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Many Martial Artists, once they reach a certain level of proficiency with their barehand fighting forms, choose to expand their knowledge to include weapons techniques. But what weapon to choose? Over the past 5000 years, the Chinese have developed a vast array of weapons, built for a multitude of purposes. What are these purposes? What is the background of these weapons? What weapon is right for you?

Ancient Chinese Weapons: A Martial Artist’s Guide is an easy reference guide. Any weapon you want to find you can find in seconds. This book is profusely illustrated and conveniently broken down into four main classifications: Long Weapons, Short Weapons, Soft Weapons, and Projectile/Thrown Weapons. Every conceivable weapon is here, from Swords and Spears, to Sharpened Coins and Flying Claws! Even if you’re not a Martial Artist, but have an interest in History and Warfare, you’ll find this guide an invaluable resource, unlike any other.

- Includes Techniques and Fighting Strategy!
- History and Evolution of the Weapons.
- Translations of Chinese Terms.
- Over 130 illustrations.

Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming is a renowned author and teacher of Chinese martial arts and Qigong. Born in Taiwan, he has trained Gongfu, Taijiquan and Qigong for thirty-five years. He is the author of twenty-five books. Dr. Yang lives in Lexington, Massachusetts.
Contents

About the Author ................................................................. viii
Foreword by Jeffery Bolt .................................................... xii
Preface ................................................................. xiii
Acknowledgment ................................................................. xv

Chapter 1. General Introduction 一般介紹 ........................................... 1
  1-1. Introduction 介紹
  1-2. Common Knowledge 一般常識
  1-3. Weapons and Chinese Geography 兵器與區域
  1-4. Weapons and Martial Artists 兵器與武士
  1-5. Weapons and Fighting Strategy 兵器與戰策
  1-6. Historical Survey 歷史簡介
  1-7. History and Evolution 歷史與武器的演變

Chapter 2. Long Weapons 長兵器 ......................................... 17
  2-1. Introduction 介紹
  2-2. Very Long Weapons 長兵器
  2-3. Long Weapons 長兵器

Chapter 3. Short Weapons 短兵器 ......................................... 49
  3-1. Introduction 介紹
  3-2. Very Short Weapons 短兵器
  3-3. Short Weapons 短兵器

Chapter 4. Soft Weapons 軟兵器 ......................................... 87
  4-1. Introduction 介紹
  4-2. Soft Weapons 軟兵器

Chapter 5. Projectile and Throwing Weapons 投射兵器 ................. 99
  5-1. Introduction 介紹
  5-2. Projectile and Throwing Weapons 投射兵器

Chapter 6. Shields and Armor 盾牌與盔甲 ............................... 110
  6-1. Introduction 介紹
  6-2. Shields 盾牌
  6-3. Armor 盔甲

Chapter 7. Conclusion 結語 ............................................... 122

Appendix A. Tables of Weapons ........................................... 123
Appendix B. Time Table of Chinese History .............................. 128
Appendix C. Translation and Glossary of Chinese Terms .................. 130
Index ................................................................. 138
About the Author

Yang, Jwing-Ming, Ph.D., 楊俊敏博士

Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming was born on August 11, 1946, in Xinzhu Xian (新竹縣), Taiwan (台灣), Republic of China (中華民國). He started his Wushu (武術) (Gongfu or Kung Fu, 功夫) training at the age of fifteen under the Shaolin White Crane (少林白鶴) Master Cheng, Gin-Gsao (曾金灶). Master Cheng originally learned Taizuquan (太極拳) from his grandfather when he was a child. When Master Cheng was fifteen years old, he started learning White Crane from Master Jin, Shao-Feng (少峰), and followed him for twenty-three years until Master Jin's death.

In thirteen years of study (1961-1974) under Master Cheng, Dr. Yang became an expert in the White Crane Style of Chinese martial arts, which includes both the use of barehands and of various weapons such as saber, staff, spear, trident, two short rods, and many other weapons. With the same master he also studied White Crane Qigong (氣功), Qin Na (or Chin Na, 推拿), Tui Na (推拿) and Dian Xue massages (點穴按摩), and herbal treatment.

At the age of sixteen, Dr. Yang began the study of Yang Style Taijiquan (楊氏太極拳) under Master Kao Tao (高濤). After learning from Master Kao, Dr. Yang continued his study and research of Taijiquan with several masters and senior practitioners such as Master Li, Mao-Ching (李茂清) and Mr. Wilson Chen (陳威伸) in Taipei (台北). Master Li learned his Taijiquan from the well-known Master Han, Ching-Tang (韓慶堂), and Mr. Chen learned his Taijiquan from Master Zhang, Xiang-San (張祥三). Dr. Yang has mastered the Taiji barehand sequence, pushing hands, the two-man fighting sequence, Taiji sword, Taiji saber, and Taiji Qigong.

When Dr. Yang was eighteen years old he entered Tamkang College (淡江大學) in Taipei Xian to study Physics. In college he began the study of traditional Shaolin Long Fist (Changquan or Chang Chuan, 少林長拳) with Master Li, Mao-Ching at the Tamkang College Guoshu Club (淡江國術社) (1964-1968), and eventually became an assistant instructor under Master Li. In 1971 he completed his M.S. degree in Physics at the National Taiwan University (台灣大學), and then served in the Chinese Air Force from 1971 to 1972. In the service, Dr. Yang taught Physics at the Junior Academy of the Chinese Air Force (空軍幼校) while also teaching Wushu. After being honorably discharged in 1972, he returned to Tamkang College to teach Physics and resumed study under Master Li, Mao-Ching. From Master Li, Dr. Yang learned Northern Style Wushu, which includes both barehand (especially kicking) techniques and numerous weapons.
In 1974, Dr. Yang came to the United States to study Mechanical Engineering at Purdue University. At the request of a few students, Dr. Yang began to teach Gongfu (Kung Fu), which resulted in the foundation of the Purdue University Chinese Kung Fu Research Club in the spring of 1975. While at Purdue, Dr. Yang also taught college-credited courses in Taijiquan. In May of 1978 he was awarded a Ph.D. in Mechanical Engineering by Purdue.

In 1980, Dr. Yang moved to Houston to work for Texas Instruments. While in Houston he founded Yang’s Shaolin Kung Fu Academy, which was eventually taken over by his disciple Mr. Jeffery Bolt, after Dr. Yang moved to Boston in 1982. Dr. Yang founded Yang’s Martial Arts Academy (YMAA) in Boston on October 1, 1982.

In January of 1984 he gave up his engineering career to devote more time to research, writing, and teaching. In March of 1986 he purchased property in the Jamaica Plain area of Boston to be used as the headquarters of the new organization, Yang’s Martial Arts Association. The organization has continued to expand, and, as of July 1, 1989, YMAA has become just one division of Yang’s Oriental Arts Association, Inc. (YOAA, Inc.).

In summary, Dr. Yang has been involved in Chinese Wushu since 1961. During this time, he has spent thirteen years learning Shaolin White Crane (Bai He), Shaolin Long Fist (Changquan), and Taijiquan. Dr. Yang has more than thirty years of instructional experience: seven years in Taiwan, five years at Purdue University, two years in Houston, Texas, and sixteen years in Boston, Massachusetts.

