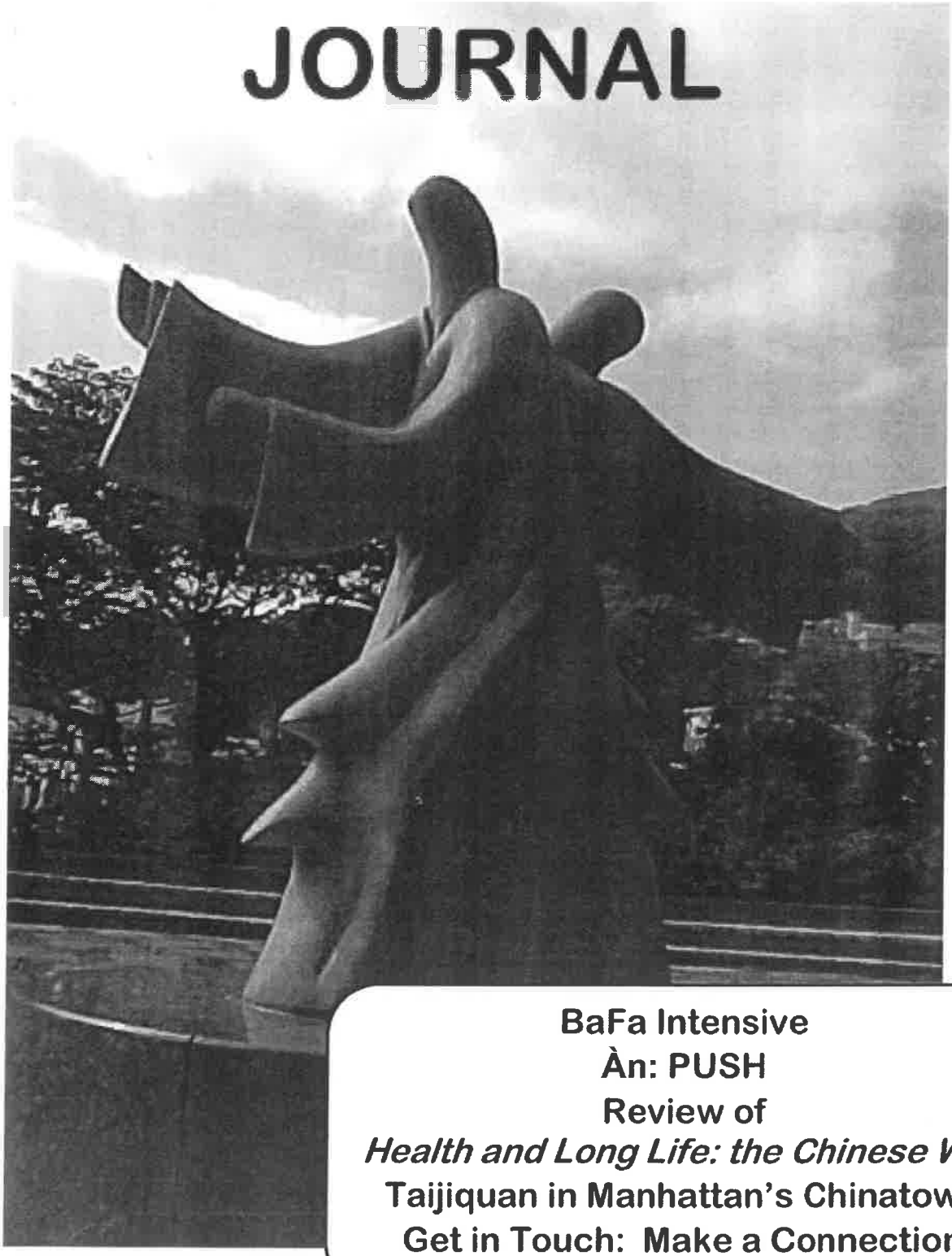
YANG FAMILY HIDDEN TAIJIQUAN TRADITION SUMMER 2005 VOLUME 13 NO 1

AYMTA JOURNAL



BaFa Intensive
Àn: PUSH
Review of
Health and Long Life: the Chinese Way
Taijiquan in Manhattan's Chinatown
Get in Touch: Make a Connection

Editors' Notes

Cover: An unnamed statue in an unnamed pocket park one lane east of Zhongshan Bei Lu, Section 7. Sit on the surrounding stairs and eat your take-out lunch. Mark thinks it's a double "single whip." Any other ideas? More views on pp. 8 ff.

Associates: As Charlie indicates on the right, we're looking for associate editors for both the *Journal* and *Aymta.org,* with the idea of those people eventually taking over if the roles suit them.

One thing Tom doesn't mention in his review of Livia Kohn's *Health and Long Life* is that almost two paragraphs are devoted to AYMTA and the *Journal.* Perhaps more practitioners will become aware of YMT and our numbers will grow.

Ask the Advisers: only one advisers responded to a member's question about taijiquan and qigong, so we're delaying printing it in hope we'll get more responses. We could also use more questions.

Check out Assi Ben-Porat's Tai Chi paintings at www.arttaichi.com.

--Don

President's Message

Hello. Welcome to the summer 2005 edition of the *AYMTA Journal.* As a member you should have already received a questionnaire in the mail about possible actions that the board of directors would like to undertake based on the interests of the membership. I would encourage all members to take a little time with the questionnaire, as it should be member opinion that fuels the decision-making process of the board. I would love to now write a little about a favorite topic of mine, art.

I love art: any kind of art. And I enjoy taking the time to appreciate art everyday, for as much of the day as possible. I have a particular fondness for taijiquan , as it is a very straightforward medium for creativity. I am quite comfortable in expressing what is most important to me when both feet are firmly on the ground and my attitude is one of openness. I have found this to be the general approach to art with most of the folks that I have met within the taiji community. I do feel that the only reason that I am drawn to taiji with such personal enthusiasm is purely for the love of the art.

Just as in any art form, taiji has certain fundamentals that need to be learned and constantly revisited. We study the taiji classics as well as the basic form movements and applications. We then study the breathing and visualizations that put the insubstantial "zing" that is particular to this art. The martial applications are indeed fascinating and I could go on for pages about the seemingly endless health benefits but neither explains that initial creative impulse that compels me to practice. Taji, like any art form, is only beautiful when a person's whole heart melds entirely with their creation. I don't feel that such things are learned no matter how great the teacher or student. But, it also can be considered the most fundamental aspect of the art: the will to create.

Sometimes I consider the wealth of extraneous activities that I love so much; I also attempt to picture life...*Ulp!!*...without them. In more contented moments I can picture a life without the so many things that I am involved in but I can never shake the need to appreciate art. It also seems that humans have always had this need to convey their experiences through one medium or another. The will to create seems to be so essential to human existence that perhaps it can be considered part of one's vital makeup.

Looking from the view of Chinese medicine, there are certain vital essences within the body known as *Jing*. *Jing* is what we are born into the world with, the cards that we are dealt. The *Qi* of air and food is used in the body to help stave off the inevitable wearing out of *Jing*. In Chinese medicine *jing* is seen as having the characteristics of water. The theme of water is used over and over again in the *Dao de Jing* when alluding to a more sublime experience of life. The strength of a person's *Jing* is a sense of the strength of all humanity from all time. So, perhaps an unobstructed appreciation of art doesn't really build up *Jing* but allows it's inherent strength to freely flow. Perhaps "art for arts sake" can be seen as the most fundamental way of looking at health.

If art can be seen as such a direct link to the primal stream of humanity, than this seems to imply a love of community; for without community how could the will to create find its way back home. If people did not share their art with others and appreciate the art of others, then what might be called art really seems to be just an intellectual flight of fancy.

As all of us as taiji enthusiasts owe our experience to someone sharing with someone else. I hope we continue that tradition. I really enjoy such a notion because that means we might all make an effort to practice together more often. So, I have I've expressed a few a ideas about some of the possible healing aspects of art for arts sake. I very much enjoy considering such notions about art and community but, without a way to bring these notions into the world, they begin to take on the feeling of a lifelineless astronaut drifting about somewhere just past the second moon of Saturn. So I'll again make a plug for every member to participate in the questionnaire. Also, this very journal and the website are looking for some members' creative touches to keep them going: at the moment, Associate Editors with the prospect of becoming Editor. If a project like our journal or website seems like work that would attract your creative input, please contact the journal editor. —Charles Adamec

CONTENTS

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Don Klein
AYMTA Journal
1700 Robbins Road #244
Grand Haven, MI 49417-2867

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Editor/Publisher
Don Klein
Editorial Assistant
Kay Reese
Layout
Don Klein
Kay Reese
Proofreaders
Gretchen MacLane
Jan Phillips
Consulting Editors
Thomas W. Campbell
Gretchen MacLane
Jan Phillips
Sam Tomarchio

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AYMTA
P.O. Box 173
Grand Haven, MI 49417
U.S.A.

Push (Àn)

By R. A. Leedle

When you push, can you send your partner flying like in the photos? We all recognize that our ability to push is one tangible indicator of our Taiji skill. For me, push was frustrating for a very long time. I felt I was making good progress in Taiji, but I could not get push to work. With time and excellent instruction, the pieces have fallen into place and now my push works. Because I know others also have difficulty with this, I decided to share my understanding of the mechanics and timing of push.

Push consists of two parts: you need to push and your partner needs to jump. You initiate and facilitate both. The push part might seem intuitive, but the jumping part likely is not. During push you make your partner jump – and at just the right time. The jump is not a pre-arranged agreement executed on the count of 1, 2 or 3, but an involuntary reflex that maintains posture. This same reflex is what a physician triggers by tapping your patellar (knee) ligament with his rubber hammer.

What causes your partner to jump during push? The answer is the involuntary posture maintenance reflex that includes your large thigh muscles and the nerve fibers between the muscles and your spinal cord. (Remember that the brain and conscious thought are not involved in the reflex.) To understand the importance of the posture maintenance reflex in push, let's review its components and function. Within muscles there are specialized nerve fibers that are sensitive to changes in length. When the knees bend, i.e., when the thigh muscles lengthen, the reflex automatically recruits additional muscle fibers to return the muscles to their original length. The purpose of the reflex is to maintain posture such as when we pick up a heavy weight. In push we trigger this involuntary reflex in our partner's leg by applying downward pressure on our partner's arm or body. When the additional muscle fibers in our partner's leg contract (reflex; and this is why timing is important), we release the pressure and our partner will reflexively jump. While he is in mid-jump, you push him away. This is push. It sounds simple, but obviously timing and technique are very important.

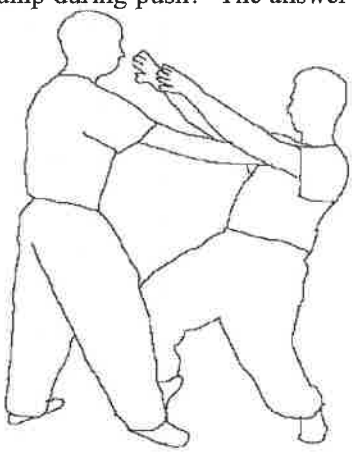

Figure 1

To trigger our partner's postural reflex, weight must be applied lightly and quickly, and in such a way as not to be noticed. Also, the direction of the downward pressure needs to be generally toward the partner's forward knee. This keeps his knee from moving without making him take a step or pushing him away. It also helps if the downward pressure is slightly oblique, directed just medial or lateral to his knee. To restate, the downward pressure must be light, akin to 4 ounces, and in the right direction!

The jump resulting from the downward pressure provides only part (a necessary part) of the uprooting force for your push. The rest of the uprooting force comes from you and requires that you move through a series of specific postures in time with your partner's reflexes. I have found it helpful to think of these postures in the same way as mile markers on the freeway. I notice them as I pass by but I do not stop at each.

In terms of timing and efficiency, the application of downward pressure is done as part of assuming your actual pushing posture. Push as felt by your partner begins in a sharply upward direction and ends in a horizontal direction, transcribing a trajectory similar in shape to air flowing over an airplane wing.

As a starting point in describing the postures and dynamic of pushing, let's use the yielding fundamental in which your partner pushes on your chest with one hand. See Figure 1. During this single-handed push, you shift your hips forward as your chest moves back. There are two important points here. First, the knee of your forward leg bends and moves forward toward your partner during the yielding phase. Second, neither the back leg knee nor the hip of the back leg can be allowed to bend appreciably. The amount of forward movement of the front knee determines how far forward your hips go. How far forward is enough? To successfully push your partner, your hips must be under or nearly under his center of gravity. (This is not really necessary, but you must be close to him and you must control his center. By saying you need to be under his center makes the explanation easier.)

Keeping a straight or nearly straight back leg and hip joint allows the leg to function as a lever during the initial pushing (uprooting) motion and to act as a post-like brace for the remainder of the push. A straight leg allows force to be transferred through your bones from the floor under your foot to your partner, giving your push a sharp, non-elastic start and a solid follow-through. If the rear leg and hip joint were bent during the pushing phase, the push would depend on leg muscle strength. You cannot muscle your way through push. By using muscle only, the push would begin too slowly, it would be too elastic, and it would not work.

Having your forward knee bent and in under your partner while shifting your hip under not only gets you closer to and under your partner but also facilitates placing the initial downward force on your partner. This weights his forward leg and initiates the reflex. See Figure 2. Then by linking your arms and upper body to your lower body with firmed abdominal muscles, send a wave of force through your back, shoulders, elbows, and hands.

So far I have covered a number of the details for setting up

the actual push. You have moved into position close to and under your partner, you have applied light downward pressure on him, and have initiated a wave of force through you to your partner. Now all that remains for you to push him away is to sharply straighten your front hip joint. So, delivery of the wave of force is coincident with straightening the hip/leg. See Figure 3. You can step up with the rear foot as a follow through but it is not necessary.

To prepare for and to practice Taiji push, there are other important details to cover. First, realize that the fundamental yielding exercises contain all the posture aspects and transitions needed for push. Practice them, paying particular importance to the positioning of both knees during the yielding phase. Keep in mind that yielding has two purposes – to get you out of the way (redirect) and to get you into position for pushing despite the fact that pushing (AN) is not part of the fundamental exercise. This means that you need to be thinking about push while you practice the postures. Your mindset is equal in importance to the actual postures. Furthermore, yielding is not passive and you do not retreat - either mentally or physically. To yield properly and make push work you must have a neutral frame of mind. You mentally wait, allowing events/motions to change and flow almost as if watching from afar. When and if the opportunity presents itself, you shift into an aggressive posture and frame of mind to execute push. To match the neutral mindset of yielding, you do not move away from your partner during yielding. You actually move in closer – except for the point of contact. The point of contact, by necessity, moves away from your partner, but the rest of you moves closer. Moving in closer allows you to get into a position to put weight on your partner and to push from the correct location. During execution of a push, shifting your hips forward and under is the starting point and marks the point at which you commit physically and mentally.

There are two really important postural requirements that can dictate success or failure of push. The first of these is hip (and knee) position. The second is linkage between the upper and lower halves of the body. Hip position is best explained as part of an overall discussion of hip and hip joint postures used during Taiji. At one end of the spectrum is a posture in which both hip joints (and knees) are bent, i.e., flexed. The exact meaning of hip joint in martial descriptions is often unclear. What I am talking about is bending at the places where your legs attach to your body. With both hip joints bent/flexed (regardless of amount) you feel elastic and insubstantial to a pushing-hands partner. Your partner cannot find anything solid to push against; he cannot "find" your center. Unless he can find your center, he cannot push you. There you stay with hip joints bent, moving with your partner through the pushing-hands exercises until one of you makes a mistake. When he makes a mistake, i.e., when you find his center, you commit to push him. You shift your hips forward, straighten your rear leg and hip joint and put downward pressure on him. Your partner's leg will invol-untarily reflex. Then you deliver the wave of force and push him away. I should point out that with a straight rear leg and hip joint it is easy for him to find your center as well. You place yourself at risk to be pushed. This is why straightening the rear leg and hip joint is a commitment.

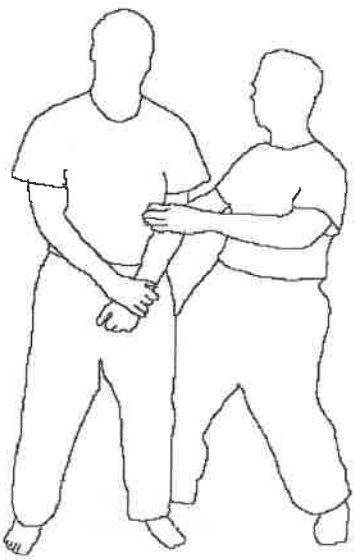

Figure 2

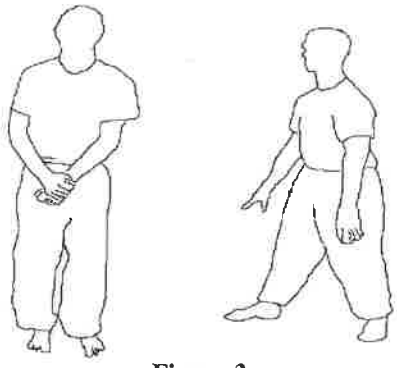

Figure 3

Knee position for yielding and push is generally unimportant except as an indicator of hip and hip joint position or unless the knees are bent or positioned incorrectly. Incorrect knee positions include placing the knees at odd and unsafe angles and bending the knees without first bending the hip joints. Note that it is not necessary to keep the knees directly over the feet at all times (as we teach beginners in Taiji), but they do need to be aligned with the force vector from the floor to the upper body.

