

BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF BOOKS AND VIDEOS ON TAI CHI, MARTIAL ARTS, AND QIGONG

DR. YANG, JWING-MING

Tai Chi Chuan

CLASSICAL YANG STYLE

THE COMPLETE LONG FORM AND QIGONG

傳統楊氏太極拳

One of the people
who has “made the
greatest impact on
martial arts in the
last 100 years.”

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CHAPTER 1

General Introduction

概論

1-1. Introduction

Even though Chinese martial arts were imported into Western society more than fifty years ago, many questions still remain. The most common and confusing questions today are the following: Where does the style I am learning come from? What are its theoretical roots and foundation? How good are the styles which I am practicing? What are the differences between the internal styles and the external styles? What are the differences between the southern styles and northern styles? How do we define hard, soft-hard, and soft styles? How is Japanese karate different from Korean taekwondo, and how are these styles different from Chinese martial arts? How do these styles relate to each other? What is martial arts qigong? How different is this qigong from other schools of qigong, such as medical qigong, scholar qigong, and religious qigong?

In order to answer these questions, you must first study and understand the history of Chinese martial arts. Furthermore, you should search and comprehend its theoretical roots and cultural background. Knowledge of its past history and an understanding of its roots will enable you to appreciate the consequences that exist today.

Taijiquan, its theoretical roots and the concept of yin and yang itself, can be traced back four thousand years. From this root, the essence of taijiquan originated. Specifically, the style was created in the Daoist monastery of Wudang Mountain (武當山), Hubei province (湖北). The original motivation behind taijiquan creation was twofold: self-defense and spiritual cultivation.

Taijiquan is a slow and relaxed moving meditation. Through practicing taijiquan, you are able to calm your mind, locate your spiritual center, and consequently find your entire being. Moreover, from the relaxed moving exercises, you can bring your physical body to an ultimate level of relaxation and natural ease. This can result in smooth qi (inner energy or bioelectricity) and smooth blood circulation. This is the key to maintaining health and recovering from sickness.

Since taijiquan's revelation to the Chinese public in 1926 by Yang, Chen-fu (楊澄甫) in Nanking Central Guoshu Institute (南京中央國術館), it has been widely

welcomed and has gradually become one of the most effective ways of self-healing exercises or qigong (氣功) in China. Unfortunately, it was also due to its popularity and emphasis on health promotion that the martial essence of taijiquan has been gradually lost. The forms have been changed and the quality has been worsened. The essence of every movement is no longer of importance to the general public.

When Taijiquan was introduced into Western society during the 1960s by Cheng, Man-ching (鄭曼清), it was already popular in China. Before long, it had become a very popular exercise in the West. Today, it is commonly recognized that practicing taijiquan is able to help with many problems such as hypertension, high blood pressure, balance and stability, heart problems, lung-related illness, stomach problems, and many others. It is understood that through these relaxed movements, you can reach a state of self-relaxation and healing. The benefits of practicing taijiquan are reported again and again. In fact, many healthcare providers started encouraging their clients to practice taijiquan, and beginning in the 1990s, some insurance companies even began to contribute to the expense of learning in order to further the health and vitality of their members.

Since 1973 when President Nixon visited mainland China and opened the gate of China, many taijiquan masters have immigrated to the United States. Now, the Western taijiquan practitioners are starting to realize there are many styles of taijiquan that have originated from the same theoretical root. Unfortunately, two major parts of taijiquan essence are still missing. These two are the martial root of taijiquan and its relationship with qigong. The motivation for writing this book is to provide modern taijiquan practitioners with an understanding of the relationship between taijiquan and qigong. After studying this material, if you are interested in knowing more about the taiji qigong and martial applications of taijiquan, you may refer to these books: *The Essence of Taiji Qigong*, *Tai Chi Theory and Martial Power*, and *Tai Chi Chuan Martial Applications*, published by YMAA.

In the first chapter of this book, common martial arts knowledge will be introduced followed by a brief history of taijiquan. The meaning of taijiquan and its training guidelines, particularly that of Yang style, will then be discussed. After you are familiar with these general concepts, the most important essence of taijiquan will be introduced: the relationship between qi and taijiquan. This relationship will be explored in Chapter 2 through the means of taiji qigong. The third chapter will cover the external manifestations of the theory, as well as the external root of basic taijiquan movement, the thirteen postures. Finally, the traditional Yang Style Long Form of Taijiquan will be introduced in Chapter 4.

I believe that through effort and by coordinating both theory and the practice of qigong and external training, you can glimpse and begin to appreciate the profound essence of taijiquan, instead of just learning how to copy the forms.

1-2. Common Knowledge of Chinese Martial Arts

Since taijiquan is an internal martial art, in order to understand its origin and historical background, it would be wise for us first to learn some of the common knowledge behind Chinese martial arts.

CHAPTER 2

Qi, Qigong, and Taijiquan

氣、氣功、太極拳之關係

2-1. Introduction

Qigong has always been an important part of Chinese martial arts training. Without qigong training, a martial artist will have lost the origin of martial power, and what he or she uses will be only muscular power. This will make Chinese martial arts no different from the Western fighting arts. The most unique elements of Chinese martial arts are in the qigong training and the buildup of internal energy (i.e., qi). Moreover, through mental concentration, qi can be led throughout the physical body to boost its functioning to a higher level. However, the most important aspect of qigong training is to learn to feel yourself, to understand yourself, and to deal with your own mind. This is the path of self-discipline and spiritual cultivation. From this training, you will begin to understand the way of your life more deeply. From this, you can see that the way of Chinese martial arts is a way of life, and your life can be built upon an understanding of Chinese martial arts. This bridge between these two mountains is the practice of qigong.

