

THE DAO OF TAIJIQUAN

WAY TO REJUVENATION



Jou, Tsung Hwa

Edited by:

Lori S. Elias, Sharon Rose, Loretta Wollering

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太極拳 長生之道



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TAI CHI FOUNDATION



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WAY TO REJUVENATION

Author's Dream

It has long been my dream that one day Americans of all ages, creeds and colors will be practicing taijiquan in the parks of this nation as they do in China. Few places in the world have such beautiful open spaces which can and should be used productively at no expense. The result would be tremendous improvement in mental and physical well-being.

Now, after more than 30 years of researching taijiquan, I understand that it is becoming a lost art. It is my hope that through this book we can work together to revive taijiquan.

Dedicated to the friendship of Chinese and American Peoples

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Letters from Jou, Tsung Hwa

April 1981. I was a math teacher who had published about thirty books on mathematics in Chinese. In 1964 at the age of forty-seven, I became very ill with an enlarged heart and gastroptosis because of years of hard work and vigorous schedules. My doctor told me that my condition was incurable using available medication. At the same time, one of my friends, Louzifeng (婁子丰), told me about taijiquan (太極拳) and introduced me to his taiji teacher, Yuandao (袁道). Mr. Yuan was a *xingyiquan* (形意拳) specialist; his picture appeared in Robert Smith's book, *Hsing-I Chuan*. Although Mr. Yuan at that time was in his sixties with white hair and beard, his movements were youthful and agile. When I compared Mr. Yuan's alert and good health in his sixties to my ill health at age forty-seven, I became aware of how people who take care of themselves can enjoy a healthy and happy life. I stopped smoking and started to practice taijiquan.

I first learned Yang's Taijiquan (楊式太極拳). Two years later, I learned the Wu style (武式). For three years, I practiced the Wu style constantly day and night. Then I learned the first routine of Chen's taijiquan (陳家太極第一路). I did not, however, practice this routine to the degree I practiced the Yang and Wu styles. I now practice at least three hours a day and have been doing so for the past fifteen years. At first, I had only enough strength to practice half an hour at a time. In only two weeks, my appetite improved and the frequency and severity of my stomach pain lessened. In three years time my stomach was completely healed. In five years my heart returned to normal, and I regained total good health without the use of drugs. Because of my personal experience, I decided to devote much of my time to teaching taijiquan.

There are thousands of people today who desire good health but do not know how it can be acquired. They seek doctors, take pills and try all kinds of methods. Since taijiquan can provide a way to regain good health, I want to share taijiquan with all people.

In 1972, one year after my arrival in the United States, Daniel Goode, my first American taiji student and a music teacher at Livingston College of Rutgers University (New Brunswick, New Jersey), introduced me to the Livingston Music and Arts Department, where I began teaching a credit course in taijiquan. In 1973, Professor Phil Shinick, in an effort to enlarge the Sports Study Program into a Physical Education Program, took the taiji class from the Music and Arts Department and included it in the Sports Study Program. The original taiji course was expanded to include classes in taiji sword (太極劍) and taiji sparring (太極散手). About three hundred students registered for the taiji classes during each semester. However, since each class was limited to thirty students, most students were unable to enroll. Unfortunately in 1975, because of financial and other reasons, the Sports Study Program was not developed into a Physical Education Program and consequently the taiji classes were cancelled.

The Livingston College Curriculum Committee, based on their reading of existing taiji texts, felt that taijiquan was a form of exercise rather than an area of study worth academic credit. The committee relied on various books available on taijiquan, at that time which through pictures and illustrations emphasized only taiji's postures and physical aspects.

Having read all of the taiji books, both in English and Chinese, I would tend to agree with the Curriculum Committee. The books then available did not explain the philosophy of taijiquan or how the taiji philosophy relates to your daily life. Thus I decided to work on a book

which could serve as a college textbook for courses in taijiquan. However, I initially had a lot of difficulty because I tried to write in English. Dr. Shoshana Shapiro Adler, one of my students, suggested that I begin writing the text in Chinese and then translate it into English. It was this suggestion that encouraged me to write this book. Wuji to taiji (无极而太极)!

Taijiquan is a Chinese art with a history dating back thousands of years. The movements are graceful, the tempo is slow and the benefits are great. It is the one form of exercise in which you should not use outward strength (拙力) or force in your movements. Improvement depends not on outer strength, but inner awareness. Behind every taiji movement is the philosophy of yin and yang (阴阳). In the Western world, exercise concentrates on outer movements and the development of the physical body. On the other hand, taijiquan develops both the mind and body. It embodies a philosophy that not only promotes health but also can be applied to every aspect of daily life. For example, the posture of luo (掙) or roll-back teaches the student not to resist or try to escape. Simply, the student, with total awareness of the opponent, relaxes. This movement could be compared to the graceful and precise reactions of the bullfighter. When the bull attacks, the bullfighter does not meet the bull head-on because it would mean certain death. Nor does the bullfighter run from the bull and try to escape, because the bull would follow and kill him. The bullfighter simply steps aside or "rolls back," allowing the bull to pass him, and thus the bullfighter maintains control and awareness of the bull. It is important to note that the bullfighter's position allows him to withdraw yet stay in a position to attack the bull as it passes by. This ability to attack as one withdraws is known in Daoism as "the yang among the yin (阴中有阳)."

The teachings of taijiquan can also be incorporated into your daily life. To carry the above example further, consider the verbal attacks encountered from day to day. If a person criticizes you or makes an unfair or disparaging remark, you can react in several ways. If you meet resistance with resistance and attack by returning the criticism, conflict naturally develops. You become upset, and nothing is settled. Alternatively, if you retreat from the person's statement, you become fearful and assume the statement must be accepted; you again become upset, frustrated and hurt. However, Daoist philosophy provides an alternative to either total attack or total retreat. The philosophy of "the yang among the yin" teaches you how to become acutely aware of what is said. Consider its meaning, and act accordingly. You will dismiss the statement if it is false and learn from it if it is true. Having this understanding, you realize that you are in control of yourself and your own reactions.

Clearly, there are many aspects involved in the practice of taijiquan. To concentrate merely on the physical aspect places limits on what you can gain from its practice. College students will particularly benefit from a holistic study of taiji philosophy. Since they are at a period in life when they are developing a greater awareness of themselves, their world and their future, taiji practice will help college students open their minds to a new way of thinking and viewing life. In addition, since every aspect of taijiquan can be applied to daily life, they will be better able to cope with the challenges presented by their academic studies and their extracurricular activities. Taiji emphasizes the development of the whole person, promoting personal growth in all areas of life. Consequently, the study of taijiquan not only enhances students' academic careers, but also provides a philosophy that will benefit students for the rest of their lives, regardless of the career they may pursue. Since the objectives of colleges are to prepare our young people for a happy and successful life and to open up new ways of thinking and growing as individuals, the opportunity to learn taijiquan could be an important part of the college curriculum.

Thousands of people have been practicing taijiquan throughout Southeast Asia, in

places such as China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Japan and Korea. In recent years, the practice of this art has become increasingly popular in the United States and throughout the Western world. Taijiquan's long tradition and widespread popularity have led to the development of various taiji schools, each with different styles of taijiquan. However, each school still follows the same basic taiji principle: the *Yijing* (易经) philosophy with its emphasis on "change." Within the framework of constant change, there exists the idea that some things, such as basic principles, do not change. This is especially applicable to the taijiquan postures. In the interest of the widespread development of taijiquan, standard sets of postures (forms) need to be practiced, and you should seek out a teacher who teaches one of these forms. These standard forms provide a basis for communication among taiji practitioners everywhere.

In this book three main schools of taijiquan are discussed and illustrated: Chen, Yang and Wu. The *Chen* (陈发科 1887-1957) family's taijiquan is described using illustrations from *Shenjiashen's* (沈家楨) book *Chen's Taijiquan* published in the 1960's. Depicted in the illustrations are the famous Master *Chenfake* and his son *Chenzhaokui* (陈照奎). The first routine of taijiquan and the second routine *Paochui* (砲捶) are shown. The *Yang* (楊) family's taijiquan is illustrated using the postures of the great Master *Yangchengfu* (楊澄甫, 1883-1936 AD), *Wujianquan* (吳鑑泉, 1870-1940 AD) and *Zhengmanqing* (郑曼青, 1901-1975 AD). The *Wu* (武) family's taijiquan is illustrated with the postures of Master *Haoweizhen's* (郝为真, 1849- 1920 AD) grandson, *Haoshaoru* (郝少如), who is still teaching taijiquan in Shanghai. I did not use my postures in the book because I feel you should see and learn from the original masters; since these postures illustrate the optimal standards, you will avoid pursuing variations.

When I began my study of taiji in Taiwan, Master *Zhengmanqing* (Cheng, Man-Ching) had just arrived in New York to teach taijiquan. When I came to America in 1971 for my graduate degree in mathematics education at Rutgers University in New Jersey, Master *Zhengmanqing* had returned to Taiwan to teach the *Yijing* at the Chinese Cultural College (中国文化学院). I made three visits to Taiwan. During these visits, I spent much time visiting Master *Zheng's* home in Taipei, especially on Saturdays and Sundays when he taught his students how to practice push-hands. Master *Zheng's* appearance was small and very gentle, but one had the sense that he was very strong internally. In the practice of push-hands, he could easily throw a student far away. Although I was not a formal student of Master *Zheng*, I called him "Master" and had great respect for him. The question is not who your teacher is or how many years you have studied, but how well you understand the philosophy and persist throughout life in the practice of taijiquan.

There is only one warning I would like to give. Although the practice of taijiquan can promote good health, it cannot help people who do not take care of themselves. For example, the great master *Yangchengfu* achieved a very high level in taijiquan. In a book on taijiquan that was published in 1939, *Zengzhaoran* (曾昭然), *Yangchenfu's* last student, described his master's posture of Golden Pheasant Stands on One Leg (金鸡独立) as follows: "My master, when he was young, met his elbow to his knee in the posture. However, as he grew older, his stomach became as big as a drum. Thus, he was unable to touch elbow and knee. In fact, they were several inches apart." In the preface of *Zeng's* taiji book he states: "I asked my master about the meaning of every posture, and he explained each posture and its meaning very clearly to me. What he could not explain in words, he would show me by demonstrating the postures. After a few movements, he would become short of breath. I recall those times as if they were happening now, and thinking of my master I am brought to tears." When he was young, *Yangchenfu* lived in Beijing and had an orderly daily life. *Xuyusheng* (许禹生) points out in

his taijiquan book published in the 1930's that Yang and Xu practiced the taijiquan solo exercise at least twelve times daily in the *Baofusi* Temple (報福寺) in Beijing. Later, Yang went to Nanjing, Shanghai, etc., to teach taiji. The move to the urban part of China from the pleasant countryside of Beijing meant a change of environment and lifestyle. Because of increased travel and social activities, Yangchengfu did not have as much time for his daily practice of taijiquan. He gradually became very fat and died in his fifties.

Another example of the importance of taking care of oneself is provided by Zhengmanqing, who was not only a renowned master of taijiquan but also a poet, artist, Chinese doctor and famous chess player. Master Zheng, in the preface of his Chinese taijiquan book that was published in 1946, talks about himself: "When I was young, I suffered from rickets and rheumatism. However, by the practicing *yijinjing* (易筋经) or 'the change of tendons,' I developed my strength and regained my health. When I neared twenty, I contracted tuberculosis and suffered from a serious cough and vomited blood. I learned taijiquan and consequently regained my health and strength once again." Later in his book, Master Zheng talks about drinking: "At about age seven or eight, I could drink one or two bottles of wine; at age eighteen, I nearly died from a twenty-four hour drinking binge. My mother then forced me to stop drinking. I stopped for six years, but at age twenty-four, I began drinking again. My frequency and capacity for drink increased greatly. Until about age forty, I could drink large amounts and not become drunk. In 1946, at age forty-five, my tolerance for drink began to decrease, and I easily and frequently became drunk."

Master Zheng taught taijiquan in Taiwan for free. His students, knowing he liked to drink, often gave him gifts of fine wines. He soon developed an outstanding wine collection in his home. Finally, his doctor told him that his blood pressure had become too high and advised him to stop drinking. Master Zheng continued to practice taiji, but he also continued to drink. In 1975 at age seventy-four, he was struck with a heart attack and died.

I have used these two examples not to criticize these great masters, but to point out that, along with the practice of taijiquan, one must always take care of oneself and avoid harmful habits. My dream is for all Americans to practice taijiquan each day in order to promote health and well-being throughout their country. For this reason, I have taught taiji free of charge to students for eight years. Likewise, this dream is the inspiration for my writing this book. The backyards of this nation are ideal places for the practice of taijiquan, and as people experience the many benefits of taijiquan its practice will continue to spread. I envision a day when taiji teachers will be trained in a taiji college to instruct students in the practice of taijiquan. Everywhere people will have the opportunity to learn how the practice of taijiquan improves the health of the body, mind and spirit.

Because English is a second language for me, writing this book has been a great challenge. After my Chinese text was translated into English, some of my students helped me to improve the English. It was difficult to find students who were proficient in both taiji philosophy and the skills required to write and publish a book.

Five years of work on the book resulted in a basic text that both reflected my research and experience and accurately described the taiji philosophy. First I standardize Chen's, Yang's, and Wu's forms to promote the common practice of taijiquan throughout the world. Second, I go beyond the physical forms and talk about the philosophy. Although taiji philosophy is not easily explained, I feel it is important to give you an understanding of how taijiquan affects your view of space and time. My book is the first to deal with this subject in any detail. Eventually, after years of practice of taijiquan, you will gradually feel that every movement of taijiquan is a movement of the universe. The separation between mind, body and

spirit begins to disappear, and you attain “oneness.” Likewise, you cease to feel apart from other people and the rest of creation. Finally, you will be on the threshold of the four-dimensional world by learning that our present understanding of time is limited to our perception of this moment and gradually becoming aware of the continuum of past, present and future. Taiji will show us a new awareness of space and time and our place in that continuum.

There are a number of people who have been helpful in the writing of this book. Without their advice, assistance and encouragement, writing this book would have been much more difficult.

I especially would like to thank the following: Daren Driscoll, Elisabeth Boeke, Estelle Lader, James Birney, Jay Dunbar, Hess, Laurie Heddy, Leonard Hollander, Marsha Rosa, Mindy Sheps, Paul Albe, Richard Greene, Shana, Stephen Berman, Sidney Austin, Susanna Thompson, Victor Franco, Suzanne, Wagner, Zollo, and C.C. Chan. And, I extend a special gratitude to Wang, Chien-Chang (王建章) for his work on the drawings.

Jou, Tsung Hwa
April 1981

March 1983. Since the publication of the first edition of this book, I have received letters from around the world, and many teachers and students of taijiquan have visited me. I am grateful for their favorable response, but now I feel as if a thousand-pound burden has been set upon my shoulders. I am sixty-five years old: a “senior citizen.” In other forms of physical activity I might be expected to retire, surpassed by younger people. Taijiquan, however, is unique. If people visited me and found I had nothing further to show them, they might justifiably feel that though my book is good, I would be unable to demonstrate that taiji can be used by people of any age to fight, develop energy and rejuvenate the body. They would say that taijiquan is only talk. Consequently, over the past three years I have doubled my efforts to make progress, and as a result, have achieved a breakthrough from my previous ability to a new level of understanding and practice.

There is no secret, no key piece of information which if revealed would instantly confer enlightenment and expertise. If you do not make progress, you cannot blame your teacher, because no teacher can transfer awareness to you. If you have no teacher, do not place your highest priority on finding the “right” one. None of my formal teachers were famous taiji masters, and for over ten years I have not had a personal teacher. In that time, I have discovered the only real secret: you must develop on your own. If you continue to depend on a teacher, or merely try to reproduce and preserve a particular teacher's approach, you will not reach your highest potential. Anyone wishing to go further must be willing to re-examine the classical principles of taiji (see Chapter 4) and intensify his/her efforts to embody them.

In order to improve my own ability, I knew I needed to devote more time to taiji, yet I thought I could not possibly fit more practice into my schedule. When I reviewed my daily habits, though, I realized that I was spending two or more hours a day reading a variety of Chinese newspapers. I canceled all of my subscriptions and ordered only the *Sunday Times*. In this way I could improve my English, keep up with the news, and have more time for taijiquan. Now I do not subscribe to the *Times*, either. It is always possible for people to make time for activities they really value.

Also, I thought about the stories of early Yang style masters: one master could throw the strongest boxer to the ground using only the force in his abdomen; another would lie on his back, place grains of rice on his abdomen, and launch them to the ceiling. Clearly this kind of prowess is not the result of performing the taiji forms softly and gracefully a few times a day. Another Yang master used to practice his inner strength at night, making the bed shake suddenly. I realized then that to attain the highest levels in taijiquan, it would be necessary for me to strengthen myself even at night. Now, I sleep only two or three hours every night, catnapping between sessions of meditation and qigong.

The breakthrough I have attained is most obvious to others in the practice of push-hands. I now realize that true ability is not a trick or simply the practice of better technique. It results from the cultivation of a real, non-muscular energy, taijijing and from learning how to mobilize this energy with a minimum of effort. From my own experience over the past three years, I would like to place a renewed emphasis on three aspects of taijiquan, which I feel will lift any good taiji player to new levels if practiced diligently.