I mentioned that the knees are useful indicators of hip joint position. I am referring to the rotational movement of the joint. When we walk, the primary motion of the hip joints is flexion and extension that occurs as the legs swing forward and back. But to walk smoothly, a small amount of rotation in the hip joint also must occur. As a leg swings forward, the pelvis changes position from facing squarely forward (at mid-stride) to one side angled forward about 40° as the forward heel touches down, then back to facing forward again at mid-stride and then to angled forward on the other side with the next step. Accommodating the changing angle between the pelvis and legs requires opening and closing of the hip joints. Confused? Opening and closing the hip joints is easiest to visualize by using the knees as an example. Stand up and move from a knock-kneed position to a bow-legged position, i.e., a knees-in to a knees-out position. See how the rotation works? That said, now forget about focusing on the knees to evaluate hip joint rotation. It was just a convenient way to explain it. Instead, think about rotating your upper thighs inward or outward. You must pay attention to the forward knee, however. It needs to point in the direction of your focus. If you think about moving your knees for hip rotation, knee direction will not be correct.

The inward and outward rotation at the hip joints is absolutely critical in Taiji. While shifting the hips forward and under your partner during push, the hip joints must rotate outward and stay that way through the end of the push. This outward hip rotation is one of the more difficult requirements

of pushing. It is finely controlled and maintained by strong contraction of the two larger gluteal (rear-end) muscles. The large and middle gluteal muscles rotate the hip joint outward and hold the posture. (The small gluteal muscle [with others] rotates the hip joint inward.) Have you ever had sore gluteal muscles? So sore you cannot sit on a hard surface without discomfort? If not, you have some work to do.

How much hip rotation is needed to execute push? This question is best answered while assessing your hip flexibility. Assume the posture for a butterfly stretch. Sit on the floor, back straight and head up. Bend the knees and place the soles of your feet together just in front of you. How close to the floor are your knees? To have adequate rotational flexibility to execute push, your knees must be within 4 inches of the floor. Sorry, but there is no way around it – this seems to be an absolute minimum requirement.

So far I have described hip joint dynamics in the context of using the back leg as a post-like brace to the upper body that efficiently delivers force from the floor to the hands. Let me close this portion of the discussion by saying that most Taiji techniques deliver power in this way - with the back leg and hip joint straight. But there is a second hip joint position used to deliver force from the floor, such as that used in Taiji press. In this second position, both hip joints are bent/flexed and power is delivered by a forceful, sharp, and tightly controlled inward rotation of the hip joints. Other martial styles such as Ba-Gua, use this second posture extensively.

Regardless of the martial technique, including push, linkage between the upper and lower parts of the body is very important. Most people would agree that the upper and lower parts of your body should be linked so that entire body position can be controlled and so that the movements in the upper and lower halves of your body can be coordinated. Unless you firm your abdominal muscles, you cannot achieve the linkage needed to control entire body position or coordinate movement in the upper and lower halves. Is this counter to the Taiji literature that places a great deal of emphasis on having a relaxed stomach? I say it is not – if you do it correctly. "Correctly" means anatomically correct (using the right muscles to effect the linkage).

Let us start this linkage discussion by defining terms and with some anatomy. The lower half of the body is defined as from the navel down. For Taiji purposes, the rest of you is upper body, but for this discussion let's view the body as having three parts: the lower body as defined previously, the upper portion of the upper body which includes the chest, arms and head, and the torso which links the lower body with the chest-arms-head. From viewing a human skeleton, it is clear that the spine spanning the torso between the upper and lower halves is a potentially weak link. The torso is the place where most back problems occur. Why? There are no bones other than the spine in this link. Unless you control torso/spine position either consciously or unconsciously, the structure will not be solid enough to support every day activities without problems. The way the spine is constructed further complicates and increases the risk of back problems. The spine contains a joint every few inches – much like a chain. Ever try to push a chain? It cannot be done unless there is added support to make the chain rigid. Despite the apparent weakness inherent in the spine's boney anatomy, the link at the torso does not have to be weak. The solution is the same one as required to push a chain. When we contract the muscles of the torso, the structure becomes very solid. The advantage to using muscle is that we can control relative positioning of the upper and lower halves of our body to a much greater extent than if the link were made solid by bones. Especially relevant to Taiji, forward and backward motion of the upper half relative to the lower half can be allowed or prevented by muscle. This motion is primarily controlled by contraction or relaxation of certain abdominal muscles.

Earlier I said that abdominal muscle contraction can be done without going counter to the Taiji literature. To do so you must be very selective in which muscles you use. You must use only the straight abdominal muscles. Looking at the muscular anatomy of your stomach region you will see four muscles. Two are the abdominal oblique muscles that run diagonally across and crisscross the stomach region. The third is the transverse abdominal muscle that encircles the torso like a very wide belt. And the fourth ones are the straight abdominal muscles. These muscles are strap-like and extend vertically from the pelvis to the bottom of the ribs on both sides of the front midline. When the straight abdominal muscles contract the vertical distance between the pelvis/navel and the ribs decreases. Because of their location and vertical orientation, the straight abdominal muscles can be thought to function as a second spine, stabilizing the front of the body. Working along with the real spine, it solidly links the upper and lower body. By contracting only the straight abdominal muscles, neither torso rotational freedom nor relaxation at the solar plexus is compromised. Rotational freedom and a relaxed solar plexus are underlying requirements for Taiji.

Putting this discussion of torso muscle into the context of push means that you must not let the distance between your navel and ribs increase when moving your pelvis forward and under your partner. If the distance is not maintained, there will be no downward pressure on your partner, he will not jump, and your push will fail.

In this discussion of push I have tried to convey my understanding of Taiji dynamics. It has been a simplified explanation. There are additional aspects regarding the chest, shoulders, arms movements, and the concept of "extending through" your partner, but these can be discussed later. In the meantime, enjoy your practice.

Bob and his wife, Jane, are long-time students of George L. Hu of Houston, TX. Over the years they have taught in many places and started groups in Lansing and Kalamazoo, MI and in Greenfield and Oconomowoc, WI. They live in Delafield WI, about 20 miles west of Milwaukee and receive instruction several times a year through workshops and visits to Houston.

Pushing Hands

By John Cole

What is pushing hands?

We frequently define things and events by what we read (media), are told, and/or experience. Our understanding is based on facts, events and experience both first hand, and referred by others. So one's definition may not express another's reality.

Pushing Hands is the real expression of taijiquan. Yin and Yang represent all relationships. Yang Lu Chuan taught a martial art system. He defined the application of techniques, attack and countering as taiji, until his style became known as Taijiquan. The interaction of techniques is found within the concept of pushing hands. One could say the heart of taiji is pushing hand.

Pushing hands is the practice of countering an opponent's attack. The patterns of pushing hands roll from one partner to the other, countering the counter which countered the counter all the way back to the original first attack which was directed by precept. One could say pushing hands is taiji's study of martial arts in a safe environment.

Pushing hands is an energy exchange. Energy comes at me. I encounter it, change and return it, over and over again. The energy comes at me expressed through a martial technique. I return it through a martial method.

Pushing hands is encountering the only person I ever must encounter--Myself. I must unstick my mind, body and qi to remain flowing in the present. All Techniques may be countered. All techniques work when you surprise the partner's mind. A surprised mind is momentarily stuck. When the mind is stuck the body and qi are stuck. New approaches to the same information help us to unstick our minds. When the mind is not stuck the body and qi flow and one is able to overcome the attack.

Every time I use a new secret technique I win, but after using the new secret technique three or four times my opponent has devised a counter. I should have as much joy for his or her new counter as I had with the original success of the secret technique. After all the reason for pushing hands is to improve both our skill levels. Everyone I push with is my teacher.

One of the definitions of insanity is "Repeating the same thing over and over again expecting a different outcome." Change occurs when I respond differently to the same stimulation. I recently pushed hands with an old acquaintance that I pushed with 25 years ago and discovered my old acquaintance doing the same things that he did 25 years ago with a smug expression. OK, it was time for a little intervention. Change the cadence and pattern and observe what happens.

When pushing hands we must stay focused as we give our bodies to our partner to help him or her learn. I was teaching a pushing hands class and explaining a technique while pushing with a student, who picked me up and threw me down on my back. I congratulated him and showed him the counter to his throw, just a few minutes too late. I learned a valuable lesson of multitasking: when pushing stay focused on pushing while teaching.

Pushing hands is about practice. My son gave me a video game. I started to play the game. Within 15 minutes "That stupid game was no good!" A couple of weeks later he declared, "I beat the game" I asked him how long did it take, and he replied, "40 hours."

It is easy for me to blame the game instead of taking responsibility for my unwillingness to lose and practice. As an adult I see something once and quickly believe I know and understand it. Then when I try it and fail, I blame something else like the stupid game. I know it all, without being willing to repeatedly lose, in order to learn to win. I must practice and be willing to understand how I lose in order to acquire the skill to win. Skill is acquired by diligent, persistent practice. Again I am fighting with myself, not with my push hands partner.

Pushing Hands is the real expression of taijiquan. Pushing hands is the practice of countering an opponent's attack. Pushing hands is physical and energetic combined with a focused mind intention. The only opponent I have is myself. Pushing hands should be fun. Both partners should benefit from pushing. I must let go of my ego, practice the patterns and think outside the box.

John practices and teachs in Benecia, Calif.

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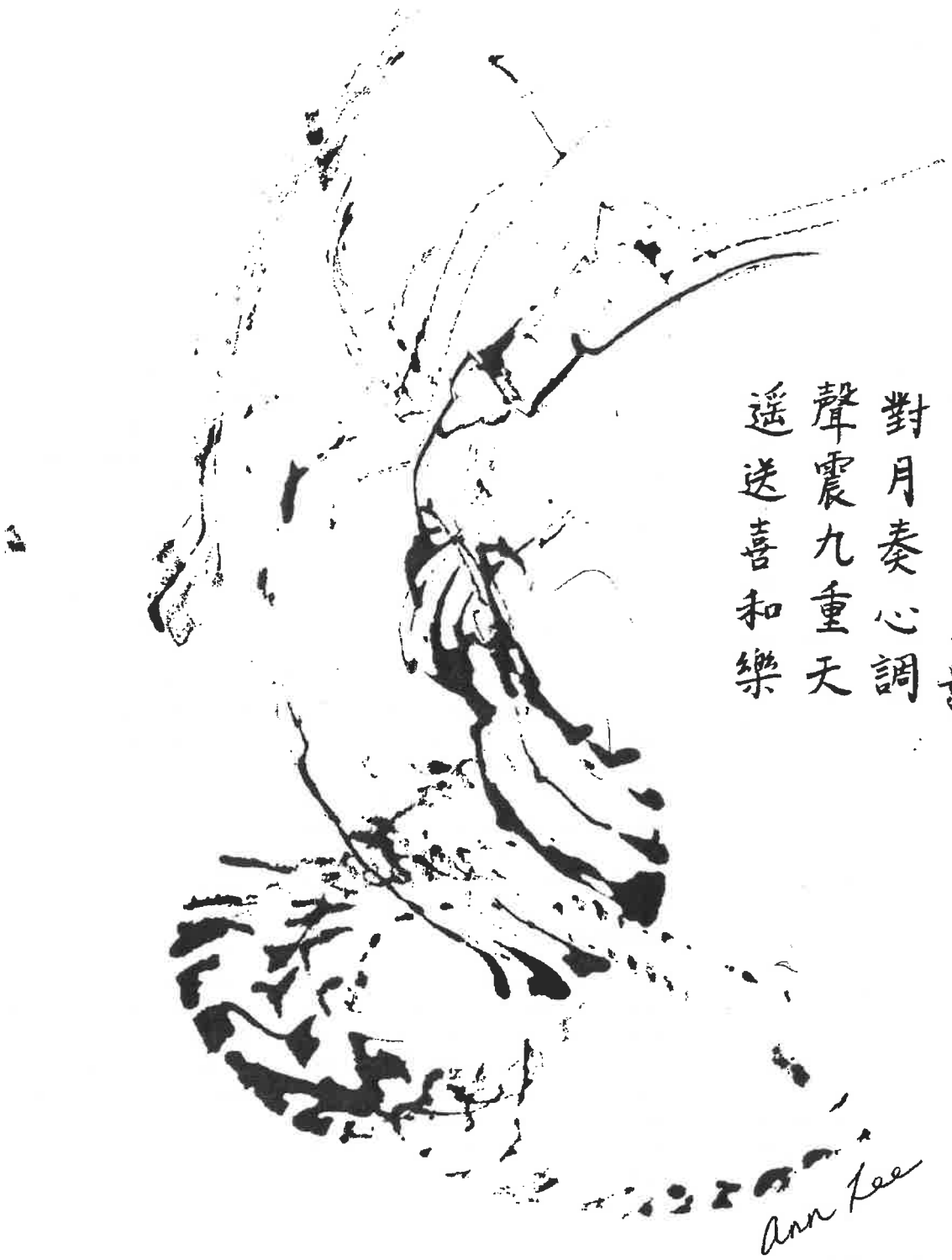
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Xīn diào
shēnshān bùjiàn yǐng
duì yuè zòu xīn diào
shēngzhèn jiǔchóngtiān
yáo sòng xǐ hé lè

Editor: On the one hand this piece vaguely reminds me of Wallace Stevens: "Anecdote of The Jar," "Valley Candle" …; yet on the other it expresses the classical Chinese concepts of continuous yin-yang transformation (*wuhua* 物化): "The Chinese world is a phenomenal world of continuity, becoming, and transitoriness. In such a world there is no final discreteness."(Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, *Focusing on the Familiar*, Honolulu, 2001, p.10). "for the Daoist the objective world is objectless. Sages envision a world of changing events that they can … choose to freeze momentarily into a distinct pattern of discrimination …" (Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, *Dao de Jing: A Philosophical Translation*, New York, 2003, p. 43).

It follows the metric pattern of the Han and Tang Dynasties five character verse, two (rather than four) paired lines, each line composed of two syllables, pause, 3 syllables. I emulate Tony Barnstone in his essay on translating Chinese Poetry in *The Anchor Book of Chinese Poetry* (Tony Barnstone and Chou Ping, New York, 2005), wherein he "consider[s] it a great success [to] translate a five character line … into a five- or six-word line." The first line is similar to Liu Zongyuan's "River Snow": *A thousand mountains. Flying birds vanish* in defining a landscape, but then Xin Diao plays with the ambiguity that characterizes much of Chinese poetry and the language itself. Since verbs are not inflected, the reader doesn't know who is facing/opposite the moon, who is playing heart tune, and who gives the present of the final line—it may be the heart tune itself or a response from heaven; an ambiguity reinforced by the fourth line's *yáo* reflecting the first line's *shēn:* both able to glossed as *remote.* Further, the character *shān,* mountain, is present in the fourth line's *yáo* and the character *tiān*, heaven, in *sòng*; *tiān* is often characterized as 遠 yuǎn and 玄 xuán—remote and dark. The third line is replete with symbols, but how do they interact? 震 is ☳ ䷲ Thunder, The Arousing; 九重天 is the nine divisions of the celestial sphere, but it is generally considered *jiǔ* stands for *many* rather than specifically *nine* (in the same way that *wanwu* is glossed *myriad processes/events/becomings* rather than *10,000 happenings*). Where the hexagram *zhèn* in the *Yijing* is characterized by fear and trembling, here the result is peace, joy, harmony.

Things as they are /Are changed upon the blue guitar …

Heart Tune
Deep mountains, no shadows
Facing moon, play heart tune
Sound arouses all heaven
Distant gift of joy and peace

Dialectic of the Transmission Or the Difficulty of Teaching

By Claudy Jeanmougin
Translated by Don Klein

To teach a discipline based in tradition such as Taijiquan is to take on responsibilities from the very moment when one claims to pass on an education that was received from a culture that is not one's own.

I decided to write this article when I was accused of deforming a tradition and it was recommended that I name the style with my patronymic. I wondered what right or authority the accuser had to utter such judgment, having never attended any of my classes. Further, anyone making such a judgment must be self-persuaded to be in the direct path of a faithful transmission. Then, I ask, how can anyone be sure of the correctness of the education with regard to the tradition? Naturally all these questions have a common thread, which is transmission, whether it is secret or not. This article is my response, not out of guilt, but to place the multiple problems that confront a teacher of our discipline into broad daylight. Therefore I put myself in the most constructive optics which is and which goes to the sense of the principles of Taijiquan.

The accusations essentially bear on my writings and sometimes on my practice when it is said to me that I do not do Taijiquan. The origin of my writings was to answer the multiple questions of my students during my classes. Avid to dedicate these classes only to the practical, my works filled the lack of time for the more theoretical study required to answer. In the titles of the works in question, I clarified that these papers were produced from my education from Wang Yen-nien. Is it a misuse of language to say such? I have had no other teacher of Taijiquan and what I write is effectively my understanding of what was taught me. Suppose that I did not mention Master Wang's name, would he have blamed me for that? In these works I have given names—for purely educational reasons—to gestures that had not been named. By naming such, I draw attention on the gesture and, at the same moment, the students perceive their gap. Is it slighting the tradition to name that which has no name? Moreover, would it not be better to wonder why a gesture in question has no name? What am I other than the transmission of the education?

So, we can ask what does it mean to pass on an education? And, at the same time, envisage this same question within the framework of a tradition.

To teach, is it simply to reproduce a sort of model? Let us suppose it is and I would try to say the same words that my teacher had and to reproduce his same gestures without any modification, that is without regard for my audience. There exist such teachers, very respectful moreover, but I refuse to believe that they are the only ones who respect the lineage. These teachers, do they wonder if their teacher acted the same? For example, are we sure that Wang Yen-nien is a faithful reflection of Zhang Qinlin?