In addition, Dr. Yang has been invited to offer seminars around the world to share his knowledge of Chinese martial arts and Qigong. The countries he has visited include Canada, Mexico, France, Italy, Poland, England, Ireland, Portugal, Switzerland, Germany, Hungary, Spain, Holland, Belgium, Latvia, South Africa, Morocco, Iran, Venezuela, Chile, Bermuda, Barbados, and Saudi Arabia.

Since 1986, YMAA has become an international organization, which currently includes forty-four schools located in Poland, Portugal, France, Italy, Holland, Hungary, South America, Ireland, Belgium, the United Kingdom, Chile, Venezuela, Canada, and the United States. Many of Dr. Yang’s books and videotapes have been translated into languages such as French, Italian, Spanish, Polish, Czech, Bulgarian, Russian, Hungarian, and Farsi.

Dr. Yang has published twenty-two other volumes on the martial arts and Qigong:

About the Author

8. Tai Chi Chuan Martial Applications, YMAA Publication Center, 1986.
14. The Essence of Taiji Qigong—The Internal Foundation of Taijiquan; YMAA Publication Center, 1990.
21. The Essence of Shaolin White Crane; YMAA Publication Center, 1996.

Dr. Yang has also published the following videotapes:
It is well-known that the Chinese martial arts have a very rich history and contain many different styles. These styles can be divided into two general categories; internal and external. These categories can further be divided into more sub-categories and systems, either by geographic location, family systems, religious orientation and others. Even though the many styles and systems of the Chinese martial arts are diverse, they all utilized the same weapons that were available at that time in their history.

In the study of Chinese Martial arts, it is important that the practitioner also have an understanding of the history of their art. Some styles practiced techniques that were restricted, or determined by the clothes worn at that time of the style’s development. Some emphasized techniques needed for close quarters, while others were not restricted by space. Those styles, presumably, can be expanded upon or modified slightly for the clothing worn today, or because of less restrictions on space, without diverting from the essence of the style itself.

Likewise, many styles utilized various weapons that were available. Many weapons were simple farm tools and instruments, which depended upon the type of crops or livestock that was prevalent in that area of the country. It is also important to understand this history, so that one does not “restrict” the practice of one’s art to only those techniques or weapons that were used under different historical circumstances.

In this book, Dr. Yang provides an invaluable view of the many weapons used throughout Chinese martial arts history. This will help the practitioner and enthusiast to better understand the reasons why their particular style uses the weapons that they do.

I am especially honored to write the foreword for this book. Master Yang has been my teacher since he first came to the United States from Taiwan in 1974. I began my training under Master Yang in January of 1975, while a student at Purdue University. He has been a teacher, a father and a friend. Learning from Master Yang is never-ending, since he himself continues to learn, research and practice the Chinese martial arts to their full potential. The only limitations to an individual’s capability in the martial arts are their own lack of vision, perseverance, and dedication. Master Yang has shown us all that he suffers from none of these afflictions.

Jeff Bolt
August, 1998
Since 1973, when President Nixon opened the gate to Communist China, the cultural exchange between the East and the West has greatly influenced both societies. Chinese cultural treasures, such as acupuncture, martial arts, Qigong, painting, music, calligraphy, Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism are no longer strange concepts to Westerners. In order to expedite this cultural exchange, in 1984 I resigned my engineering job and put all my effort into translating classics of Chinese culture into Western languages. Through seminars, instruction, and publication, I have attempted to incorporate Chinese wisdom of the ages into our hurried, modern world. Unfortunately, all my effort has been limited to the knowledge of my own personal experience. The exchange in many other fields is still waiting for the expertise of other qualified contributors.

The fields which with I am most familiar are Chinese martial arts and Qigong. After thirteen years of effort, I have published twenty-two books and twenty-five videotapes. Many of these publications have also been translated into other languages. YMAA (Yang's Martial Arts Association) was originally founded under this charter. Today, YMAA Publication Center publishes not only my writings, but also those of many other authors involved in the exploration of Oriental culture. Moreover, YMAA schools have multiplied from only a few, just thirteen years ago, to now more than forty, in no less than fourteen different countries.

During this time of great cultural exchange, I am convinced that the authoritative information which we can provide to the public is critical in order to help the seeker filter out useless, exploitative fantasy, and direct them on to the path of true understanding. For example, due to a lack of profound publications regarding the philosophy of Chinese martial arts, most Westerners still believe the main goal of Chinese martial arts training is fighting, rather than spiritual cultivation. Moreover, many so called “psychic Qigong masters” in China have contributed to a misunderstanding of Qigong, and have cast its practice in an unfavorable light, with their wild and insupportable claims of miraculous healing through their own “psychic” powers. These frauds serve only to bring increased suffering into the world for their own financial gain. They have also delayed true scientific verification and acceptance of ancient Chinese Qigong by Western medical practitioners.

In order to provide a clear understanding of Chinese martial arts, I wrote the book, Introduction to Ancient Chinese Weapons, published in 1985 by Unique Publications. However, due to a lack of information at that time, the contents of the book were not as thorough as I originally wished. Now, there is more information available. Therefore, I believe that the time has come to update the original book. Naturally, this new book should not be considered the final authority
Preface

in this field. There have simply been too many weapon developments and refinements over the more than seven thousand years of Chinese history for any one book to cover. What this book can provide you with is an historical overview of weapon concepts and trends for your study and enjoyment.

Due to lack of information, great battle engines such as siege machines, troop carriers, firearms, fortification defenses, battering rams, and catapults are not covered in this book. This book instead will focus on squad level weapons which were carried by Chinese martial artists and soldiers. I sincerely hope to someday see more knowledgeable scholars than myself publish other volumes covering the subject of these great war machines, as well as those weapons introduced in this book.
Chapter 1

General Introduction

1-1. Introduction

Chinese Wushu (武术) (martial techniques), known to Westerners as martial arts, has evolved in China for over 5,000 years. This evolution has been experienced not only by the many schools of barehand fighting, but also by a wide variety of weapons practitioners. As various types of weaponry have evolved, so have the materials and techniques for their fabrication. From the most primitive weapons made of stone, one can trace their development through copper, brass, iron and finally very strong yet light alloys.

Although the art of Chinese weapons mastery has enjoyed a glorious past, its future remains doubtful. Modern culture leads people away from the study of ancient weapons for a variety of reasons. First, guns, with their ease of operation and greater killing potential, have made people believe that understanding martial weapons is impractical. Second, very few qualified masters are around to teach, and thereby preserve, the artistry of handling ancient weapons. Finally, becoming proficient in any martial art (especially those involving weaponry) requires much time, patience and practice. In today’s society, few people appear willing to exert the energy necessary for learning the ancient art of Chinese weapons.

The study and practice of Chinese weapons, like that of any martial art, has value far beyond that derived from perfecting the techniques. There is an intrinsic historical value. This art form has been developing for over 5,000 years, it represents an incredible evolution of human culture. There is also the more conventional artistic value. Like a fine dancer, the martial artist exhibits total control of his or her body. There is value for one’s health. Perfecting the art of Chinese weapons requires extensive physical training, which enables the entire body to become strong and well-conditioned. Of course, there is the personal self-defense value. Martial weapons originated for defensive purposes. Practicing with them trains one’s perception and reaction time, allowing for quick and correct maneuvering. Moral value remains the most important aspect
of the art of martial weapons. The practitioner must learn patience, perseverance and humility. With diligence and dedication, one will strengthen his spiritual confidence and power.