First, practice qigong breathing, (see Chapter 3) as often as possible. Hold the abdominal positions for longer intervals, concentrating with your mind on the dantian. Qi will begin to gather in the belly, like money deposited in a savings bank. As you are gradually able to give up the use of muscular force, you will be able to draw upon this reserve of inner strength. Unless you cultivate this energy, your taiji will be like writing checks on an empty account. You may be able to push people around, but you are only fooling yourself.

Second, practice repeatedly the chansijing in the silk cocoon exercises, described in Chapter 3. You can practice these movements with each of the joints in the body, striving to emulate the soft, powerful sensitivity of a cat.

Third, merge your practice of qigong and the chansijing with your performance of any taijiquan solo form. Let your body's outer movements and inner energy become responsive to the kind of spiral pathways you develop with the chansijing. For awhile, this may impel you to change the appearance of the form so that, for example, the hands in Single Whip twist outward simultaneously, or the feet rotate dynamically. Eventually, as you internalize the energy patterns, the form will look much as it did at first. This is reminiscent of the story of a Zen master for whom a mountain was a mountain before his enlightenment; upon his enlightenment a mountain was not a mountain; after his enlightenment, a mountain became a mountain again.

Gradually you will be able to sink the movements of silk cocoon into your body, and they become natural and automatic. Then, when you practice push-hands, your arm can be still while your whole body expresses the chansijing. You will not have to disengage the attack with a forceful block nor withdraw by stepping back. Instead, differentiating emptiness and solidity, your inner response to your opponent's first touch will already have defeated him/her.

I would like to assure my readers that the Dao, the Way, of taijiquan leads to mastery today as surely as it did in former times. The old stories and principles are authentic guides to the kind of faithful, persevering study and practice required. I trust that this book will also continue to serve as a dependable guide. Another source of encouragement is the growing sense of community among taiji players. In the mid-southeast, for instance, one of my students, Jay Dunbar, established a newly-formed society to help players from all schools and backgrounds communicate and share with each other. Taiji is not something we should attempt to guard jealously. Generosity does not deplete us, and it may help others to make progress. Let us open old doors wide and work together for a true taiji society.

Jou, Tsung Hwa
March 1983

November 1985. There is a “master key” to taijiquan. Possessing it, if you are willing to devote time and energy to practice, you can continue to make progress throughout life to the limits of your natural ability. Without this key you can only hope to improve your technique to a certain level and then will “sigh away your time” (枉费功夫貽叹息) as the *Song of Thirteen Postures* says. The master key defines the art of taijiquan. You can do the forms or *quan* and practice a variety of principles such as slowness, relaxation, straight spine and certain hand positions. You can even reach high technical achievement; but without the master key you should not call your art taijiquan.

The master key is not related to any particular style. Instead, it makes one family of all diverse forms of taiji. The forms and styles are analogous to rooms in the same hotel. Each room has a key whose superficial appearance differentiates it from all others and provides the guest with access to that room and to no other. Problems arise when guests begin thinking their room is best and the particular humps and valleys, notches and grooves, straight or contoured edges in their key are essential and should appear in everyone's key. As the external differences are given greater significance, “Taiji Hotel” turns into “Quan Condominiums.” All the guests try their keys in one another's doors and say, “Your room is no good because my key does not open your door, and I know my key works.” This is happening among some taiji players today. Adherents of various styles become involved in describing individual differences as if they were fundamental. One might say, “The key to taijiquan has five notches of increasing depth in its upper edge.” Another might counter, “The upper edge of the key must be smooth to permit it to turn either way.” When instructors, who may have been misled by their teachers, focus on the unique configuration of their own “keys,” students are easily fooled. They mimic the person at the front of the class instead of seeking to apply the master key for themselves. However, just as the manager of a hotel has one master key which unlocks all doors, there is one master key to taijiquan that reveals which bumps and valleys in individual keys are merely superficial differences and which are common to all other styles. This key defines the essence of the art.

The master key to taijiquan is so complete that it contains all other principles within it, yet so simple that some people will hear and laugh; some will acknowledge it yet forget to practice it, and only a few will achieve mastery with it. Yet anyone can hear and immediately have some understanding of it. What is the master key? You do not have to take my word for it; I did not originate it. The master key has existed since ancient times, distinguishing taiji from other *quan*. I only wish to emphasize it so taiji players of all styles can see the common ground defining their practice and can work together toward mastery.

In the Tang Dynasty (唐朝, 618-905 AD) a hermit named *Xuxuanping* (许宣平) is said to have practiced a martial art similar to taijiquan “with the eight trigrams in the arms and five elements under the feet” (手抱八卦，脚踏五行), which means all movements are according to the principles of the *Yijing*. In the tenth century, *Chenlinxi* (程灵洗) stated that no one can master taijiquan without studying the *Yijing*. These are early statements of the master key to taijiquan.

In the fourteenth century, *Zhangsanfeng* (张三丰), who synthesized earlier forms of taiji boxing, Daoist qigong, and the principles of the *Yijing* to define the art now known as taijiquan, wrote a treatise called *The Theory of Taijiquan* (太极拳经). At the end of that work, he emphasized the importance of thirteen postures, which corresponded to the eight trigrams of the *Yijing* and the five elements. These concepts can be considered the master key to taijiquan. All subsequent variations are based on this foundation.

Around 1970, *Chizhangdao*, an advanced student of the great modern master, *Zhengmanqing*, told me that his teacher had said there were “eight trigrams in the hand.” Chi

did not understand this saying and asked me about it because he thought my background in mathematics would enable me to explain the dynamics of hand movements in terms of the eight trigrams. I did not understand then, but now, fifteen years later I do.

Since before Zhangsanfeng to the present, experts have recognized the master key that can transform any quan into taijiquan. If karate practitioners applied the master key, their karate would become taiji. This sounds mysterious but actually it is quite simple. There is a Chinese expression: "The highest thing is the simplest." As soon as I show you, you can see it immediately, for it seems natural. I might say initially that "the eight trigrams in the arms" means that your hands move in unison, and your movements match perfectly those of your opponent; the "five elements under the feet" means to be able to step forward or back, to turn left or right, while remaining poised at the center. This may seem very simple; but the master key is not an academic or intellectual comprehension. The only way to understand it is to do it! Do not expect to get this by following a teacher. Practice again and again by yourself to gain "understanding energy" or *dongjing* (懂勁), which means self-knowledge. One day you will know and will no longer feel the need to ask anyone about this or that.

The master key is not a short cut. "The highest is the simplest, but the simplest is also the most difficult." Practicing the application of the master key is the work of a lifetime. Whether you have been studying thirty years or three months, ask yourself if your practice incorporates an effective method for embodying "the eight trigrams in the arms, the five elements under the feet."

If you want to understand the eight trigrams in the arms, for instance, you must practice the chansijing, which I have described in Chapter 3. If you want to understand the chansijing, you must understand the taiji diagram, discussed in Chapter 2. Direct your practice through three stages.

First, learn not to move your arms independently of your body. Zhengmanqing used to say that if your arms move independently, you were just "doing exercise, not taiji." Move your arms around a center as the earth orbits around the sun. Study this by tracing the taiji diagram with each hand individually, paying attention to the relationship between your palm (yin) and the back of your hand (yang). When your palm is facing straight up, your hand shows the trigram *kun* (坤). When the palm is facing down, the hand shows the trigram *qian* (乾). Each hand manifests all eight trigrams as it passes around the circle, like the monthly cycle of the moon from new to full and back again.

Second, all parts of your body must exhibit revolution, similar to the rotation of the earth on its axis, which, when added to the circularity of its orbit, results in a spiraling motion through space. Study the chansijing exercise with both hands matching one another like the sun and the moon. Matching may be complementary, where for instance the left hand shows the trigram *dui* (兌) and the right hand shows *gen* (艮); each hand showing yin in an equal proportion to the yang in the other hand. Matching may also be corresponding, where the hands move as identical or mirror images of one another.

Third, your hands must match each other in the solo form in preparation for being able to match the energy of an opponent.

All arts have a "master key." For example, most people can learn to dance by taking lessons, following a teacher, or imitating others around them on the dance floor, and some dance professionally for years; yet only a few become great dancers. The others learn the outer movements, but the great dancer possesses a "master key." Similarly, many people take piano lessons, and of these, some are disciplined enough to become professional players, piano teachers, or even concert pianists; but only a few become great. The others may have musical

techniques; the great pianist possesses a “master key.” It is the same in the martial arts.

Long ago, someone got the idea for the art of Monkey Fist by watching a monkey. Now, a person may study Monkey Fist (猴拳) for twenty years and reach a high level of proficiency, but if he has never watched a monkey, his art cannot truly be called Monkey Fist. The master key to the art of *bagua* (八卦) is the circular arrangement of the eight trigrams. Practitioners may imitate circular walking, but they must understand the eight trigrams for their art to truly be “bagua.” The master key to *xingyi* (形意) is the relation of the five elements in each movement. In taiji, we have the same problem as other arts. Most students learn only to follow and do not acquire knowledge of the master key. The taiji player must learn both the eight trigrams and the five elements. If you study for twenty years with the best teacher and still lack the master key, you may have quan but it will not be taijiquan.

Some practitioners of Monkey Fist, bagua, xingyi and taiji would exclaim loudly against this, saying it is too theoretical and useless for fighting. They would be right if the goal were form, but the goal is formlessness. They would be right if the master key were complicated, too abstract to be applied effectively. It is not. In taijiquan, the master key is the conscious embodiment of the fundamental way in which change occurs naturally in this world. This mechanism is exercised in qigong, expressed in the five elements and pictured in the taiji diagram — the basis of the *Yijing*. The taiji diagram is our “monkey.”

Beware of being satisfied with your own level of understanding of these things. If you are willing to accept a platitude about the “natural harmony of opposites” as a summary of the taiji diagram, you will never make progress. Take the taiji diagram as your teacher, practice taiji as revealed in it, and you will begin to be able to read the trigrams and hexagrams as patterns of energy in yourself and others. If you have not yet made the effort to understand these things, then no matter how many years you study, you cannot say you have begun to be a student of taijiquan. You must make the effort to understand the master key.

Jou, Tsung Hwa
November 1985

May 1988. Taijiquan is based on the *Yijing*, especially on the idea of “change.” Nobody can perform the forms and postures of taiji perfectly, for perfection is relative—an ideal dependent on individual perception. In playing taiji, your aim must be to change again and again; to vary your practice in order to make progress in understanding the principles you attempt to embody. Even if you try to hold everything constant, even if you strive to reproduce some image of a “perfect form,” nature itself ensures that conditions within and around you are never the same, and no two performances will ever be identical. You can either be frustrated by this or you can learn the way in which change, the only constant, can be employed to attain higher levels of wellness, happiness and awareness.

Sometimes in your efforts to improve your taiji, you may experience a “breakthrough.” This does not come from attempts at humdrum repetition but is triggered by some modification, some change in nuance or posture, in mood or intent, that opens us to a flow of unexpected energy. Sometimes we are able to describe a breakthrough with a story or image; other breakthroughs may be nonverbal—a new feeling or heightened perception. Usually, the sensation of breakthrough is exhilarating. It is accompanied by a sense that seemingly difficult things are easier—that seemingly complicated things are simpler. Frequently, a breakthrough in one area will have a far broader impact. Breakthrough in a single posture, for example, will often be felt throughout your form.

Breakthrough is not unique to taijiquan. Passing an important examination, graduating from school, trying a new method after doing a job the same way for ten years, finding a faster route home, or putting on toe-clips after years of only pushing down on bicycle pedals all may result in the feeling of breakthrough. In daily life, we think of breakthroughs as solutions to problems. I am not talking about the slow, nearly imperceptible progress that comes from daily practice. A breakthrough feels more dramatic, even if it is a relatively small gain. It is like an earthquake—an abrupt release of tension that is measurable and discrete—rather than a series of tremors indistinguishable from one another. I would define breakthrough in taijiquan as “a sudden and exhilarating transition toward enlightenment.”

Everyone who persists in taijiquan and utilizes the principle of change will experience many of these transitions. Zhengmanqing told of one such breakthrough that occurred when he was a student of Yangchenfu. According to Zheng, Yang repeatedly admonished his students to relax. Zheng did his best but still made no progress; his fellow students could still push him around. Then one night Zheng dreamed that his two arms were broken at the shoulder and, like a doll's, were connected to his body by only a string. When he woke, he understood what “song” (relax) means, and when he pushed with his classmates they wondered how he had made such rapid progress.

I experienced a breakthrough one evening as I watched a cowboy ride a wild horse in a televised rodeo. Suddenly I saw that every motion of the horse had a purpose. The horse's intention to unseat the cowboy was accomplished in a succession of movements that threw the cowboy's center of balance further and further off until it was possible for the horse to toss him to the ground. I realized with excitement that this is also the aim in push-hands—the smallest movements must be related to the goal of defeating your opponent. Of course, long hours of practice must follow these moments of revelation.

In this letter, I would like to distinguish between two kinds of breakthroughs. The lesser is the personal milestone, of which there can be many. The two examples above belong to this category. The greater marks the boundaries between three major developmental stages that define the road to true mastery in martial art. Each of the three major stages is characterized by a “method.” Martial artists in the first stage use hand method, those in the

second stage use torso method, and in the third stage, mind method. Although many lesser breakthroughs are possible within each stage, the transitions from hand to torso method and from torso to mind method are distinct—requiring a major breakthrough, a “quantum leap.” Lesser breakthroughs are individual experiences and will vary widely; the greater breakthrough, however, will be very similar for all who pass from one stage to the next. Most martial artists remain in the first stage. A few reach the second stage. Classical stories tell us of those who have attained the third stage, but I know of no one today who has reached it.

The First Stage: Hand Method (手法). The hand method refers to the execution of techniques by the body's extremities. Techniques include punching, blocking, kicking, striking, locking and jinna. Stretching is important, and movements are usually large, fast and forceful. All hard, external schools stay within the bounds of the hand method. For martial artists trained in these schools, the practice of taiji defined by its principles, not its forms, represents a breakthrough—the doorway to the second stage of development. Unfortunately, most taiji players also remain at the first level; the performance of form and push-hands will simply be the exercise of techniques until players learn to apply the master key (the application of the eight trigrams and the five elements) and thereby breakthrough to the next stage.

The Second Stage: Torso Method (身法). The hallmark of the second stage is the use of torso method. Torso method is characterized by use of the body, specifically the waist and spine, to initiate and empower the movements of the arms and legs. That is, the torso leads all movement. In the first stage, muscular dynamics and independent movements generate force. In this second stage, suppleness, connectedness, inner movements, and the spiral motion pictured in the taiji diagram unlock the power of innate energy or qi. What do torso method movements look like? No parts of the body move independently; the movement of any part is contingent on the matched motion of all other parts and all parts are continuously alternating between the extremes of yin and yang. Only those who reach this stage can truly be said to be practicing taiji; yet these are few indeed. Most taiji players are working on the principles that define the torso method, but the breakthrough that marks mastery of this stage is elusive. It is easy to deceive yourself about progress at this level. Taiji forms can appear very graceful and connected, especially when performed by a player with long experience. Careful study, however, will reveal hands and other parts moving independently or stagnating and failing to change as weight shifts and the waist moves.

The Third Stage: Mind Method (心法). Finally, there is mind method. It is difficult to talk about this third stage, since I myself have not reached it or even met anyone who has broken through to this level. The classics attest that it is possible, and there are tales of masters whose feats sound as if they had attained this level. In the mind method, all movement has been absorbed into the body. Techniques formerly executed with the extremities now begin and end within the energy of the individual. Where previously the torso led, now it is the mind that leads and the energy that follows; the player's intention is accomplished with little or no external action. In this third stage, physical energy or qi has been transmuted into psychic or spiritual force, called *shen* (神). Tales tell, for instance, of masters who could neutralize the attack of a tiger simply by reflecting the tiger's fierce energy back at him in a concentrated glance.

It is one thing to say that a breakthrough is necessary to move from stage to stage, but how can you work toward breakthrough in taijiquan? Imagine the course of your development to be an endless corridor. If development were merely a function of effort over time, then the corridor would look like a ramp angled upward to the vanishing point. Yet it is not. The corridor is uneven and interrupted by a series of locked doors. Advancement within each passage comes with patience and perseverance over time; but without a key, the next passage is

inaccessible. With effort, you can maintain your skill at the level of the door, but if you become complacent or have no key, you will only remain there without making progress.

Breakthrough is not the automatic result of the passage of time or an accumulation of experience on a particular level. Years of practice will result in smoother technique, but the habit of performance is external. Internal concentration and change are necessary to breakthrough in taijiquan. Think about the history of automobile design. The first cars were essentially a chair or a couch mounted on four wheels. For years, designers allowed these features to dictate what cars looked like on the outside and produced only variations on the theme. The exterior was simply a casing for the interior. For a breakthrough to occur, someone had to adopt an entirely new concept. Aerodynamics provided the key. As designers began to pay attention to the flow of air outside the vehicle rather than to the furniture inside, their designs began to change radically. While it is a simplification, this example provides an insight into the nature of a major breakthrough. It is not just a slight improvement on an existing idea; it is a jump to a new arena of creativity made possible by recognition of a different fundamental concept. This is what must occur between each major stage in taiji development.

I believe the answer for those who wish to go forward is twofold: never be satisfied and always seek diligently for keys to further progress. Let me consider each of these ideas in turn. First, how can you avoid the pitfall of self-satisfaction, which tempts you to settle for where you are rather than pursue loftier aims? One way is to pay close attention to the reasons why you play taiji and the goals you think you can achieve by practice.