To teach a transmission, is it not to stand between two: the one that passed on to me and those to whom I pass on? Is not it a question of playing the role of a sort of channel that would interpret knowledge between two beings? In a sense, in my teacher's quality, should not I disappear so that link becomes established in a continuous way? Furthermore, in our discipline there is a double adaptation to make: that of the time which passes by and that of two fundamentally different cultures.

It seems to me although in a first course the future teacher must incorporate a number of concepts that are the essential source of the discipline. Is the teacher Chinese or not? This simple remark uncovers the different possibilities that offer themselves as teaching within the framework of a transmission.

Our transmission having its source in the Chinese culture, assume the teacher is Chinese who teaches in Chinese. In




that case, it would seem, a priori, that everything is simpler, assuming the age of the discipline is ignored. But nothing is certain because to understand an ancient text requires not only the knowledge of the ancient language but also that of the subject. During my work in translation, I observed that my Chinese friends, although they had perfectly mastered the ancient language, were incapable of explaining the content of the text because they had no knowledge of Taijiquan.

Then, assume the teacher is a Chinese who teaches Westerners or any other culture that is not Chinese. This time, if one wants the message to be understood there must be an effort on behalf of the teacher to put himself within the reach of the taught and an effort on the part of the students to grasp a culture which is not theirs. Contrary to the usual image of a Chinese master whom one hardly dares to address, Wang Laoshi was generous with his explanations when he addressed us Westerners. However, the barrier of the language remains and it is necessary to rely on the service of an interpreter who can, unintentionally, deform the thoughts of the teacher. In that case, it is up to the student to take steps to integrate notions that do not belong to his culture, especially when the student goes to the country of origin.

Next, the teacher is a Westerner, or from a culture other than Chinese, who teaches Westerners or non-Chinese and who received education from a Chinese within the framework of direct filiation. That is the case of all the non-Chinese students of Master Wang including myself. Either one becomes involved in elements of Chinese for which the audience is not necessarily prepared, or they are brought to the follower interested in Chinese culture bit by bit. Here, there is the obvious question of the motivations that led the student to attend our classes. But, as teachers, do we have the right to interrogate our students about their motivations? Is it not more correct to welcome them and to respond bit by bit their demands, while knowing that those who have no desire to understand at least a little of a culture which is not theirs, will not have any chance to understand the foundations of the discipline?

Finally, there is a case of a Westerner who teaches Chinese students that which he received from Chinese masters (in our style, we have several teachers who are in this situation). Once the barrier of language is overcome, it is not necessarily simpler than the previous scenarios since Taijiquan supposes its own knowledge. However, one can imagine that the understanding of Chinese terms will be easier and will facilitate "apprenticeship." But the cultural barrier will remain in spite of all the efforts of the teacher.

Although we could continue by examining other scenarios, it would not add anything to the fact that we have only three constant factors that create barriers to the transmission: the language (but we think that it is not really an obstacle), culture and difference of era (that we term "the passage of time").

The difference of era is, in my opinion, a major problem to those who do not understand the meaning of the terms that belong specifically to the tradition. How does tradition evolve in the transmission (in time and space)? For a long time our discipline belonged to a master's oral tradition to followers in a single country, even a single part of the country. The history of Taijiquan clearly shows us the distortions that the discipline underwent even within a family; that says to me that there is barely a chance that what we practice today is identical to that was formerly taught. However, can we say that it is not Taijiquan? The variety of the styles that are practiced today should cause us to perceive the evolution of Taijiquan—which cannot escape the law of alterations. Then, instead of claiming the originality of a style, would not it be more profitable to state what differentiates styles and especially what they have in common?

There seem two common points: the classic texts and the concepts that they develop with very concise formulae which are practically untranslatable, and the body.

The body transforms in time as recent studies show, and also with age. It is a necessity for today's teacher to have a minimum knowledge of the functioning of the body so as not to damage it. Nowadays, where the recession of age is a reality that is too little taken into account, it is indispensable to know what one asks of our students physically. I do not believe that this concern existed in the past with 40 year old men. The physical body is also




subjected to the laws of energetics of Chinese traditional medicine. This idea, old women of five thousand years, live because they join a spatiotemporal dynamics. Now, the classic texts also employ these Chinese energetics. We shall say while the Chinese energetics and the body constitute a repository which allows us to insure a journey in time as a vital lead.

The classics are indeed open formulae because of their conciseness. The simplicity of the text makes understanding it complex because it cannot remain purely intellectual: only if engaged physically will one be able to enlighten the sense of terms or formulae. I think that the key of the transmission of Taijiquan is exactly this body intelligence without which Taijiquan would have no sense. It is also this key that engages the responsibility of the teacher in the transmission of a tradition: he will indeed be able to pass on only what he understands well through his body, and this understanding will be in perfect agreement with the classic texts.

The foundation of the tradition in the education of Taijiquan is these Chinese texts that consist of formulae originally passed on orally and recently transcribed. Their understanding supposes an intellectual interaction between deciphering a text and one's own body, which is a physical and emotional experience, which translates it. This physical experience returns us to a second reading of the text with a more widened understanding. The refinement of the practice will be done under the interactive game of the body and of spirit as is indicated in the classics themselves.

Let us return in the difficulty of these classics. They are practically untranslatable because their transcription in another language, always subject to interpretation that will necessarily be reduced to the understanding that the author had at the moment. Thus it is necessary to always return to the Chinese text and so to have a minimum of knowledge of the written Chinese language. I think that in the state of the education of Taijiquan it is an obligation. There will certainly come a day when a teacher, having perfectly integrated principles, will be capable of producing so simple and open formulae in the terms of his language. At the moment, it is necessary to satisfy ourselves with multiple translations.

If the formulae of the classics are open, it is because the tradition is not congealed: it grows richer over the time. For example, if traditional Chinese medicine is valid it is not because one continues to use only three thousand years or more old formulae. Some formulae stayed as they were because one did not find better and it is wise to apply them as it is. Other formulae, having been recommended for a long time, grew rich by additions making them more effective. Thus new formulae are born. It is not because the former masterful formulae grow rich, or that new ones appear, that the fundamental principles of the Chinese energetics changed. They remain, as those of Taijiquan. These classic texts are well the cornerstone of the transmission of a tradition.

To return to my works, I assume complete responsibility for their contents. They are simply my understanding that I wish to share with my students. It is with them that I advance slowly on this long and infinite way of Taijiquan. These papers do not contain any truth; they are simple reflections that encourage dialogue and exchange on a discipline that is far from being simple. They are the fact of a teacher who measures the dimension of his responsibility within the framework of the transmission of an education.

As I wrote earlier, it is not a question of exonerating myself but to send each of us teachers back to face our responsibilities. If it pleases some to see in Taijiquan only a gymnastic or a combat sport, they are free to make of it what they want. Having been a professor of physical education and a practitioner of other martial arts, I know that Taijiquan is more. Taijiquan is an art with its own laws that we have to master. It allows us a great amount of creativity. If we manage to transmit this message to our students, they will be capable all of creating their own shapes of Taijiquan that are most convenient for them with respect to fundamental principles and without the least detriment to their health. If that is the case for my students, you will find me both very satisfied with my teaching and happy to have fallen in their neglect as they realize their own blooming.




Yen-Nien Fan Breathing

By Don Klein and Kay Reese

We've been using variations of the recording released on the Weapons CD for some years and offer this chart to help others coordinate the moves and the breathing. The bold breaths are associated with the bold movements, the non-bold with the non-bold. h = hū, exhale, x = xī, inhale. Italicized words are in the form listing but not the recording; bracketed words are in the recording but not the form listing; where there are ?s, our ears were not perceptive enough to gloss the words.

[Yánnián Tàijí Shàn]	[Yen-nien Taiji Fan]	
yùbèi *shi*	**Get Ready**	**h**
qǐ shì	Begin	xh**x**
báihè liàng chì	**White Crane Spreads Wings**	**hxhx**
qīnglóng chūshuǐ	Green Dragon Darts Out of Water	^{tui}hxh**x**
zuǒ huà yòu shān	**Deflect Left, Fan Right**	**hxh**
shàng bù tuī shàn	Step, Push the Fan Forward	xh
***zhuǎnshēn* bèi shàn héngsǎo**	**Turn, Slide the Fan Across the Back, Sweep Away**	**xhxhx**
tàn hǎi shì	Explore the Sea	hxhxhxh
wū lóng bǎi wěi	**Black Dragon Wags Its Tail**	**xhxhx**
yú fù cáng shàn	Hide the Fan in Fish's Stomach	h^{hup}x$^{ci\ tiao}$xh**x**
xīniú wàngyuè	**Rhinoceros Gazes at the Moon**	**h**
qīnglóng tàn zhuǎ	Green Dragon Explores with Its Talons	xhxh
zhǐ tiān jī dì	**Point to the Sky, Attack the Ground**	**xhxh**
shīzi yáotóu	Lion Shakes Its Head	xhxh
***zhuǎnshēn* bèi shàn héngsǎo**	**Turn, Slide the Fan Across the Back, Sweep Away**	**xhxhx**
shùn shuǐ tuī zhōu	Push the Boat Along with the Current	hxhxhxh**xhx**
liúxīng gǎn yuè	**Shooting Star Chases the Moon**	**hxhx**
fènghuáng sān diǎntóu	Phoenix Nods Its Head Thrice	hx2x3h**x**
zuǒ yòu fēi shàn	**Fan Flutters Right and Left**	**hxhxhxh**
zuǒ yòu luòhuā	Petals Falling Right and Left	xhxh^{tui}xhxh
héngsǎo jī dǐng	**Sweep Away, Strike the Top**	**xhx?xhx**
bái shé tǔ xìn	White Snake Darts Its Tongue	h
lì pī Huà Shān	**Split Hua Mountain with Force**	**xhxhx^{zhuan}h**
kuíxīng shì	God of Literature	xh**x**
***zhuǎnshēn* wū lóng jiǎo zhù**	**Turn, Black Dragon Twists Around the Pillar**	**hxh1234^{tui}1234**
língmāo bǔ shǔ	Clever Cat Catches Rat	xh^{tiao}xh
yǐnjìn luòkōng	**Draw and Empty**	**xhx^{tui}hx^{tui}hx^{tui}hx^{tui}hx**
sān huán shàn	Three Circular Movements	hxhxh**x**
shàngxià sān cì	**Stab Up and Down Three Times**	**hxhxhxh$^{ci\ tui}$x**
huítóu wàngyuè	Turn and Gaze at the Moon	h^{tui}x^{xia}h$^{?}$**x**
dà péng zhǎnchì	**Huge Roc Spreads its Wings**	**h**
zuǒ yòu yáo shàn	Wave the Fan Left and Right	^{kai}xhxhxhx**hx**
***zhuǎnshēn* bèi shàn héngsǎo**	**Turn, Slide the Fan Across the Back, Sweep Away**	**hxh**
bái yuán xiàn guǒ	White Ape Offers Fruit	^{hup}x$^{ci\ hup}$
yànzi rù cháo	**Swallow Enters its Nest**	**hxh**
fēng sǎo méihuā	Wind Blows Through the Plum Blossoms	xhxh
shàng bù zhǐ nán	**Step Forward, Point Levelly**	**xh**
bào shàn hé tàijí	Hold the Fan, Taiji Comes Together	xhxh
[shōu shì]	**[gathering posture]**	**xh^{hao}**

Taijiquan in Manhattan's Chinatown

By Gretchen MacLane

Taijiquan happens seven days a week throughout Chinatown parks in groups with teachers as well as individual gongfu. Weekdays at 6 a.m., in almost all weather, the early players come before their workday begins. Waiters, manicurists, hotel workers, shop attendants and artists with lofts in Chinatown. There may be more than one teacher for a group. The regulars pay at the new moon. The cognoscenti eschew weekends because groups swell with Westerners. The postures may be called out by numbers, not names, to accommodate the multitude of Chinese dialects and Anglophones. Weekends there are groups from 6 a.m. until noon teaching form and sword. Free-style push hands happens all day long in selected park areas.

Sword Form at Federal Plaza

Federal Plaza, built in 1996, was built as a public park. Many practitioners and teachers established regular weekend space there under the Court of International Trade adjacent to the INS building. The area is a beehive weekdays and empty on weekends. A teacher would claim space by simply being there consistently. Just east, surrounded by courthouses, the small green patch of park in the middle of Foley Square was exclusively weapons forms. The plaza groups practiced on the marble tiles of the sheltered pass-through of the Court, facing the African Burial Ground, a swatch of lush grass behind a chain-link fence at Elk Street. The advantage of the roof made all-weather classes with music possible. The most popular groups (40 or more) were a dancing class with Chinese/Western music and a methodical exercise class that ran the hour before.

Immediately after September 11, 2001, materials were stored in Federal Plaza and the area was cordoned off. All the teachers had to move elsewhere. Thus taijiquan in Chinatown has consolidated into Sara D. Roosevelt Park, a narrow strip between Chrystie and Allen Streets, running south to north for seven blocks from Canal to Houston Street. The smaller parks in Chinatown were already crowded on weekends with grandparents and children and the few taiji masters who had established their own space years ago. The dancing and exercise classes occur seasonally and now weather permitting.

Sara Roosevelt Park is administered by the New York City Parks Department. Each block of the park has a different character. Canal to Hester is a concrete schoolyard surrounded on three sides by a grassy slope. Dogs are walked on the slope. Weekends, this yard has the push-hands people. There is a lot of pushing open to anyone with courage and some skill.

Between Hester and Grand are concrete chess stands and the congregation of older Chinese gentlemen. Just beyond is a playground with benches on all sides, a meeting place for morning taiji groups who practice in a sunken basketball basin immediately north of the playground. In winter a group may rent small Chinatown studios, often up five flights of stairs.

At Grand Street is a fenced-in soccer field, covered with AstroTurf, for league play. Snow doesn't stop the matches—the players shovel. Just beyond in an alley between that fence and the back of the Parks Department building, which faces Broome Street, are the Falun Gong people quietly standing or chatting. It is

rumored by the neighborhood Chinese merchants that the CIA supports them so they dress uniformly and hand out CDs with their pamphlets. The Park building has comfort stations that are open during the day; thus, there is a large homeless population on the park benches surrounding the next sports basin between Broome and Delancy. Here, in addition, older Chinese women gather to socialize in warm weather.

This Broom Street basin is the best taiji area because the sporting arena has a rubbery surface that is kind to knees. The basin wall is about 5 feet up to street level where there is a walkway and the fenced-in Hua Mei Bird Park, at Delancy, dedicated in 1993, with shrubs, paths and trees. The bird owners arrive with their birds about 9 a.m. and leave by 11 a.m. They carry expensive Asian songbirds in covered bamboo cages that are uncovered and placed in the gated garden to sing and compete for the most beautiful birdsong. The most beautiful eventually sings alone, leaving the other songbirds in awed silence. I believe the bird owners place bets on which bird it will be.

ONE BIRD OWNER, THE BEST ENGLISH SPEAKER, IS A SUCCESSFUL ARTIST WHO LIVES IN WESTCHESTER. HE IS SO PASSIONATE ABOUT THE HUA MEI HE DRIVES DOWN SATURDAY AND SUNDAY WITH FOUR OR FIVE BIRDS EACH IN THEIR INDIVIDUAL CAGES.

Saturdays, a Wu-style teacher, who had been established at the plaza before September 11, systematically teaches form, push hands and sword to Westerners. He teaches around town, at the United Nations and privately. New to the space this past winter, an older gentleman teaches Yang style and sword. He plays an audiotape of the names of the postures over soft music. His students are Chinese.

Saturdays and Sundays, Mau Fu Rong taught Wu and Chen styles, Xingyi, and Qigong. Currently his high blood pressure has made his showing up mercurial. For years Mr. Mau showed up about 8:30 a.m. and did his Wu form and Xingyi. One by one his regular students arrived. Once or twice during the morning he would do the Wu form for all who studied Wu to follow. He'd correct individual faults and leave them alone to practice it. Then he would demonstrate one or two sections of the Chen form (he knew four sections of the six) and explain and polish postures. His is a collegiate manner of teaching allowing people learning different forms to study together. Push hands was his favorite and he could engage his best student for a long, long time. Students encircled Mr. Mau watching and waiting to jump in to push with him. He'd repeat a move and slow it down to show, his face beaming each time he unbalanced the student. To teach me Single Whip Mr. Mau pushed me continuously with it … until he got bored. Pushing would continue until 11:30, maybe noon, when all would slip $10 into his palm and go to Mr. Mau's favorite restaurant.

Mr. Mau pushing with Mr. Qwang; Federal Plaza, Elk and Duane

Gretchen practices and teaches in New York City.

Wu –style teacher at left; Facing south Broom St.

Taiji in Your Life #2
Get in Touch: Make a Connection

By Dale Napier

This time I want to discuss *making a connection.* From there the next installments will discuss sticking/persistence and continuous movement. All are closely enough related that it is difficult to discuss one without the others.

Taijiquan

Making a connection is one of the more subtle requirements of taijiquan. You cannot *see* it happen. You can only experience it by *feeling* it. Only when sensing your opponent's center can you make a move against the opponent. Ironically, once the connection is truly made, moving *against* the opponent is little different from moving *with* the opponent. Yin and yang, the opposing dynamics of taijiquan, thus rule passively as well as actively.

In karate one might "make a connection" by punching or kicking an opponent, but in taijiquan a connection is required *before* an attack can be successful, or even appropriate. Thus the karateka is making contact, but not truly connecting. To truly connect, you must be mix with and be aware of the opponent's center as much as your own; to feel it is much as your own. In this way, control can be gained over both, and the opponent moved as desired. If one moves without making the connection, it will be (literally) like running into a wall. Chances are you will bounce, hard.