By their sheer numbers, ancient Chinese weapons confuse most martial artists. Adding to this confusion is the fact that many weapons developed in places other than China. For classification purposes, Oriental weapons commonly used today are: Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Indochinese, and Okinawan types.

Almost all Oriental weapons originated in China and were subsequently exported to other cultures. Following centuries of evolution in different cultures, the weapons necessarily became dissimilar. Hopefully, this book will clarify the confusion that these circumstances have created.

1-2. Common Knowledge

In ancient China, weapons varied greatly. These variations arose from differences in: 1) the terrain from one province to another; 2) physical traits of martial artists; 3) local culture and lifestyles; and 4) the special purposes of each weapon. To be a knowledgeable martial artist, one must understand these differences in addition to knowing the Chinese weapons themselves. Therefore, this section will discuss the classification of Chinese weapons and will explain the relationships between weapons and Chinese geography, martial artists and fighting strategy.

Classification of Chinese Weapons. At one time, the Chinese word for “weapons” was Bingqi (兵器) which translates into “soldier instruments.” Later, it was shortened to just Bing (兵). Thus, Chang Bing (长兵) means “long weapons” and Duan Bing (短兵) means “short weapons.” Another term commonly used by Chinese is Wuqi (武器) which literally translates as “martial instruments” or “martial weapons.”

During the 5,000 year history of Bingqi (兵器), styles, shapes, materials and fabrication techniques have changed from one dynasty to the next. Within the period of one dynasty, some of which have lasted 800 years, countless numbers of Chinese weapons evolved.

To characterize this multitude of arms, eighteen kinds of weapons including long, short, very short, soft and projectile were chosen. A martial artist proficient with all of these types wassaid to have mastered the Shi Ba Ban Wuyi (十八般武艺) or “eighteen kinds of martial techniques.”

In this section, the “eighteen” representative weapons, chosen for three different eras, are listed. The common weapons classified as long, short, soft, and projectile and thrown will be listed in Appendix A, which will include the Chinese spelling, pronunciation and English translation.
Distinctions existed also between people of the west and southeast. Because of the mountains in the west, the local people specialized in hunting with a trident. Naturally, they often used the same weapon when fighting. Also, poisonous animals such as snakes, spiders, and centipedes were common in the western mountains. After thousands of years of experience, people learned how to deal with these poisons. This special knowledge made western martial artists expert in utilizing poison on their weapons to kill an enemy more easily. The southeast, unlike the west, was a great agricultural plain. People used the hoe and harrow for cultivation. As a result, hoe and harrow fighting techniques developed.

Furthermore, the country was so vast that in ancient times the central government exerted little control in the areas distant from the capital. During harvest season, large groups of bandits would swoop down and rob entire villages. To combat such attacks, a village would hire a martial artist to teach the young people defense. Because the bandits struck with little warning, the defenders used whatever was at hand as a weapon. Therefore, the people became adept with the hoe, rake, harrow, trident, or other common farming or hunting tools as weapons of defense.

With time, communication and transportation improved throughout China. As weapons spread around the country, local distinctions were lost and martial styles and techniques became a national mixture.

1-4. WEAPONS AND MARTIAL ARTISTS

Generally speaking, a well-trained martial artist would carry at least three kinds of weapons. He would have a primary weapon such as a sword, saber, staff, or spear, with which he was most proficient. Usually this weapon was obvious to his enemy and had the most power and killing potential. A secondary weapon would be hidden on his body, perhaps a whip or an iron chain in his belt or a pair of daggers in his boots, which could be used in the event that his main weapon was lost during battle. For use at very long distances or in a surprise attack in a close battle, he would use dart weapons. Some of these easily-hidden weapons (e.g., darts or throwing knives) were thrown by hand, others (e.g., needles) were spat from the mouth, and still others (e.g., sleeve arrows) were projected from a spring-equipped tube.

In choosing his weapons, a martial artist must consider three factors. First, what weapon suits his physical stature? If he is tall and strong, he would take advantage of a long, heavy weapon such as a large saber or halberd, which may weigh over 50 pounds. These weapons have more killing potential because of their length and are more difficult to block because of their great weight.

If a martial artist is tall but not particularly strong, he might choose a spear. With this long but lighter weapon, he can effectively utilize his speed and realize
### Table 1-1. Eighteen Representative Weapons.  
*(Shi Ba Ban Wu Qi)*  
十八般武器

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spring and Autumn Period and Warring States Period (772-222 B.C.)</th>
<th>Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-220 A.D.)</th>
<th>Song Dynasty (960-1280 A.D.)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spear (Qiang-枪)</td>
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<td>Halberd (Ji-戟)</td>
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<td>Long Rod (Gun-棍)</td>
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<td>Iron Bar (Tie-砥)</td>
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<td>Trident (Cha-叉)</td>
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<td>Horse Fork (Tang-亓)</td>
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<td>Hook (Gou-钩)</td>
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<td>Eighteen-Chi Tapered Rod (Shuo-槊)</td>
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<td>Ring (Huan-环)</td>
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<td>Saber (Dao-刀)</td>
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<td>Sword (Jian-剑)</td>
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<td>Crutches (Guai-拐)</td>
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<td>Axe (Fu-斧)</td>
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<td>Whip (Bian-鞭)</td>
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<td>Sai (Jian-斬 or Chai-械)</td>
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<td>Hammer (Chui-锤)</td>
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<td>Short Staff or Club (Bang-棒)</td>
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<td>Pestle (Chu-杵)</td>
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<td>Bow and Arrow (Gong Jian-弓箭)</td>
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<td>Long-Handled Battle Axe (Yue-钺)</td>
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<td>Long-Handled Claw (Zhua-抓)</td>
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<td>Sickle (Lian-镰)</td>
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<td>Piercing Spear (Jue-铩)</td>
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<td>Battle Strategy (Bing Fa-兵法)</td>
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<td>Cross Bow (Nu-弩)</td>
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<td>Lance (Mao-矛)</td>
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<td>Shield (Dun-盾)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Harrow, Rake (Ba-耙)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Flat-Head Halberd (Ge-戈)</td>
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CHAPTER 3

Short Weapons

3-1. INTRODUCTION

Short weapons, like their long counterparts, can be divided into two classes based on length. Very short weapons measure less than two Chi (approximately two feet). Often they are no longer than the distance from the hand to the elbow. Short weapons range in length from two to five Chi.

All short weapons possess an inherent advantage over long weapons: they are easy to carry. The same attributes that give short weapons this advantage make them impractical for large battles. They are more effective at short range, and therefore are used more for personal defense than for attack.

It is impossible to discuss all of the short weapons of China. From their birth some 5,000 years ago, short weapons have evolved in such numbers as to make any detailed examination a life’s work. This chapter gives only a brief introduction to the more common short weapons. It reviews very short weapons and short weapons.

3-2. VERY SHORT WEAPONS

In this section, we will introduce very short weapons. As mentioned earlier, very short weapons were usually less than two Chi in length. Since they were relatively lighter than longer weapons, very short weapons were also commonly used as throwing weapons. Due to their size, they could be carried easily or hidden somewhere on the body. The disadvantage of very short weapons was that their defensive range was relatively shorter than that of other weapons. In order to increase their defensive capability, very short weapons were commonly used as double weapons. Because of this, we will not divide the very short weapons into "single very short weapons" and "double very short weapons."