Goals organize energy. They help you use your time and effort more efficiently. Goals are most effective if they are made conscious and meaningful. What is your goal for yourself in taijiquan? One day, if you have achieved skill, what do you think you will do with it? Try to be specific in formulating your goals. For example, "to be healthy," or "to be able to defend myself," or "to feel relaxed and happy," are vague. Vague goals, even if they sound good, will not focus your energy nor inspire you to employ effective means of realizing them. Challenge yourself: sharpen your goals so that they are a reflection of your will to make real progress and to breakthrough. For example, "I want to be healthy" might become "In six months, I will be twenty pounds lighter and will be able to walk up to my apartment without breathing hard." "I want to be able to defend myself" might become "In one year I will have learned both sides of the sparring form," or "I will demonstrate in X number of sparring or push-hands matches that I can neutralize my partner without hurting him/her."

Specificity helps focus your will and strengthens your belief in your own potential. Focus on something you really want, not just something that sounds nice. The fervor of your desire makes the difference between a fond hope and a goal which empowers your pursuit of it. **Empowering goals are magnetic.** They attract energies in your life that contribute to their fulfillment and repel things that might distract you. Once you have such a goal for taijiquan, you must begin to discriminate between things that contribute to its fulfillment and those that draw your energies away. Do late hours keep you from daily practice? Do you spend too much time in front of TV or in idle reading? Do you often seek companionship instead of valuing time with yourself? You must be willing to push distractions resolutely from you and do what is necessary to accomplish your goal. Your goal, for instance, must compensate you for getting up early each morning for practice!

Let us assume that your taiji is good. You have worked hard for a number of years and you feel you are on a par with your peers. Other people are better than you only because they have been at it longer. This is a treacherous place. You are losing your "beginner's mind," and you face choices that are critical to your future development. Even after twenty years, if you

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think “I’m good enough now,” or “I’m happy just running this taiji studio,” then you are finished. You will stop there and never breakthrough. If you want to breakthrough to the next stage you must never be satisfied. When you attain your goal, or see beyond it to something higher, the principle of change suggests that you adjust your sights toward that loftier vision of self-fulfillment. Only your hunger for greater achievement will impel you to breakthrough.

Now let me return to the second concept mentioned above: the importance of searching diligently for keys to further progress. Where are such keys to be found? I believe that if we sincerely desire breakthroughs, keys can be found beneath the mat of the most common experiences of your life. We must cultivate intuition, however, to discern them. One method of finding keys to breakthrough in taijiquan is to think deeply about things other people take for granted. Accepting other people’s answers at face value, for whatever reason, can block progress. For instance, when I first began studying taiji, I wondered why there was so much variation among the major styles. Other players told me it was because of differences in the personal styles of the masters, or that the variations were random, or the result of faulty transmission, or that they represented alternative martial applications. I sought my own answer by studying three of the major styles and concluded that the Chen, Yang and Wu (武) styles define a continuum, purposefully designed to lead a player from hand method to mind method, from form to formlessness, from the limitations of action in the external world to freedom of action in the internal world. I assure you it would repay your effort to investigate this for yourself as I did.

Another way of finding keys to breakthrough is to relate as much of your daily life and your knowledge of the way things work to the practice of taiji. Ask continually, “How is this like taiji?” The classics and tales from the lives of earlier masters also will repay your consideration. However, ideas in books or from any source other than yourself must be personalized in the crucible of your own practice. In the earliest classic on taiji, Zhangsanfeng says that taiji is learned from the movement or orbit of the sun and the moon. Clearly, he watched their movements and related them to his own life. When I first heard this I thought it was superstitious. How can they be related? Then one night, as I practiced taijiquan, I saw the crescent moon rise. Suddenly, I understood the connection Zhangsanfeng had made: the back of the hand is yang, the palm is yin. As the hand turns, a crescent of yang appears. We have two hands, so they must match one another like the relationship between the sun and the moon. This breakthrough became possible because I was willing to open my mind and admit that this old story might have something to say to me. From this I was able to recognize that the *bagua* (八卦), representing eight phases of cyclical change, is the key to the torso method in taijiquan.

Suppose you have set yourself a goal to move from stage one to stage two, from hand method to torso method. How might you do this? The hand method rule was to practice a repertoire of techniques over and over until you could execute them smoothly and forcefully. Now you will need to adopt a higher concept: do not move your hands. If the hands cannot move independently, then the body must begin to move in order to cause the hands to approximate the positions you have learned in the form. Therefore, in order to practice torso method, your body must learn to move more and more, as you strive to move the hands less and less. Try this exercise: Stand with your arms at your sides, palms facing to the rear. How can you move the torso so that your palms face outward? If you are not allowed to move your hands, then you must combine the sinking of the body and the use of dantian and inner movement to effect a movement in the extremities. As this becomes possible for you, you are on the verge of discovering the difference between taiji and all other quan: every posture in every taiji form in all styles should be executed with the same inner intent and outer stillness.

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Let us carry this exercise a step further. How do you move from the torso method to the mind method? If you move from hand method to torso method by reducing the movement of the hands and increasing the movement of the torso, then expect to move from torso to mind method by reducing the movement of the body and increasing the activity of the mind. This is an advanced concept. To practice torso method, we strive to lead the hands with the body; but what leads the body? The mind—and this will show in the eyes. If we comprehend this, even as we practice at lower stages, we can begin to cultivate the rudiments of the mind method. As the mind thinks, “I want to move the hand,” the eyes lead by looking slightly ahead of the movement. By analogy, when you read aloud your eyes are scanning the text ahead of your voice. This is known as the “eye-voice span.” If your eyes focus only on the word you are saying, you comprehend less of what you are reading, and your voice loses the appropriate expression. Good readers have larger eye-voice spans than poorer readers. In taiji, if the eyes focus on the hand, the mind will follow the hand and allow it to lead. If the eyes focus slightly ahead of the hand, the hand will learn to follow the energy of the mind, and the mind will learn from the hand how to act effectively in the world.

Confucius once said every phenomenon has its causes and its effects; every event has its start and its conclusion. If you know what comes first and what follows next, then your actions can be close to the Dao. This highlights another important concept related to breakthrough. A student at the beginning of study has no background. S/He does not know Chen style or Yang style and does not know what to work on first. If at this point s/he only wants to work on the application of postures and thinks, “I’m right, I’m ready,” s/he will never breakthrough, because s/he is unaware of the requirements of process in his/her own development. At every stage, there is specific work to be done that cannot be skipped if you wish to make progress. Your instructor may suggest routes that lead consistently to greater expertise, but you must strive to accept responsibility for your own development—to acquire sensitivity to the flow of your own unfolding and your specific weaknesses and needs. **Have confidence in yourself.** If the old masters did it, you can do it. **Give up negative habits of thought.** **Excuses will drain your energy and ruin everything.** When confronted by a difficult move in a form, such as a jump in the Chen second routine, if you say, “Oh, I’ll never be able to do that jump,” then in fact you will never be able to do it. Now, as you read this, sit up straight—lift your spirit and relax inward toward your center! Remember your goal: to acquire mastery. There is certainly some truth in the old adage, “You are what you eat,” but how much more true that you are what you think. Your assumptions about yourself and who you are—what you look like, what jobs are possible for you—create an inertia in your life. To varying degrees, we are all engaged in this inertial thinking. **Who are you?** The more often you think of your goal, the more it shapes your reality. Once a week is better than once a month, once a day is better than once a week. Frequency is important and so is the intensity of your mindfulness. As often as you remember, ask yourself, “If I were indeed a master, how would I act in this situation? How do I act with this person from the space of mastery? How does the master sit? How does the master eat?” Remembrance is the greatest key, linked to the cultivation of your will and the power of your imagination.

Daily practice of taijiquan is simply an exercise in remembering who you truly are. If you can remember your goal and yield to the possibility of change, you will indeed breakthrough and begin to live at higher levels of energy and consciousness. In his classic on taiji, Wangzongyue asserts that the energy generated by continuous practice, dongjing, leads to a sudden illumination or godlike stage. He states that the key to this stage and to dongjing is understanding the relationship between yin and yang and thereby interpreting energy correctly.

He promises all taiji players: “Comprehend the dongjing and the more you practice, the more wonderful will be your development. You understand in silence and experience in feeling until you may act at will.” Of course, the opposite of this is that if you do not understand, no amount of practice will be of any use!

My purpose in writing this letter is to encourage all taiji players, both students and teachers, to open their minds and strive to adopt the philosophy of taiji, expressed in the principle of change. Unfortunately, some players are sidetracked by the belief that their teacher is the only teacher. In the attempt to follow only one way they lose sight of the principle of change and of the richness of taijiquan. You probably were led to your teacher to learn certain personal lessons you might not have learned with someone else. This was a gift to you, but if it fosters an attitude that excludes rather than includes and that encourages mockery of other people and ideas, you will very likely shove away the keys to your own breakthrough. Be open to the lessons hidden in all that comes your way. Remain flexible and see what works for you. Do not be afraid to change your practice, to learn another style, or to incorporate new ideas into your form. As you change, it changes—as it changes, you change.

I am not advocating change for its own sake, nor am I suggesting that individuals should modify the choreographies of standard forms. The traditional forms within the major styles have been carefully crafted by great masters to accomplish most efficiently the aims of the art. However, individuals must use these forms as personal proving grounds for the classic principles of taiji philosophy. Forms may change in emphasis as long as the principles are not violated. These principles permit a wide range of physical interpretation and require you to experiment creatively with movement and energy in your quest for breakthrough to greater levels of mastery

Jou, Tsung Hwa
May 1988

May 1998. As I have mentioned, I began practicing taijiquan when I was 47 years old and very ill. However, it was not until 17 years after serious research and practice that I began to comprehend that taijiquan is not like regular exercise. To practice taijiquan, it is necessary to put your mind into the movement and seek to develop the spirit of vitality or *shen* (神). The mind, body and spirit must be combined as one unit. In this way, the practice of taijiquan allows you to experience the depths of Chinese philosophy.

Since this book was first published, it has been translated into various languages including: Dutch, Italian, Spanish, Russian and Polish. I feel honored to have received many wonderful letters from taiji players around the world who call this book “The Bible of Taijiquan.” Readers appear to appreciate the two important facts I considered when writing this book. The first is that traditional Chinese philosophy is difficult to understand for modern people. The second is that I have been able to make the concepts of Chinese philosophy more comprehensible by using Western logical/scientific terms and examples. My unique way is to deeply research Chinese philosophy but to explain it in a way for Westerners to understand and accept. Yet, I feel somewhat undeserving of all the credit that has been bestowed upon me. The philosophy of taijiquan contained in this book is not my own creation—it is the incredible gift left to us by the ancients. I have only collected it; I seek to “keep it alive” and make it available to everyone. I can only take credit for making the old works easier to understand, and for developing some of the exercises for chansijing energy development.

Now in 1998, I will be 81 years old. More than 30 years of daily and nightly practice has led me to believe that taijiquan is becoming a lost art. I do not say this to scare you, but consider what the classics state and what is really happening nowadays. According to *The Classics of Taijiquan* by Wangzongyue: “In boxing there are many teachings (旁門) about combat. Although they differ with respect to postures, they can never go beyond reliance on the stronger defeating those who are weaker or the swifter conquering those who are slower. These, however, are the result of physical endowments in many cases and not necessarily of practical application and experience.” This explains that external schools of martial arts rely on strength and/or swiftness. In taijiquan, this should not be the case, as it is further stated: “The strong and quick, however, cannot explain nor implement the deflection of a thousand pounds’ momentum with a force of four ounces, nor can it explain an old man’s defeat of a great number of opponents.” These are the characteristics of true taijiquan. Age, muscular strength and speed are not the determining factors of a person’s taijiquan ability. Yet let us be honest. Look around you and see what is happening. In push-hands or taiji sparring competitions, competitors are divided into gender and weight categories. These are physical attributes which should have no effect on a taiji fighter’s abilities. The classics emphasize this point. Furthermore, excellent external school fighters can defeat taiji players in sparring. Many famous taiji instructors have a solid background in gongfu or other martial arts and teach/use those elements in taijiquan and push-hands practice. Who is really using purely internal traditional taijiquan methods? Who really understands them? Who really practices push-hands or taijiquan sparring without making it a match of pushing and shoving with lots of external force? This is all not the traditional taijiquan way. The practice of taijiquan has today become impure. “To deflect a thousand pounds’ momentum with a force of 4 ounces” does not allow a fighter to meet force with force. A bullfighter does not meet the bull head-on; he knows when to step aside and let the bull pass by. Furthermore, if people were truly following the taijiquan principles, they should not be getting so weak with age. If taijiquan is so good for longevity, then why are so many older taijiquan players often weaker, hunched over and sicker than people their age who do not play taijiquan? They are not getting the full benefit of taijiquan because

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they are not fully following its principles. People cannot demonstrate the abilities of the ancient masters and are no longer concerned with studying and embodying the principles of the classics. Instead, they want to focus on details, little tricks and other insignificant ideas. This is what I mean about taijiquan becoming a lost art (旁門).

How can we change this sad situation? How can we revive taijiquan? To do so, we now have a lot of important work to do!

1. Because taijiquan developed out of yin/yang philosophy, taiji players must first study this philosophy. If you do not understand the yin/yang philosophy, the eight trigrams and the five elements, you do not understand the foundation of taijiquan.
2. All movement has three stages: hand, torso and mind methods. Taijiquan is a torso method. Hence, taiji players must avoid all hand method. Concentrate on using the central body (dantian and torso) to initiate the movement and transfer it to the periphery (limbs). Strive for synchronicity and unity in all movements. Practicing the solo form and push-hands while moving the arms and legs separately of the body is akin to a star athlete pitching a baseball by only throwing his arm around! After the torso method, reduce external movement and increase the activity of the mind in order to develop the mind method. In this way, the practice of taijiquan approaches the Dao.
3. Taiji players must develop the dantian and “breathe without breathing” to control the chansijing throughout the body and to apply the theories of the eight trigrams and the five elements.
4. Taiji players must look at historical facts and follow a path of development similar to that of Yangluchan. As you read this book, you will learn that he visited the Chen family to learn their first and second routines and then returned home and spent years in serious practice. He then began to develop the Yang form. The Yang family continued to develop the form through three different generations and nine different ways of practicing it. Taiji players must follow his example. In other words, if you want to revive and practice traditional taijiquan, you must start the same way as Yangluchan.
 - Study the philosophy and begin practice of the Chen first routine in order to develop the chansijing.
 - Then learn the second routine to develop the fajing for using internal energy to explode into external force for fighting.
 - After these requirements are met, just as the blacksmith purifies his metal, we must “forget” the chansijing and fajing to do the Yang form.
 - Then the focus can finally be put on the development of the mind and spirit.

To spend our time learning taijiquan without any serious consideration of its classic principles and stages of development is a waste of our time and a damage to this art.

Jou, Tsung Hwa
May 1998



ZHANGSANFENG
The founder of taijiquan

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Chenyanlin (陈炎林, 1906-1985) published an excellent book about Yang's Taijiquan during the 1930's. In his book he wrote about the taiji qigong, sword form, knife form, staff form and taiji sparring. He also stressed a different kind of jing which no one had explained previously. He remained an enigma to his readers because he provided no background information about himself.

While practicing taijiquan in a Shanghai park in the spring of 1980, I met one of Chenyanlin's students who brought me to visit his teacher. Master Chen gave me new insights into push-hands techniques.

Master Chen, who was a doctor of Chinese medicine, began the practice of taiji at four years of age and has practiced every day since then. This picture was taken at his home in Shanghai, China.

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When I visited Taiwan in the summer of 1972, I appeared on a television show with Master Zhengmanqing/Cheng, Man-Ching. This picture was taken at the Grand or Yuan San Hotel in Taipei, Taiwan.

