human being.

I wish you a wonder year 2015 and a happy year of the sheep, a colorful like, good health and many times shared (with mechouis?) with you loved ones and you far-away friends.

At the dawn of this year of the sheep or the goat, I wish you to know how to fight the wolfs, who are getting near.

So, as not to end on a negative note, I give you this tale of Patrice Minet based on the fable of *The Wolf and the Lamb*. Because, even if our history ends badly, nothing should keep us from laughing while we are still alive.

LE LOUP ET L'AGNEAU (In French, “lipogramme” without U nor F) – by Patrice Minet

THE WOLF AND THE LAMB

Jean de La Fontaine

It is the law of the fittest
 As we are going to show.
 A lamb was drinking in the courant of a clear stream
 A wolf came by, famished, who was looking for adventure
 And who was attracted to the spot by hunger.
 –How do you dare to disturb my drinking?
 Said this animal, full of rage
 Your temerity will be punished
 –Sir, said the lamb, your Majesty
 Should not get angry
 Or rather should consider
 that I am drinking in the courant,
 More than 20 steps lower than where your Majesty is,
 And consequently in no fashion
 Am I disturbing her drinking.
 –You are disturbing me, answered this cruel beast.
 And I know you lied about me last year.
 –How could I do that when I was not even born?
 Answered the lamb. I am still breastfeeding.
 –If it was not you, then it was your brother.
 –I don't have one
 –Then it is another one of your relatives,
 As you people never give me a break,
 You, your shepherds and your dogs.
 I was told this: I need revenge
 And then, to the depth of the forest,
 The wolf takes the lamb and eats him.
 With no further ado.

THE LOBSTER AND THE SWORDFISH

...Esopo

Against the cruel ogre,
 Justice looses its mind
 Of the delights of the sea, listen to the sinister oration.
 When by chance he came upon a swordfish,
 Which was famished
 –It is an outrage for you to dirty my beach
 Said this animal, full of rage
 I'll teach you some respect, watch your shell!
 –O my good lord! answers the lobster in American
 Thee have not to make me a scene
 I am not jogging in your space
 I drink, is it a crime, in the stream
 Outside of your territory
 And so my lord, what is the matter
 I have not dirtied your pool
 –Yes, with your sputter, answers this murderous beast
 Yesterday, already, you cut my nose with your claws
 –What, my lord yesterday? I was not even born
 answers the lobster, I am still breastfeeding.
 –If it's not you, then it is your brother!
 –He was fished out of the water!
 –Be quiet! Your shellfish race terrorizes swordfish
 And at the slightest lack of attention
 Your people eat my head, my core.
 I was told it. Time to pay for your crime.
 And in the abyss, he drags him
 And dines on the young lobster.
 Unfair trial, pleasant murder.

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