Short Sword (Duan Jian, 撃劍) (Figure 3-1). The structure of the short sword was the same as that of the regular sword, except that it was shorter and the blade was not as wide. The advantages of the short sword were that it could be hidden
Chapter 3: Short Weapons

and carried easily as a secondary defensive weapon. In addition, if a handkerchief or a piece of cloth was added to the pommel, it could be used as a thrown weapon. When it was used as a thrown weapon, it was called “Flying Sword” (飛劍).

Because it was shorter than the regular sword, the material of the short sword could be a harder steel, and it could therefore be a sharper and stronger weapon. Almost all famously sharp swords are short. Normally, short swords were carried in a pair, and were used in both hands at the same time.

The history of the short sword can be traced back to the very beginning of Chinese weapons smithing. During the Huang Di period (2597-2597 B.C., 黃帝), there already existed short swords made from jade.

**Short Saber** (Duan Dao, 短刀) (**Figure 3-2**). Similar to the short sword, the short saber was also only a shorter variation of the regular saber. Again, it could be carried easily and could be hidden on the body, such as in a boot or in the waist area, without the opponent noticing. Moreover, it could be thrown if a piece of cloth was attached to the pommel, which gave it the name “Flying Saber” (Fei Dao, 飛刀). Often short sabers were used in pairs.

The history of the short saber can be traced back to the very beginning of Chinese weapons smithing, during the Huang Di period (2597-2597 B.C., 黃帝).

**Iron Ruler** (Tie Chi, 鐵尺) (**Figure 3-3**). The simplest iron ruler was merely a flat metal rod that might or might not be tapered. Some iron rulers had a separate handle. Because the iron ruler was short and easy to carry, it was commonly used by peace officers, in the way a nightstick is used
by policemen in the West. The iron ruler originated in the Spring and Autumn Period and Warring States Period (722-222 B.C., 春秋戰國).

**Scrape Saber (Xiao Dao, 削刀)** (Figure 3-4). The blade of the scrape saber was metal, and only one edge was sharp. A groove along the blade equalized pressure inside and outside the body, so that the blade could be withdrawn after stabbing. If no groove were present, the vacuum inside the body cavity would hold in the blade.

Like all very short weapons, the scrape saber served as a secondary weapon, used in emergencies, such as the loss of a major weapon. The scrape saber could be hidden by attaching it to the forearm with straps, or it might be hidden in a boot.

The scrape saber, like the dagger, was used for stabbing and cutting. Often, martial artists carried two sabers. The scrape saber could also be used as a throwing weapon. The scrape saber was probably invented during the Spring and Autumn Period and Warring States Period (722-222 B.C.).

**Sleeve Sword (Xiou Li Jian, 袖利劍)** (Figure 3-5). The sleeve sword was similar to the scrape saber, except that the sleeve sword was straight, and both edges of the blade were sharp. In addition, a spring hidden in the blade could be activated, expanding the weapon to twice its length.

This hidden spring action provided for surprise attack at close range. The sleeve sword was so named because the weapon was traditionally hidden in the sleeves.
Chapter 3: Short Weapons

Techniques for the sleeve sword resembled those of the short sword, except for the surprise lengthening of the blade. When the sleeve sword was extended, normal sword techniques would then be applied. The sleeve sword originated during the Spring and Autumn Period (722-484 B.C.).

**Short Trident (Duan Cha, 短叉)** (Figure 3-6). The short trident was a variation of the regular, long trident. The short trident differed in that it was lighter and could be carried easily. The short trident was often used in a pair. The short trident could also be used as a thrown weapon.

As with the long trident, the short trident was originally used as a hunting tool, and only later was it used as a defensive weapon against bandits. As with the long trident, the short trident originated once metal had become available.

**Sickle (Lian, 斧)** (Figure 3-7). Like a modern sickle, the Lian had a curved, metal head, sharp on one edge and attached to a wooden handle. The sickle was a farmers' tool, originally designed for cutting hay, cane or straw; it later came to be used as a weapon. In ancient China, bandits often gathered by the thousands to rob villages. In order to protect both property and lives, martial arts training was common. Farming and hunting tools were naturally modified into fighting weapons.

Hooking, cutting and striking were common techniques for the sickle. Rarely, the sickle was held by a chain attached to the handle and thrown.

The Lian dates from before Shen Nong (2737 B.C., 神農). Originally, only a sharpened stone blade was attached to a rod. Later, when metal became available, the stone blade was replaced with metal.

**Brush Rake Trident (Bi Jia Cha, 刷槊叉)** (Figure 3-8). The words “brush rake” are because this weapon was like
the brush rake, and “trident” was because it resembled a trident. This kind of trident differed in that the middle, long piece was like a sword, while the side pieces were like a fork. The length of this trident was about 1.5 Chi. It was commonly used by southern martial styles such as White Crane or Tiger Claw styles. This kind of weapon was commonly used in China’s Fujian Province (福建省).

**Flute (Xiao or Di, 笛、篳)** (Figure 3-9). The flute, a musical instrument adapted for martial arts, was originally made of bamboo. Flutes were later made of iron, steel, brass, or other metals and alloys. A short dagger or sword would often be hidden inside.

The flute alone had little killing potential. Surprise attack came from a hidden dagger or spring loaded darts hidden within. The flute, used as purely a defensive weapon, could be utilized for blocking enemy weapons, while the hidden dagger could be used for stabbing.

The flute dates from very ancient Chinese history. Scholars and martial artists enjoyed music and often carried flutes. It easily evolved into a defensive weapon.

**Cymbals (Ba or Nao, 鐸、銃）** (Figure 3-10). The cymbal was a musical instrument. However, it could also be used as a weapon because of its sharp edges. Cymbals were held by a small knob and a cloth ring. Usually, cymbals were made of brass.
Chapter 3: Short Weapons

The cymbals, like many other ordinary appliances, became serious weapons in the hands of a martial artist. Very few people were familiar with the cymbals as weapons; therefore, they were not easily defended against.

Cymbals could be used to slap, chop, slash or cut. In addition, they could be thrown. Throwing cymbals, called “Nao,” were generally smaller. They were called “Flying Nao” (Fei Nao, 飛鳴), and often had serrated edges. When thrown, the cymbal acted like the flying discs used today for recreation. The techniques for throwing were also like those for such flying discs. Cymbals had an advantage over most other weapons in that they constantly emitted a loud and harsh noise, distracting and confusing an opponent.

Cymbals imported from Tibet have been used as musical instruments for thousands of years. Their transition from instruments to weapons occurred during the Tang Dynasty (618-907 A.D., 唐朝).

Fan (Shan, 扇) (Figure 3-11). Fans used by martial artists were made of wood (bamboo and other kinds), or more commonly, metal. The outer edge was extremely sharp, and often spring-loaded darts were hidden in the ribs.

Fans were perhaps the most easily hidden weapons, because they could be kept in plain sight. A martial artist with a fan in his hand could at one moment be the elegant scholar, and in the next, a deadly fighter.

Fans, with their razor-sharp edges, could be used to cut, strike or slide. Spring-loaded darts were utilized for surprise attacks. In China, fans are both practical and beautiful, and their use began very early in Chinese history.