Qigong has been studied and developed in China for more than four thousand years. It is not easy for any person to achieve a deep, profound understanding and feeling for such arts in a short time. To help you grasp the concepts of martial qigong training, you must first build the foundation of knowledge and understanding. This will provide you with a baseline reference for all your further study and evaluation.

This chapter will provide you with a simple qigong practice “road map” that can guide you to the garden of qigong practice. You should study it carefully. If you can understand this chapter, you will soon grasp the rationale of every training method in this book. In the next section, first I will define the terminology of qi, qigong, and their relationship to humanity. Having this definition, we will not treat qi as mysterious. Then, in order to help you understand the historical background of qigong, different categories of qigong will be briefly summarized in section 2-3. Next, in section 2-4, the theoretical foundations of qigong training will be discussed. From comprehension of this section, you will have less doubt in your qigong practice. Finally, we will discuss and summarize the relationship between qigong and taijiquan. If you wish to learn

more about qigong, please refer to these books: *The Root of Chinese Qigong* and *Qigong the Secret of Youth, Da Mo's Muscle/Tendon Changing and Marrow/Brain Washing Classic*, published by YMAA.

2-2. Qi, Qigong, and Man

Before we discuss the relationship of qi with the human body, we should first define qi and qigong. We will first discuss the general concept of qi, including both the traditional understanding and the possible modern scientific paradigms, which allow us to use modern concepts to explain qigong.

A General Definition of Qi. Qi is the energy or natural force that fills the universe. The Chinese have traditionally believed that there are three major powers in the universe. These three powers (*san cai*, 三才) are heaven (*tian*, 天), earth (*di*, 地), and man (*ren*, 人). Heaven (the sky or universe) has heaven qi (*tian qi*, 天氣), the most important of the three, which is made up of the forces which the heavenly bodies exert on the earth, such as sunshine, moonlight, the moon's gravity, and the energy from the stars. In ancient times, the Chinese believed that weather, climate, and natural disasters were governed by heaven qi. Chinese people still refer to the weather as heaven qi (*tian qi*, 天氣). Every energy field strives to stay in balance, so whenever the heaven qi loses its balance, it tries to rebalance itself. The wind must blow, rain must fall, even tornadoes or hurricanes must happen in order for the heaven qi to reach a new energy balance.

Under heaven qi is earth qi. It is influenced and controlled by heaven qi. For example, too much rain will force a river to flood or change its path. Without rain, the plants will die. The Chinese believe that earth qi is made up of lines and patterns of energy, as well as the earth's magnetic field and the heat concealed underground. These energies must also balance; otherwise disasters such as earthquakes will occur. When the qi of the earth is balanced, plants will grow and animals thrive.

Finally, within the earth qi, each individual person, animal, and plant has its own qi field, which always seeks to be balanced. When any individual thing loses its qi balance, it will sicken, die, and decompose. All natural things, including mankind and our human qi, grow within and are influenced by the natural cycles of heaven qi and earth qi. Throughout the history of qigong, people have been most interested in human qi and its relationship with heaven qi and earth qi.

In China, qi is defined as any type of energy that is able to demonstrate power and strength. This energy can be electricity, magnetism, heat, or light. For example, electric power is called electric qi (*dian qi*, 電氣), and heat is called heat qi (*re qi*, 熱氣). When a person is alive, his body's energy is called human qi (*ren qi*, 人氣).

Qi is also commonly used to express the energy state of something, especially living things. As mentioned before, the weather is called heaven qi (*tian qi*, 天氣) because it indicates the energy state of the heavens. When something is alive it has vital qi (*huo qi*, 活氣), and when it is dead it has dead qi (*si qi*, 死氣) or ghost qi (*gui qi*, 鬼氣). When a person is righteous and has the spiritual strength to do good, he is said to have normal qi or righteous qi (*zheng qi*, 正氣). The spiritual state or morale of an army is called energy state (*qi shi*, 氣勢).

CHAPTER 3

Taijiquan Thirteen Postures (Eight Doors and Five Steppings)

太極拳十三勢 - 八門五步

3-1. Introduction

Philosophically, the major concepts of taijiquan are rooted in Daoism (道家). In particular, two major Daoist texts were, and are still today, important for the taijiquan practitioner: the *Dao De Jing* (道德經) and the *Yi Jing* (易經). While neither book is in any way a martial manual, both books firmly establish a way of thinking about the world that affected every aspect of taijiquan from breathing techniques to power development.

In the *Dao De Jing*, a book of poems reputedly written by Li Er (李耳) or Lao Zi (老子) around the fourth century B.C., one of its major themes that has come to dominate and influence taijiquan is the idea of Dao. As presented by Lao Zi, Dao is the ultimate reality from which all things evolved. Therefore, the goal of life is to follow, without contention, the natural order of the manifestations of Dao, and eventually Dao itself. The emphasis on doing the natural according to the laws of the universe, versus the forced or artificial, was very important to Lao Zi. The scholar Fung, Yu-lan has stated: “If one understands these laws and regulates one’s actions in conformity with them, one can then turn everything to one’s advantage.”¹ It is out of this basic idea that taijiquan received its name, which means the Grand Ultimate Fist (i.e., fist means martial style) or the fist which manifests the Dao of taiji. The basic goal inherent in the idea of taiji, or the grand ultimate, is to return to the original source of the universe, the wuji state (無極). The closer you can get to the first principle or cause, the more you can complete yourself. Thus, taijiquan practitioners have taken this idea of the Grand Ultimate and have applied it to their martial system. For fighting or for health, the taijiquan artist will follow the natural inclination of things.