Life

Some of the most accessible examples come from the many worlds of politics. As a teenager and young man I muddled endlessly in politics, mistakenly associating politics with the arena of ideas, not realizing there is a tertiary connection at best. Time and time again, I or others would run for an office based on the "good ideas" we had to make the world a better and more just place to live, at least as we perceived it. Time and again, we lost.

Eventually I came to realize that I must either abandon such quests, or radically modify my outlook: *ideas* do not vote, *people* vote. Tip O'Neill, the late Speaker of the House of Representatives from Massachusetts, made famous the phrase that "all politics is local". He was saying that politics connects with people.

Any bookworm can connect with ideas. A successful politician connects with ideas only to the extent that they connect with people. In that respect politics is a worthy, not ignoble, activity.

Say what you will about his morality or policies, Bill Clinton is a master at connecting personally. Many attribute his electoral success to his ability, his *eagerness*, to connect in a way that truly made his subject feel cared about ("I feel your pain"). By the same token, the electoral failures of most recent presidential contenders—Michael Dukakis, the first President Bush, Al Gore, John Kerry—can be traced to their inability to relate to the common man. President Bush's win last year can be seen as largely due to his ability to connect.

This is true not only in electoral politics, but virtually every type of human interaction. What is "office politics", but the attempt by people to advance themselves through personal connections? Any family with large monetary stakes has internal politics as well—as does, for that matter, any family *without* monetary stakes. The connection to the heart is the most powerful of all.

Taiji Exercise in Making a Connection

To best experience a connection, apply a taiji movement in an exercise with a partner. There are many ways to experience a taiji connection, but in this case, have your partner stand sideways, left side facing you. You are going to work on *play PiPa.*

Prepare yourself by taking a right front stance in the general pose of play pipa on the right side. To get a proper connection you must observe all of the taiji essentials: crown up, chin in, relax and hollow chest, raise upper back, relax arms, loosen waist, relax tan tien, and so on.

Once prepared, lightly extend the upper leading (right) arm so that you touch your partner's upper arm, below the shoulder, to the middle of your outer forearm. You must maintain intention not only in the leading right arm, but in the lower left arm as well: extend out into infinity through the *lao gong* of each palm. Stand erect. Look beyond, not at, your partner as you project your *qi* over him/her.

As you extend through your palms, you should feel the connection take root. Describing this feeling is as difficult as feeling it for the first time, but you are striving to feel your opponent's center. Feeling the center tells you where your partner is and what his/her intentions are.

Done correctly, this is sufficient for *obtaining* a connection; by no means is it sufficient for *controlling* your partner's center. In fact, a skilled partner will make the connection first and feel your own unsuccessful attempts.

If you *can* connect with the center and control it, you may discharge and eject your partner by completing the shearing movements of play pipa. The pressure of the connection increases gradually, but unrelentingly, until the partner literally "pops" out of position. Done correctly, you should be able to discharge and move your partner completely across the room with minimal effort.

Life Exercise in Making a Connection

Just as in taiji, you may make a connection without dominating. Hopefully you desire a connection with a person not to dominate or injure, but to create a bond that will benefit both of you through the richness of your humanity.

This bond may be created in giant steps or baby steps, but in either case it starts by creating a connection. The strength of the connection in the future lies in your efforts to cultivate it.

This exercise requires that you mix with a group of people you do not know. This can be a party, an away-from-home business meeting, any number of events. This exercise is most challenging if you find a group of people that you do not knowingly have anything in common with—a "blind" business networking group for instance, where you are a guest.

Your goal is to find a person—preferably a *lot* of people, for practice—who is a total stranger, and make a connection with that stranger. Do not expect to create a close personal bond, but you should endeavor to create a connection strong enough that a move toward a closer personal bond is a reasonable possibility.

How do you talk to a stranger? This is the lesson I was taught over a period of thirteen weeks, some years ago, in a Dale Carnegie course. The elements are simple, but as with taiji, you must have the *intention* to make a connection before it is possible to do so. That means, do not be shy! After all, taiji may be gentle in its own way, but it is hardly shy.

Approach a stranger. Who should you approach? To make this a truly effective exercise, *rule out everyone who looks physically attractive to you.* Pick someone that you do not feel even a distant connection to prior to meeting. That is not a requirement, but it makes the exercise more challenging.

To make a connection, you must find *something* that is near and dear to your target's heart, and get him/her to talk about it. It is that simple—and if meeting strangers puts you off, it is that difficult. Push the envelope, if necessary. Create new intention for yourself through sheer willpower.

How do you find what is near and dear to that person? There is a long list of possibilities. As you ask questions, look for two things. You want to find a subject that seems to make your target simply light up with enthusiasm. Once found, pursue that line of discussion as far as possible or reasonable. You also want to find opportunities to create a connection by talking about your own activities and experiences that are similar to those being discussed by your "partner".

It can go something like this:

Introduce yourself by name, and get your soon-to-be-new-friend's name.

Ask what brought him/her to the affair. Is it a first time? If so, why is the person there and what is he/she expecting to get out of it?

If not a first time, why is your partner there? What value is there in these meetings?

From there, segue to a discussion of your partner's work. What does he/she do? How does it connect to the event, if at all?

If that topic does not resonate, move on to any of a series of topics near and dear to most people's hearts: do you have kids? do you have a pet? have you traveled lately? been on a vacation? Any of these can lead to a long and enthusiastic conversation.

Not everyone will open up readily or respond with more than monosyllabic replies, but making a connection in taiji can be pretty difficult as well. Each requires intention and persistence to make a connection.

Summary

In both taiji and throughout life, making a connection is a critical matter. In either case, making the connection is an intimate process, albeit in much different ways. You may improve the effectiveness of your taiji and your relationships with people by paying close attention to the quality of the connection.

Intention, discussed in the last article, and *making a connection* are closely related. It takes intention to make a connection. When you make a connection, the power of your intention is manifested. In the next article we will examine the importance of *continuous movement* and its analog to our lives.

Dale Napier teaches Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan at the University of Houston. You may reach Dale at "Dale Napier" dalenapier@hotmail.com..

WE ARE ALL VOLUNTEERS: A PLEA FOR SUBMISSIONS.

As Sam listed in a very early *Journal*: Articles, Photos, Personal Experiences, Artwork, Poems, Anything related to TJQ, Neigong, Meditation … And we continue to need proficient French-English translators.

Dale offers an additional option: if you can't think of a topic on your own or don't feel you have enough for a full article, consider responding through a *Letter to the Editor* or sending Dale a paragraph or two on either the next topic or a specific example in which you see a parallel between your taijiquan practice and an incident in your life.

And if you have even more interest, consider being a Associate Editor of the *Journal* or *aymta.org*.

Journal of the Motionless Journey: Discovery Bit by Bit of Neigong

By Christian Bernapel
Translated by Don Klein and Gretchen MacLane

It has been eight years that I have "dragged the paw," which some have noticed, after a chance accident due to inattention in front of a stair.

I made the decision to remedy it in the summer solstice. And here is Chinese winter: things are set. Spring will arrive and develop its work of growth and renewal.

This fourth day after the operation desires and the need of structure reappear. The urge to make order, to sit down (what luxury after four long days lying down), to think, to meditate, to write spurs me on.

The vague idea to apply "Daoist gestures" in little gifts, apparently pointless and intimate details, after the surgical operation in the heart of my body, the pelvis, has trotted in my heart since the decision of the operation.

I knew that at least three months would be required to be reborn: 90 days. A figure close to the mythical 100 days of daily and continuous practice to set up "Daoist foundation" for the neigong passed on to us by Master Wang.

Alors, I decided to try to put myself in it: to use this favorable time, this bracket in my life, in the service of my wandering on the path of the Dao. On numerous occasions, in the course of years, trainings and meetings with the Master, I had begun this cycle of 100 without ever reaching the term. An active life and its imperatives never allowed me to buckle the buckle. Then here we are, the occasion was given to me and I made the resolution, the morning of the fourth day, to re-engage the road by adding a companion: a report of daily observations that I share with those interested in this motionless journey.

So, this fourth morning, I sat myself on the edge of my chair, in front of the mirror to look for the position "of the emperor." You know, where the body is at the same moment erect and lax, restfully well balanced on both buttocks, the lax and tonic perineum moving with the breath. Feet are on the ground, at hip width, and parallel. Weight divided between heel and toes, between inside and outside of the foot, in such way that the arch of the foot is naturally marked. Toes are relaxed and steady on the ground without tension. No redness or pallor characteristic of non-relaxation. The ischia rest on the edge of the chair allowing the natural movement of the perineum and the anterior-posterior mobility of the pelvis.

Observing in the mirror my body, weakened by these years of lack of dynamics of recovery, incites me to attempt the tool of renovation: neigong. My breath is still a little superficial, difficult to descend but pleasant. Skin appreciates the heat of the pervading air. I am alone with myself and my spirit is calmed: awareness. I have the time to wake my internal sensations and can perceive my outside image thanks to a mirror where I can see myself if I wish. The myth of Psyche brushes me as a bubble, but no more. I shall have to rediscover it …

The body inflates and deflates. I feel it inside but also perceive it outside. Sensation and glance conjugate: wavering. The respiratory rate is set up, takes its place, lives in the body as a metronome. The pelvis balances front and back around each ischium's axis, in touch with the chair. The pelvis finds its place naturally with relaxation.

A piece of music invades me—Fauré's air fills me:

Si tu veux savoir ma belle, où s'envole à tire d'aile, l'oiseau qui chantait sur l'ormeau. [If you want to know my fair one, whither, on strong wings, the bird that was singing on the elm is flying. —*"Sylvie"*]

Happiness. I do not reject this apparent thought interference for it is so agreeable.

It is the moment to begin. No question, I have time, it is good, I perceive the fragrances of my body; I hear my breath and also the noises from outside, which cross me without becoming confused.

Then hands unite to form the magic seal, the one that protects from the wild tiger and the cunning fox. A little yin in the yang, a little yang in the yin, and it is the beginning of the adventure … Breath[1] resumes its place and comes to light in its details: inhale, exhale, but also the spaces between inhale and exhale and exhale and inhale. There where tensions are ridded, structures are set up, the continuance of the gesture comes true and movement surrounds them: inhale—plenitude and vacuity; exhale—relaxation and behavior. The perineum descends and reascends with delicacy. The place is intimate, it is a real crossroad: "breath of the forge" that instigates the fire of energy to circulate in the body. The language rises and falls in the mouth, delicately between the upper palate and the floor of the

mouth like a light ribbon that floats among high and low in the breeze of the wind ... The wind is breath, air that feeds our esters with its virtues. Between every respiratory cycle a time of respite. "Suspension" at the end of the inhale and "emptiness" at the end of the exhale. Eyes hanging closed or rather closed in the middle like Venetian blinds, according to the relaxation of each. Thoughts calmed down, but spirit remains watchful to the least internal or external shiver, like the cat that watches without sleeping. The body, breath and spirit try to unite as three accomplices and it is the rhythm that takes them as an engine. Find the rhythm as a function of the moment without forcing. Breath is calmed and its cycle remains natural, not "forced" in its duration: a rhythm of about four breaths per minute is a good target. Do not forget: you have 100 days to arrive there. By waiting according to your capacities.

The duration of the practice[2] is also a question of common sense. It is enough to listen and not to exceed the threshold of discomfort. Between 20 and 30 minutes is an optimal time, but also you have 100 days to arrive there. In the beginning five minutes are enough, then time lengthens naturally, according to each. Even if you have only two minutes in your day, practice all the same. It is a little better to practice every day that not at all. Do not hesitate to aid yourself with a watch (with a sweep second hand) which will give you an easy reference you if you feel the need.

It is the end: palms settle naturally on knees. It is warm, the small emperor increases. "That which presides" developed some its sensations and its heart. It is simple finally, it is enough to live it.

You have time, do not rush yourself. As many times as you want, you will be able to begin these 100 days again. It's not serious if you do not succeed the first time. It is never too late to begin again.

Method? Do not make an obsession of it. Find the one that is appropriate for you. The main thing is to arrive safe and sound, it doesn't much matter the way as long as it is convenient for you. No doctrine, any rule, just advice and your sensation, your way. Take your time ... Soak in the advice of Master Wang's texts in his books and writings, as well as of your recollections, or of your notes taken during a training with him if you had the happiness to participate in one: schedules, places, favorable dates, etc. ...

I hope to have given you the urge to attempt these 100 days of "motionless journey."

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[1] Breath, is done with a closed mouth at first (if the nose is not blocked). Bit by bit, "it" rises and descends; inflates and deflates; tightens and relaxes, the mouth half-open, air escaping bit by bit by the mouth and entering by the nose. Springtime breath puts itself in place by itself. Breath takes its place between the top and bottom. It descends on one side and rises on the other according to the sex of the practitioner. Only the initiates know a good method. And when a natural breath descends, its alter ego rises, et cetera. It is a cycle. The microcosmic cycle has been taught. Breath crosses our two main canals of energy, conception and governor, which enliven us and initiate movement. Each will recognize them as they are named. Their roads are strewn with "passes" and "valleys," mysterious words that do not necessarily correspond to our Western Cartesian conceptions. It doesn't much matter, eight majors are identified: three front and three rear, one at the top and one below. They face each other and balance each other. When the one is empty, the other is full. But what does all this mean? Do not hurry up. Remember, you have 100 days to wake them, to feel them and to understand what they are. They correspond to precise anatomical zones. Bit by bit, name and retain in your mother tongue and in Chinese. The names of things help in their comprehension. They will make sense and their substance will become apparent when the moment has come. Do not hasten ...

[2] The duration of practice settles comfortably and naturally with the breath. If the inhalation is six seconds, the space between inhalation and exhalation is one second; the exhalation six seconds, the space between exhalation and inhalation one second, then about four breaths per minute are described. In that case, 81 breaths (nine multiplied by nine; fulfillment (nine) amounts to the square and "grand fulfillment" represents about 20 minutes of practice. But one can indeed make six breaths per minute, or three or two, if one feels at ease. If the respiratory cycle is briefer, global time is briefer and conversely. You have 100 days not to count any more and so "do quite alone." Do not wonder if you do not arrive at the symbolic figures exactly. But one is not far from it ... Accept that nothing is completed. It is for that that pi is not a finished number, that leap years are a necessary subtlety to reduce mathematically the precession of equinoxes. Nevertheless, the circle is there, is perfect, and the year which takes place with its seasons is a matter of fact, also. Nothing is perfect but time and space, in the apparent imperfectness.

YMT For Self Defense

By Christopher Nelson

Controversy has been brewing lately over the inclusion of "self-defense" within the by-laws of the AYMTA. The arguments for removing those words seem to be that, since the majority of teachers are not teaching fighting techniques, and the reigning philosophy is that of non-violence, the term "self-defense" is neither accurate nor wanted.

It is my understanding that some within the YMT community would like to see the peaceful aspect of Taiji be further developed; that confrontational terms ("... opponent, strike, ...") be replaced with more neutral words ("partner, giving energy ..."); that overly antagonistic aspects of the form be given less importance (competitive Push Hands, applications, ...). All in all, the YMT form would be pushed further towards a healing function, and less towards the martial arts from which it originated.

Considering the current world events, it is hard to argue that we need more violence in this world. Healing, peace, and non-violence are sorely lacking at the dawn of the 21st century. I firmly believe in the healing aspects of Taiji in general and of our form in particular. I have witnessed great healing at some of the Push Hands workshops. And there is absolutely no way to do correct Taiji with a heart troubled by anger or fear.

The arguments against removing the term "self-defense" from the by-laws are mainly that, like it or not, YMT is a martial art. There is no way to explain correctly the movements of our form without refereeing to the applications. YMT also happens to be one of the older forms of Taiji and, in my opinion, one of the purest. To dilute the teachings by only dealing with the softer aspects means that we would risk losing a venerable and ancient art. Our duty, as practitioners and teachers of this art, is to preserve it as intact as possible, so that we may continue passing on the wisdom found within it.

But there is yet another argument for preserving self-defense as an element of our style. Taijiquan has always been a multi-layered art. It is a martial art, with frightfully effective counter-attacks and strikes. It is a moving meditation. it is a dance. It is a kinetic language which allows us to become the living expression of the forces of the Dao. Within it are found balance, change, stillness, movement, transformation, calm, energy, all the elements which make life possible.

And it also reflects our inner world. The calm we seek can be seen in a lower heart rate, a deeper breath. But it really manifests itself in the banishment from our brains of the more negative thoughts that plague our daily lives. And it is on this field that the real martial art is found. All the movements of Taiji are allegories for the inner struggles that we must all face. And it is a struggle.

Daoism is not interested in the more esoteric philosophical discussions. There no Daoist Hell or divine judge. Life is to be lived now, in our physical world. The goal is to live this life fully and happily, and the way to do so is to rid ourselves of the demons and negative thoughts that prevent us from reaching that happiness. Entire books have been written on this topic, so I would like to focus on a specific aspect of this struggle: daily life.

The calm and serene mindset that we all seek is easy to find within the confine of a classroom filled with friends quietly moving through the Taiji forms. But if that mindset evaporates as soon as you step onto the parking lot, then all you've bought yourself is a reprieve. I say spend your tuition money more wisely and spend a week in Tuscany.