Dagger (Bi Shou, 刀) (Figure 3-12). The dagger has had a long history, even before the Chinese Shang Dynasty (1766-1122 B.C., 商). At that time, it was made from stone or jade. After the Shang Dynasty, these materials were replaced with brass or iron. The dagger has been one of the most popular hidden weapons. It could be carried easily at the waist or in the boot. When necessary, it could be an effective and fast acting weapon for short range fighting. It could also be used as a throwing weapon. During the Chinese Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-221 A.D., 漢), the dagger was a secondary defensive weapon, and all of the soldiers were required to carry it. Daggers were usually carried in a pair.
Zi Wu Mandarin Duck Axe, Deer Hook Sword or Deer Antler Saber (Yuan-Yang Yue or Lu Jiao Dao, 鳥雀鏃、鹿角刀) (Figure 3-13). There are many names for this weapon. It was also called “Zi-Wu Mandarin Duck” (Zi-Wu Yuan-Yang Yue, 子午鴛鴦鏃) or “Sun-Moon Heaven-Earth Sword” (R Yue Qian-Kun Jian, 日月乾坤劍). “Zi” means “midnight,” which implies “Yin,” while “Wu” means “noon,” and implies “Yang.” Sun and Heaven are also classified as “Yang,” while the Moon and Earth are classified as “Yin.” This is a special weapon, originating from Baguazhang style. It was said that this weapon was specially designed to defeat the sword. Its shape is like Baguazhang’s Yin-Yang fish (Bagua Yin-Yang Yu, 八卦陰陽魚). It was commonly used in a pair, like the male and female mandarin duck which are always together. The weapon is called “Sun-Moon” or “Zi-Wu,”
Appendix A
Tables of Weapons

Long Weapons 長兵器

Very Long Weapons
1. Eighteen-Chi Tapered Rod (Shuo, 疊) (Mao-Shuo, 毛繩), p. 18
2. Lance or Long Spear (Mao, 劍), p. 19
3. Twelve-Chi or Thirteen-Chi Rod (Shu, 矛 or Zhang-Er, 丈二), p. 20
4. Nine-Chi Tapered Rod (Jiu-Chi, 九尺), p. 20

Long Weapons 長兵器

A. Single Long Weapon 單長兵
1. Rod or Club (Gun, 縱) (Tiao-Zi, 條子), p. 21
2. Spear (Qiang, 矛), p. 22
3. Long Staff (Chang Bang, 長棒), p. 26
4. Long-Handled Saber (Da Dao, 大刀), p. 26
5. Shovel or Spade (Chan, 鉏), p. 30
6. Fork (Cha, 掇), p. 34
7. Rake (Ba and Tang, 鉗、耙、扒、耙、鑚), p. 35
8. L-Shaped Lance (Flat-Head Halberd) (Ge, 矛), p. 38
9. Halberd (Ji, 戟), p. 38
10. Long-Handled Battle Axe (Yue, 斧), p. 40
11. Brush, Brush Attacker, Brass Fist (Bi, Bi Zhua, Tong Quan, 笔、筆.cbo、鎌拳), p. 41
12. Long-Handled Sickle (Da Lian, 大鎌), p. 42
13. Long-Handled Claw (Zhua, 抓), p. 42
14. Hoe (Ba Tou, 扒頭), p. 42
15. Buddha Hand (Fo Shou, 佛手), p. 42
16. Other Miscellaneous Long-Handled Weapons
   a. Fire Hook (Huo Gou, 火鉤), p. 44
   b. Stirring Heaven Killer (Hun Tian Lu, 混天戳), p. 44
   c. Tree Knot (Chun Jie, 檔結), p. 45
   d. Heaven Lotus Wind Tail Tan (Tian He Feng Wei Tan, 天釵風尾螳), p. 45
   e. Wolf Brush (Lang Xian, 狼筆), p. 45
Appendix A: Tables of Weapons

f. Lamp Staff (Deng Zhang, 筒仗), p. 46
   g. Long-Handled Pincers (Chang Jiao Qian, 長腳鉗), p. 46
   h. Inviting to Pull Staff (Qing Ren Ba, 費人拔), p. 46
   i. Heaven-Earth Sun-Moon Saber (Qian Kun R
     Yue Dao, 乾坤日月刀), p. 47

B. Double Long Weapon 長長兵
   1. Double-Headed Spear (Shuang Tou Qiang, 雙頭槍), p. 47

SHORT WEAPONS 短兵器

Very Short Weapons
   1. Short Sword (Duan Jian, 短劍), p. 49
   2. Short Saber (Duan Dao, 短刀), p. 50
   3. Iron Ruler (Tie Chi, 鐵尺), p. 50
   4. Scrape Saber (Xiao Dao, 削刀), p. 51
   5. Sleeve Sword (Xiou Li Jian, 袖裡劍), p. 51
   6. Short Trident (Duan Cha, 短叉), p. 52
   7. Sickle (Lian, 割), p. 52
   8. Brush Rake Trident (Bi Jia Cha, 筆架叉), p. 52
   9. Flute (Xiao or Di, 笛, 箫), p. 53
  10. Cymbals (Ba or Nao, 鈸, 鴨), p. 53
  11. Fan (Shan, 扇), p. 54
  12. Dagger (Bi Shou, 彈), p. 54
  13. Zi Wu Mandarin Duck Axe, Deer Hook Sword or Deer Antler Saber (Yuan-Yang Yue or Lu Jiao Dao, 弈鵲雁錐、鹿角刀), p. 55
  14. Emei Sting (Emei Ci, 艾窩刺), p. 56
  15. Ring or Wheel (Quan or Lun, 圓、輪), p. 57
  16. Sun-Moon Tooth Saber (R Yue Ya Dao, 太月牙刀), p. 57
  17. Moon Tooth Sting (Yue Ya Ci, 月牙刺), p. 58
  18. Palace Heaven Comb (Gong Tian Shu, 宮天梳), p. 58
  19. Brush (Bi, 彈), p. 58
  20. Scissors and Ruler (Jian Dao Chi, 剪刀尺), p. 58
  21. Money Rings and Double Sabers (Qian Ling and Shuang Dao, 畫領、雙刀), p. 59

Short Weapons
   A. Single Short Weapons 单短兵
      1. Sword (Jian, 剑), p. 60
      2. Saber or Wide Blade Sword (Dao, 刀), p. 63
      3. Whip Rod (Hard Whip) (Bian Gan, 棍棒), p. 67
      4. Whip (Hard Whip) (Ying Bian, 槍鞭), p. 67
      5. Iron Rod (Tie Jian, 鐵繩、鐵繩), p. 69
Appendix A: Tables of Weapons

6. Pestle (Chu, 揍), p. 71
7. Staff (Bang, 棒), p. 71
8. Short Axe (Fu, 斧), p. 71
9. Crutches (Guai, 拐), p. 71
10. Hammer (Chui, 锤), p. 72
11. Sword Spear (Jian Qiang, 剑槍), p. 72
12. Iron Claw (Tie Zhua, 鐘抓), p. 72
13. Blocking Face Pipe (Lan Mian Sou, 鍼面身), p. 74
14. Double Hook Arrow (Shuang Gou Si, 銎鈷矢), p. 74
15. Brass Man (Tong Ren, 睛人), p. 74
16. Fierce Pincers (Lie Qian, 烈钳、烈鉗), p. 74