From the *Yi Jing*, a book over two thousand years older than Lao Zi’s *Dao De Jing*, taijiquan martial artists took the concept of yin (陰) and yang (陽). In the natural flow of events, the operating principle that drives the universe is the interplay of two polar forces—yin and yang. The yin is considered the passive force while yang is considered the



**FOLLOW
ALONG**
TAIJIQUAN 13
POSTURES

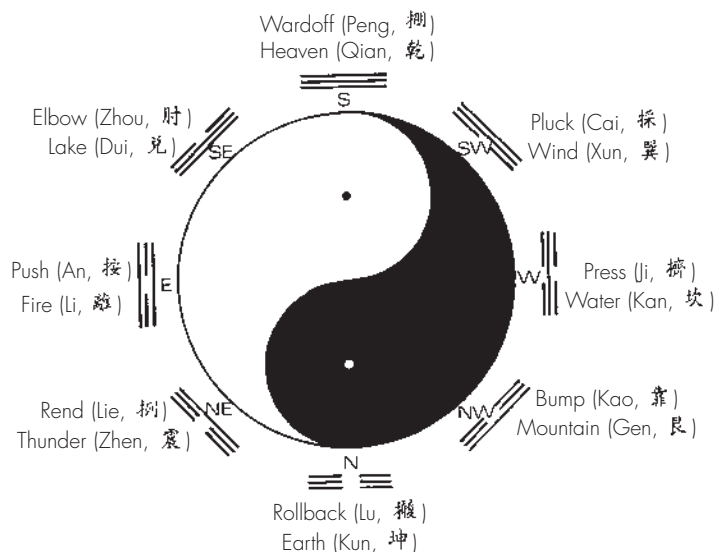


Figure 3-1. The directions of the eight basic techniques according to Chang, San-feng.

active one. Between the dynamic tension of yin and yang, all things find their nature.

In the *Yi Jing* the dynamic interplay of yin and yang is represented by a two dashed line (---, *yin*) and a single solid line (—, *yang*). These lines are then arranged into groups of three (e.g., ☰) and six (e.g., ☰). Traditionally, the discovery of the trigrams, of which there are eight, is attributed to Fu Xi (伏羲) around the period of 2852-2738 B.C. Later, King Wen of Zhou (周文王) combined the trigrams into hexagrams, of which there are sixty-four. Because yin and yang are fundamental principles, the eight trigrams and sixty-four hexagrams can be used to understand the mysteries of nature. These representations of yin and yang can then be used to predict everything from the birth of a child to the fate of a nation.

From the important and fundamental trigrams, taijiquan evolved its basic martial strategies. First, by looking at the arrangement of the bagua, the eight original trigrams that represent the eight fundamental directions of action, the trigrams correspond to the eight basic techniques of taijiquan. Each of the eight techniques was assigned a direction and a trigram to describe its fundamental nature, as shown in Figure 3-1. For example, the technique of “wardoff” (*peng*, 棚) is composed of three lines that are symbolic of the yang principle; therefore, this particular technique contains extreme energy and is used with a great explosion of power. The three yang lines indicate that its explosiveness requires exhalation to bring out the full power of the practitioner. On the other hand, the technique of “rollback” (*lu*, 擡) contains three yin lines; therefore, this technique is purely defensive and requires inhalation; it absorbs rather than attacks. A technique such as “push down” or “press down” (*an*, 按) is a mixture of offensive and defensive, although the offensive will dominate because there are two yang lines to the one yin line.

In addition to the various technical actions, the taiji theorists added five active

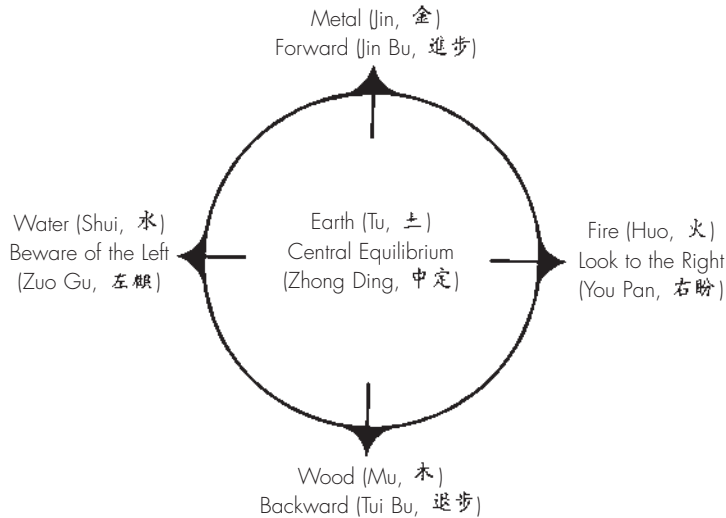


Figure 3-2. The directions of the Five Elements according to Chang, San-feng.

steppings or strategic movements that represented the five basic elements that compose the universe: metal (*jin*, 金), wood (*mu*, 木), water (*shui*, 水), fire (*huo*, 火), and earth (*tu*, 土). The five elements are called the *wuxing* (五行) and correspond to the movements of stepping forward (*jin*, 進步), stepping backward (*tui bu*, 退步), beware of the left (*zuo gu*, 左顧), look to the right (*you pan*, 右盼), and center equilibrium (*zhong ding*, 中定) (Figure 3-2). Taken together, as explained in Chapter 1, these thirteen elements are formally known as the thirteen postures (*shi san shi*, 十三勢). The thirteen postures are one of the foundation stones for taijiquan as a martial art. In fact, many people have called the art “shi san shi” in reference to its fundamental principles.