To extend that mindset to the rest of our lives is to approach our immediate environment the way trained YMT martial artists would: relaxed, open to the world, listening, soft on the outside but capable of steely determination. This does not mean that we are to learn how to drop kick every shady character we encounter. Rather, we must acknowledge the fact that, on the surface, each encounter with the physical world is a potentially violent act. When an excited six-year old child runs into a frail eighty-year-old woman, no harm was intended but that collision can still result in a serious physical injury. When we become more precariously balanced in our old age, a bump from a passing pedestrian can cause a disastrous fall.

And when we find ourselves in unknown surroundings, each person becomes a stranger and a potential source of danger. And that is a violent act in and of itself. An act we inflict upon ourselves when we allow fear of the unknown to become fear of our neighbors, of strangers, of the people casually going on about their lives around us. We close ourselves instead of opening up; we dig in instead of reaching out, and, most importantly, we stop listening. When all we hear are the fictitious fears that the mind creates, we are made dumb to what is really going on.

Self defense within the Taiji tradition is about discovering those self-generated fears and conquering them. But that means that in the classroom (a safe environment) those same fear buttons need to be pushed. When that six year old runs into you, what should you do? Where do your feet go? When you are about to be bumped into on the sidewalk, what do your arms do? When a fist comes towards you, what fear blinds you? What emotions come up? What learned behavior prevents you from leading a full and fulfilling life?

Once those fears are exposed, we can now unlearn them. We can see that a running child is not necessarily a dangerous threat. And maybe that tension we carry is not really useful; that the aggressive mindset we learned is not as effective in making us happy as we had thought. The world becomes less threatening when you learn to deal with it.

Once those internal obstacles are removed, then the fear can evaporate. And we see the world as it is, not as we fear it is. Each interaction with it becomes a dance instead of a fight: that six year old is sidestepped, the pedestrian is redirected, gently, and those strangers are simply what we are: people, parents, sons and daughters of people we have not met yet. You can tell people that the world is just waiting to dance with them, but until they experience it, they will not believe you. But then ...

But then we can be part of the real Taiji, of the Grand Ultimate, moving from Yin to Yang and back again, endlessly flowing, unhampered by our own inner demons.

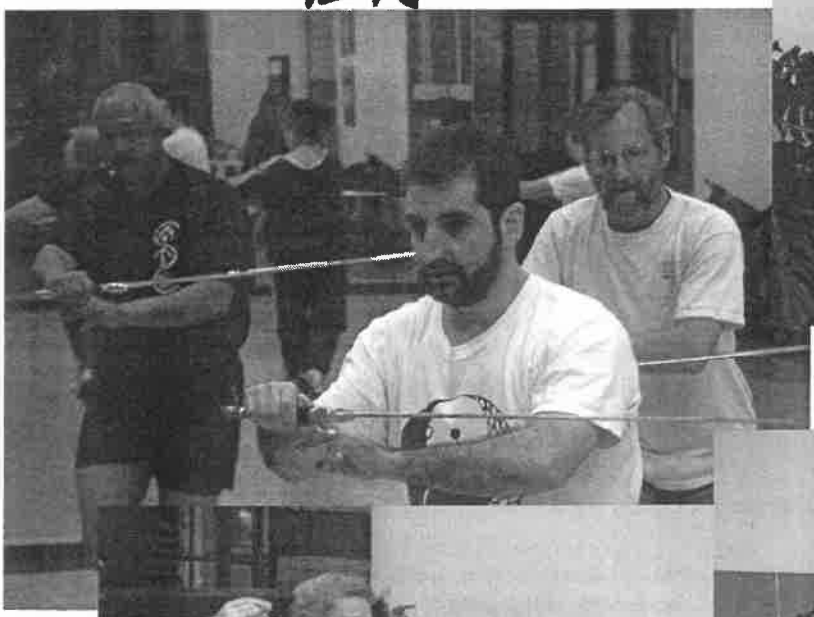
Chris practices and teaches in Southern California.

KunLun Jian from New York, WuDang Jian from Michigan

昆侖剑

武當剑

纽约



密西根

On the Bookshelf

Health and Long Life (The Chinese Way), by Livia Kohn, in cooperation with Stephan Jackowicz, is a perfect book for students of Eastern methods of Health and Longevity. Just published by Three Pines Press (http://www.threepinespress.com) and not yet available at Amazon.com at the time of this writing, it is also ideal for those who have experience and are looking for a more rounded and complete knowledge of the various elements that might fit under this large and ancient umbrella. A professor of Religion and East Asian Studies at Boston University, Kohn has structured the book along the lines of the course that she teaches on Chinese Medicine and religious healing techniques.

This format works very well for a number of reasons. The twenty chapters are distinct enough to allow one to pick and choose what most interests and to come back to the others at another time, if that is your wish. And you would be well served by the information contained in each of chapters, which run about ten pages each. If you've always wanted to learn more about the history and techniques of acupuncture, for instance, chapter 7 is a great place to start. You'll get a general background, a discussion of the development of acupuncture from an historical and cultural perspective, and an analysis of how and why it is used for health and healing.

This is a great approach to a short story collection (I always start with the shortest and work my way from there) but would be a mistake with this wonderful book. It really is a cumulative experience, one chapter providing the necessary foundation for that which follows it. This is especially important for anyone who wants to expand their understanding of the history, philosophy, and practical aspects of Chinese healing. Just as the body and soul are best served from a holistic perspective, rather than the standard a la carte Western medical perspective, so is the reader, student and teacher, best served by approaching and appreciating this book from beginning to end.

It is instructive to look at the table of contents and to consider how each exists in relation to the other. Interestingly, the chapter headings are not on the table of contents listing in the book I reviewed (nor are chapters delineated as such) but do appear on the web site listing (http://threepinespress.com/books.health.php).

The table of contents:

(PART ONE: FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTS)

1. Dao and Qi
2. Yin-Yang and the Five Phases
3. Visions of the Body
4. Understanding the Mind
5. The Meridian System

(PART TWO: CLINICAL PRACTICE)

6. Methods of Diagnosis
7. The Practice of Acupuncture
8. Forms of Massage
9. Medicine in China Today
10. Other East Asian Countries
11. Acupuncture in America

(PART THREE: INTERACTIVE QI-CONTROL)

12. Fengshui
13. Food Cures and Diets
14. The Chinese Pharmacopoeia
15. Sexual Practices

(PART FOUR: SELF-CULTIVATION)

16. Breathing and Gymnastics
17. Qigong
18. Taiji Quan and Martial Arts
19. Meditation
20. From Inner Alchemy to Healing Dao

Upon consideration, it should be clear that there is a logical progression to chapters. For instance, there is enough information about the internal workings of the body in chapter 6, Methods of Diagnosis, to appreciate the process. "The goal of Chinese medical diagnostics is system differentiation, i.e. to find an understanding of disharmony and identify the main organ and meridian gone astray." (page 63) This is succinct and clear. When read within the context of the previous chapters, (for instance the detailed discussion of qi-flow and the meridians in chapter 5), a deep and practical system of knowledge is elucidated that has little to do with isolation and everything to do with looking at the patient, or yourself, from all perspectives, internal, external, emotional, even cultural.

As you read "Health and Long Life" you will encounter two unusual additions to the standard book format. The first are the numerous embedded URLS – links to web sites that add supplementary information and independent analysis. It's an interesting and I think valuable technique. After about three chapters I started book marking most of them and ended up with over forty interesting sites related to health, Daoism, meditation etc. Some were familiar, most of them were new to me, all of them fit nicely into a bookmark folder marked "Health". The only downside to this technique is that by the time a book is finally published some of the web sites might not be found – links become broken, web sites get renamed, sometimes they close down. There seem to be a few such links in the book (though I will not discount mistyping as a source of these disappearances). You can have the pleasure of typing and searching for yourself. Such is life on the Internet.

The other interesting addition stems from the academic world, but is useful for any reader. Throughout the chapters, in simply delineated boxes, there are "exercises" designed to stimulate thought and to push the reader into a more interactive experience – to stop, think, and to examine. In the chapter on Fengshui, for instance, following a discussion of the historical beginnings of the practice ("... fengshui began as the siting of graves, as part of the belief that the ancestral spirits could only rest properly and benefit the living if their bodies ... [were] placed in harmony with the earth") there follows this exercise: "Reflect on the role of the dead in our lives, How do the feel about family continuity, graves, the presence of death? Has our culture gained or lost in comparison with ancient China?" This is pretty heady stuff, providing the opportunity to explore issues not usually found at the forefront of our experience.

Throughout the book topics are explained in precise and easy to understand language. Ideas that can be difficult and complex for Western minds, such the evolution of the five phases (wuxing) and their relationship to color, organs, direction etc. in Chinese thought are carefully explored in a historical/chronological perspective and presented in well produced charts and drawings to explain their various sequences.

In their discussion of Qi, in chapter 1, the authors use an interesting and effective graphic to illustrate a concept that

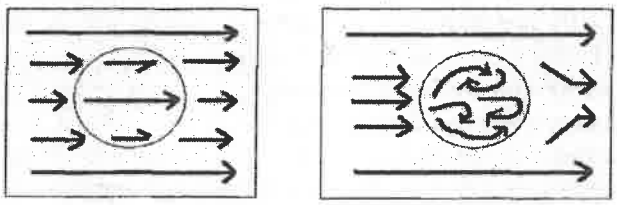


Fig. 2. The proper and wayward flow of *qi*.

is difficult to put into words. They suggest that we visualize a fluid filled sack under water in order to better understand the basic nature of qi, and specifically how it can be depleted and/or become "wayward". The sack can both absorb fluid and allow it to pass. The waves in the surrounding water has influence upon the fluid in the sack—when all is correct the flow of fluid inside and outside of the sack is even and in balance. But when, for various reasons, the fluid in the sack begins to work in a pattern that is not like the overall movement of fluid, or simply cannot work in tandem with the movement that it is immersed within, the balance is lost. "... the uncooperative flow within the smaller sack is *xieqi* or "wayward qi. ... From the perspective of the individual body, some flow may be wayward because correctness (health) is the desired state."

Another pleasure is the discussion of health and healing within the context of history and societal development. In chapter 3, "Visions of the body", the authors contrast the integrated ways that Eastern cultures consider the spiritual and the flesh with the historically western conception of the body as material/flesh removed and different from the religiously or mystically defined soul. Whereas sexual energy can be understood as life-force in Chinese thought it takes on a more dangerous definition within the development of Western culture: uncontrollable, dark, something to be repressed and misunderstood. Rather than seeing and understanding the body, life force, and soul as interdependent, they have been regimented into distinct and pre-defined places; the better to suppress that which is not culturally acceptable.

This need to clinically control the body, to master the material world around us gave way, the authors explain on page 39, to something born of the twentieth century. "An increasingly consumer-based and consumer-oriented society no longer considered the mere flesh and loosened the constraints of control. This society increasingly supported the promiscuity and hedonism, encouraging people to try new things, buy more, and improve continuously... The body in Western society has become a major battle ground between asceticism and hedonism, control and suppression versus letting go and ashamed display. It has become an ideal, a vision, a project that has to be pursued and made, refashioned..." By comparing and contrasting such radically different world views, and looking at ways that each continues to shape the other, the authors present challenging and rewarding investigations into the mysterious nature of life, health, and our attempts to understand them.

The chapter on taijquan discusses both the health and martial aspects and traces its history from the Buddhist Shaolin Temples, the Daoist Zhang Sanfeng, and the military officer Chen Wangting, (who in the 17th century began to teach what was to become known as the Chen style of taijiquan). The authors also discuss the Yang family lineage, leading from Yang Luchan, through his sons Yang Jianhou and Yang Banhou, to their sons Yang Shaohao and Yang Chenfu, to Zhang Qinlin, and finally to Zheng Manqing and Wang Yannian (Yen-nien). Interestingly the Michuan system, as taught by Wang Yen-nien, is translated as an "esoteric" style, as opposed to "hidden tradition" . It Is a well written chapter, with useful information about Cheng Manqinq, T.T. Liang, Jou Tsung-Hwa, and of course Wang Yen-nien.

Health and Long Life, The Chinese Way is a valuable resource for anyone who is interested in taking an active role in their own health and well-being. It is accessible, well written, expertly researched and will benefit anyone who is looking to deepen their understanding of "alternative" health practices.

—Thomas W. Campbell

Notes from the Field

In regard to those who have a problem with the term "self defense" I would like to paraphrase Shakespeare... " me thinks they dost protest too much". Looking at the totality of our AYMTA objectives and the context of the sentence in which "self defense" is found, I personally find it to be a mere part of a much larger concept. Lets not overlook the obvious: Tai Ji Quan has always been included as a martial art. The historical roots of all Tai Ji Quan as well as our own particular style are steeped in the concept of self-defense as well as the other facets that are included in that sentence of our objectives.

I would like to suggest that people also look at self-defense in a larger frame than mere physical combat. Through our practice we strengthen our immune system that helps us fight illness and disease. We maintain a proper blood pressure that prevents the likelihood of heart problems. By keeping our legs strong and our balance integral we avoid the risk of falling and subsequent injury as we age. We develop skills in yielding and deflecting which help us to not only avoid potential conflicts with others but can also serve to help us to avoid moving objects such as falling boards or cars reversing in a parking lot. With a calm mind and strong spirit we decrease the chances of suffering from stress and depression. These factors are a whole aspect of self defense today that are more likely to cause us harm than a mugger or potential attacker.

The yin-yang symbol represents opposites. To remove self-defense as a part of Tai Ji Quan will serve only to create an imbalance.

Michuan Tai Ji Chuan in Todos Santos, Baja California Sur, Mexico

March was a very fortunate month for the small but dedicated Todos Santos group. First we received a visit from Terri Pelliteri, who spent a week with Irene Patch and led the group through two classes as instructor, Steve Merrill (much to his chagrin) was too sick to even be present. As we operate pretty much in a bubble down here, Terri's visit was a wonderful opportunity for the group to experience the form and style of another teacher. We look forward to Terri and any other YMT practitioners coming to visit us.

At the end of the month, Charlie Adamec, visited Todos Santos for the third year in a row of Wudang Sword Workshops as well as a well-deserved rest from his intensive studies. Over the first two workshops Charlie introduced the form in two parts. This third workshop stitched the entire form together and dealt more intensively with particular details throughout the form. Charlie spent most of his mornings taking advantage of the empty beach out in front the house to do his own practice. One of his highlights was a seal lying on the beach watching him. Perhaps the seal had hauled out onto the beach to practice his own particular form of neigong. **—Steve Merrill**

Here are some photos from last Saturday's Los Angeles Taiji Day 2004 ceremonies.

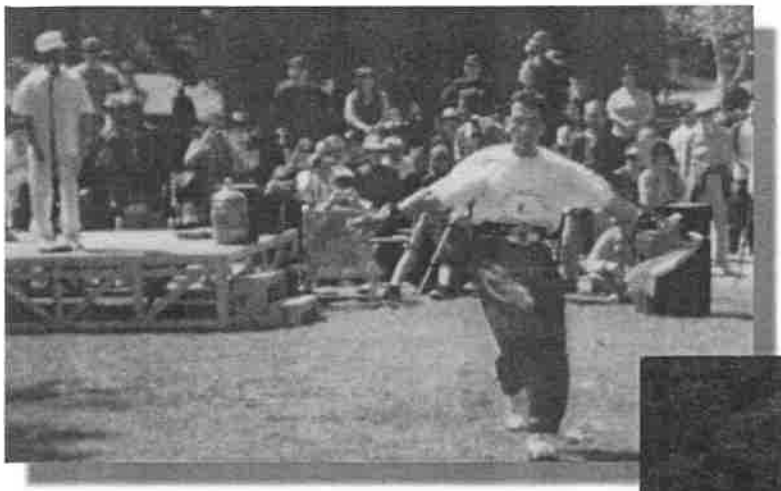
Anne Lee, Jane Hsu, Mrs. Wada, myself and Harry Wu are on this page.

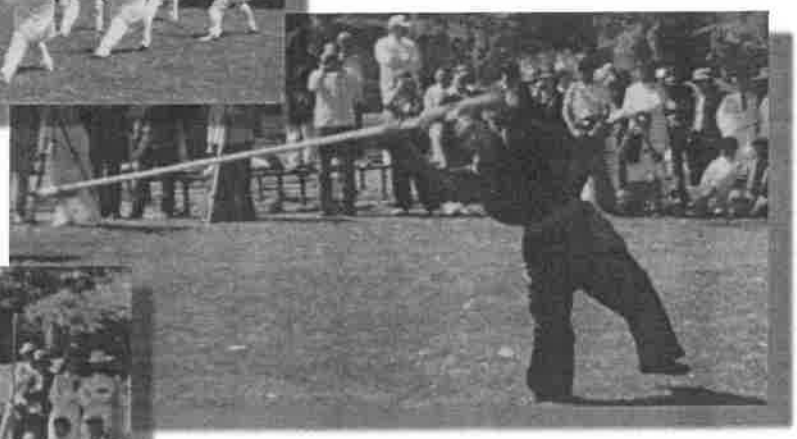
From 9 A.M. to 11 A.M. there were three sessions of group performance of the '24' taiji form. From 11 A.M. onward there were public demonstrations.

Interestingly, a black man wearing full dreadlocks introduced himself to Harry as a practioner of YMT hailing from Boston. He was scheduled to demonstrate. Note the bottom photo on the next page of the three children performing a staff form; the young lady on the left, about 7-8 years old, gave a private demonstration of her one-handed staff twirling ability to Mrs. Wada and me. I don't think I've ever seen a staff twirled so fast! She and her friend couldn't stop giggling. Mrs. Wada was glad she hadn't brought her staff.

The color and festivities on a bright, clear SoCal morning were a real treat to experience. The park, associated with the Rose Bowl, was beautiful. The skills demonstrated were breathtaking. I'm sorry I didn't get a photo of the many different taiji groups' banners that were displayed.