B. Double Short Weapons 叁短兵
1. Double Sword (Shuang Jian, 三剑), p. 75
2. Double Saber (Shuang Dao, 三刀), p. 75
3. Butterfly Saber (Hu Die Dao, 蝴蝶刀), p. 77
4. Hook (Gou, 钩), p. 78
5. Double Hard Whip (Shuang Bian, 炫鞭), p. 78
6. Hairpin or Sai (Chai, 赤), p. 78
7. Chicken Claw Yin-Yang Sharp (Ji Zhua Yin Yang Rui, 雞爪陰陽銳), p. 80
8. Double Fork Stick (Shuang Cha Gan, 雙叉竿), p. 81
9. Cross Tiger Block (Kua Hu Lan, 跨虎欄), p. 81
10. Double Axes (Shuang Fu, 雙軒), p. 81
11. Wolf Tooth Club (Lang Ya Bang, 龍牙棒), p. 81
12. Double Hammer (Shuang Chui, 雙錘), p. 83
13. Blocking Door Pliers (Lan Men Jue, 潑門鉗), p. 83
14. Chicken Claw Sickle and Chicken Saber Sickle (Ji Zhua Lian or Ji Dao Lian, 雞爪镰、雞刀镰), p. 83
15. Double Crutches (Shuang Guai, 雙拐), p. 83
16. Horse Halberd (Ma Ji, 馬鎗), p. 84
17. Judge’s Brush (Pan Guan Bi, 判官筆), p. 84
18. Single Dao Crutch (Dan Dao Guai, 單刀拐), p. 84

SOFT WEAPONS 軟兵器
1. Sweeper or Broom (Shao Zi, 捲子、掃子), p. 87
2. Iron Chain Linking Club (Tie Lian Jia Bang, 鐘鏈夾棒), p. 87
3. Three Sectional Staff (San Jie Gun, 三節棍), p. 89
4. Soft Hammer (Ruan Chui, 軟錘), p. 89
5. Stick Soft Whip (Gan Zi Bian, 杖子鞭), p. 89
6. Four Sectional Tang (Si Jie Tang, 四節鎯), p. 90
Appendix A: Tables of Weapons

7. Cangue Staff (Lian Jia Gun, 連枷棍), p. 90
8. Sectional Steel Whip (Jie Bian, 賒鞭), p. 91
9. Rope Dart (Sheng Biao or Suo Biao, 龍套索), p. 92
10. Comet Star Hammer (Maul) (Liu Xing Chui, 梨星錘), p. 93
11. Dragon Head Whip Club (Long Tou Gan Bang, 龍頭柺棒), p. 93
12. Plum Flower Claw and Dragon Claw (Mei Zha and Long Zha, 梅叉、龍叉), p. 94
13. Flying Claw or Flying Hook (Fei Zhua and Fei Gou, 飛抓、飛勾), p. 94
14. Leather Soft Whip (Pi Bian, 皮鞭), p. 95
15. Chain Sword or Chain Brush (Lian Zi Jian or Lian Zi Qiang, 鋍子劍、捺子箒), p. 96
16. Whip Spear or Chain Spear (Bian Zi Qiang or Lian Zi Qiang, 鋍子槍、捺子槍), p. 96
17. Double Head Comet Star Hammer or Double Head Flying Maul (Shuang Tou Liu Xing Chui or Shuang Tou Fei Chui), p. 97
18. Double Flying Claw (Shuang Fei Zhua, 雙飛抓), p. 98

PROJECTILE AND THROWING WEAPONS 投射兵器

1. Bow and Arrow (Gong Jian, 弓箭), p. 99
2. Sling Bow or Sling Shot (Dan Gong, 弹弓), p. 100
3. Crossbow (Nu, 箭), p. 101
4. Back Crossbow (Bei Nu or Hua Zhuang Gong, 背弩、花裝弓), p. 102
5. Step Crossbow (Ta Nu, 滾弩), p. 102
6. Flying Darts (Fei Biao, 飛鏢), p. 103
7. Throwing Arrows (Shuai Shou Jian, 拋手箭), p. 104
8. Sleeve Ring (Xiu Quan, 袖圈), p. 105
9. Dart Knife (Biao Dao, 聶刀), p. 105
10. Lo Han Coins or Throwing Coins (Luo Han Qian or Zhi Qian, 羅漢錢、擲錢), p. 105
11. Mother-Son Cross Dart (Mu-Zi Shi Zi Biao, 母子十字鏢), p. 106
12. Sleeve Arrow (Xiu Jian, 袖箭), p. 106
13. Flying Locust Stones (Fei Huang Shi, 飛蝗石), p. 107
15. Flying Sting (Fei Ci, 飛箝), p. 107
17. Iron Mandarin Duck (Tie Yuan Yang, 鐵鴨雁), p. 108
18. Plum Flower Needles (Mei Hua Zhen, 梅花針), p. 108
19. Poison Sand or Red Sand Hand (Du Sha or Hong Sha Shou, 毒砂、紅砂手), p. 108
**SHIELDS AND ARMOR** 盾牌與鎧甲

**Shields** 盾牌
1. Side Shield (Pang Pai, 旁牌), p. 112
2. Leaning Shield (Ai Pai, 推牌), p. 112
3. Hand Shield (Shou Pai, 手牌), p. 114
4. Swallow Tail Shield (Yan Wei Pai, 燕尾牌), p. 114
5. Rattan Shield (Teng Pai, 藤牌), p. 114
6. Cavalry Side Shield (Ji Bing Pang Pai, 騎兵旁牌), p. 115

**Armor** 鎧甲
1. Armor (Kai Jia, 鎧甲)
   A. Helmet (Zhou, 裏) (Xiang Dun Mou Tou, 犢頭盔頭)
      (Dou Jian, 戴鍔), p. 117
   B. Shoulder and Upper Chest Cover (Pi Bo, 拖胸), p. 119
   C. Body Armor (Shen Jia, 身甲), p. 119
Index