The *Yi Jing* also influenced taijiquan in other different and subtle ways. For example, as explained earlier, in terms of the overall style, taijiquan has two types of meditation that are considered yin and yang: conventional sitting meditation and the moving meditation of the taijiquan sequence. Taken together, both are needed to fully develop the yin and yang aspects of health and martial defense. On a smaller scale, the act of breathing has been broken down into a yin and yang relationship: inhaling is yin and exhaling is yang.

With this short introduction, you can hopefully have a general idea of the philosophical background of taijiquan. For a more complete discussion on the *Dao De Jing* and the *Yi Jing*, you can consult many good scholarly books on this subject. Once you have fully acquainted yourself with the principles of the two books, you can more clearly see the underlying general theory behind taijiquan.

In the next section, we will explore the concept of the eight trigrams, also known as the eight doors or the thirteen postures. From this, you will gain a clearer understanding of how taijiquan can be applied in personal combat. Then, in section 3-3, the five strategic movements, or five steppings, will be reviewed.

3-2. Eight Doors (八門)

In this section, we will define the eight basic taijiquan technical moving patterns: peng, lu, ji, an, cai, lie, zhou, and kao. These eight moving patterns are commonly called “eight trigrams” (*bagua*, 八卦) or “eight doors” (*ba men*, 八門). It is from these eight basic moving patterns and the five basic strategic steppings that the entire taijiquan was constructed. Therefore, these eight basic moving patterns are the foundation of the taijiquan. If you can comprehend the meaning of these eight movements and apply them into the practice, you will soon become a proficient taijiquan practitioner.

I. Peng (棚). Peng can be translated as “wardoff.” Peng has the feeling of roundness and expansion. Generally, this round and expanding feeling is formed and generated from the chest and the arm(s). For example, when you use your arm to push people away with the support of the arcing chest (Figure 3-3), it is called “peng kai” (棚開) and means “open with wardoff.” The expanding force can be upward, forward, or sideways (Figure 3-4). The force generated from peng is very offensive and forceful, just like a beach ball bouncing you away. Peng is often used to generate a round, circular defensive force by the chest and the arms. This allows you a chance to wardoff the opponent’s power upward and thereby neutralize his attacking force (Figure 3-5).



Figure 3-3

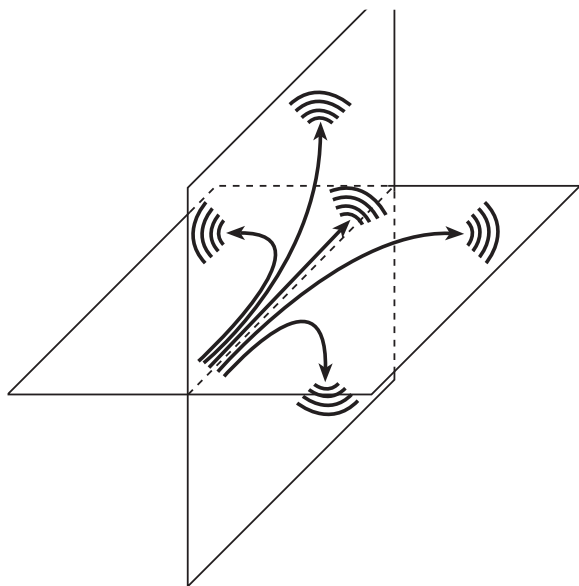


Figure 3-4



Figure 3-5



Figure 3-6



Figure 3-7



Figure 3-8



Figure 3-9

The typical examples in taijiquan postures are peng, (wardoff forward or slightly upward) (Figures 3-6, 3-7, and 3-8); grasp sparrow's tail (upward) (Figure 3-9); wave hands in the clouds



Figure 3-10



Figure 3-11

(sideways) (Figure 3-10); and crane spreads its wings (upward diagonally) (Figure 3-11).

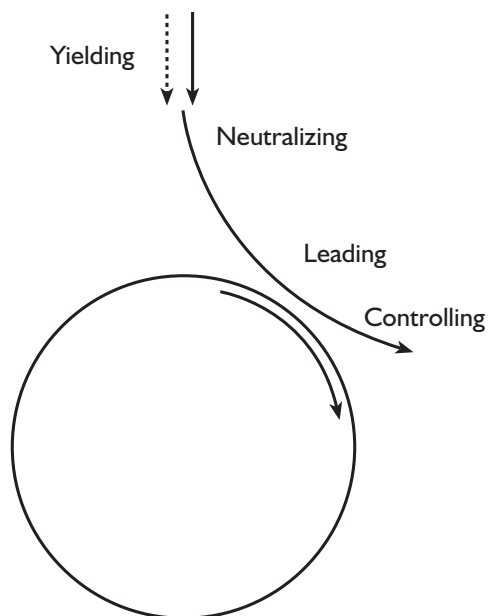


Figure 3-12



Figure 3-13

2. Lu (掮). Lu means to yield, lead and neutralize; it is commonly translated as “rollback.” The main purpose of this movement is to yield to the force first, then to lead it backward and to the side for neutralizing (Figure 3-12). Theoretically, lu is a defensive strategic movement. However, occasionally lu can be aggressive when the timing and situation allows. For example, when you yield and lead, you may also lock or break the opponent’s arm (Figure 3-13).