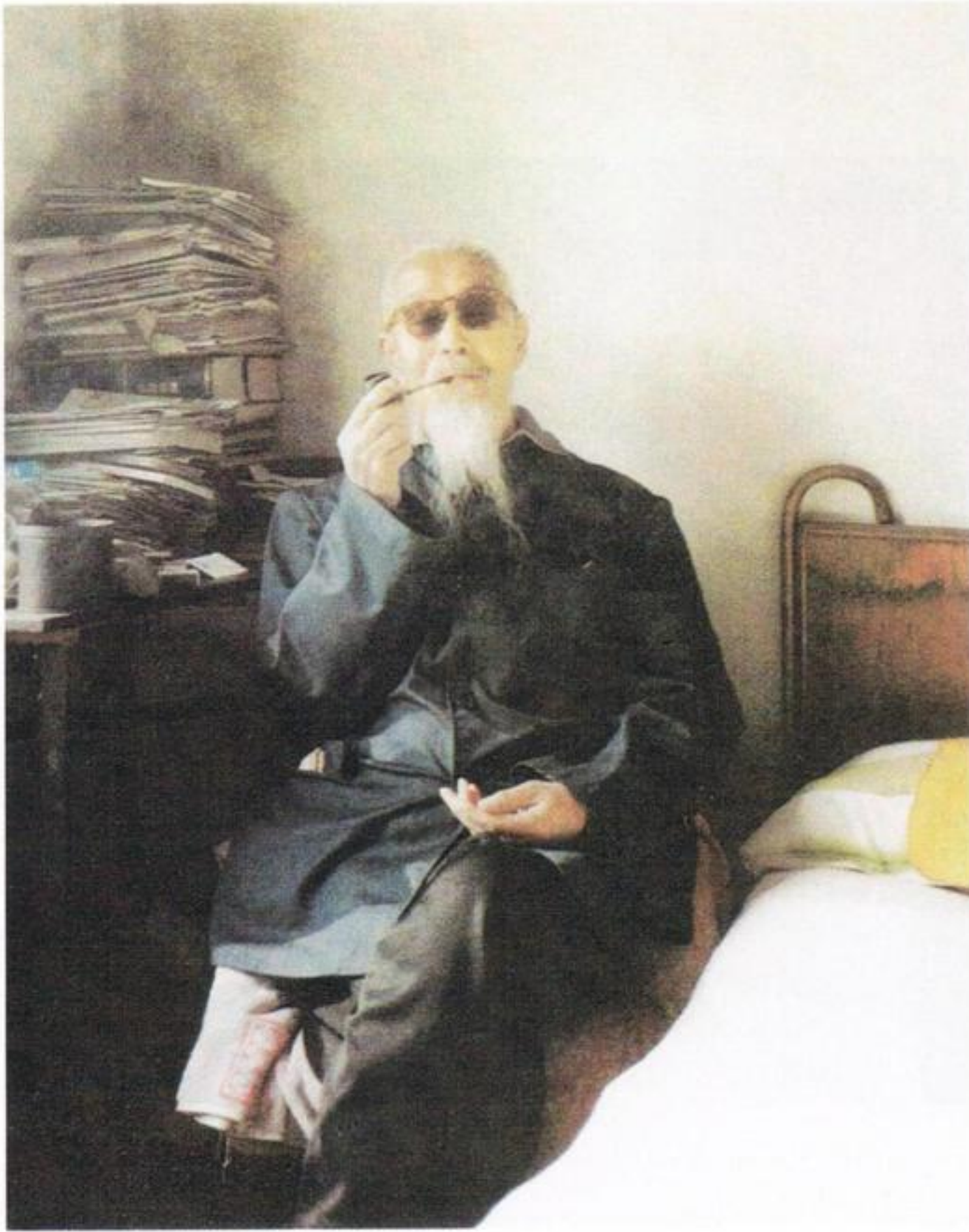
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The birthplace of taijiquan is the Chen Village, Henan Province, China. I have visited here twice to exchange greetings and share in perpetuating taiji.

Two elders of the Chen family enjoy health and happy lives. Both were in their eighties at the time of this photograph and continued to practice the traditional Chen form with spirit and enthusiasm. They were a living document from which all taiji players can learn.

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Though Wutunan (吳圖南, 1883-1990) was 102 years old in this photo, his sight was normal, his hearing keen and his memory sharp. He could easily speak out his old friend's names without thinking. His spine remained erect when sitting and standing.

He lived in an apartment on the ninth floor, but went to the park to practice taijiquan twice a day. We asked him what is the secret of his longevity. His answer was simple: Taiji, taiji and taiji!

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In America senior citizens are discovering taiji as the way to rejuvenation. In all parts of the United States my students are showing old Americans how to develop the energy or jing, so a state of relaxed alertness can be maintained at all times, once again "like a young kitten." Here Paul Albe instructs seniors in Piscataway, NJ.

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The Tai Chi Foundation sponsored taiji tours to China, Hong Kong and Taiwan. Our group spent two weeks in China, where we experienced an academic opportunity by staying in the dormitory of the Beijing Institute of Physical Education. We visited the Great Wall, Shaolin Temple, Chen Village, etc. We also visited many well-known taiji masters, and we spent one week visiting Hong Kong and Taiwan, joining taiji players in the local parks. The Chinese Taiji Institute (above) was our host in Taipei, Taiwan, 1985.

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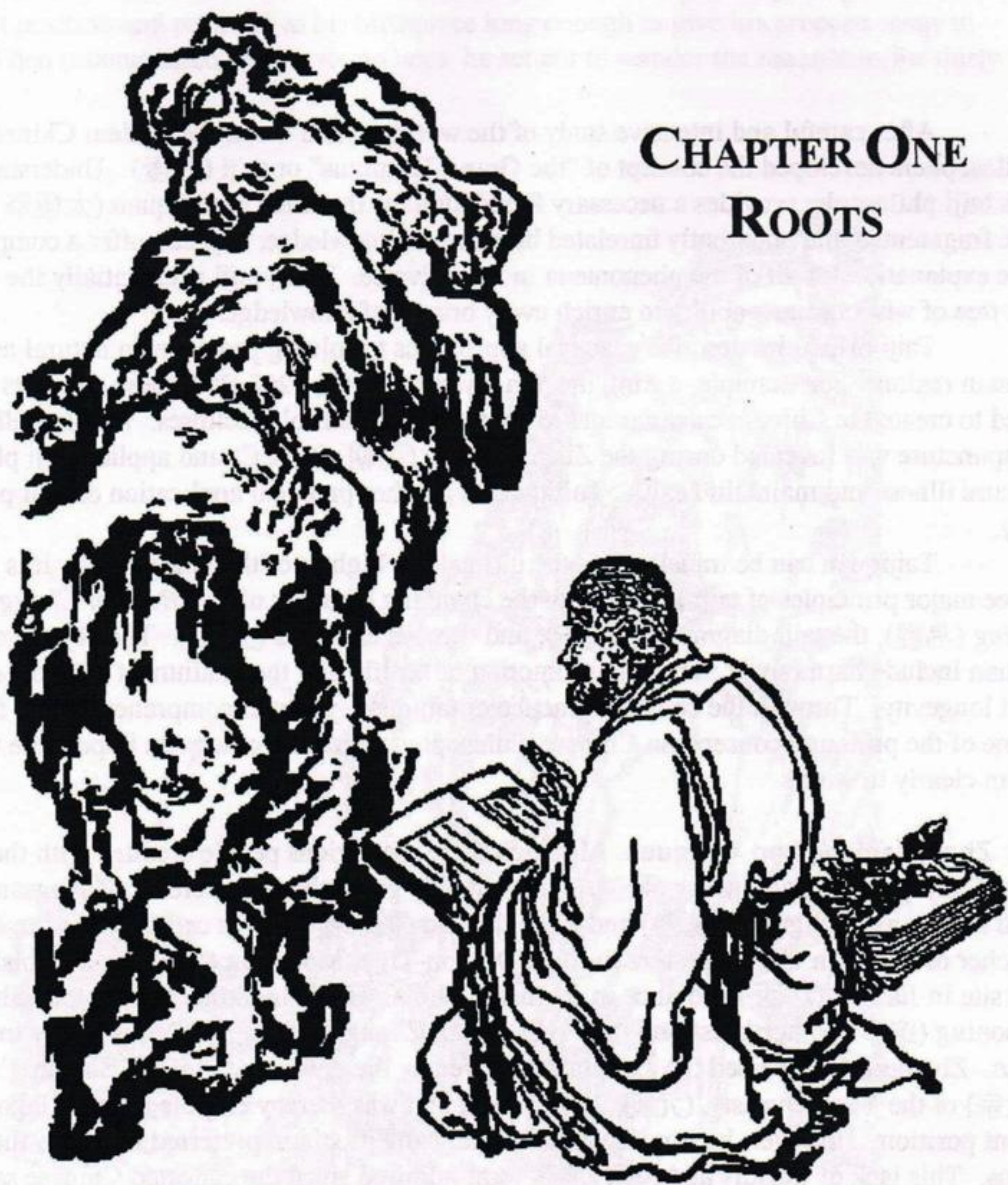
At age 47, I was diagnosed with an enlarged heart and severe stomach disorders with no hope of cures with traditional Western medicine. Now after 34 years of practicing taijiquan, qigong and meditation, shown here at age 81, I am healthy and ready to fight!

Photograph by Bruce La Carrubba March 1998 at The Summer Palace In Beijing

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CHAPTER ONE

ROOTS



CHAPTER ONE

ROOTS

After careful and intensive study of the world around them, the ancient Chinese philosophers developed the concept of “the Grand Terminus” or taiji (太極). Understanding this taiji philosophy provides a necessary foundation for the study of taijiquan (太極拳). Unlike fragmented and apparently unrelated branches of knowledge, taiji can offer a comprehensive explanation for all of the phenomena in the universe. Thus, taiji is essentially the root of the tree of wisdom in its ability to enrich every branch of knowledge.

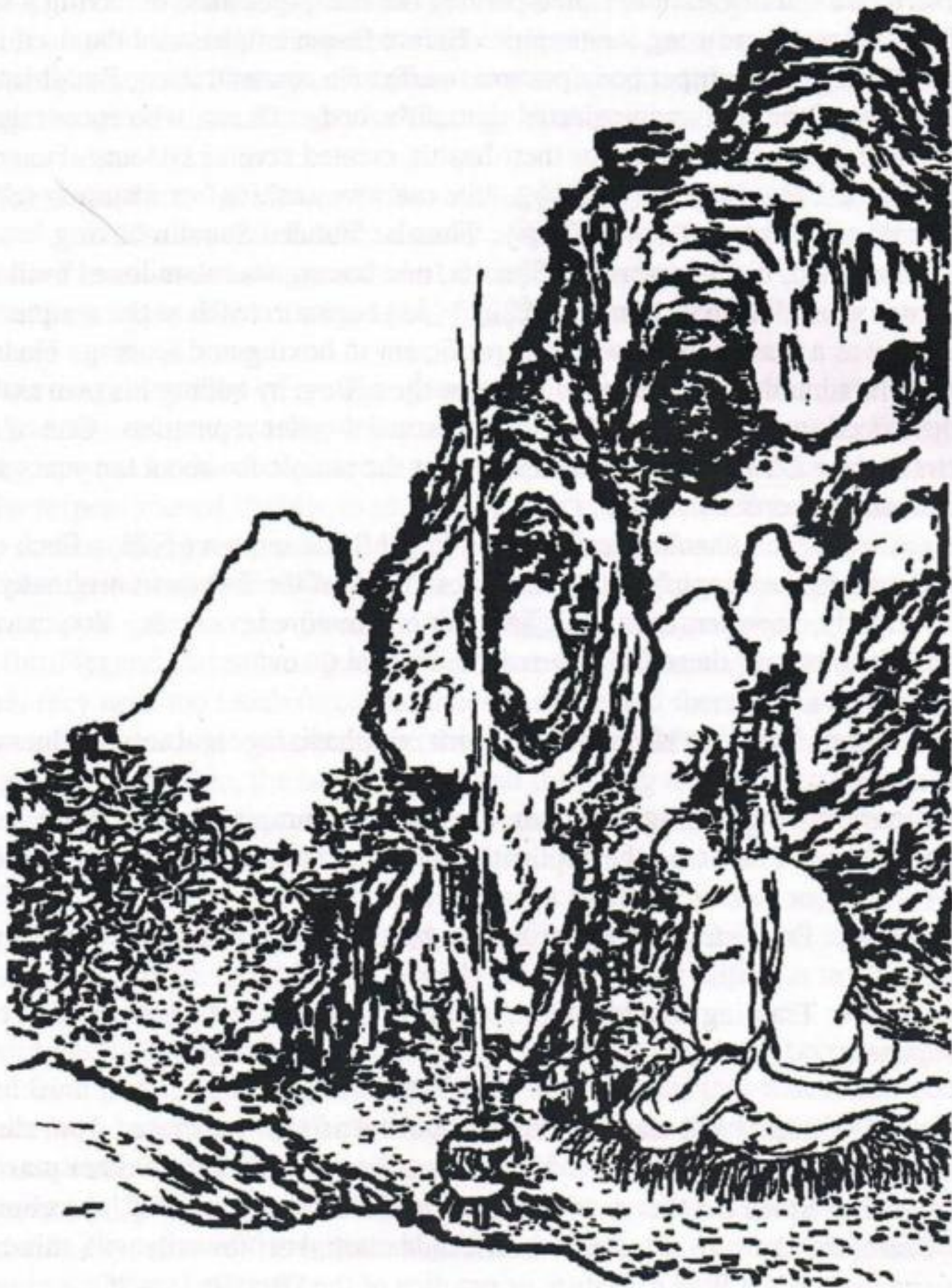
Taiji principles describe practical approaches to solving problems in natural as well as human realms. For example, during the Yin Dynasty (殷朝, 1200 BC), these concepts were used to create the Chinese calendar and to predict lunar and solar eclipses. Additionally, acupuncture was invented during the Zhou Dynasty (周朝, 696 BC) and applied taiji philosophy to cure illness and maintain health. Taijiquan is another practical application of taiji philosophy.

Taijiquan can be translated as the ultimate or highest of the martial arts. It is based on three major principles of taiji philosophy: the changing trigrams of *The Book of Changes* or the *Yijing* (易經), the taiji diagram (太極圖), and the five elements (五行). The objectives of taijiquan include harmony of the mind, promotion of health, and the attainment of rejuvenation and longevity. Through the constant practice of taijiquan, you will comprehend more fully some of the profound concepts in Chinese philosophy, which are otherwise impossible to explain clearly in words.

1.1 Zhangsanfeng and Taijiquan. Although there are various people credited with the founding of taijiquan, Zhangsanfeng (张三丰) is generally given the major credit. Zhangsanfeng was also known as Zhangtong (张通) and Zhangjunbao (张君宝) and is certainly the greatest teacher of taijiquan. His ancestors lived on Dragon-Tiger Mountain (龙虎山), a Daoist historical site in Jiangxi (江西) Province in southeast China. His grandfather moved to Yizhou in Liaoning (遼寧), a northeast province. His father, Zhangjuren (张居仁) was a very intelligent man. Zhangsanfeng passed the examination given by the government of the Emperor Taizong (太宗) of the Yuan Dynasty, (元朝, 1279-1368), and was thereby eligible for a high government position. However, he was devoid of worldly ambition and preferred to live in the mountains. This lack of worldly ambition (清高) was admired since the educated Chinese saw the hermit who renounced all connection with society as the ideal and the position of government official as much less satisfying. Zhangsanfeng was born at midnight on April 9, 1247. The anniversary of this day is now celebrated by followers of taijiquan with dining, drinking and demonstrations of taijiquan.

To the ancient Chinese, physical appearance reflects a person’s level of intelligence and character. This method of evaluation is similar to the more familiar art of palmistry except that the Chinese looked not only at the hand, but also at the whole body. According to legend, Zhangsanfeng was born a wise man because he had the arched back of a tortoise and the figure of a crane. His large round eyes were considered a symbol of intelligence and longevity. At twelve years of age he began studying the Chinese classics. Because of his good memory and

keen perception, he was eventually able to become a government official. Zhangsanfeng spent some time meditating and planning his future during a visit to Gehong Mountain (葛洪山), where Gehong (See Figure 1.1a), a minister in the reign of Emperor Yuan (290-370 AD) was said to have become immortal. After the death of his parents, Zhangsanfeng resigned from his government position and returned to his birthplace long enough to give his property away to relatives. Then accompanied by two young boys, he set out to wander the mountains for thirty



In his efforts to prolong life indefinitely, a minister by the name of Gehong refined "the pill of immortality" at the Gehong mountain. The result of his study was the development of Daoist magic.

Figure 1.1a

years visiting old temples in the hope of meeting a wise man. Finally, he settled in Midwestern China in the beautiful, green Baozhi (宝鸡) Mountains which have three pointed peaks, or “sanfeng” (三丰) in Chinese. It is said he mastered the well-known shaolinquan (少林拳) during that time.

Shaolinquan is an exercise invented in the famous Shaolin Buddhist Temple in Henan (河南), a northern province of China. The temple was built in the Shaoshi (少室) Mountains during the Wei (魏) Dynasty in the third century AD. Damo (達摩), an Indian Bodhidharma master who came to China in 527 AD, lectured there for many years during the Liang (梁) Dynasty, sixth century AD. Finding many of the monks weak, unhealthy and even prone to fall asleep during sermons and meditation, Damo pointed out the importance of having a sound body in the effort to develop a strong inner spirit. Before Damo emphasized the need for strength, physical energy and proper body posture in effective concentration, Buddhist theory stressed development of the soul and neglected that of the body. Damo, who encouraged the monks to exercise in the early morning for their health, created several systems of exercise: “the change of tendons” or yijinjing (易筋经), “the marrow washing” or xisuijing (洗髓经) and the eighteen Buddha's hands (十八罗汉手). Thus he founded Shaolin boxing.

After Damo died, his followers left Shaolin, and boxing was abandoned until several hundred years later when Jiaoyuanshangren (觉远上人) began to teach at the temple. Jiaoyuanshangren was a master monk who was proficient in boxing and fencing. He learned of the eighteen Buddha's hands and decided to improve the system by adding his own skills. Thus, shaolinquan developed into seventy-two hands and earned a better reputation. One of the many followers it attracted was Zhangsanfeng, who stayed at the temple for about ten years and mastered all of the Shaolin exercises.

The treasures of the Shaolin Temple were called the five quan (五拳). Each quan was named for the animal best exemplifying its attributes. Each of the five quan originally had only six postures. Currently, however, each quan has over one hundred postures. You can develop many variations if you master these five quan. The original quan are:

Dragon Quan. Training attention and spirit; emphasizing lightness, stillness and change.

Tiger Quan. Strengthening the bones, emphasizing jumping up and down.

Leopard Quan. Practicing the application of force; emphasizing jumping and fighting.

Snake Quan. Practicing qigong, prolonging the body; becoming very sensitive and active.

Crane Quan. Training concentration, stability, accuracy and determination to defeat the opponent.

All the styles, names and clans of Chinese martial arts are generated from shaolinquan, the prototypical Chinese martial art. However, taijiquan differs from other martial arts because Zhangsanfeng added the theory of the *Yijing* and Daoist *qigong* (气功) techniques to shaolinquan. Therefore, the way of practice transcends martial art towards will, mind, body and nature—very close to the Way of Nature or practice of the Dao (道) itself.