A fine morning indeed. **—John Whittaker**





Student's Notebook: Ba Fa Intensive
Learning the Eight Hand Methods in Eight hours

By Marc Andonian, Ph.D.

Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan (YMT) is a complete system with a three-part empty hand form, tui shou or push hands, weapons forms and techniques, and san shou or free hands sparring. Our tui shou tradition includes individual exercises, single and two-handed exercises, and fixed and moving step routines. One of the two-handed, moving step routines is called the "Da Lu," sometimes translated as the "big roll back" or cornering Da Lu.

The second is called the Ba Fa Da Lu, often referred to in YMT circles as the 13 postures. Ba Fa is often translated as the eight hand methods or energies. When Ba Fa is coupled with Wubu or five directions, we get the 13 postures—the foundation for all taijiquan forms. This is sometimes referred to as the Ba Fa Da Lu—representing this two-person exercise as a "dance" with martial principles and intent. Scott Rodell, Director of the Great River Taoist Center recently held an eight hour intensive workshop to teach the Ba Fa to students and friends of Still Mountain T'ai Chi Center.

In preparation for the seminar, I reviewed my growing library of books on taijiquan and push hands and conducted a number of searches of the internet for background material on the Ba Fa and the Da Lu. I was surprised to find virtually nothing substantial written about these series of two-person taijiquan exercises, despite literally millions of references to tai chi or taijiquan, over 50,000 mentions of push hands, over 20,000 for tui shou and less than a 5000 each for Ba Fa, Da Lu, or 13 postures! What I did find, suggested that the Ba Fa Da Lu was considered to be a push hand drill in some styles like Chen, but is treated as a distinct mini-form or series of exercises in the Yang style. Most of the references indicated that the Da Lu employs the eight basic movements (péng, lǚ, an, ji, cǎi, liè, zhǒu and kào) and a series of stepping routines that work the diagonals or corners. It is considered to be an excellent training routine to help develop various receiving or releasing energies or jings. Many of the sites referred to the Da Lu as a "dance"—creating images that obscure Taijiquan's martial origins and application. The results of my background research left me eager to begin our workshop with Scott. Having taken several excellent workshops with Scott, I was confident that he would enlighten us on the eight movements of the Ba Fa Da Lu, from both the martial and civil sides of our Michuan system.

We begin all of our seminars with a series of traditional YMT basic exercises. We do a series of front and side roll downs, a little Zhan Zhuan, and we carry a few tigers to the mountain! For tui shou oriented workshops, we also incorporate a number of Master Wang's basic push hands exercises (spiral up and down to the open and closed sides) to get warmed up. We also add some "Turn and Pat the Body" exercises to develop our tenacity or "springiness," flexibility in the waist, and our verticality.

Once everyone was warmed up, Scott talked about the importance of the eight basic energies or movements, which when coupled in various combinations with the five directions provided the foundation for our form. He demonstrated the Ba Fa Da Lu as a single person exercise, and then as a two-person exercise with Bede Bidlack, Director of Still Mountain Tai Chi Center. Scott then worked through each of the basic movements in sequence along with a number of their applications. We took time to practice each of the movements individually, and with fellow students serving as *duifang*s or opposites. For each of the exercises, we also spent time practicing the techniques and steps to neutralize with varying speeds and levels of fa jing or energy release. This article summarizes this student's notes from the seminar, and is intended to give the flavor of a focused learning event from a student's perspective, not to teach the 13 postures or Ba Fa Da Lu.

When practiced as an individual exercise, the Ba Fa Da Lu contains four moves in one direction, and four movements in the reverse direction. Typically the player begins moving forward with 1) Cǎi (pull down or pluck), 2) Liè (grasp or twist), 3) Zhǒu (elbow strike), 4) Kào (shoulder strike), and then reverses with 5) Péng (ward off), 6) Lǚ (rollback), 7) àn (push), and 8) jǐ (press). Similarly, the opposite player begins backward with Péng, Lǚ, An, Ji, then moves forward with Cǎi, Liè, Zhǒu and Kào.

Person A (forward)	**Person B (backward)**
1. Cǎi (pull down or pluck)	*1. Péng (ward off)*
2. Liè (grasp or twist)	*2. Lǚ (rollback)*
3. Zhǒu (elbow strike)	*3. An (push)*
4. Kào (shoulder strike)	*4. Jǐ (press)*
Person A (backward)	**Person B (forward)**
5. Péng (ward off)	5. Cǎi (pull down or pluck)
6. Lǚ (rollback)	6. Liè (grasp or twist)
7. An (push)	7. Zhǒu (elbow strike)
8. Jǐ (press)	8. Kào (shoulder strike)

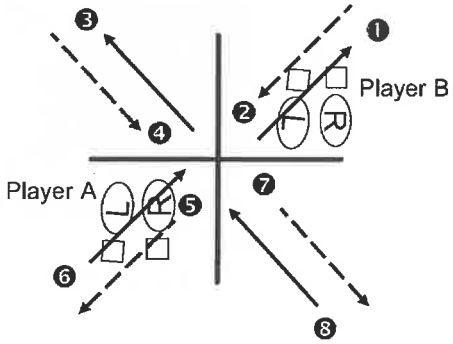
The linear sequence is that player A moves forward and player B moves backwards (4 complementary movements). Both players are moving "out" from their central starting position. Then, the players reverse direction and Player B moves forward and player A moves backwards along the same line—returning to the starting position. This completes a single cycle.

With each completed cycle, the players switch hands and steps to the right. The players effectively switch sides of the body that are used for the movements and then work another diagonal. Player A "starts" two cycles by moving in the forward direction. Then Player B has two cycles as the person moving forward.

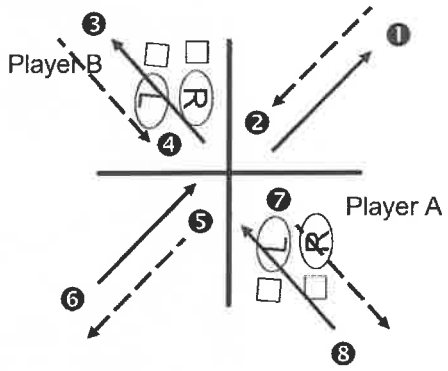
Each forward movement is "neutralized" by the respective reverse movement of the opposite player. This sequence is performed to each of the four diagonals, with a foot, hand and direction change occurring at the conclusion of each forward and backward cycle until all of the diagonals are worked. The process occurs in a counter-clockwise direction. With practice, the players increase their speed, and fajing. What begins as a beautifully choreographed "dance" can quickly become a frenzy of movement. As one develops their kung fu (skill earned through persistent effort), the exercise can become an intense contest between the players.

Setting the Pattern

Player A starts with the feet in the lower left quadrant. The first movement is a Căi to the right diagonal. The Ba Fa Da Lu starts with a step ❶ to the upper right quadrant with the right foot (forward moving person), or a step backwards with the left foot (backward moving person). The sequence moves four steps out, then four steps back to the center ❷.

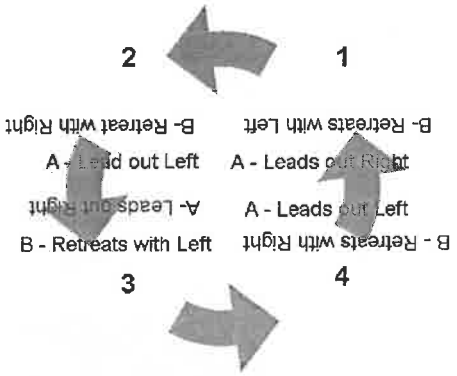


Next, Player A and Player B each take a step to the right, then the hand positions change position. Both players started originally with their right hands up at forehead height and their left hands at chin height. With the side step, each player brings their left hand up on the inside—so that they are now raised to forehead height, and their respective right hands drop to chin height.



With this side step to the right, and the sequence moves to the diagonal in the upper left quadrant. Players proceed in the same orientation (Player A going forward, Player B going Backwards) they had in the first round, except that the sequence works the same sequences on the opposite side of the body. Player A moves out from the center ❸ for the first 4 moves, then returns to the center ❹ with the backwards moves. Working each of the eight movements on both sides of the body is typical of the Michuan Taijiquan system.

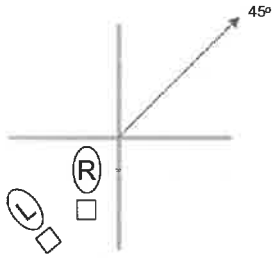
The sequence continues in a counter clockwise direction, with steps to the right between sequences ❷ and ❸, ❹ and ❺, ❻ and ❼. The cycle can stop when all of the diagonals are worked in each direction for each player. This approach allows each player to work the eight movements on each side of the body from both the starting forward positions, and the moving backwards positions. Training each movement in each direction provides a strong foundation for internalizing the form.



The following sections will summarize the basic moves from the perspective of the first player moving forward and backward. The duifang moves in reverse with the opposite or reciprocal moves as described in the table above. Once again, this reflects this student's perspective from a one-day training workshop.

Starting Position

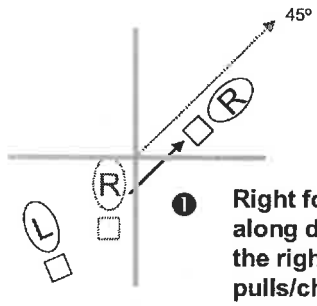
Before starting the Da Lu, it is necessary to begin with the correct starting position. To enable a sound stance, the left foot is placed at a 45° angle, with the right foot facing forward with "getaway room" (you can pull the right foot back and not hit the left heel). Root/weight is in the left foot, with the right foot extended forward for "touch point" balance (at the yongquan point) and to serve as a "brake" should the player be pulled forward. Next, the right hand is elevated to the height of the eyes/forehead—palm facing inward; the left hand is about shoulder/neck height—palm facing outward to protect the core. This is a traditional taijiquan ready or fighting stance.



Starting Position: Standing, right hand raised, forehead height, palm facing in, left hand is chin height, palm facing out.

Căi

The first move of the Ba Fa Da Lu is **Căi** (pull down or pluck). Begin with a step forward with the right foot, pulling down (pluck or chop) with right hand (against a péng). This move is not down and then forward, but more like a diagonal descent down a 45° slope. As you intercept the ground in front of you, the energy can effectively be "bounced" into the duifang—decisively just above waist height. According to Scott, it is important not to pull below the waist or you are likely to create an opening that the duifang can enter. It is important to use your listening, sticking and following skills in this move, and to time the pull down and step to finish as the right foot establishes its root.

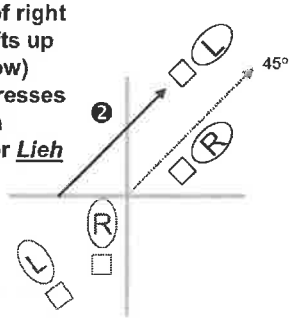


❶ **Right foot moves along diagonal to the right. Right hand pulls/chops down with a *Tsai* movement**

Liè

The second move is **Liè** (grasp or twist). The player, rooted in their right leg at the end of the Căi, steps up and forward along the diagonal with the left foot. The right hand is extended about should height, palm down. The left hand moves forward just above waist height, palm up. The left hand lifts up, while the right hand pushes down, effectively twisting an elbow (in the left hand) up, and the wrist (in right hand) down, locking the arm. The player is rooted in the right foot and spirals down to the right throughout this twist movement, with the extended left foot serving as a touch point or brake. The twist movement is aligned with the player's centerline to ensure structural integrity and the arm joint is controlled—directing energy through the duifang's center.

According to Scott, everything is "on" all the time. Scott refers to the taiji classics...be still, like a mountain, move like a great river...(hmmm...sounds like a couple of Taijiquan schools I know...). The players are not just making the twist motion, but must visualize the elbow and wrist as connection points through the motion. The lifting hand (with the duifang's elbow) must be higher than the other hand. In addition, Scott recommends that you keep the left foot internally "active"—ready to kick. This gives you more "oomph" in the move. Keeping your movements active, full of energy and power, gives you a better likelihood of "getting the split."



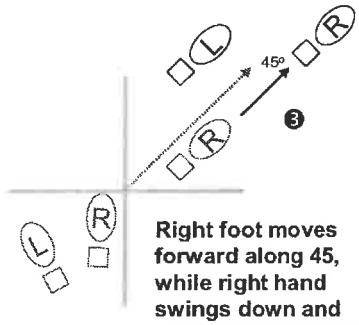
Left foot moves forward along the diagonal ahead of right foot. Left hand lifts up (catching an elbow) and right hand presses down (catching a wrist) in a twist or *Lieh* movement

In Scott's discussion of applications, he described the duifang, facing you, grabbing your right shoulder with their right hand. The player would deflect to the right with the right hand/forearm using Lǔ (roll back), then pulling the wrist downward with the right hand. The left hand lifts up, catching the elbow and the joint is twisted. To maximize effect, the player can catch a central biceps tendon in the "elbow pit" with the middle finger of the left hand—for added control. With the joint twisted, the player pushes the duifang's wrist into their center and can easily push the duifang out. While it can be difficult to neutralize an elbow lock, Scott says that the duifang can sometimes turn to the outside (in this case counter clockwise) to free or "unwind" the lock.

Zhǒu

The third step is **Zhǒu** (elbow strike). Once the Liè is executed, the root is transferred to the left foot and the player brings the right foot to the left instep. The right hand circles underneath toward the body—folding into an elbow strike. The right hand is closed in a fist; the left hand covers the fist (left palm facing down, fingers on top of the fist). The fist is held at the center of the body, shoulder height, and aligned with the player's center. The player steps forward with the right foot pointing to the duifang's centerline, moving forward into elbow strike. The player springs up and forward—but does not over extend. Any incoming energy is grounded to the root.

There are three ways to move into Zhǒu—bringing the close-fisted hand in from over the top vertically, horizontally from the front, or vertically from underneath. In the Ba Fa, the move to Zhǒu is done by bringing the fist up from underneath. When the posture is correctly executed, there is a vertical line from the shoulder through the knee, through the yongquan ("bubbling well") point in the foot. Maintaining the principle of verticality is essential. Under or overextending this position corrupts and weakens the posture.



Right foot moves forward along 45, while right hand swings down and inward making a fist, to fold elbow into elbow strike or *Zhou*

Scott warns that it is important not rotate the elbow up or down—but strike through the duifang's centerline. Be sure to maintain getaway room. Do not put more than 20% weight in the front leg (you should be able to bounce it). Lead with the front knee forward, heel up slightly so that you are connecting with the ball of the foot.

Scott notes that if the front heel is down, it is easy to be pulled down or forward; but if the heel is up and the structure is connected properly through the bubbling well, the front leg serves as a solid stabilizer or brake—preventing a forward pull. It is also important not to over reach or extend the elbow—as it is easy to cripple your structure. Instead of over-reaching, consider taking a slightly longer stance. The concept is to sink and push in a manner that is "springy."

As with all of the movements in our form, structure is critical. Scott demonstrated the importance of good structural alignment. If the posture is executed properly, it is very difficult to uproot; however, slight deformities can easily cripple the structure.

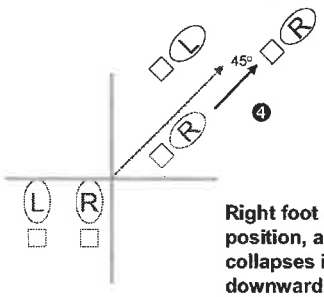
Once you feel pressure or pushback on the elbow strike, the elbow/arm "collapses" and the player drops into the next posture—Kào—or shoulder strike.

Kào

The fourth forward movement in the sequence is **Kào** (shoulder strike). Kào is considered to be one of the most powerful forms of energy release in the form. According to Scott, this is one of the most difficult movements in Taijiquan to execute properly. The challenge is to keep the root and power coming from the rear leg, while transitioning down into the front leg as the

energy is released. In the form, we often practice slowly, so it is difficult to understand that this process occurs very quickly in a real situation.

Like all moves, Kào can be executed from both sides, but in this example, we are executing the movement to the right, from Zhŏu. As stated in the previous section, if the player receives energy to the elbow/arm when executing Zhŏu, the arm "collapses" and the player moves into Kào. During this move, the Left Hand (that was "bracing" the fist in elbow strike) comes forward (palm out) with a tiger's mouth to the shoulder—thumb at armpit level. This protects the neck/face from a strike or kick. Simultaneously, the elbow strike collapses, with the right hand dropping to mid-thigh, palm up, to protect the groin against a kick. During the palm up places the "hard bones" of the forearm (radius) facing out (and blood vessels and nerves in the arm facing in)—protecting the arm as well.



Right foot stays in position, and the *Zhou* collapses into a downward shoulder strike *Kao*, with the left hand protecting the shoulder/chin – palm facing out, thumb at armpit; right hand dropped, mid thigh, palm facing up.

According to Scott, when Kào is executed properly with flow, the power is issued from the rear leg and never really goes to the front leg—but transitions through it. The move is swift and hard. The force or energy is akin to a hammer being hit on a nail. His demonstrated Kào jing on me several times, and the force is more like that from a sledgehammer! The head of the hammer (shoulders) hits down, pivoting on the handle (rear leg). When the movement is completed, the front knee is forward—over the yongquan point, and the forward heel is raised slightly.

With the "end" of Kào, the player drops into the forward leg (right in this case) and comes up with an implied hand/palm strike with the left hand. This helps reinforce the connection between the hand that expresses the jing that originates from the opposite foot.