Figure 3-14



Figure 3-15



Figure 3-16



Figure 3-17

In Chinese martial arts, lu can be applied in two ways. One is to first ward off the opponent's arm with your arm (Figures 3-14 and 3-15), and then to rollback his arm backward and to your side (Figures 3-16 and 3-17). This rollback action is also called "small rollback" (xiao lu, (小撮).



Figure 3-18

The other case is to use one of your hands to grab your opponent's wrist while using the forearm of the other arm to press and lock the rear side of his post-arm (upper-arm) (Figure 3-18). This kind of rollback is called "large rollback" (da lu, (大攏).



Figure 3-19



Figure 3-20

3. Ji (擠). Ji means to "squeeze" or to "press." This action can be performed with two hands, where the palms face and then press against each other (Figures 3-19 and 3-20).



Figure 3-21



Figure 3-22



Figure 3-23



Figure 3-24

Alternatively, the ji action can also be done by “pressing forward” with both hands. For example, the rear hand presses the front wrist forward. This can be done with the front of the palm facing in (Figure 3-21) or facing out (Figure 3-22). The main pressing power is generated by pressing the rear palm into the front wrist, which is supported from the torso and legs. Alternatively, “press” can also be performed by pressing both forearms forward, again with the front palm either facing out (Figure 3-23) or facing in (Figure 3-24).

Traditional Yang Style Taijiquan

傳統楊氏太極拳套路

4-1. Introduction

Before we introduce and analyze the traditional Yang Style Taijiquan sequence, we would first like you to understand how martial sequences are created and what purposes they serve. Sometimes people who lack this understanding tend to view the taijiquan sequence as a dance or abstract movement. A proper understanding of the root of the art will help you practice in the most effective way.

A martial sequence, called *taolu* (套路) or *tan* (趟), is a combination of many techniques, constructed in the imagination of its creator to resemble a real fight. The creator of a sequence must be an expert in the style and experienced enough to see the advantages and disadvantages of a form, technique, or even just a step or stance. Within a martial sequence are hidden the secret techniques of a specific style. Chinese martial sequences commonly contain two or three levels of fighting techniques. The first level is the obvious applications of the movements and contains the fundamentals of the style.

The second level is deeper and is usually not obvious in the movements of a sequence. For example, a form might contain a false stance at a particular spot. This stance allows the practitioner to kick when necessary, but this kick may not actually be done in the sequence. Experienced martial artists can usually see through to this second level of applications.

The third level is the hardest to see, but it usually contains the most effective techniques of the style. These third-level techniques often require more movement or steps than are shown in the sequence and must be explained and analyzed by the master himself. In addition, when a proficient martial artist is able to understand to the depth of the third level, he or she can understand the secrets hidden “behind” the form of the four categories of fighting techniques. These categories were explained fully in the first chapter and include kicking, punching, wrestling, and qin na. Therefore, a Chinese martial sequence has several purposes:

1. A sequence is used to preserve the essence of a style and its techniques. It is just like a textbook that is the foundation of your knowledge of a style.
2. A sequence is used to train a practitioner in the particular techniques of a style. When a student practices a sequence regularly, he can master the techniques and build a good foundation in his style.
3. A sequence is used to train a student's patience, endurance, and strength, as well as stances, movements, and jin.
4. A sequence is also used to help the student build a sense of enemy. From routinely practicing with an imaginary opponent, he can make the techniques alive and effective in a real fight.

The taijiquan sequence was created for these same purposes. However, as an internal style it also trains the coordination of mind, breathing, qi, and the movements. Because of this, the yang aspect of taijiquan training comes slowly in the beginning and then gradually incorporates speed and an external manifestation of the inner essence. The yin side of the training is to practice taijiquan at a slower and slower speed, in order to cultivate a more deeply meditative mind that, in coordination with correct breathing, will develop stronger qi. This subject will be further explored in the next section.

Though Yang Style Taijiquan has many different versions that can have 24, 48, 81, 88, 105 or more postures depending, in part, upon the method of counting, it actually contains only 37 fundamental martial moving patterns, called the thirty-seven postures. These fundamental moving patterns form the basis of more than 250 martial applications or techniques. Within the sequence, many postures or fundamental techniques are repeated one or more times. There are two main reasons for this:

1. To increase the number of times you practice techniques that are considered more important and useful. This, naturally, will help you learn and master them more quickly. For example, wardoff, rollback, press (squeeze), and push (downward pressing), considered the most basic fighting forms, are repeated eight times in the long sequence.
2. To increase the duration of practice for each sequence. When early taijiquan practitioners found that the original short sequence was not long enough to satisfy their exercise and practice needs, they naturally increased the time of practice by repeating some of the forms. Doing this lengthened sequence once in the morning and/or evening is usually sufficient for health purposes. However, if you also intend to practice taijiquan for martial purposes, you should perform the sequence continuously three times, both morning and evening if possible. The first time is for warming up, the second is for qi transportation training, and the third time is for relaxed recovery.