Now let us return to Zhangsanfeng's life. In 1314 at the age of sixty-seven, he finally met a Daoist, Huolong (火龙) whose name means “fire dragon.” This hermit taught Zhang the method of being immortal, but Zhang practiced in the high mountains for four years with very little achievement. He then moved to Wudang Mountain (武当山) and finally, after staying

there for nine years, became aware of the truth and the Dao. Again Zhang started wandering from north to south. When he returned to his birthplace, he found that all of his relatives had died. When the Yuan Dynasty ended in 1368 and the Ming Dynasty (明朝 1368-1654 AD) began, Zhangsanfeng was afraid that the royal family would need him since he was a well-known immortal Daoist, so he pretended to be mad. Thus he earned the nickname of the "Sloppy Daoist." In 1385, the Emperor ordered him to serve the government, but he hid himself near the border of Yunan Province, which is in southwest China, until 1399. At that time, he returned to Wudang Mountain to meet his best friend, Wanpuzi (完朴子). In 1407, Emperor Chengzu (成祖) sent two officials to visit Zhang on Wudang Mountain, but they could not find him. The emperor then ordered high-ranking officials to build a big temple on Wudang Mountain in Zhang's honor. In 1459, Emperor Yiuchung bestowed a title of immortality on Zhang. Thus, according to legend, Zhangsanfeng was born at the end of the Song (宋) Dynasty and lived through the whole Yuan Dynasty to the reign of Dingzong (定宗) in the Ming Dynasty—a period of more than 200 years!

There are different stories as to how Zhangsanfeng created taijiquan. One story states that he created it in his dreams. While this may seem improbable, remember that the French mathematician Pascal invented a geometrical theory at 16 years of age in a dream. It is possible that Zhangsanfeng, especially with his sound foundation in shaolinquan, may have used his subconscious to create taijiquan.

According to another story, Zhang heard birds on Wudang Mountain making an unusual noise and saw them all staring down at the ground where a serpent was lifting its head and watching upward. A moment later, a magpie spread its wings and descended to attack the serpent. The serpent moved slightly to escape the attack, but maintained its usual circular shape. The contest continued, up and down, back and forth, several times until Zhang stepped out of the door. Immediately the magpie flew away and the serpent disappeared. Zhang then realized the truth of softness over firmness (柔能克刚) and created taijiquan.

A third legend states that Zhangsanfeng saw monks boxing on Wudang Mountain. He observed that they used too much force and outer strength and therefore lacked balance. If yin and yang were balanced inside the body, he thought, one would be less clumsy. Accordingly, he used principles from the Dao, the taiji diagram and the *Yijing* to develop taijiquan. The purpose of the movements in taiji is to transfer intrinsic energy or *qi* (气) to the spirit or *shen* (练气化神) and to use inner rather than outer force.

After Zhangsanfeng, the famous taiji masters included Wangzong (陕西王宗), Chentongzhou (温州陈同州), Zhangsongxi (海盐张松溪), Yejimei (四明叶继美), Wangzongyue (山右王宗岳), and Jiangfa (河北蒋发). Finally, Jiangfa taught taijiquan to Chen's family.

1.2. Legends about Zhangsanfeng. Tales about Zhangsanfeng have been widely circulated and believed from generation to generation. Many of the stories that follow may seem exaggerated to Westerners; in fact, many Chinese do not believe them. This disbelief results from not having been exposed to the remarkable accomplishment of a person who is even moderately skilled at taijiquan. In any case, serious students can use stories of Zhangsanfeng's achievements to provide examples of their ultimate goals. As such, they are teaching stories which remind us that practice makes perfect.

It is said Zhangsanfeng had five hobbies: 1) sword dancing in moonlight, 2) playing taijiquan on a dark night, 3) climbing mountains on a windy night, 4) reading classics on a rainy night and 5) meditating at midnight. He believed that sword dancing in moonlight brought energy (增神), playing taijiquan on a dark night brought vigor (益精), climbing moun-

tains on windy nights lengthened his breath (长气), reading classics on a rainy night cleansed his mind (明心), and meditating at midnight brightened his nature (見性). These are the Daoist's main goals. If you are able to reach these ends, then you are not far from the Dao.

Consider the following stories of Zhangsanfeng's abilities:

In bitterly cold winter, when the path in front of the temple was covered with snow, Zhang liked to go out and enjoy the snowy landscape. After he walked on the path, no footprints remained. It was as if no one had stepped there. This phenomenon is called "stepping on snow leaving no footprints" and is considered the highest ability. He also could melt the snow when he passed by using his inner force, the pure yang air. The heat from his body was so incredible that the path then would appear as if it were under warm sunshine. It is also said that as he meditated at midnight, the qi from his body went rustling through his robe as if the wind had blown it. Moreover, the walls surrounding him shook. These phenomena indicated that his inner force had reached a peak level. He had reached the stage where qi had been transferred to shen; his spiritual and physical energies were in harmony.

One night, a sudden rainstorm hit the mountain. Many trees fell and a huge rock weighing near a ton rolled down toward the temple but was blocked by another huge rock on the way. It was a critical situation during the storm, but Zhang climbed the edge of the first rock, lifted the second one, and threw it into a creek. His strength was truly amazing.

Zhangsanfeng was also fond of apes and cranes, which were always around him in Wudang Mountain. When he forbade himself to eat cooked crops (辟谷) for several months, the ape would go to the forests to pick wild fruits for his master. The crane would act as a guard, driving the snakes and serpents away. If a python appeared, the crane would tell Zhangsanfeng, who killed the python with his bare hands. To do this, Zhang moved his body aside swiftly when the python raised its head and struck. Zhang concentrated his inner force, held his breath, and using Mustang Ruffling Its Mane (野馬分鬃), grasped the snake's neck with one hand and body with the other. Zhang then turned his body and applied force with his waist and legs so that the python became straight. After the snake was stretched, Zhang would throw it to the hillside breaking it into several bloody sections. It is said that any aged python that felt Zhang spying would hide itself in the moor or high mountains.

It is also said that Zhang liked to use Bend the Bow to Shoot Tiger (彎弓射虎) to kill tigers with his bare hands. When a tiger jumped towards him, he stepped forward and turned his torso a little to the right causing the tiger to miss its target. Zhang would then grasp the tiger's rear paws, tearing it into two parts.

Zhang raised a very big ape that was so clever that, after watching his master practice everyday for a long time, he could play taiji. Zhang named this ape Xueding (學定) which means "to learn to be stable," because the nature of the ape is fickle, and Zhang wanted his pet to have stability. Xueding helped him in many ways. For example, it is said that Zhang cut wood without an ax and Xueding picked up the firewood and carried it home. To cut the wood, Zhang stretched his arms using the Diagonal Flying (斜飛式) posture and, slightly separating his two palms to the right and left, broke several branches which dropped to the ground.

The Mongolian royal family of the Yuan Dynasty once was hunting on Wudang Mountain as Zhang was picking herbs to be used as medicine. He was quite aware that the Mongolians were good archers, but he did not like their pompous attitude. While he stood there watching, the Mongols ordered him to walk away. This made Zhang angry, but he spoke to the prince with a smile saying, "Your highness hunts with bow and arrow; I use my bare hands." Suddenly a pair of hawks flew across the woods, and Zhang jumped up several feet and caught them. He dropped to the ground like a falling leaf, without making any noise. The prince was

shocked. Then, Zhang placed the birds on each of his palms. No matter how hard the birds tried to fly, they could not lift themselves. Zhang then said, "I have mercy on living creatures; I do not want to hurt the birds." As soon as he withdrew his palms, the hawks flew into the sky. Angrily, one of the prince's followers drew his bow to shoot an arrow at Zhang. Zhang opened his mouth and caught the arrow with his teeth; then holding the arrow with his index and middle fingers, he threw it towards a tree. "I have no need of any violent weapons," said he. The arrow was buried deep in the tree.

1.3. Taijiquan before Zhangsanfeng. In the Tang Dynasty, (唐朝, 618-905 AD), there was a style of martial art similar to taijiquan, known as *sanshiqi* (三世七), credited to a hermit named Xuxuanping (许宣平). Xu was a native of Anhui (安徽) province in southeast China and lived on Ziyang Mountain (紫陽山). He ate only uncooked food, was seven feet five inches tall, grew a long beard flowing to his navel and extremely long hair flowing to his feet. Xu ran as fast as a horse and often carried firewood to town to sell. He would always sing the following:

Bearing firewood to market in the morning
 Bringing wine back at sunset.
 Where is my home?
 It is in the green woods through the clouds.

Libai (李白, 701-762 AD), one of China's greatest poets during the Tang Dynasty, made a special trip to visit Xu. He did not find him, so he left a poem on the bridge near Xu's home. Today the name of that bridge is Waiting Immortality (望仙桥) Bridge. Xu's style of taijiquan was called *sanshiqi* because there were thirty-seven movements, similar to the thirteen movements in Chen's taijiquan. Some of the different names are Shoot Snow Goose With A Bow, Dust Pan Posture, Sparrow Lifts Its Tail, Flip Fingers, Tan Mountain Is Angry, Grind the Mill, and Hang on the Tree and Kick. Xu's training method consisted of single posture practice, i.e., finishing one movement then starting another without a standard sequence. After completing the thirty-seven postures, the player automatically put them together as a single continuous movement, "with the eight trigrams (八卦) in the arms and five elements (五行) under the feet," which means all of the changes of movement are according to the principles of the *Yijing*. Completely identifiable with the taiji principle, the form was called Long Quan (长拳) because of its continuity.

Lidaozi (李道子), another expert during the Tang dynasty also created a long quan called *xiantianquan* (先天拳). Xiantian means "the stage before the universe is created." It is said Li lived from the Tang Dynasty through the Ming Dynasty (618-1644 AD) more than a thousand years. He seldom talked to people and ate nothing but a few pounds of bran daily. If he had to speak, he said only, "Great future (大造化)," meaning good luck. He taught his student Yulianzhou (余蓮舟) the following about the inner experience of Long Quan:

Taiji is so subtle
 To embody it you must be empty as air

Its movements are innate
 As the chime is to the bell
 Hanging from the ridgepole of an old temple:

Natural,
As a tiger's growl
Or a monkey's cry.

Sometimes like the current
whirling deep within a still pool,
sometimes rising like waves at sea!

It makes the body sound,
And also it makes resonant
The mind.

Yu's family carried on Li's Long Quan from generation to generation.

These stories about Xuxuanping and Lidaozi illustrate the existence of martial arts like taijiquan in the Tang Dynasty. During the Liang Dynasty (907-921 AD), Hangongyue (韓拱月) was an expert in the taiji martial arts who developed the Nine Little Heavens (小九天). He taught Chenglingxi (程靈洗) who taught Chengmi (程泌), both of whom are officially recorded in history. Nine Little Heavens has fourteen movements, including Lift Hand, Single Whip, Big and Small Punch, and Grasp Sparrow's Tail; the same postures in Yang's taijiquan. In addition, the taijiquan movements Looking at Fist under Elbow and Step Back to Drive Away Monkey are the same respectively as Flower Among the Leaves and Cloud on Monkey's Head in Han gongyue's quan.

Chenglingxi stated that you cannot master taijiquan without studying the *Yijing*. Taijiquan must be understood by the mind. When practicing taijiquan, you must know your own intentions but not allow anyone else to know them. These words epitomize the practical use of taijiquan.

Furthermore, it is said that Hujingzi (胡鏡子) developed a taiji martial art called *houtianfa* (后天法), but no one knows when or where he was born. Houtian means "the stage after the universe is created," and fa means "method." Houtianfa has 17 postures and emphasizes the use of various elbow movements. Its major postures are: ward-off, roll-back, press, push, pull, split, elbow and shoulder-strike. Their functions are similar to those of the corresponding moves in Yang's taijiquan. During Hu's trip to Yangzhou (揚州), a famous and beautiful city on the northern shore of the lower Yangtze River, he wrote a poem which reads:

As time goes by
You do not care, nor I.
Wandering everywhere without anyone's interference,
I feel the spring breeze
As I play the flute in the tavern pavilion.

The tone of this poem indicates his carefree and open-minded attitude toward life.

In summary, while there were several taiji martial arts before Zhangsanfeng, he achieved their union. From taiji's narrow martial origins, Zhangsanfeng added the Daoist qigong techniques and utilized the *Yijing* principles in order, as Zhang himself stated, to finally broaden taijiquan to help all people enjoy a long, healthy life. For these reasons, people came to respect and refer to Zhangsanfeng as the founder of taijiquan. Zhang transformed taijiquan from a martial technique into a way of improving the body, mind and spirit, thus enabling play-

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ers to progress through the stage of tranquility to ultimately enter the world of the fourth dimension (See Chapter 2.5).

1.4. The Chen Family's Taijiquan. Taijiquan has been recorded in formal documents since the time of Chenwangting (陳王廷). Chen was born in Henan province in northern China during the late sixteenth century and was appointed an army officer in Santung province in 1618. He returned to his birthplace at the collapse of the Ming Dynasty in 1644. When he began teaching taijiquan, it consisted of five routine or *lu* (路). He also taught two additional *lu*: Paochui (炮捶), which means the punches are very fast and violent like cannon shots, and Long Quan, which has 108 postures.

From generation to generation, many new teaching methods arose and many boxers excelled. Each of the five generations after Chenwangting produced a famous taiji expert. Chenchangxin (陳長興, 1771-1853 AD) united and simplified Chen's taijiquan to a first routine of taijiquan, and a second routine of Paochui. Chenyouben (陳有本) simplified the movements even further in order to meet the requirement and needs of the era, i.e., strict martial arts training was not stressed as much because the gun had been introduced into Chinese weaponry, a development which greatly affected all of the martial arts. Chenjingping (陳清萍) incorporated the xiaojia (小架) style for busier and tighter (緊奏) movements. He thus followed the principle of "not changing original action," a method in which the names of the original movements were left intact, but the postures were altered by adding circling movements to each step. Thus, Chen's taijiquan branched into three styles: Chenchangxin's Old Style, Chenyouben's New Style, and Chenjingping's Xiaojia.

The first routine of Chenchangxin's taijiquan is the oldest known form, from which all other forms are derived. It has simple movements, more softness and less firmness. Ward-off (棚), roll-back (捋), press (擠) and push (按)—the four directions (四正)—were practiced primarily. Elbow (肘), split (冽), pull-down (採) and shoulder-strike (靠)—the four corners (四隅)—were practiced secondarily. Both quality and quantity of movement require softness.

For the student, the routine is like a self-teaching encyclopedia of the science of movement, of martial arts techniques, and of qigong. The key to using this tool is the regular practice of the silk cocoon jing or chansijing (see Chapter 3.4). You must learn the movement of the body as a coherent unit by originating all movements from the dantian and by giving circularity to arm and leg movements.

Regularly practice this jing to learn to follow these principles intuitively and directly. Then study how the routine explicitly and systematically works out the many possibilities that result.

A simple example of the unitary study is Posture Two, King Kong Nailed Fist, where your fist hits your open palm as your foot stamps the ground. A study of complex circularity can be seen in Posture Fourteen, Hidden Hand Punch. Here the ward-off arm, the torso, and the right arm and fist are all wound counterclockwise, which brings the ward-off arm out while the right fist is brought back hidden beside the torso. The coiled-up torsional energy is then released with a clockwise movement that draws the ward-off arm back while the right fist spirals forward with all of the energy of the unwinding torso in it.

Variations abound when kicks and punches of all sorts are considered. Some kicks, for example, are thrown while leaping into the air and others bring you all of the way to the ground with a leg split. Still other portions of the routine illustrate slow, moderate movements whose outer purpose seems obscure, while within the body the principles of circularity are being applied invisibly.

Coordinating dantian movement with the movements of the body is a study in itself,

and its basic rhythm is emphasized in Posture Four, 60% Open 40% Closed, which appears 7 times in the routine. Here you bring your hands down and out from behind while you slowly push out the dantian.

Maintaining a double-weighted stance throughout the routine is avoided in taiji since double-weighting makes a quick response impossible. However, the correct role of physical double-weighting is to act as a transitional stage between two postures. (See section 4.2.) Double-weighting is a concept that is greatly misunderstood by many, and it requires thorough study.

When the routine is performed, you begin by facing north, and end facing south. You then repeat the form, which returns you to your starting position facing north.

Because of the frequent and clear shifts of movement from vigorous to soft, the routine makes it possible for you to observe and gain awareness of many ways you can alternate between yin and yang and of how the transitions are successfully made.

If you are serious about learning the form, commit the series of pictures to memory, using them both as a standard and as training in inner visualization of your movements. The emphasis on inner training that is so marked in taiji is being echoed in modern scientific studies of the capabilities of the body. One study in recent years, for example, shows that an average person is capable of clear visual memory and distinction between a minimum of one quarter of a million human faces.

In the first routine's style, the body leads the hands (以身运手); forget your arms and allow your hands to follow the body. This statement is easy to say and understand, but try to demonstrate it in your taiji form. If you make movements in which your hand or any other part of your body moves separately from the rest of your body, you are not doing taiji. This principle can be used to determine whether or not a person truly knows the essence of taiji.

The postures of Chen's first lu are presented here by name and in diagrams. The numbers on the diagrams refer to the list of the postures' names. The pictures of the first lu depict Chenchaikeui, the son of Chenfake (陳发科, 1887-1957 AD). These diagrams are reproduced from the most authentic, original sources available, those written by Chenxin (陳鑫) and Shenjiazhen (沈家楨).