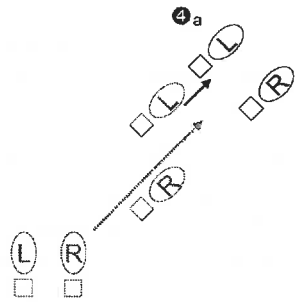
Scott says that the power of Kào is really expressed over the entire side of the body. He showed that the Kào jing could be directed to the duifang's shoulder, chest, all the way down to the knee or lower body. As with Zhŏu, when the movement is completed, there is a vertical line between the forward shoulder, through the knee, through the yongquan point. There is also a straight line from the back foot to the rear shoulder - like the handle of the hammer. Scott warns that breaking the line is like breaking the handle of a hammer—no force is produced by the hammer head (shoulder strike).

It is important to maintain clear directionality through the shoulder in Kào. The player needs to be careful not to rotate at the waist or shoulders as they drop into the shoulder strike. Scott notes that the posture plane should be flat—as if you were lying on your back on the ground with back, buttocks and feet all flat.

This ends the forward-sequence of four movements. The next section covers the reciprocal movements done in the reverse direction.

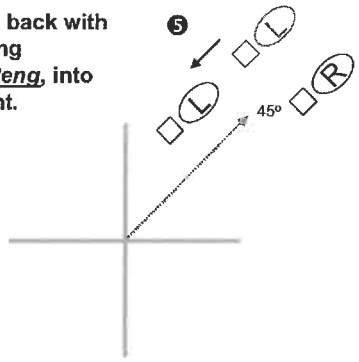
Péng

Péng (ward off) is the next movement after Kào. In this sequence, Péng is exerted in two directional phases—forward or upward, and retreating or downward. One could say that the first phase (forward/upward) is exerting traditional Péng jing (like water supporting a moving boat), and the second is "receiving" Péng jing. After completing Kào, the player stands up on the right foot using an upward péng or ward off right. Upon standing on the right foot, the left comes forward to mid-step of the right foot.



Player stands up on right foot, bringing left foot forward. Right hand swings up in upward *Peng* to the starting position palm facing toward forehead, with left hand protecting chin, palm facing outward

Upon completing the forward, upward péng, the player reverses direction, stepping back with the left foot, warding off with the right arm. This downward péng effectively receives and grounds the energy from the duifang's Cǎi or pull down. This movement begins the reverse sequence.

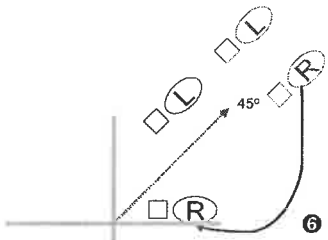


Player steps back with left foot, using downward *Peng*, into ward-off right.

Lǚ

The player moves from Péng into **Lǚ** or roll back while stepping backwards. Lǚ is used in the Ba Fa to neutralize a Liè (twist) being initiated by the duifang. First, step back with the right leg—making a half circle as you step back. It is important to ensure you have adequate getaway room on the reverse step. Simultaneously, you spiral up to the right with a roll back using the left arm, bent at the elbow. As you spiral up to the right, you pivot on the ball of the left foot—which is now in front. The right forearm/wrist rotates so the palm turns out. This adds a characteristic spiral motion to the movement that makes the form "slippery."

Rollback neutralizes the duifang's incoming energy by leading it into nothing. At the same time, when properly executed, it allows you to direct energy to the duifang's centerline. It is important that with all rollbacks that there is elbow to elbow connection to help control the duifang and maximize the effectiveness of the movement.

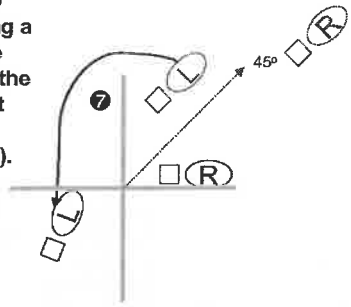


Player steps back with a semicircle with the right foot, spiraling up to the right, applying a rollback *Lu* with the left arm. Engaging the dui fang at the elbow with the left forearm, and spiraling the right hand to turn the palm out in a deflection

An

When Lǚ effectively neutralizes an incoming Liè, the duifang transitions into Zhǒu, or elbow strike. The receiving player uses **àn** (push) to neutralize the incoming Zhǒu. To accomplish this, you first step back with the left leg, with foot tracing a half circle. As with the reverse step used in Lǚ, the step is a half circle, to ensure you have adequate getaway room.

Player steps back with a semicircle with the left foot, sitting into the left foot, exerting a push or *An* with the left hand engaging the elbow, and the right hand, the forearm (trapping the elbow).



In this case, the player uses àn to intercept or catch the elbow, receiving the energy, grounding it to the root, and then bouncing or pushing it back to duifang. The hands intercept or cradle the elbow, with fingers pointing on each side of the elbow (heel of the palms together). This approach allows for maximum control for a push. A slight modification of this "palm/elbow cradle" is to move the hand on the duifang's "wrist side"—forward a bit—so you can control both the elbow and the wrist. In the case of this example, the Player A would have their left hand

on the left side of the elbow and their right hand closer to the duifang's wrist.

Scott indicates that the timing of the àn is critical to be effective. He recommends that you let the duifang brings out just enough energy so they get hard (bring out their steel) and sense that they "have something"—then ground it and bounce or push it back. Receive the energy as you are sitting into the left leg—coordinating the movement so it is transparent to the duifang. It is critical not to let the duifang know you are going to push back. When you push, no more than 20% of your weight is in the front leg. This allows you to bounce the energy, and use your front leg as a brake—should you be pulled forward or downward.

Scott also recommends that you use your hands to sense where the duifang's centerline is and push directly to the center. Depending on the situation, you can use short, medium or long energy in the àn. He notes that it is important to understand the difference between àn, and jǐ (press). àn can come from either leg—or both, depending on the circumstances, and can be used upward, horizontal or downward directions.

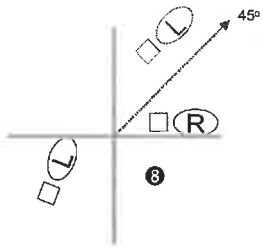
Ji

After executing An, the player moves into **jǐ** (Press), with the left palm facing toward the duifang, joining with the right palm facing inward. In the Ba Fa, the press is typically applied to the duifang's upper arm as s/he transitions from Zhǒu to Kào. Press can be used effectively in a number of places that require a burst of strong, short energy.

Scott indicated that in his experience, he has found that most people do not know how to press properly—they put their hands together and push (use àn jing). He recommends that serious players read and cultivate the "Song of Press" in the Yang Family transmissions. Two sides come together with one intention, against the duifang, combining in one moment. He indicates that jǐ is necessary to counter act the "demon hammer" of Kào; it cannot be done effectively with push.

Scott demonstrated the difference between àn jing and jǐ jing on several parts of my body. jǐ jing felt much like my bones were being "bitten" as the short energy projected in and "exploded" at "targeted depths"—something like a depth charge… àn jing, had a very different feeling—it carried more of a longitudinal momentum typical of a push or shove. Depending on where and how these energies are released, the effects can be quite strong.

Ji happens in two phases that are very close together. First, the player exerting press indirectly receives the energy from the duifang. In the Ba Fa—it is coming from the duifang's Kào, and is bounced to the back leg (in this case left) and routed back to the duifang's arm. The process results in a squeezing sensation between the hands and the point of contact with the duifang, and a force response like a ball bouncing off of a wall.

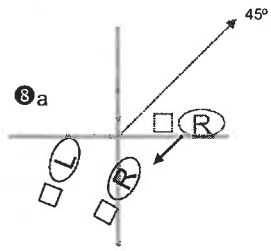


Player transitions from An into *Ji* (press) with the right hand palm facing inward, left palm facing outward, making contact with duifang. Two phases of the press, one receives/neutralizes the energy from Kao, the second one presses out.

Scott says that jǐ can really come from the back or front leg, and is ideally used to collapse small spaces with forceful short energy. This is very different that the push energy or effect of àn. In the Ba Fa, jǐ can be exerted in two phases—a press down, followed by a press up. When the player exerts jǐ jing, it is important to line up the press with the duifang's centerline.

When using Ji, you can use any two points on the body, as long as they align with the duifang's center. You can press on the wrist, arm or palm—anywhere you can get two points of your body to come together with the duifang's. In addition, you can follow any press with a second press. Typically you issue the first press from the rear, and follow it quickly with a press from the front leg. Together, this creates a tremendous force.

The second phase of press (press up) completes the reverse sequence, and the player stands up on the left foot raising the right hand to the starting position.



Player stands up on left foot, raising right hand to starting position, left hand protecting chin.

As indicated at the beginning of the article, each of these cycles concludes with a right step and a change of

hands—effectively alternating the side of the body and the direction of the movements.

Scott recommends that students explore each of these movements in depth—to fully learn how to use and neutralize them. Using techniques such as the "bowling alley" approach (practicing a single movement a multitude of times as you progress across a room and back) gives you a wonderful opportunity to practice issuing, receiving and neutralizing the energy from your duifang. It is important to fully understand all three perspectives to develop your skill. Using focused practice (e.g., several hours on a single movement or energies—as part of a Saturday morning class) affords a student to get the equivalent of months of focused practice on a single movement—so they can develop real skill.

In a previous seminar on Chinese Swordsmanship, Scott said that it takes 10,000 repetitions of a sword cut to become proficient. In this seminar, he said the same principle applies to our form movements. Practice, practice, practice.

We concluded our seminar by working all of the movement in each of the four directions. While we learned the basic routine and many of its applications during the day, it was clear that we would all need to practice. This is particularly true as we work the opposite sides of our bodies, and start in the reverse direction from which we were taught.

Scott Rodell's seminars continue to be a wonderful mix of in depth learning and skill development tailored for students of all levels, while challenging even the most skilled of players.

Scott maintains an excellent forum on his school's website (www.grtc.org), and answers questions about taijiquan and Chinese swordsmanship with aplomb. Scott has also just published his next book - *Taiji Notebook for Martial Artists*—that contains many insights, based on over 30 years of practicing taijiquan, and being a disciple student of Master Wang. Information about seminars or books is available through Scott's website.

Scott regularly refers to the classics, and says that the book *T'ai-chi Touchstones: Yang Family Secret Transmissions* by Douglas Wile (1983) should be considered essential reading, along with Master Wang's "red books" on the form and applications. I refer to these resources regularly in my study and practice.

I have also found that the series of tapes on the Michuan Taijiquan Tui Shou exercises, produced by Tom Campbell are extremely useful. These tapes cover an intensive seminar by Master Wang, for the New York Michuan Taijiquan Association, conducted in 1996 and include detailed descriptions and demonstrations of the Ba Fa, along with 14 other tui shou exercises. These well-produced tapes are available through the AYMTA web site (www.aymta.org), and provide you with a wonderful opportunity to learn from Master Wang, with translation and demonstration by Julia Fairchild.

Scott Rodell, director of Great River Taoist Center in Washington, D.C. (www.grtc.org), conducts periodic seminars for Still Mountain T'ai Chi Center in conjunction with Bede Bidlack, Still Mountain's director—and a senior student of Scott Rodell. Marc Andonian, Ph.D. is an exercise physiologist, gerontologist who has been studying Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan since 2001 as a student of Bede Bidlack.

Letter from Taipei: Election Results

Hello Everyone,

The board of directors of the National Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan Association of the ROC (Taiwan) is pleased to announce the results of its first elections held on April 30, 2005 in Taipei:

The 32-member board of directors elected eight people to the steering committee: Wang Yen-nien, president; Julia Fairchild and Yeh Yun-wu, vice presidents; Su Wen-yan, Luo Qingxiang, Xu Xinxiong, Li Shaohua, and Wang Bailu, directors.

Chen Caiben (non-board member) was appointed secretary.

Board members are elected for four-year terms. The association address is the same as the Yen-nien Daoguan (see below). An email address and web site have yet to be established; in the meanwhile, please use the Daoguan email address. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Julia Fairchild
NYMTA (Taiwan)

WORKSHOP REPORT

By Hervé Marest

Study of the applications of the movements jin bu, gao tan ma, cai shou xia shi, fen jiao (step back, pat high on the horse, draw downward and squat, separate the feet) from the section two of the Form movements." Led by Hervé Marest at the seminar of the YMT Teachers' European College in March 2005.

Following a demonstration, these movements were both practiced about ten times on each side, as they are shown in Master Wang's book of *yongfa*. Two rules were suggested: do not stop to start talking after the first try, and practice slowly and as gently as possible (both partners must work together to ensure the smooth running of the movement.)

During the exercise, precisions were asked and answers provided. *(comment: I had brought Master Wang's book of yongfa with me so that everyone may refer to it. According to me, the movements suggested in it are the ideal aid to acquire the proper energy of each application and also to acquire the will in the gesture (*yi*) and to fill the Form. I advocate a thorough and systematic study of this book by all practising people.)*

The question of the martial efficiency of the movements was asked. I answered that we will see this in the second part of the workshop, for the moment there was no question of looking for any martial efficiency, but of integrating the yongfa with complete peace of mind. We can assimilate this work to these of scales in music. You must first work slowly before being able to go faster, and especially practice them a lot.

The gentleness and the participation of both partners to the smooth running of the movement are essential. *(comment: if it does not work, we must not blame the partner's supposed lack of suppleness or coordination, but together, with our spirit, overcome the toughness and the lack of knowledge about the movement and our own body.)*

During the second part of the workshop, we tried to search for the martial efficiency of these movements when faced with fast and clear attacks.

The following preconditions were stated:

- As long as we are not in a real fight, conventions are needed. The first one is that the one who punches must do it boldly without deflecting from the line where his/her partner was at the start of the action. Ideally speaking, you must punch as if there were no one, as if you were doing it in the void. It is possible to hit with your weight on your front leg or your back leg while respecting the empty and the full, the yin and the yang (right fist closed- weight on left leg, left fist closed-weight on right leg)

- As long as you do not have enough *qi* to make the one who punches bounce with your body, you had better shift. Which often means: change line to the left or to the right. That may be done by shifting forward (as mentioned in the Classics) or backward, or staying at the same level. This shift is often accompanied by a rotation: turning towards the partner or away from him/her. *(comment: the shift can be different from the form. In gao tan ma, for example, in the form, you stay on the same line. With a real punch, you had better shift. This does not mean that the form should be changed. The form has its own logic that is proper to respect.)*

- Some movements can be done on the partner's both sides (by shifting towards the front or back side of the partner who punches).

- It is proper to respect as much as possible the arms movements. But when confronted to a real punch some parts of the gesture can be tightened.

- During the dodge, in fast speed, contact is not compulsory (even if they occur in the *yongfa*), but you must anyway respect the arm form to keep the movement and posture unity and strength.

- The strike with the edge of one's hand, for *gao tan ma*, and the kick for *fenjiao*, are not the end of the movement. You must continue moving, walking or dancing around your partner, for a second, in order to learn not to lose your coordination and prematurely break his/her attention. This is often seen in boxing: one of the opponents gives a good punch and, being very happy about it, relaxes his/her attention. He/she then gets two punches back.

These various conditions are shown, and then we go on to the practice always with the recommendation to do at least ten applications on each side and not to stop to talk.

Very quickly, it turns out that a majority of us cannot practice at once at fast speed for lack of habit in such a work.

Intermediate exercises without partners are suggested to learn to move by dodging.

In order to help to get rid of any apprehension about punching two solutions are suggested

1. Punching is done more slowly so that it gives time to familiarise with the gesture, and then faster for more advanced people.
2. Both partners stand three meters apart. Then the one who should punch straightens his/her arm forward, fist closed, and starts walking slowly toward his/her partner who has then enough time to make his gesture without panicking.

It must be repeated that working the applications, like in tuishou, has to be done in the greatest peacefulness and with the greatest constancy to benefit from it.