In the next section, we will highlight methods of advancing your taijiquan practice from a shallow to a deep level, both in its martial arts yang aspect and its deeply meditative yin aspect. In section 4-3, the key points of taijiquan postures will be discussed. Then, fundamental taijiquan training practices will be summarized in section 4-4. Finally, traditional Yang Style Taijiquan will be introduced, along with the Yang Style Long Form, in section 4-5. If you have difficulty assimilating the movements of this

sequence, you may refer to the video, *Tai Chi Chuan Classical Yang Style*, published by YMAA Publication Center. YMAA has also published several books that can add substantially to your understanding of the martial applications of this traditional sequence. These are *Tai Chi Theory and Martial Power*, *Tai Chi Chuan Martial Applications*, *The Essence of Taiji Qigong*, and *Taiji Chin Na*.

4-2. How to Practice Taijiquan Sequence

Normally, it takes at least three years to learn the taijiquan sequence and to circulate qi smoothly in coordination with the breathing and postures. You should then learn to transport qi and develop qi balance. Even after you have accomplished this, there is still more to learn before you can be considered a proficient taijiquan martial artist. You must learn how to strengthen your qi through practice, you must develop a sense of having an enemy in front of you during the sequence, and lastly, you must learn how to train jin during the sequence.

In taijiquan, qi plays a major role in jin. When qi is strong and full, then the jin will also be strong. An important way to strengthen and extend your qi is to practice the sequence slower and slower. This is the yin aspect of taijiquan practice, which helps you to build both a strong, concentrated mind and internal qi. If it usually takes 20 minutes to finish the entire sequence, increase the time to 25 minutes, then 30 minutes, and so on. Do not add any more breaths. Everything is the same except that every breath that is used to lead the qi gets longer and longer. In order to do this you must be very calm and relaxed, and your qi must be full like a drum or balloon, first in your abdomen and later in your whole body. If you can extend a sequence that normally takes 20 minutes to one hour, your qi will be very full and fluid, your mind calm, and the postures very relaxed. When you do the sequence at this speed, your pulse and heart-beat will slow down, and you will be in a deep self-hypnotic meditative state. You will hardly notice your physical body, but instead you will feel like a ball of energy. When this happens, you feel you are transparent.

Even when you can do the form very well, it may still be dead. To make it come alive you must develop a sense of enemy. When practicing the solo sequence, you must imagine there is an enemy in front of you, and you must clearly feel his movements and his interaction with you. Your ability to visualize realistically will be greatly aided if you practice the techniques with a partner. There are times when you will not use visualizations, but every time you do the sequence your movement must be flavored with this knowledge of how you interact with an opponent. The more you practice with this imaginary enemy before you, the more realistic and useful your practice will be. If you practice with a very vivid sense of enemy, you will learn to apply your qi and jin naturally, and your whole spirit will melt into the sequence. This is not unlike performing music. If one musician just plays the music and the other plays it with his whole heart and mind, the two performances are as different as night and day. In one case the music is dead, while in the other it is alive and touches us.

If you don't know how to incorporate jin into the forms, then even if you do the sequence for many years it will still be dead. In order for the sequence to be meaningful,



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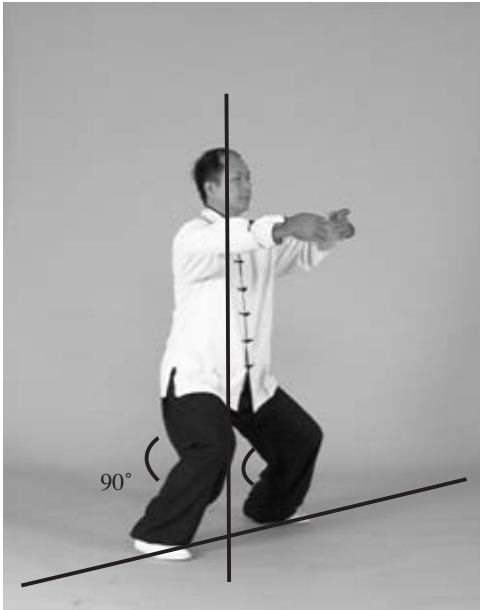


Figure 4-4

Horse Stance (*Ma Bu*, 馬步). The horse stance is commonly used as a transition between techniques and forms. To assume this stance, first place the feet parallel, slightly beyond shoulder width (Figure 4-4). Next, bend the knees until the angle between the rear thighs and calves is about 90 degrees. The torso is upright, natural, centered, and relaxed. The knees line up with the toes. Both feet must remain flat. It is important to understand that in order to avoid strain to the sides of the knees that can lead to injury, the knees must always line up with toes during your practice.



Figure 4-5

Mountain Climbing Stance or Bow-Arrow Stance (*Deng Shan Bu*, *Gong Jian Bu*, 蹬山步、弓箭步). This important form, the mountain climbing stance or bow-arrow stance, is the most commonly used offensive stance in taijiquan. First, place one leg forward so that the knee and toes are lined up perpendicularly and the leg as a whole supports 60 percent of the body's weight. The toe of the lead leg is pointing 15 degrees to the inside (Figure 4-5). The rear leg is firmly set down while supporting the rest of the weight. The knee of the rear leg must be slightly bent in this stance. Keep the upper body perpendicular to the ground. Again, beware of knee injury, and keep the knees lined up with the toes.



Figure 4-6

Sitting on Crossed Legs Stance (Zuo Pan Bu, 坐盤步). The sitting on crossed legs stance is commonly used for forward movement. First, assume ma bu (Figure 4-4). Second, turn the body and the right foot with heel 90 degrees clockwise while pivoting on the left toe (Figure 4-6). The same can be done with the left side: turn the body and the left foot with heel 90 degrees counterclockwise, and pivot on the right foot on the toes.