The first lu of Chen's Taijiquan:

1. Beginning of Taiji	Baotaiji	抱太極
2. King Kong Nailed Fist	Jingangdaodui	金剛搗碓
3. Grasp Sparrow's Tail	Lanzhayi	懶扎衣
4. 60% Open and 40% Closed	Liufengsibi	六封四閉
5. Single Whip	Danbian	單鞭
6. King Kong Nailed Fist	(see #2)	
7. White Crane Spreads Wings	Baiheliangchi	白鶴涼翅
8. First Side Walk and Twist Step	Xiexingaobu	斜行拗步
9. First Conclusion	Chushou	初收
10. Kick Forward and Twist Step	Qiantangaobu	前蹠拗步
11. Second Side Walk and Twist Step	(see #8)	
12. Second Conclusion	Zaishou	再收
13. Kick Forward and Twist Step	Louxiaobu	擡膝拗步
14. Hidden Hand Punch	Yanshougohchui	掩手肱捶
15. King Kong Nailed Fist	(see #2)	

16. Chop Opponent with Fist	Pishenchui	披身捶
17. Bending Back and Shoulder Strike	Beizhekao	背折靠
18. Blue Dragon Flies Up from Water	Qinglongchushui	青龍出水
19. Push with Both Hands	Shuangtuishou	雙推手
20. Three Changes of Palm	Sanbianzhang	三變掌
21. Fist Under Elbow	Zhoudikanquan	肘底看拳
22. Upper Arm Rolls	Daojuangong	倒捲肱
23. Backward and Press Elbow	Tuibuyazhou	退步壓肘
24. Middle Stage	Zhongpan	中盤
25. White Crane Spreads Wings	(see #7)	
26. Side Walk and Twist Step	(see #8)	
27. Fan Through the Back	Shantongbei	閃通背
28. Hidden Hand Punch	(see #14)	
29. 60% Open and 40% Closed	(see #4)	
30. Single Whip	(see #5)	
31. Cloud Hands	Yunshou	雲手
32. High Pat on Horse	Gaotanma	高探馬
33. Rub Right Foot	Youcajiao	右擦腳
34. Rub Left Foot	Zuocajiao	左擦腳
35. Turn Body and Kick	Zuodengyigen	左蹬一根
36. Kick Forward and Twist Step	(see #10)	
37. Hit Ground with Fist	Pudichui	鋪地捶
38. Jump and Kick Twice	Tierqi	踢二起
39. Animal Head Posture	Shoutoushi	獸頭勢
40. Hurricane Kick	Xuanfengjiao	旋風腳
41. Turn Body and Kick	Youdegyigen	右蹬一根
42. Hidden Hand Punch	(see #14)	
43. Small Grasp and Hit	Xiaoqinda	小擒拿
44. Embrace Head and Push Mountain	Baotoutuishan	抱頭推山
45. Three Changes of Palm	(see #20)	
46. 60% Open and 40% Closed	(see #4)	
47. Single Whip	(see #5)	
48. Front Posture	Qianzhao	前招
49. Back Posture	Houzhao	後招
50. Mustang Ruffling Its Mane	Yemafenzong	野馬分鬃
51. 60% Open and 40% Closed	(see #4)	
52. Single Whip	(see #5)	
53. Shake Foot Twice	Shuangzhenjiao	雙震腳
54. Fair Lady Works At Shuttles	Yunuchuansuo	玉女穿梭
55. Grasp Sparrow's Tail	(see #3)	
56. 60% Open and 40% Closed	(see #4)	
57. Single Whip	(see #5)	
58. Cloud Hands	(see #31)	
59. Sweep Leg and Cross Kick	Baijiaodiecha	擺腳跌岔
60. Golden Pheasant Stands on One Leg	Jinjiduli	金雞獨立
61. Upper Arm Rolls	(see #22)	
62. Withdraw and Press Elbow	Tuibuyazhou	退步壓肘

63. Middle Stage	(see #24)	
64. White Crane Spreads Wings	(see #7)	
65. Side Walk and Twist Step	(see #8)	
66. Fan Through the Back	(see #27)	
67. Hidden Hand Punch	(see #14)	
68. 60% Open and 40% Closed	(see #4)	
69. Single Whip	(see #5)	
70. Cloud Hands	(see #31)	
71. High Pat on Horse	(see #32)	
72. Cross Hands and Sweep Lotus with One Leg	Bailiantui	摆莲腿
73. Punch Opponent's Groin	Zhitangchui	指裆捶
74. White Ape Offers Fruits	Baiyuanxianguo	白猿献菓
75. 60% Open and 40% Closed	(see #4)	
76. Single Whip	(see #5)	
77. Sparrow Ground Dragon	Quedilong	雀地龙
78. Step Up to Form Seven Stars of the Dipper	Shangbuzhaxing	上步扎星
79. Step Back to Ride Tiger	Tibukuahu	退步跨虎
80. Turn Around and Sweep Lotus	Zhuanshenbailian	转身摆莲
81. Face Opponent Cannon	Dangtoupao	当头砲
82. King Kong Nailed Fist	(see #2)	
83. Conclusion of Taiji	Hetaiji	合太極

第一勢合關通視一貫圖



第二勢合關通視一貫圖



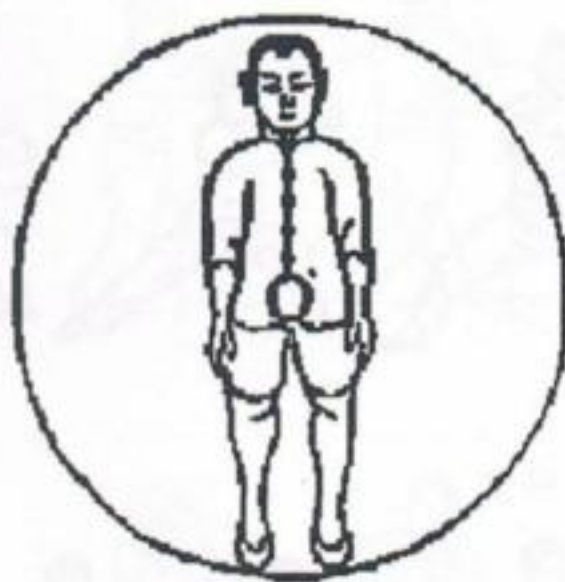
圖氣動起



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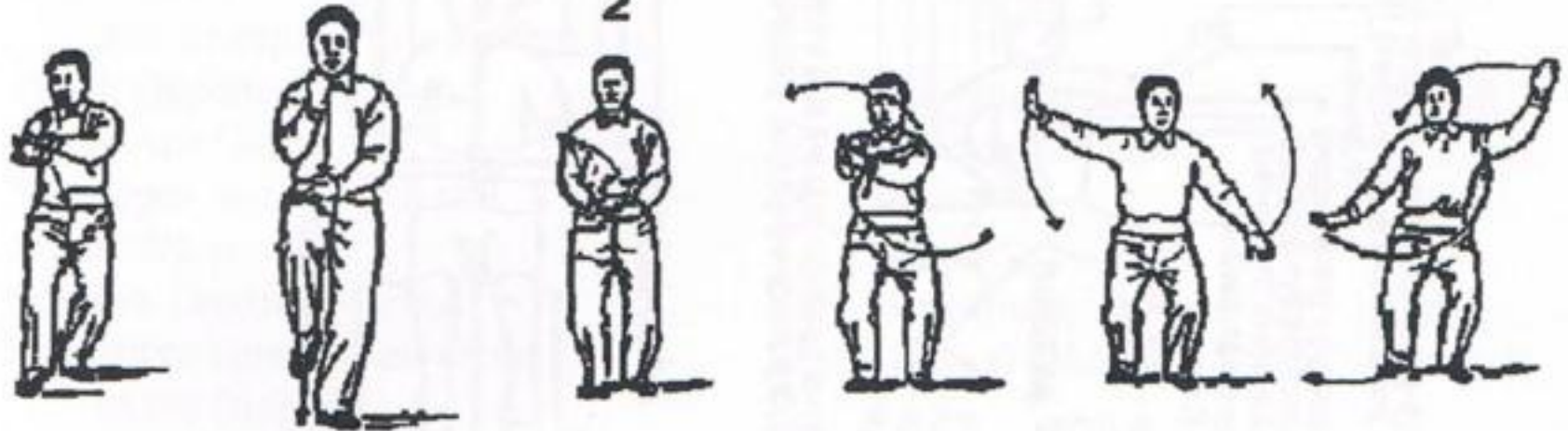
These pictures are from Chenxin's (1849-1929) book, *Chen's Taijiquan*, published in 1933. The figure demonstrates how you should pay attention during the practice of taijiquan. All of these concepts are very difficult to translate into English.

Figure 1.4a

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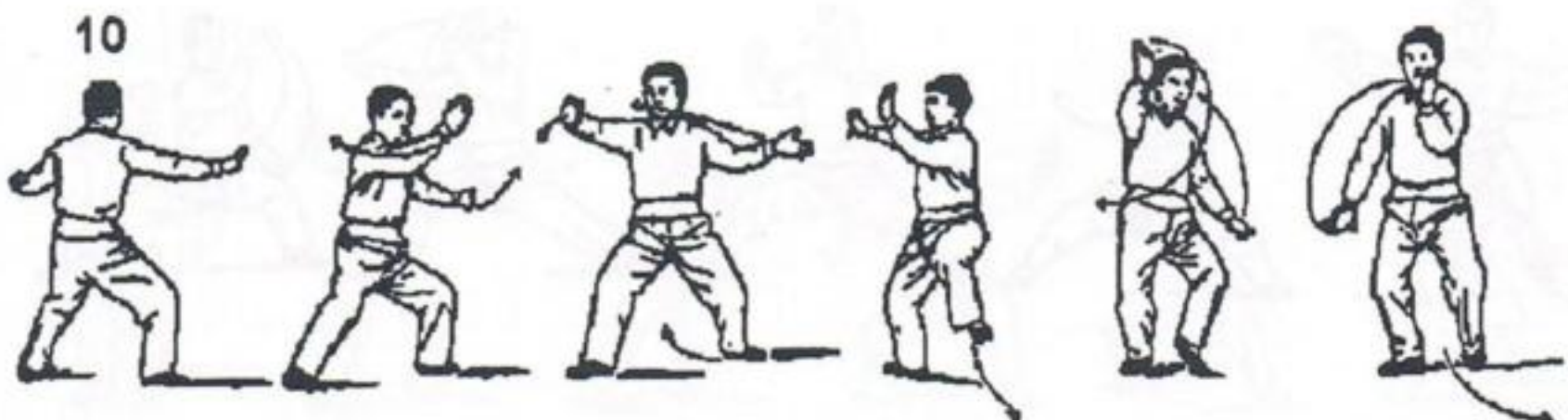
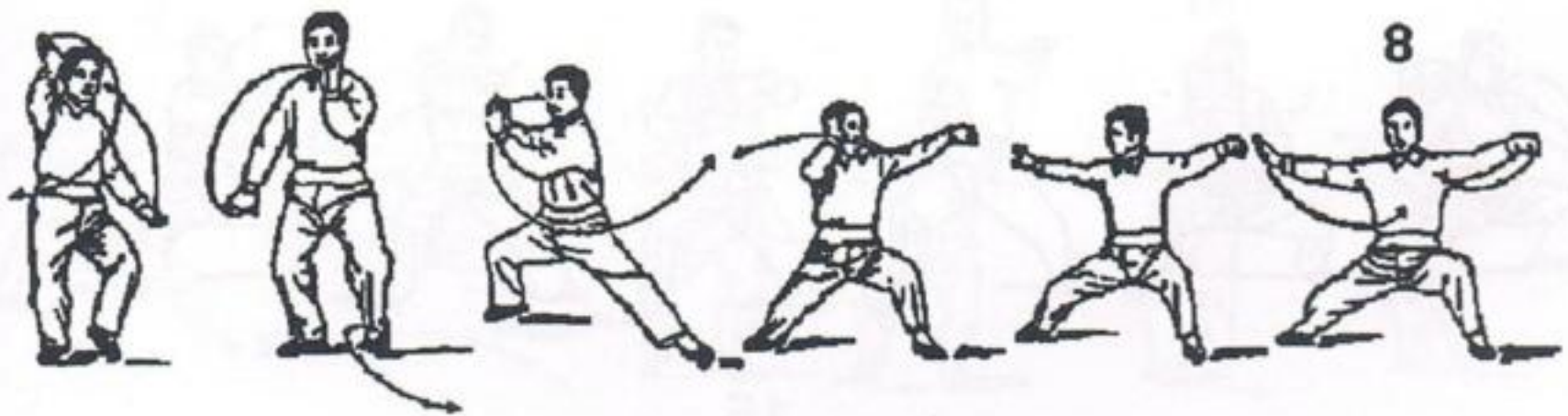