Adze, 4, 138
Aerial Spear, 138
Aerial Weapons, 109, 138
Arm Open Crossbow, 101, 138
Armor, 110-121, 126-127, 138
Army Clothes, 117, 138
Bamboo Slip, 69, 138
Bandits, 5, 35, 52, 71, 138
Bang, 20, 24, 71, 81, 88, 93, 123-126, 138
Barbarian Mao, 19, 138
Bed Crossbow, 101, 138
Bingqi, 2, 9, 130, 138
Blocking Arrow Shield, 110, 138
Blood Drop Thrower, 109, 138
Blood Stopper, 22, 136, 138
Blood, 11, 22, 27, 38, 64, 109, 136, 138
Bone Flower, 24, 138
Brass Lance, 19, 138
Bronze, 10, 138
Brush Saber, 28, 138
Bu Dun, 110, 138
Buddhism, 6, 15, 32, 138
Butterfly Saber, 66, 77, 79, 125, 138
Cai Yang’s Saber, 27, 138
Car Crossbow, 102, 138
Catapults, 7, 138
Cavalry’s Side Shield, 111, 138
Cave Saber, 65-66, 138
Chariot, 8, 17-20, 38, 95-96, 111-112, 131, 136, 138
Chest Armor, 117, 119, 138
Chi You, 10, 130, 137-138
Chopping The Horse Saber, 65, 138
Chu, 20, 71, 124, 138
Confucius, 9, 138
Convenient Shovel, 29, 138
Copper, 1, 10, 12-14, 138
Crescent Moon Shovel, 29-32, 138
Da Fu, 39, 138
Da Mo, 14, 131, 136, 138
Dang Jian Pai, 110, 138
Daoism, 138
Darter Weapon, 138
Door Gods, 69, 138
Double Head Mao, 19, 138
Double Weapons, 49, 75, 138
Dragon Armor, 117, 138
Dragon Beard Hook, 95, 138
Dun Pai, 110, 138
Eighteen Representative Weapons, 2-3, 134, 138
Eighteen-Chi Snake Lance, 19, 138
Elephant Nose Long Handled Saber, 27, 138
Emei Needle, 56, 138
Endurance, 6, 8, 17, 27, 95, 121, 138
Equal Eyebrows Rod, 21, 133, 138
Erlang's Saber, 28, 138
Eyebrow Tip Saber, 28, 138
Farming Tools, 35, 138
Female Sword, 61, 135, 138
Fire Sickle, 41, 138
Fire Fork, 34, 81, 138
Flying Sword, 50, 138
Flying Fork, 33, 138
Flying Saber, 50, 138
Fo Lian Jia, 91, 138
Foot Open Crossbow, 101, 138
Foot Soldier’s Shield, 110, 138
Fork Staff, 34, 138
Fu, 3, 9, 39, 71, 81, 83, 124-125, 131-132, 138, 142
Gan, 11-12, 22, 34, 67, 81, 89, 93, 110, 124-126, 130-133, 138
Gan Jiang, 11-12, 131, 133, 138
Geography (China), 138
Gold, 10-11, 107, 138
Golden Coin Shovel, 30, 138
Gongfu, 9, 130-133, 136, 138
Goose Feather Saber, 64, 138
Green Dragon Saber, 26, 131, 133, 138
Green Dragon Scything Moon Saber, 26, 131, 133, 138
Guo’s Long Handled Saber, 26, 138
Guns, 1, 9, 16, 138
Han Dynasty, 3-4, 12-13, 19, 32, 39-43, 55, 67, 74, 91, 128-130, 138
Hand Protection Saber, 77, 138
Hand Saber, 66, 138
He Lu, 11-12, 132, 138
He-Wolf Ear Saber, 28, 138
Heaven Tangled Shovel, 30, 138
Helmet, 117, 119, 127, 138
Hook Sickle Saber, 27, 138
Hook-Scythe Spear, 22, 138
Index

Sui Dynasty, 14, 95, 128, 139
Sweeper, 87-89, 91, 125, 139
Tang Dynasty, 9, 14, 39, 54, 71, 93, 97, 128-129, 132, 139
Tang Sickle, 90, 139
Teng Pai, 111-112, 114, 127, 135, 139
Three Kingdoms, 12, 14, 18, 26, 39, 128, 130-131, 133-134, 139
Three-Tined Fork, 33, 139
Throwing Weapons, 49, 57, 99-109, 126, 139
Tibet, 6, 54, 97, 104-105, 136, 139
Tiger Head Double Hook, 79, 139
Trident, 3, 5, 33-35, 52-53, 99, 124, 139
Two Mao, 19, 139
Upper Chest Cover, 117, 119, 127, 139
Upright Melon, 24, 139
Wagging Saber, 28, 139
Waist Open Crossbow, 101, 139
Waist Saber, 65, 139
Warring States Period, 3-4, 10, 19, 38, 51, 72, 79, 83, 132-134, 137, 139
Water-Fire Rod, 21, 139
Water-Quenching, 13, 139
Wave Long Sword, 61, 139
White Wax Wood, 22, 130, 139
Wide Blade Sword, 14, 61, 63, 124, 139
Willow Leaf Saber, 64, 139
Wind Mouth Saber, 28, 139
Wolf Teeth Staff, 139
Wrap Elbow Saber, 79, 139
Wu Dynasty, 61, 128, 139
Wu's Hook Sword, 61, 139
Wushu-1, 48, 86, 131, 135-136, 139
Xing Yuan, 104, 136, 139
Xiou Gang, 18, 136, 139
Xuan Niu, 10, 136, 139
Yellow Emperor, 10, 130, 132, 139
Yue Fei, 18, 22-23, 27, 111-112, 135, 137, 139
Yue Fei’s Long Handled Saber, 27, 139
Zhang, 4, 11-12, 19-20, 45, 101, 123, 137, 139
Zhang Hua, 11-12, 139
Zhou Dynasty, 10, 12, 14, 38, 117, 128-129, 139
Zi Dun, 139
# BOOKS FROM YMAA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6 HEALING MOVEMENTS</td>
<td>B906</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101 REFLECTIONS ON TAI CHI CHUAN</td>
<td>B868</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>108 INSIGHTS INTO TAI CHI CHUAN — A STRING OF PEARLS</td>
<td>B582</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A WOMAN’S QIGONG GUIDE</td>
<td>B833</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADVANCING IN TAE KWON DO</td>
<td>B072X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANCIENT CHINESE WEAPONS</td>
<td>B671</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANALYSIS OF SHAOLIN CHIN NA 2ND ED.</td>
<td>B0002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARTHRITIS RELIEF — CHINESE QIGONG FOR HEALING &amp; PREVENTION, 3RD ED.</td>
<td>B0339</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BACK PAIN RELIEF — CHINESE QIGONG FOR HEALING &amp; PREVENTION 2ND ED.</td>
<td>B0258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BAGUAZHANG</td>
<td>B300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHIN NA IN GROUND FIGHTING</td>
<td>B663</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHINESE FAST WRESTLING — THE ART OF SAN SHOU KUAI JIAO</td>
<td>B493</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHINESE FITNESS — A MIND / BODY APPROACH</td>
<td>B37X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHINESE TUI NA MASSAGE</td>
<td>B043</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMPLETE CARDIOKICKBOXING</td>
<td>B809</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMPREHENSIVE APPLICATIONS OF SHAOLIN CHIN NA</td>
<td>B36X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DR. WU’S HEAD MASSAGE — ANTI-AGING AND HOLISTIC HEALING THERAPY</td>
<td>B0576</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EIGHT SIMPLE QIGONG EXERCISES FOR HEALTH, 2ND ED.</td>
<td>B523</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESSENCE OF SHAOLIN WHITE CRANE</td>
<td>B353</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESSENCE OF TAIJI QIGONG, 2ND ED.</td>
<td>B639</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXPLORING TAI CHI</td>
<td>B424</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIGHTING ARTS</td>
<td>B213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INSIDE TAI CHI</td>
<td>B108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KATA AND THE TRANSMISSION OF KNOWLEDGE</td>
<td>B0266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIUHEBAFA FIVE CHARACTER SECRETS</td>
<td>B728</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MARTIAL ARTS ATHLETE</td>
<td>B655</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MARTIAL ARTS INSTRUCTION</td>
<td>B024X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MARTIAL WAY AND ITS VIRTUES</td>
<td>B698</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIND/BODY FITNESS</td>
<td>B876</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NATURAL HEALING WITH QIGONG — THERAPEUTIC QIGONG</td>
<td>B0010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NORTHERN SHAOLIN SWORD, 2ND ED.</td>
<td>B85X</td>
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<tr>
<td>OKINAWA’S COMPLETE KARATE SYSTEM — ISSHIN RYU</td>
<td>B914</td>
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<td>POWER BODY</td>
<td>B760</td>
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<tr>
<td>PRINCIPLES OF TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE</td>
<td>B99X</td>
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<tr>
<td>QIGONG FOR HEALTH &amp; MARTIAL ARTS 2ND ED.</td>
<td>B574</td>
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<td>QIGONG FOR LIVING</td>
<td>B116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QIGONG FOR TREATING COMMON AILMENTS</td>
<td>B701</td>
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<tr>
<td>QIGONG MASSAGE 2ND ED. — FUND. TECHNIQUES FOR HEALTH AND RELAXATION</td>
<td>B0487</td>
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<td>QIGONG MEDITATION — EMBRYONIC BREATHING</td>
<td>B736</td>
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<td>QIGONG MEDITATION—SMALL CIRCULATION</td>
<td>B0673</td>
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<tr>
<td>QIGONG, THE SECRET OF YOUTH</td>
<td>B841</td>
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<tr>
<td>ROOT OF CHINESE QIGONG, 2ND ED.</td>
<td>B507</td>
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<tr>
<td>SHIHAN TE — THE BUNKAI OF KATA</td>
<td>B884</td>
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<tr>
<td>SUNRISE TAI CHI</td>
<td>B0838</td>
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<tr>
<td>SURVIVING ARMED ASSAULTS</td>
<td>B0711</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAEKWONDO — ANCIENT WISDOM FOR THE MODERN WARRIOR</td>
<td>B930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAEKWONDO — SPIRIT AND PRACTICE</td>
<td>B221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAO OF BIOENERGETICS</td>
<td>B289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAI CHI BOOK</td>
<td>B647</td>
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<tr>
<td>TAI CHI CHUAN — 24 &amp; 48 POSTURES</td>
<td>B337</td>
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<tr>
<td>TAI CHI CHUAN MARTIAL APPLICATIONS, 2ND ED.</td>
<td>B442</td>
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<td>TAI CHI CONNECTIONS</td>
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<td>TAI CHI SECRETS OF THE ANCIENT MASTERS</td>
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<td>TAI CHI SECRETS OF THE WU &amp; LI STYLES</td>
<td>B981</td>
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<td>TAI CHI SECRETS OF THE WU STYLE</td>
<td>B175</td>
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<td>TAI CHI SECRETS OF THE YANG STYLE</td>
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<td>TAI CHI THEORY &amp; MARTIAL POWER, 2ND ED.</td>
<td>B434</td>
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<td>TAI CHI WALKING</td>
<td>B23X</td>
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<tr>
<td>TAIJI CHIN NA</td>
<td>B378</td>
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<tr>
<td>TAIJI SWORD, CLASSICAL YANG STYLE</td>
<td>B744</td>
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<tr>
<td>TAIJQUAN, CLASSICAL YANG STYLE</td>
<td>B68X</td>
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<td>TAIJQUAN THEORY OF DR. YANG, JWING-MING</td>
<td>B432</td>
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<tr>
<td>THE CUTTING SEASON</td>
<td>B0821</td>
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<td>THE WAY OF KATA—A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO DECIPHERING MARTIAL APPS.</td>
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<td>THE WAY OF KENDO AND KENJITSU</td>
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<td>THE WAY OF SANCHIN KATA</td>
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<td>TRADITIONAL CHINESE HEALTH SECRETS</td>
<td>B892</td>
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<tr>
<td>TRADITIONAL TAEKWONDO—CORE TECHNIQUES, HISTORY, AND PHILOSOPHY</td>
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<td>XINGYIQUAN, 2ND ED.</td>
<td>B416</td>
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### VIDEOS FROM YMAA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADVANCED PRACTICAL CHIN NA — 1, 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARTHRITIS RELIEF — CHINESE QIGONG FOR HEALING &amp; PREVENTION</td>
</tr>
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<td>BACK PAIN RELIEF — CHINESE QIGONG FOR HEALING &amp; PREVENTION</td>
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<tr>
<td>CHINESE QIGONG MASSAGE — SELF</td>
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<td>CHINESE QIGONG MASSAGE — PARTNER</td>
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<td>COMP. APPLICATIONS OF SHAOLIN CHIN NA 1, 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>EMEI BAGUAZHANG 1, 2, 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EIGHT SIMPLE QIGONG EXERCISES FOR HEALTH 2ND ED.</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESSENCE OF TAIJI QIGONG</td>
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<td>NORTHERN SHAOLIN SWORD — SAN CAI JIAN &amp; ITS APPLICATIONS</td>
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<td>SHAO LIN KUNG FU BASIC TRAINING — 1, 2</td>
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<td>SHAO LIN LONG FIST KUNG FU — TWELVE TAN TUI</td>
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<td>TAIJU BALL QIGONG — 1, 2, 3, 4</td>
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<td>TAIJU CHIN NA IN DEPTH — 1, 2, 3, 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>TAIJU PUSHING HANDS — 1, 2, 3, 4</td>
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<td>TAIJU SABER</td>
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<td>TAIJU &amp; SHAO LIN STAFF — FUNDAMENTAL TRAINING — 1, 2</td>
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<td>TAIJU SWORD, CLASSICAL YANG STYLE</td>
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<td>TAIJU WRESTLING — 1, 2</td>
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<td>WHITE CRANE SOFT QIGONG</td>
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<td>WILD GOOSE QIGONG</td>
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<td>XINGYUQUAN — 12 ANIMAL FORM</td>
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### DVDS FROM YMAA