Figure 4-7

Four-Six Stance (Si Liu Bu, 四六步). The four-six stance is the most commonly used defensive stance in taijiquan. In weight distribution, it is exactly the opposite of mountain climbing stance; the front leg supports 40 percent of the weight and the rear leg supports 60 percent (Figure 4-7). The rear leg is bent, with the knee and toes turned inward, while the front leg is held loose, slightly bent, and relaxed.



Figure 4-8

Tame the Tiger Stance (*Fu Hu Bu*, 伏虎步). Tame the tiger stance is used for low attacks and defense. To assume this stance, stand with both feet spread. Next, squat down on one leg while keeping the other leg straight. The thigh of the squatting leg must be parallel to the ground and both feet must be flat (Figure 4-8). Again, the knee of the squatting leg should line up with the toes.



Figure 4-9

False Stance (*Xuan Ji Bu* or *Xu Bu*, 玄機步、虛步). The false stance is used to set up kicks. First, place all your weight on one leg. Next, set the other leg in front of the body with only its toes lightly touching the ground (Figure 4-9). From this position the false leg can kick without hesitation.



Figure 4-10

Golden Rooster Standing on One Leg Stance (*Jin Gi Du Li*, 金雞獨立). The golden rooster standing on one leg stance is similar in form to false stance and serves the same function: to set up kicks. To assume this stance lift either knee up with the toe pointing 45 degrees down (i.e., the ankle is relaxed naturally) (Figure 4-10). The raised leg can kick at any instant.



Figure 4-11

Squat Stance (*Zuo Dun*, 坐蹲). The squat stance is primarily used as a training device to build up the knees. To begin, stand with feet spread shoulder width apart. Squat down until the thighs are parallel to the ground and the back is straight (Figure 4-11). You should attempt to stay in this stance for five minutes while keeping the mind calm. In order to guard against injury, you should start at first with only one minute, and then gradually increase the time.

Yang Style Taijiquan Sequence (Traditional Long Form)

傳統楊氏太極拳

I. Beginning (*Taiji Qi Shi*, 太極起勢)

Figure 4-109: (N) Feet are slightly spread beyond shoulder width. Hands are at the waist, palms down. Wrists must be loose. Inhale and exhale naturally and comfortably. Pay attention to your lower dan tian. This is a wuji (無極) state. Remember to keep the middle finger and the thumb slightly forward while gently pushing the pinkie backward (taiji hand form).



Figure 4-110: (N) Rotate the wrists so the palms face each other. Lift the arms up to shoulder height. Do not raise or make the shoulders tight. Inhale. From this movement, the yin and yang are discriminated. When you do this, imagine that you are picking up an object between your palms. One flow of qi goes to the arms and the other flow to the bottom of the feet. You should always remember that the motion of every form is directed by the waist area at the center of gravity (the real *dan tian*, 真丹田). The motion then passes through the spine and chest, finally reaching to the arms. It is said in the *Taijiquan Classic*: “The root is at the feet, [jin or the movement is] generated from the legs, controlled by the waist, and expressed by the fingers.”¹² In order to reach this goal, your waist must be relaxed and loose, since it is like the steering wheel of a car. When this place is stagnant, the entire body will be stiff.



Figure 4-111: (N) Point the palms down. Move down slowly into horse stance (*ma bu*, 馬步). Lower the arms to the lower abdomen level. Exhale. When you do this, imagine that you are pushing some object downward. That means your mind is about six inches in front of the palms. In this case, the qi will be led outward through the center of the palm (*laogong* cavity, P-8, 勞宮).

Analysis

This beginning action is also called “sunken qi to the lower dan tian” (氣沉丹田). This means that you are leading the qi to the lower dan tian to build your root and firm your center. In order to accomplish this, your torso is upright, your head is suspended, and your elbows and shoulders are sunk.

2. Grasp the Sparrow's Tail: Right (You Lan Que Wei, 右攬雀尾)

Grasp sparrow's tail in Chinese is "lan que wei." Lan means grasp or seize. This implies that when you apply this technique you not only intercept your opponent's strike, but also grasp him. A sparrow's tail is very light and fragile, and also sensitive and mobile. Therefore, when you grasp the sparrow's tail you must be cautious and sensitive, and you cannot use muscular strength. You must lead your enemy's attack lightly and skillfully into a bad position where you can do the technique. In the taijiquan sequence there are two forms of grasp sparrow's tail: right and left. However, the left form should be the follow-up to the right form, and so some taijiquan masters would prefer to refer to the left grasp sparrow's tail as diagonal flying (left).



Figure 4-112: (N) Raise both arms up with right palm facing in and left hand supporting the right forearm and start to turn the body to your right. Start to inhale.



Figure 4-113: (E) Continue turning your body to your right and change your stance into mountain climbing stance (*deng shan bu*, 蹬山步) while moving both of your arms up until the right hand is on the height of the eyebrow, with the elbow down, fingers pointing up. Your right toes should be slightly inward and your left toes should be lined up with your left knee.



Figure 4-114: (E) Next, bring your left leg next to the right leg. Left leg is on its toes. Complete the inhalation.