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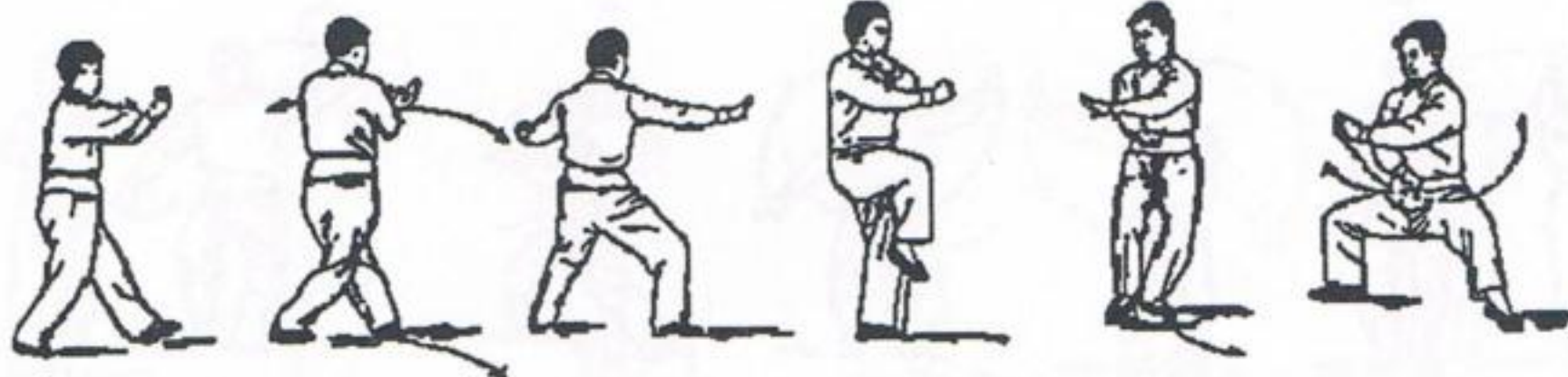
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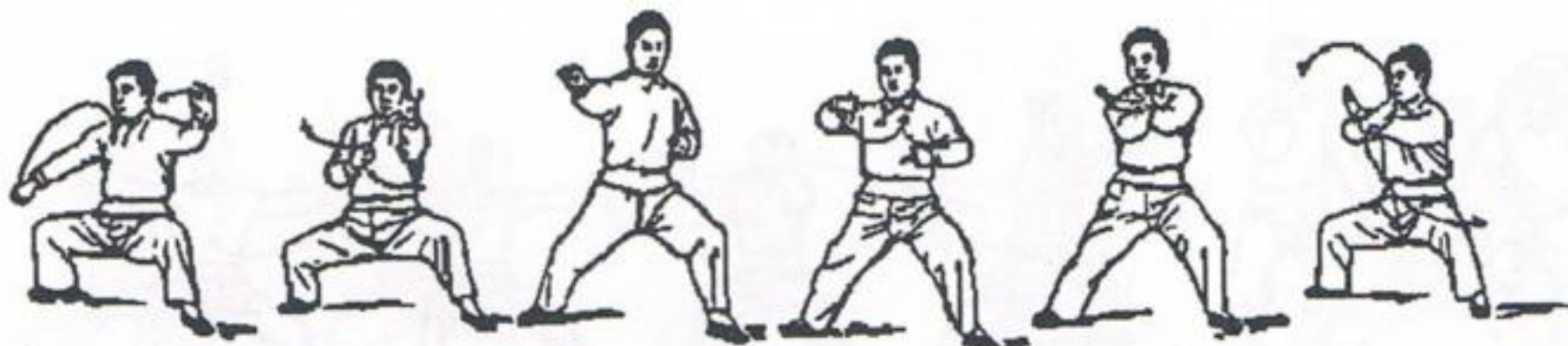
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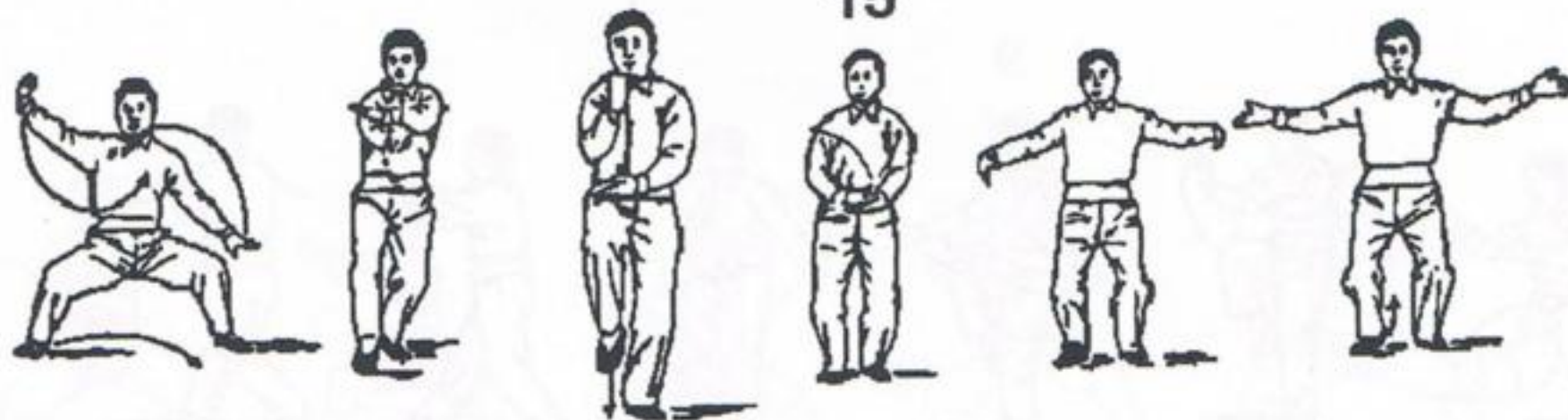
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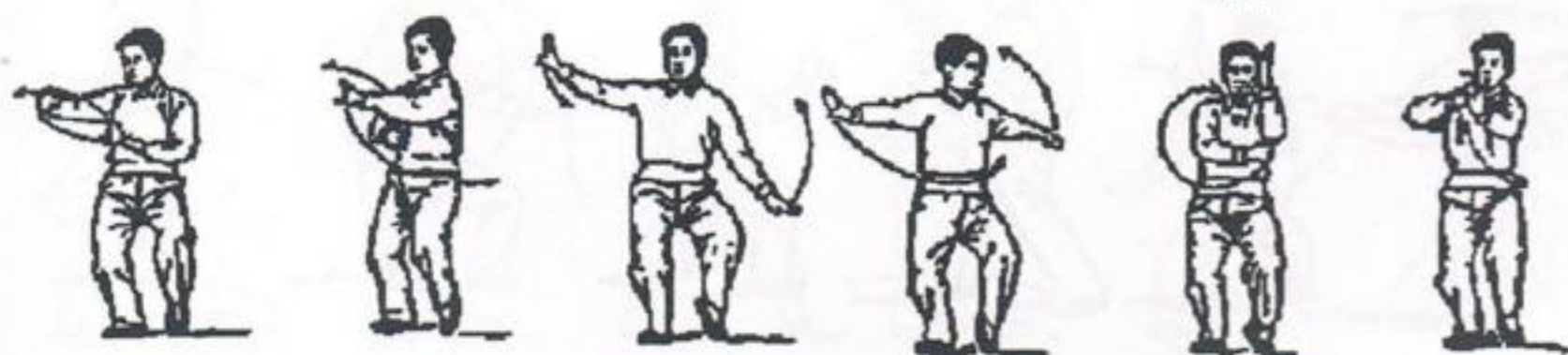
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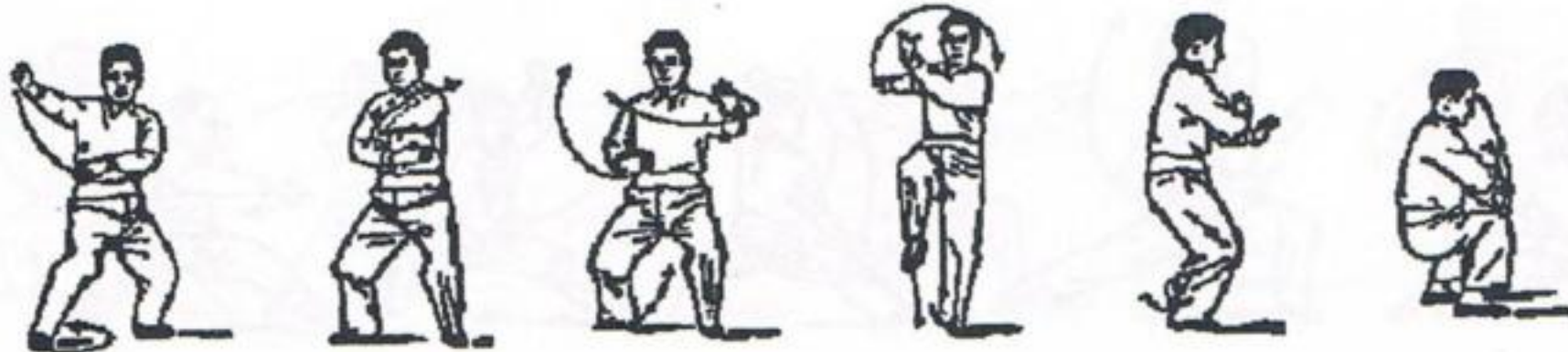
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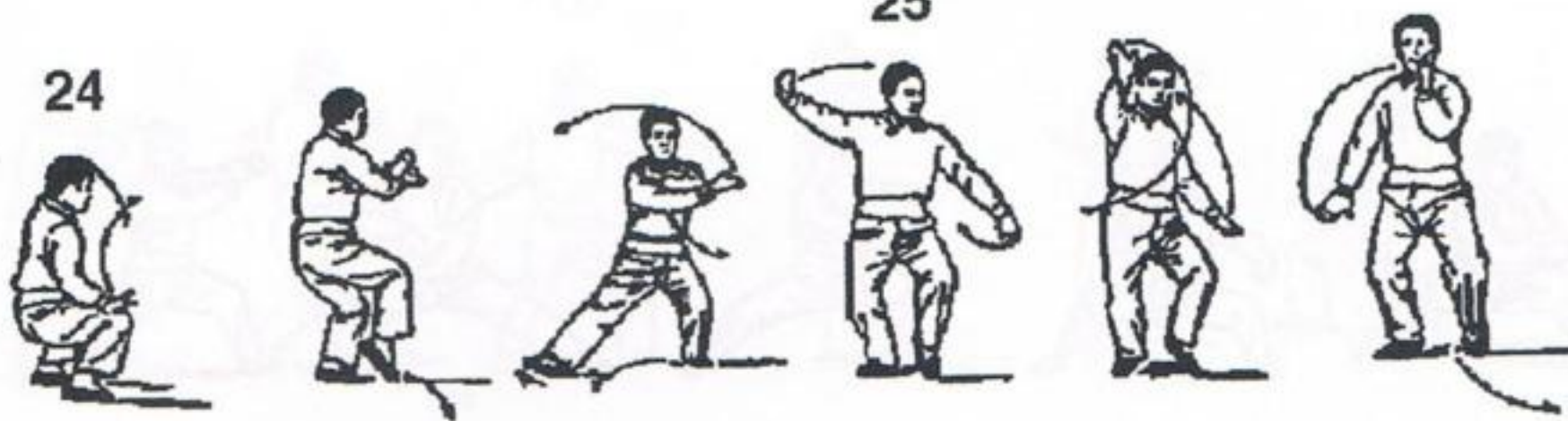


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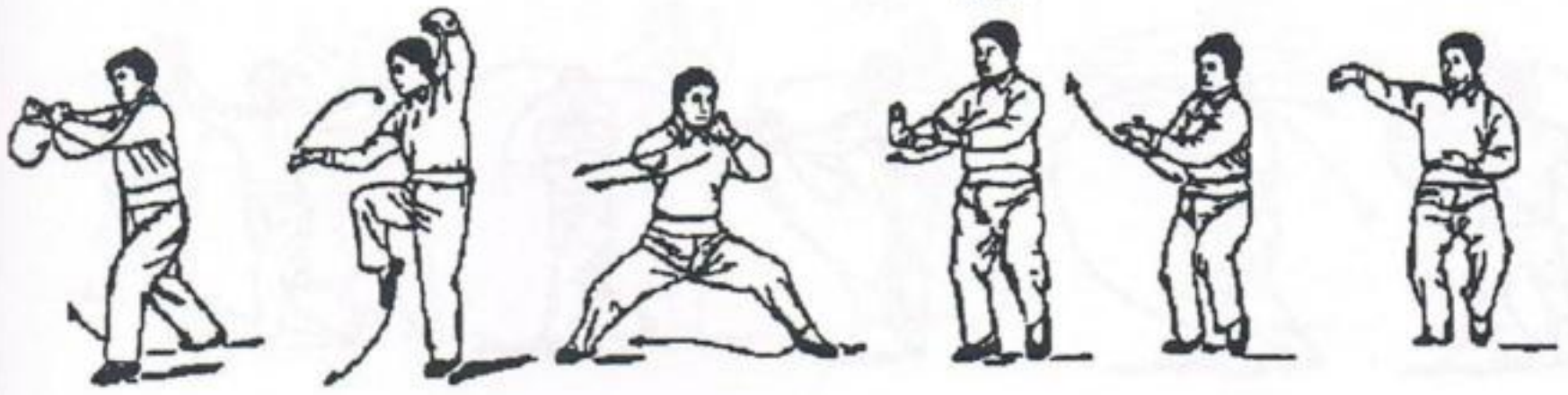
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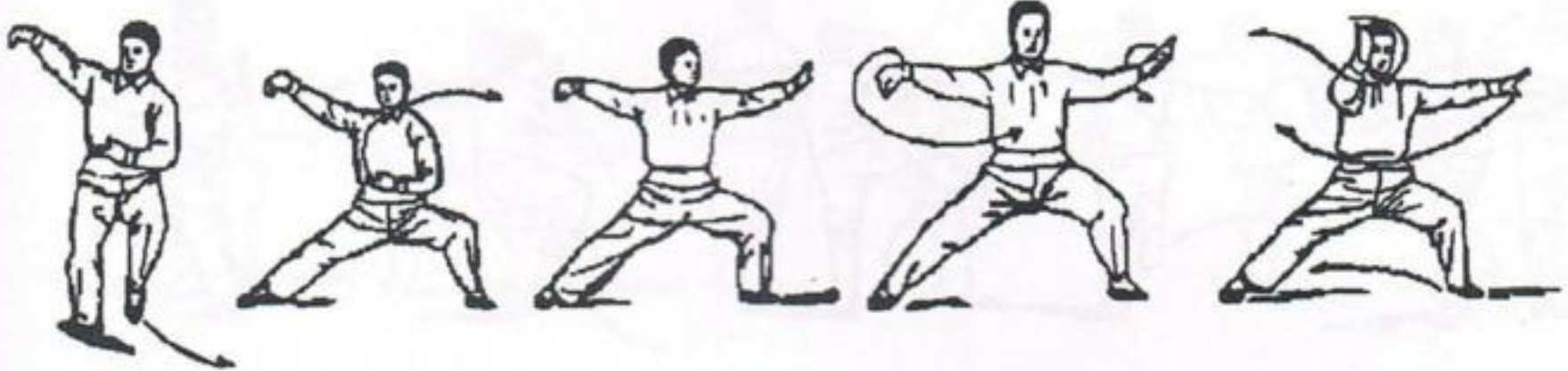
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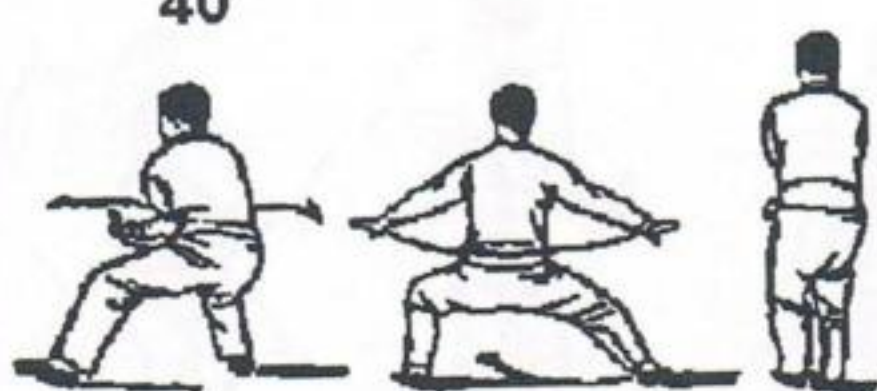


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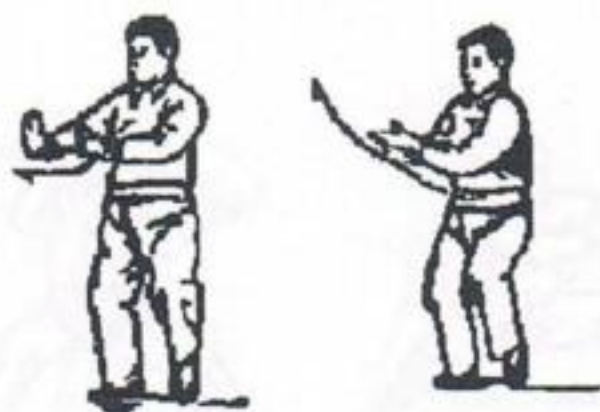