WORLDWIDE DIRECTORY OF YANGJIA MICHUAN TAIJIQUAN ORGANIZATIONS

BRAZIL
Thomas H. H. Cheng
Av. Aclimação, 68,
Cj. 82 CEP: 01531-000
Aclimação, São Paulo – S.P. Brasil
Tel: (0-11)32078565 Fax:(0-11)32096539
email: tch@brastone.com

CANADA
WORLD YMT FEDERATION (CANADA)
Ronald and Mireille Wensel
1962 New Chester Road
RR#1 Moser River, Nova Scotia,
B0J 2K0, Canada
Tel/Fax: (902) 347-2250
email: rmwensel@dunmac.com

Yann Houde
371 Boul York Sud
Gaspe, Quebec, G4X 2L2, Canada
email: cassidy@moncourrier.com

Henry Wang
2133 Downey Ave.
Commox BC, V9N 4K2, Canada
Tel: 604-339-7872

ESTONIA
Tarfu:
Urmas Lest
Mobile: 372-56-68-93-77
Renata Soukand
email: renata@ut.ee

Tallinn:
Andres Toom
email: andreas.toom@mail.ee

EUROPE
COLLÈGE EUROPÉEN DES ENSEIGNANTS DU YMT
Nicole Henriod, Secretary
32, Chemin du Village
CH01012 Lausanne, Switzerland
Tel.: (41) 21-728-44-58
Fax: (41) 21-728-44-61
email: nicole.h@worldcom.ch

AMICALE

- **BULLETIN**
  Hervé Marest
  14 rue des Fougereuses, Maligné
  49540 Martigné-Briand, France
  Tel: (33) 2-41-48-70-15
  Mobile: (33) 6 63 08 70 15
  email: herve.marest@free.fr
- **PRESIDENT**
  Zouzou Vallotton
  Route de Chièvres
  1880 Bex, Switzeland
  Tel: 41-24-46-34-504
  email: zouzouvallotton@hotmail.com
- **TREASURER**
  Jacques Lomard
  93 avenue de Stasbourg
  67400 Illkirch, France
  Tel: 03-88-67-83-20

FRANCE
I.F.A.M
Directeur des cours J.L. Saby
Tel: 0033-553-87-91-95

GERMANY
Perra-Schmalenback-Maerker
Von-Kahr-Str. 82
80999 Muenchen, Germany
Tel: (49 89)8103-9682 Fax: (49 89)8103-9684
email: petra_schmalenbach@hotmail.com

HUNGARY
Daniel Rozsa
1144 Budapest Füredi, u. 19/b, Hongorie
Tel: (36-1)2202-316 Mob: (36-30)4203-289
email: noadcoco@yahoo.fr

ITALY
ASSOCIATION WUXING
Ardito Gianvittorio
Via O. Regnoli 10/L, 00152 Roma, Italy
Tel: (065) 833-2791
Tel/Fax: (065) 834-8563
email: funzling@quipo.it, wuxing@libero.it

IVORY COAST
YANGJIA MICHUAN TAIJIQUAN FEIZHOU XIEHUI
03 BP881 Abidjan 03, Ivory Coast
Contact: Denis Banhoro

JAPAN
Kayoko Imai
Royal Corporation, Room 702
2-7-3, Honcho
Niitsu, Niigata Prefecture, Japan
email: K_imai@imail.plala.or.jp

MEXICO
Stephen Merrill
A.P. 77
Todos Santos, BCS, 23305 Mexico
Message Ph: 52-114-50109
email: rincondelcielo@todossantos-baja.com

NORTH AMERICA
AMERICAN YMT ASSOCIATION (AYMTA)

- **PRESIDENT**
  Charles Adamec
  2718 Webster Street
  Berkeley CA 94705
  Tel: (510) 644-3724
  email: cgadamec@yahoo.com
- **JOURNAL**
  Don Klein
  1700 Robbins Road #244
  Grand Haven, MI 49417 USA
  Tel: (616) 842-5096
  email: dklein@triton.net
- **TREASURER**
  Kay Reese
  P.O. Box 173
  Grand Haven, MI 49417 USA
  Tel: (616) 846-7704
  email: kreese@triton.net

REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA
YMT CLUB OF SOUTH AFRICA
48, Kidbrooke Place
P.O. Box 801
7200 Hermanus, Republic of South Africa
Tel: (27) 2831-61842
Fax: (27) 2831-61307
email: dnagtega@csir.co.za
Contact: Dann Nagtegaal

RUSSIA
THE RUSSIAN ASSOCIATION OF YMT
86 Vavilova Str., Apt. 40
Moscow 117261, Russia
Tel: (7) 095-938-5124
Fax: (7) 095-938-5000
Contact: Albert Efimov
email: a.efimov@rosnet.ru

SWEDEN
Tomas Ries
Sandhamnsgatan 54 A 12
SE - 115 28 Stockholm
Sweden
Tel: 46 8 768 799 898
email: ries@ui.se

SWITZERLAND
ASSOCIATION SUISSE DU YMT (ASYMT)
87, Bd. Carl-Vogt
1205 Geneva, Switzerland
Tel: (41) 22-800-2250
Fax.: (41) 22-800-2254
Contact: Luc Defago, president

ECOLE DE LA MONTAGNE DORREE
Av. de France 21
1870 Monthey, Switzerland
Tel/Fax: (Office) (41)-24-471-4782
Tel: (Home): (41)-79-210-9329
Contact: Joseph Pinto

TAIWAN (Republic of China)
YMT INTERNATIONAL, TAIWAN
YANGJIA MICHUAN TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION, INTERNATIONAL, TAIWAN
32, 2F, Fuguo Road
Shilin, Taipei, 111 Taiwan (ROC)
Tel: 886-2-2837-1779
Fax: 886-2-2837-2258
email: ymtitaipei@yahoo.com
Contact: Wang Yen-nien

UNITED KINGDOM
Peter Clifford
70 Abington Road
London, W8 6AP, UK
Tel.: 020-7937-9362
email: peter.Clifford@thetaichicentre.com

Directory of AYMTA Member Instructors

The following AYMTA members are Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan instructors in North America. The addresses listed are for mailing purposes only. Please contact instructors by mail, phone or email for specific information about class times and locations. If you are currently teaching Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan in North America, are a member of AYMTA and would like to be included in this list, contact the Treasurer, Kay Reese (address below under Michigan). If you are unable to contact an instructor or need additional information, please contact the Treasurer. If you are looking for an instructor outside of North America, consult the Worldwide Directory.

☯ BAJA CALIFORNIA, MEXICO

Stephen Merrill
A.P. 77
Todos Santos, BCS, 23305 Mexico
Message Ph: 52-114-50109
email: rincondelcielo@todossantos-baja.com

☯ CALIFORNIA

Charles Adamec
2718 Webster Street
Berkeley CA 94705
Tel: (510) 644-3724
email: cgadamec@yahoo.com

Frank Broadhead
612 W Stanley Street
Ukiah CA 95482
Tel: (707) 468-0718
email: shoppe@pacific.net

Scott Chaplowe
10920 Wagner Street
Culver City, CA 90230
Tel/Fax: (310) 837-3740
email: chaplowe@alum.colby.edu

John Cole
535 Whitecliff Drive
Vallejo, CA 94589
Tel: (707) 552-4738
email: john@johncole.com

James Douglas
2120 Calaveras Avenue
Davis, CA 95616
Tel: (530) 750-3843

Christopher Nelson
1644 Talmadge Street
Los Angeles, CA 90027
Tel: (567) 438-4529
email: chrisnelson@adelphia.net

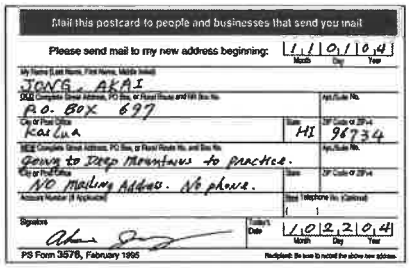
Janet Phillips
3555 Parkview Lane
Rocklin, CA 95677
Tel: (916) 632-9368
email: psychocpa@sbcglobal.net

Sam Tomarchio
400 - 30th Street, Suite 402
Oakland, CA 94609-3305
Tel: (510) 835-2148
Fax: (510) 835-2172
email: samtomio@sbcglobal.net

Harry Wu
1441 Huntington Drive #123
South Pasadena, CA 91030
Tel: (213) 258-7224
email: harry1223@aol.com

☯ HAWAII

Emily Du Bois
12168 Kipuka Street
Pahoa, HI 96778
Tel: (808) 965-9523
email: mle@tweek.net


Mail this postcard to people and businesses that send you mail

Please send mail to my new address beginning: 1/1/04

JONG - AKAI
P.O. BOX 697
Kailua HI 96734
Going to Deep Mountains to practice.
NO Mailing Address. No phone.
Signature 1/02/2004

PS Form 3576, February 1995

Kenneth Leonard
41-945-C Laumilo Street
Waimanalo, HI 96795
Cell: (808) 227-2247
email: Taichikenl@aol.com.

☯ MARYLAND

Michael Basdavanos
P.O.Box 383
Garrett Park, MD 20896
Tel: (301) 565-3320
email: dancingmount@boo.net

☯ MICHIGAN

James Carlson
P.O.Box 662
Mendon, MI 49072
Tel: (269) 496-8997
email: carlson@net-link.net

Don Klein
1700 Robbins Road #244
Grand Haven, MI 49417
Tel: (616) 842-5096
email: dklein@triton.net

Kay Reese
146 Crescent Drive
Grand Haven, MI 49417
Tel: (616) 846-7704
email: kreese@triton.net

☯ MASSACHUSETTS

Bede Bidlack
35 Broadway
Cambridge Health Associates Building
Cambridge, MA 02139
email: bede@stillmountain.net

☯ NEW YORK

Thomas W. Campbell
172 West 109th Street #1R
New York, NY 10025
Tel: (212) 222-7456
email: tomwc@verizon.net

Gretchen MacLane
160 West 73rd Street #5D
New York, NY 10023
Tel: (212) 787-5940
email: gmaclane@nyc.rr.com

Robert Politzer
25 Indian Road #6F
New York, NY 10034
Tel: (212) 569-6166
email: robert@greenstreetinc.com

Ilana Sheinman
20 W.64th Street, #15N
New York, NY 10023
Tel: (212) 877-6445

☯ PENNSYLVANIA

Marc Andonian
Still Mountain T'ai Chi Center at
St. Mary's Episcopal Church
36 Ardmore Avenue
Ardmore PA, 19003
Tel: (610) 812-9847
email: marc@stillmountain.net

☯ TEXAS

Dale Napier
4141 N. Braeswood #7
Houston, TX 77025
Tel: (713) 218-0897
email: dnapier@houston.rr.com

☯ WISCONSIN

Don Coleman
801 Emerson Street
Madison, WI 53715
Tel: (608) 251-4726
email: coleman1@chorus.net

Terri Pellitteri
4910 Sherwood Road
Madison, WI 53711
Tel: (608) 271-7392
email: terrip@aymta.org

James Sauer
514 Ludington Avenue
Madison, WI 93704
Tel: (608) 246-2124
email: wndhorse@itis.com

美洲楊家秘傳太極拳協會

AMERICAN YANGJIA MICHUAN TAIJIQUAN ASSOCIATION

Fill in, sign, and mail with check payable to AYMTA to:

Membership
PO Box 173
Grand Haven, MI 49417

☐ New Membership ☐ Renewal (skip * sections)

Name _____ Home Phone _____ Office Phone _____

Address _____ email _____ Fax _____

City _____ State Zip _____ Country _____

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* Referred by _____

* Your Instructor's Name _____ School Name _____

* School Address _____ School Phone _____

* City _____ State Zip _____ Country _____

* What taijiquan or other gongfu have you studied?

_____

_____

_____

Are you an instructor of Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan as taught by Wang Yen-nien? Y N

If you would like to be included in the AYMTA Teacher Listing at http://www.aymta.org, in the *AYMTA Journal*, and in the *Worldwide Directory of Members Teaching Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan*, please provide a reference who is an AYMTA Teacher Member, or arrange to attend a workshop with an AYMTA Teacher Member; if this is not feasible, you may submit a videotape of yourself performing elements of the form, 13 postures, weapons to the Secretary. This criterion for being listed as an AYMTA teacher is designed to ensure YMT as handed down by Wang Yen-Nien is being taught. It is not intended to judge quality of performance.

Annual Fee for January – December 20____:

- ❑ Regular Member US$ 35.00 x ____ years = _____
- ❑ Family Member US$ 20.00 _____
  Name of Regular Member _____
- ❑ Student Member US$ 20.00 _____
  Enclose proof of fulltime student status

Donation US$ _____

Total Enclosed US$ _____

Applicant's Signature _____ Date ___/___/_____

FOR AYMTA USE ONLY

Date Received ___/___/_____ Member # _____

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AYMTA Adviser Serge Dryer Returns for Summer 2005 East and West Coast Push Hands Workshops

I will share aspects of Push Hands seldom addressed in our style: the wave, short steps pushing, connection between the form and Push Hands, "bow of strength," "let it go," "inner and outer space." I hope to open new avenues about the importance of Push Hands in understanding the Yangjia Michuan style of Taijiquan.

❖ August 6th, 7h Washington D.C.

Location: 1325 18th Street NW Suite 210
Washington, D.C.

Sponsor: Great River Taoist Center

Cost: $135 for two-day workshop (one day $73)

Send your check payable to:
Great River Taoist Center
1325 18th Street, NW
Suite 210
Washington, D.C. 20036

Phone: 703/846-8222
email: Scott M. Rodell <srodell@cox.net>
Web: http://www.grtc.org/

❖ August 11th through the 14th Benicia, California

Location: 1150 1st St.
Benicia, Calif.

Sponsor: John Cole & Daoist Martial Arts

Cost: $300 for four-day workshop
Discounted Cost: $250
if paid by July 1st 2004
for current members of AYMTA

Send your check payable to:
John Cole
535 Whitecliff Dr.
Vallejo, CA 94589

Phone: 707/319-9876
email: John Cole < john@johncole.com >
Web: http://www.johncole.com/

Comments from 2004 workshops:

The workshop helped bring home a "real" sense of push hands for me. Some of the concepts Serge tried to bring home to us were: SOFTNESS ... ACCEPTING ... Serge gave freedom, reminding us to take ownership of our taiji form and push hands by 1) understanding the potential in the form, 2) to apply the moves in accord with the requirements of our own body in motion and in partnership, 3) and to align with the integrity of the form by finding how it most suitably works for each of us.

It's amazing how a seemingly small change brought to my attention after decades of practice can transform me and my practice instantly. I enjoyed Serge's tuishou instruction and appreciated how consistent his presentation was with my experience of Master Wang's teachings.

At the beginning of the four-day workshop, Serge said that an important value of "pushing hands" was to assist in the cultivation of an ability to understand others and he commented on the spiritual value of the practice. I sensed that the manner in which Serge pushed, the stepping, his expertise and genuine gentle nature, tended to move the nature of play in the direction of softness.

It was wonderful to meet someone like Serge Dreyer Laoshi who has been practicing push hands for so long. He was very open with his rich experience, provided by thousands of push-hands matches. ... Herein lies the wisdom gleaned from this workshop. As practitioners, we should be more aware of the taiji player that we are rather than being too focused on the taiji player we want to be. One moves from one stage to the next in one's own time, provided one is practicing sincerely.

I found Serge to be modest, extremely skilled and entirely focused on pursuing the essence of taijiquan. Even though he was an international tuishou champion, he did not dwell on his successes but instead told us about particularly difficult matches he had had and how tournament anxiety affected his skills. He shared these experiences to underscore how important staying calm and letting go of oneself is in developing good tuishou.

AYMTA CATALOG

		Member Price	Non-Member Price
BOOKS			
YANG FAMILY HIDDEN TRADITION OF TAIJIQUAN, ILLUSTRATED AND EXPLAINED by Wang Yen-nien			
Vol. I (2nd Ed.): The basic exercises and all three sections of the form.			
English/French		$70	$95
Chinese/Japanese		$70	$95
Vol. II (1st Ed.): Martial Applications			
English/French		$85	$115
Chinese/Japanese		$85	$115
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.			
FANS			
BAMBOO FANS, SPECIFY RIGHT-HANDED (STANDARD FORM) OR LEFT-HANDED (MIRRORED FORM)		$18	$20
Lightweight and highlighted by the Chinese characters 延年 Yán Nián (literally extended years).			
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 Taijiquan (32min.'s). Day 2/5: Basic Exercises (26 min.'s) and Sec.3 of Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan (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).			
Yangjia Michuan Taijiquan Weapons –CD Only		$16	$20
Audio CD of Wang Yen-nien calling out the breathing and the names of the movements for Yen-nien Taiji Fan (12 min's); Wudang Taiji Sword (17 min's); Kunlun Taiji Sword (15 min's). A great teaching aide, suitable for beginners and advanced players. The definitive weapons audio CD, recorded in 1999.			
VHS, DVD-Rs			
Ensure that your DVD player will play DVD-Rs before ordering. 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 **Video, DVD or VCD**.			
STITCHTING TAIJIQUAN NETHERLANDS WORKSHOP (1989) VHS	**YMTI**	$30	$40
WYN teaching Fan, 1st Duan and Basic Push Hands Exercises, with Julia Fairchild and Sabine Metzle assisting.			
RECORD OF NATIONAL SPORTS DAY DEMONSTRATION (1994) VHS	**YMTI**	$30	$40
Group Demonstration of 1st duan. Visits 10 Taipei teaching areas with the various coaches & groups training form & weapons for National Sports Day demonstrations.			
YMT: A RECORD OF TEACHER TRAINING COURSE (1996) VHS	**YMTI**	$60	$80
Demonstrating all 3 duans and each move separately with WYN commenting on correct & incorrect ways to practice selected moves. The audiotape is extracted from the sound on this video. 2 Tapes.			
PUSH HANDS BASIC EXERCISES (1996) VHS ONLY	**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 3rd 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 #1, #2; VOL 7 #1, #2; VOL 9 #1, #2; VOL 10 #1, #2, VOL 11 #1, #2, VOL 12 #1		$10	$15

Payment: only checks drawn on US banks, money orders, and wire transfers are accepted.

Availability: A basic inventory is maintained, but not all items may be in stock; enquire about availability. Only NTSC format videos are stocked although PAL & SECAM are available from YMTI. Items may be ordered directly from Taiwan and take up to 2 weeks to arrive by airmail (tapes, VCDs and DVDs) and 8 weeks by surface mail (books): enquire at *ymtitaipei@yahoo.com*.

Shipping & Handling: Prices include shipping for orders in the contiguous United States.
Please inquire about shipping costs outside of the contiguous United States at the address below or by email: "AYMTA Orders" <Orders@aymta.org>

Ordering: Please make your check payable to **AYMTA** and mail to **AYMTA Orders**
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Grand Haven, MI 49417

AYMTA

What is AYMTA?

- 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.

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.
- To provide assistance to member instructors in obtaining required documentation when requested.
- To help instructors improve their teaching and build consistency in teaching YMT.
- To publish a journal (twice a year) and newsletter for members

Member Eligibility

- 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

Annual Fee

- Regular: US$35 per Year
- Family: US$20 per Year
- Full Time Student: US$20 per Year

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AMERICAN YANGJIA MICHUAN TAIJIQUAN ASSOCIATION
PO Box 173, Grand Haven, MI 49417 USA