Analysis

Your right hand moves up to intercept the opponent's punch and lift it upward, exposing his chest to attack. Your left hand is ready to protect your chest or control his elbow. Move the left leg close to the right leg immediately after the deflection to close your groin area and prevent your opponent from kicking you. Only the toes of the left foot touch the ground, and there is no weight on it, which allows you to kick or step any way you like. Grasp sparrow's tail (right) deflects the opponent's punch and also sets him up for your attack.

3. Grasp the Sparrow's Tail: Left (*Zuo Lan Que Wei*, 左攬雀尾)

This posture is a follow-up to the previous one. While the previous posture is used for defense, this posture is used as a follow-up attack. Sometimes, this form is called diagonal flying (*xie fei shi*, 斜飛勢) instead of grasp the sparrow's tail.



Figure 4-115: (N) Step back with your left leg. Begin to exhale. Turn on the heels into horse stance (*ma bu*, 馬步). Turn your left palm in, brushing by the face. Your right palm turns down and left palm faces up.



Figure 4-116: (W) Continue to exhale. Turn your body to your left and change your stance into mountain climbing stance (*deng shan bu*, 蹬山步). Swing your left arm to the front and the right hand to the side, with the left palm facing in and the right palm facing down. Complete your exhalation.

Analysis

This posture is used for attack. The right hand's downward motion generates leverage for the left hand's upward attack. Moreover, the right leg is also used to support the left hand's offensive action.

4. Wardoff (Peng, 棚)

The Chinese word for wardoff is “peng.” Peng means to arc your arms and use them to push or bounce something away. It is used in expressions like “peng kai” (棚開) (push open or push away), which refers to the motion you wish you could use to wade through a crowd and bounce people out of your way.



Figure 4-117: (W) Turn the body slightly to your left and rotate your left palm until it is facing downward. Inhale, cave in your chest, and arc your back.



Figure 4-118: (W) Bring the right foot to the side of left foot. Continue inhaling. Swing the right hand to the front of the body, and turn the palm up to face the left palm.



Figure 4-119: (E) Step back with the right leg. Turn on the heels to (E) while shifting into mountain climbing stance (*deng shan bu*, 蹬山步) and swinging the right arm to your right with the arm horizontal, palms facing in and your left palm under the right forearm with palm facing forward and slightly down. Exhale.

Analysis

When your right leg moves close to your left leg, it protects the groin from attack, and is also set up for kicking. When you use peng to bounce your enemy, treat yourself like a beach ball bouncing an outside pressure away. Also, when you bounce, your direction should be forward and slightly upward to pull the enemy’s root up so that he will move more easily.

5. Rollback (*Lu*, 捋)

Rollback in Chinese is called “lu.” Lu means to lead or neutralize the coming power to the side.



Figure 4-120: (E) Extend the right hand upward while sinking your right elbow. Continue your exhalation from last posture.



Figure 4-121: (E) Coil your right hand clockwise and forward until the palm is facing forward while turning your left palm to face upward. Begin to inhale.



Figure 4-122: (E) Sit back into four-six stance (*si liu bu*, 四六步). Move the right arm down to the front and left hand to your left chest area. Complete your inhalation.



Figure 4-123: (E) Turn the hips slightly to your left. Make a gentle small clockwise circle with your left hand on the left side of the body. This movement does not have a practical application; instead, it is the signature of Yang Style Taijiquan. Exhale.

Analysis

The first part of this form is used to intercept and connect to the opponent's arm. Once you have connected you then rollback to lead his force sideward and past you. When you do small rollback, the movements are small and quick with the intent of exposing your opponent's vital cavities to attack. Large rollback is a larger move that is commonly used to pull the opponent's center and make him lose balance so that you can attack. It is frequently used with a step backward. In order for your rollback to be effective, you must have a firm root and good listening, understanding, adhering and sticking, and leading jins.

6. Press (*Ji*, 擠)

The Chinese word for this form is “ji,” and it means to squeeze or press against. Both hands are used to press against your opponent or to squeeze part of his body.



Figure 4-124: (E) Bring the left hand to the inner wrist of the right hand while inhaling. Face turn to the (E).



Figure 4-125: (E) Shift into mountain climbing stance (*deng shan bu*, 蹬山步) and extend both hands forward while still touching. Exhale as the arms are extended.

Analysis

The main purpose of this form is to make the opponent fall or bounce away, although it is also used to strike areas such as the solar plexus to seal the breath, or the shoulder blade to numb the shoulder.

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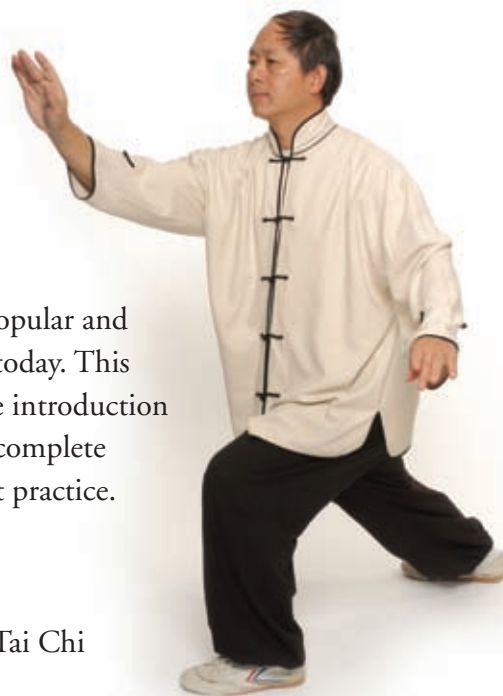
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