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<tr>
<td>BAGUAZHANG 1, 2, 3 — EMEI BAGUAZHANG</td>
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<tr>
<td>CHEN TAIJUAN</td>
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<td>CHIN NA IN DEPTH COURSES 1 — 4</td>
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<td>CHIN NA IN DEPTH COURSES 5 — 8</td>
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<td>CHIN NA IN DEPTH COURSES 9 — 12</td>
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<td>TAI CHI CONNECTIONS</td>
</tr>
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<td>TAI CHI ENERGY PATTERNS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAI CHI FIGHTING SET—TWO PERSON MATCHING SET</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAIJI QIGONG COURSES 182—16 CIRCLING AND 16 ROTATING PATTERNS</td>
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<tr>
<td>TAIJI PUSHING HANDS 1&amp;2—YANG STYLE SINGLE AND DOUBLE PUSHING HANDS</td>
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<tr>
<td>TAIJI PUSHING HANDS 3&amp;4—YANG STYLE SINGLE AND DOUBLE PUSHING HANDS</td>
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<td>TAIJU SABER, CLASSICAL YANG STYLE</td>
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<td>UNDERSTANDING QIGONG 1</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNDERSTANDING QIGONG 3—EMBRYONIC BREATHING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNDERSTANDING QIGONG 4—FOUR SEASONS QIGONG</td>
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<td>WHITE CRANE HARD &amp; SOFT QIGONG</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ancient Chinese Weapons: A Martial Artist’s Guide is an easy reference guide. Any weapon you want to find you can find in seconds. This book is profusely illustrated and conveniently broken down into four main classifications: Long Weapons, Short Weapons, Soft Weapons, and Projectile/Thrown Weapons. Every conceivable weapon is here, from Swords and Spears, to Sharpened Coins and Flying Claws! Even if you’re not a Martial Artist, but have an interest in History and Warfare, you’ll find this guide an invaluable resource, unlike any other.

- Includes Techniques and Fighting Strategy!
- History and Evolution of the Weapons.
- Translations of Chinese Terms.
- Over 130 illustrations.

Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming is a renowned author and teacher of Chinese martial arts and Qigong. Born in Taiwan, he has trained Gongfu, Taijiquan and Qigong for thirty-five years. He is the author of twenty-five books. Dr. Yang lives in Lexington, Massachusetts.