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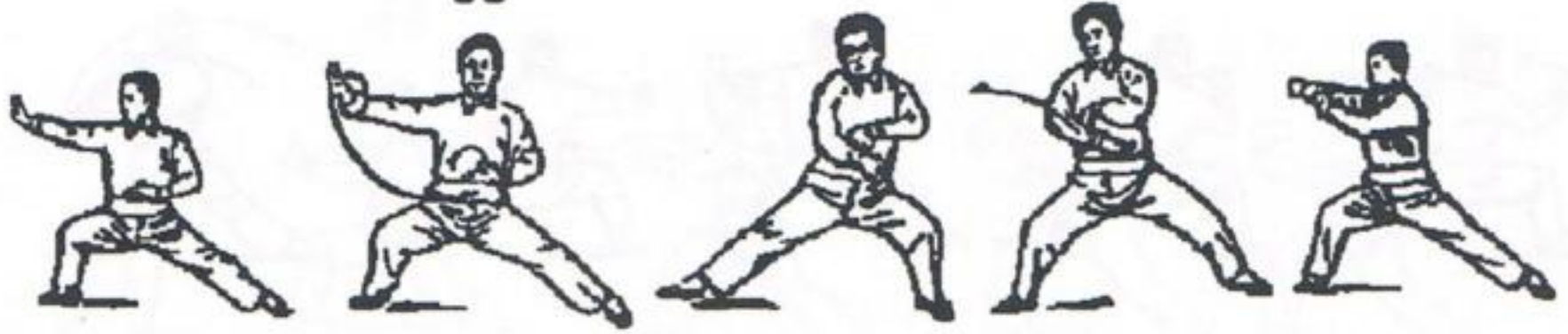
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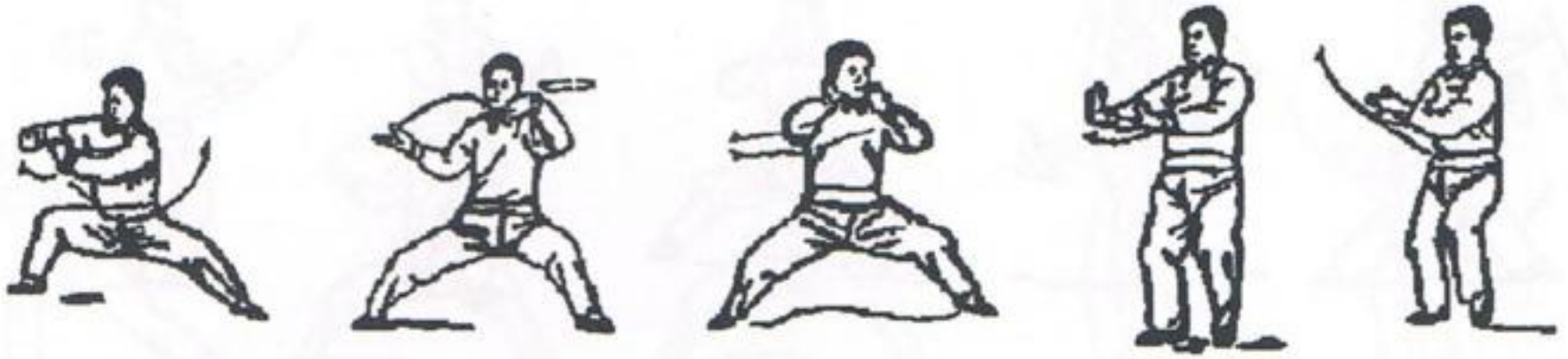
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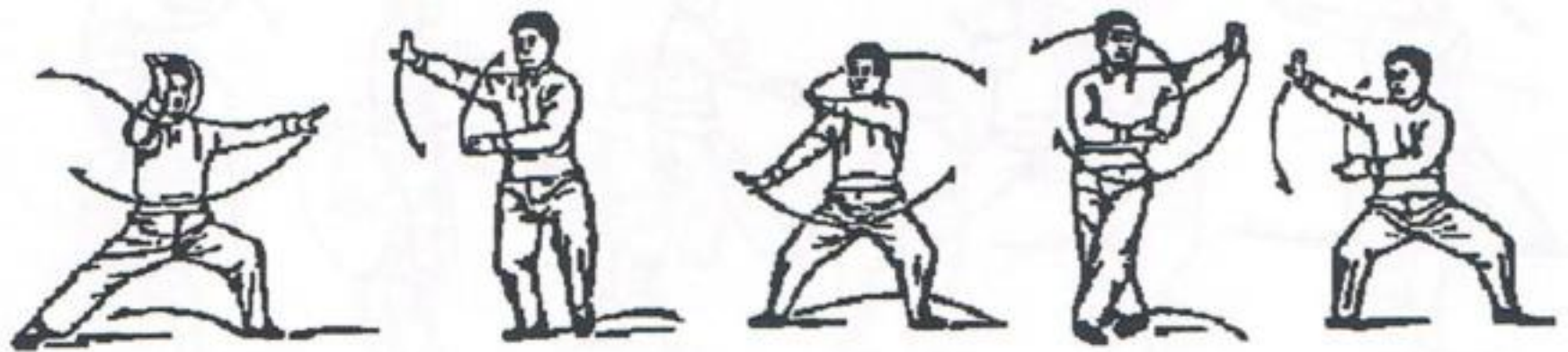
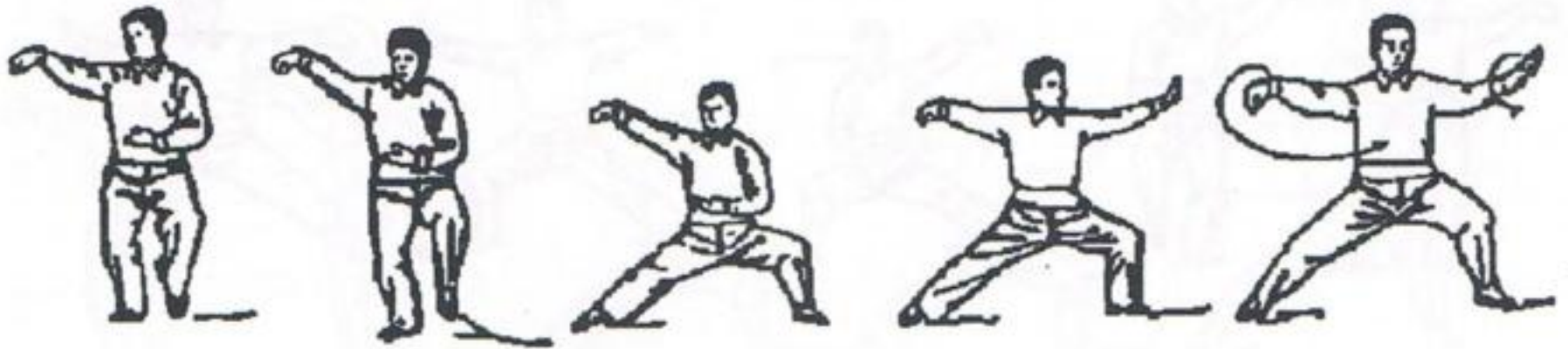
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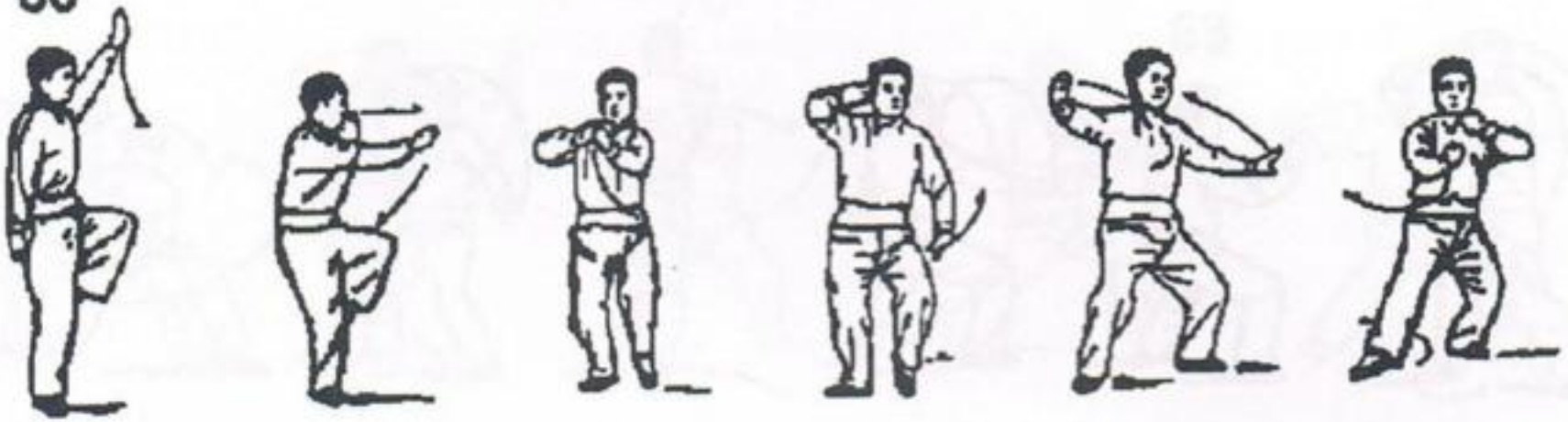
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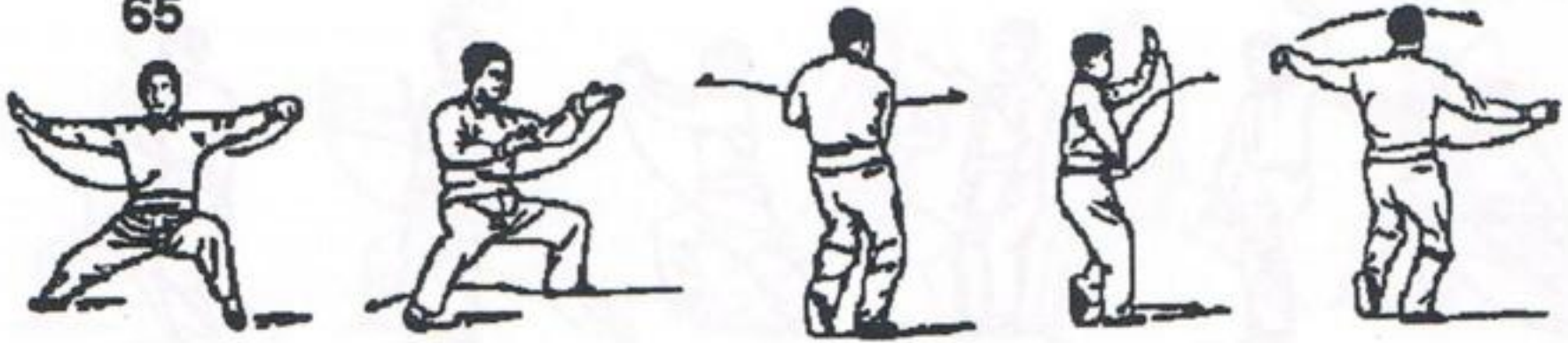


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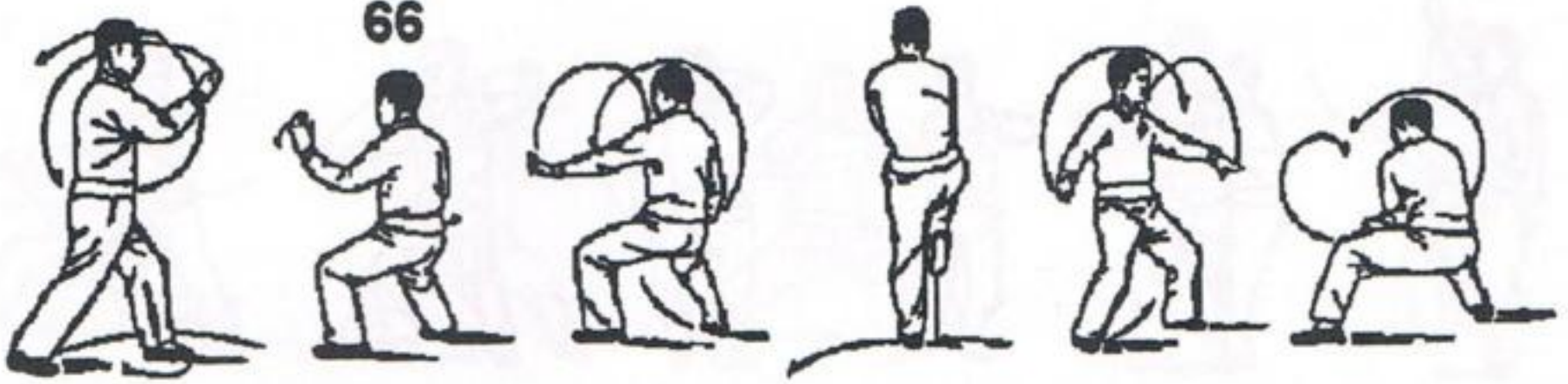


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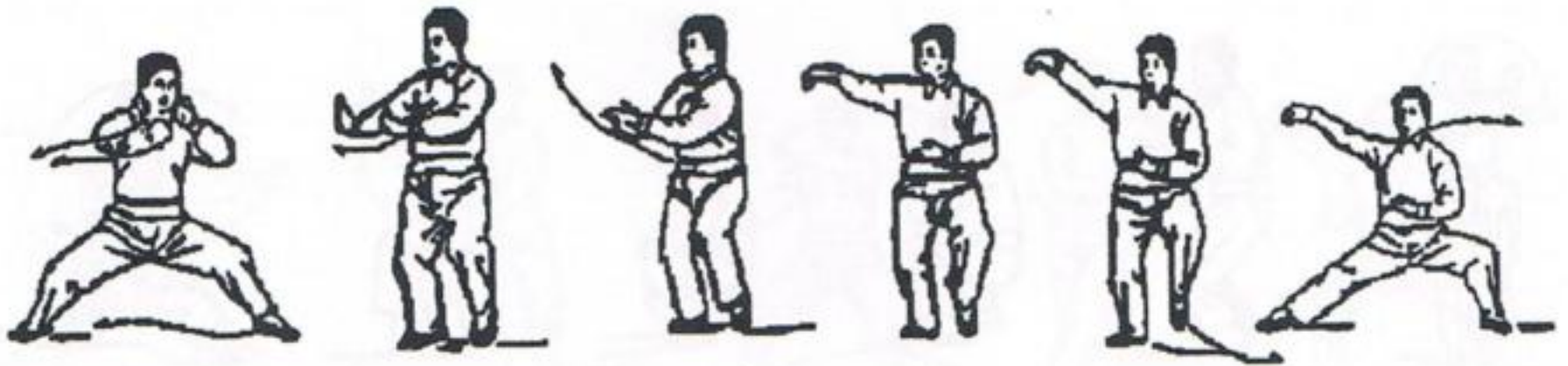
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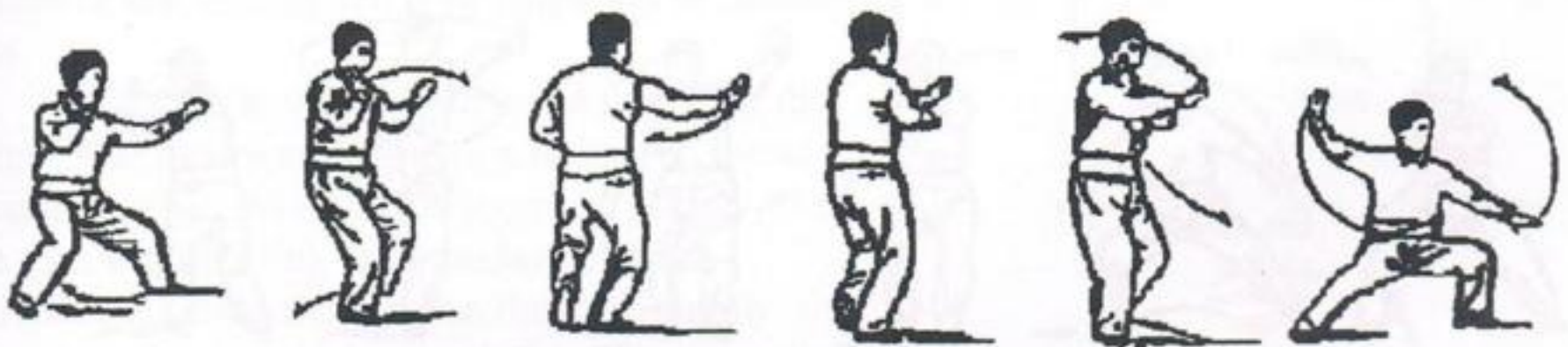




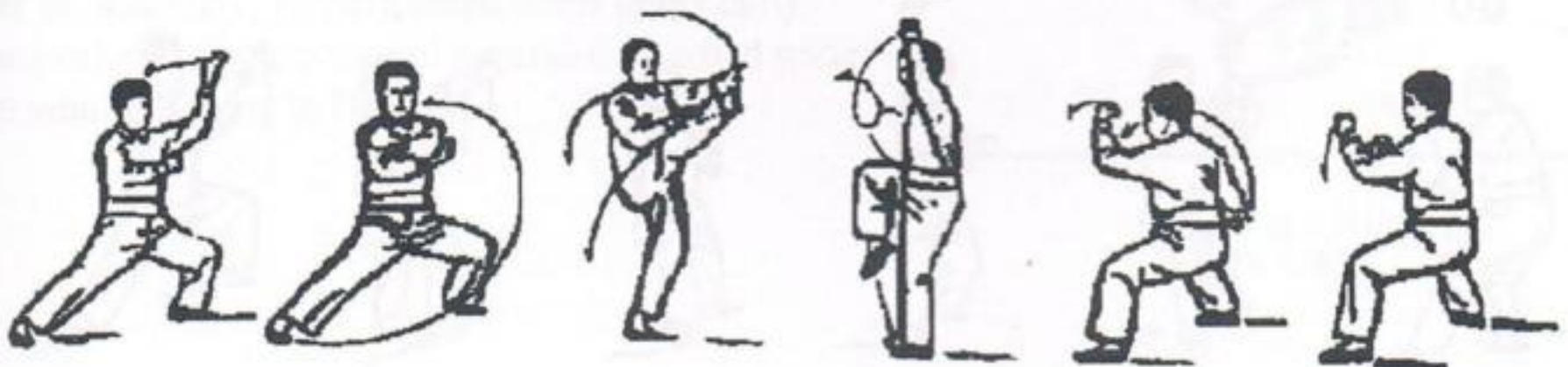
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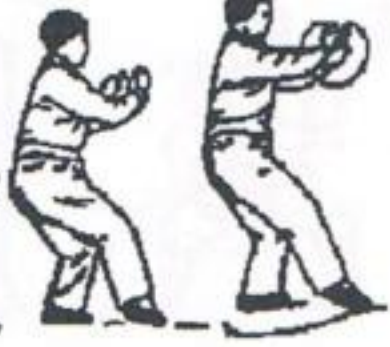
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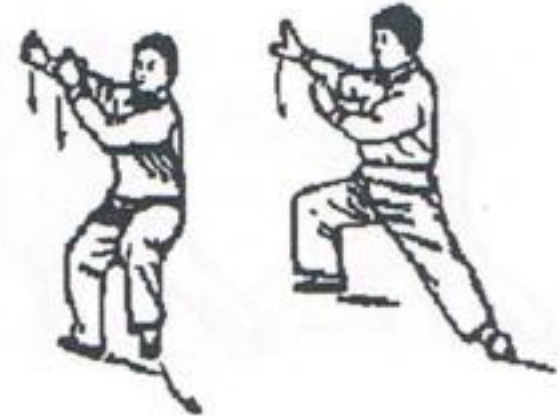
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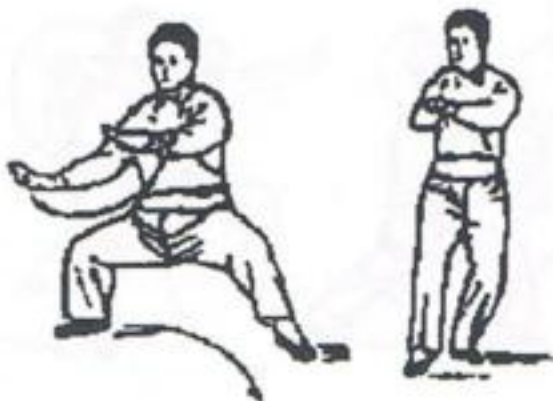
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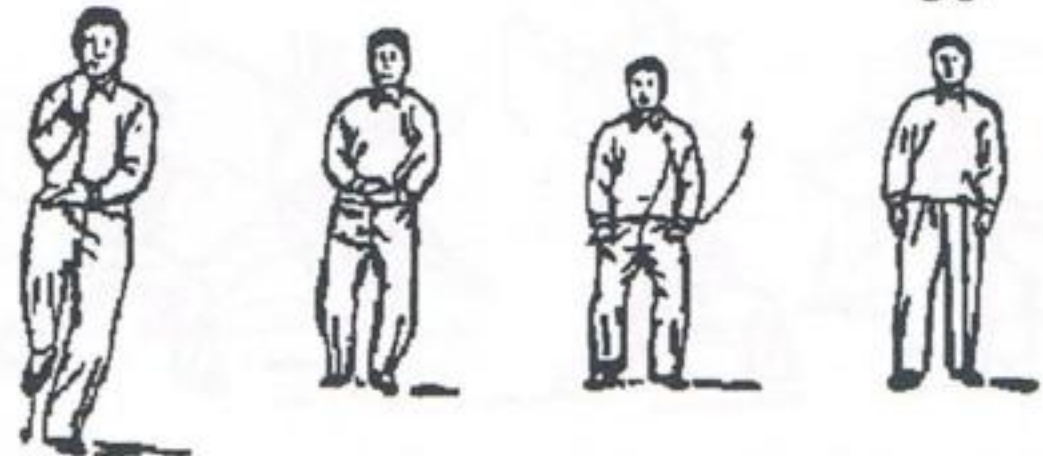
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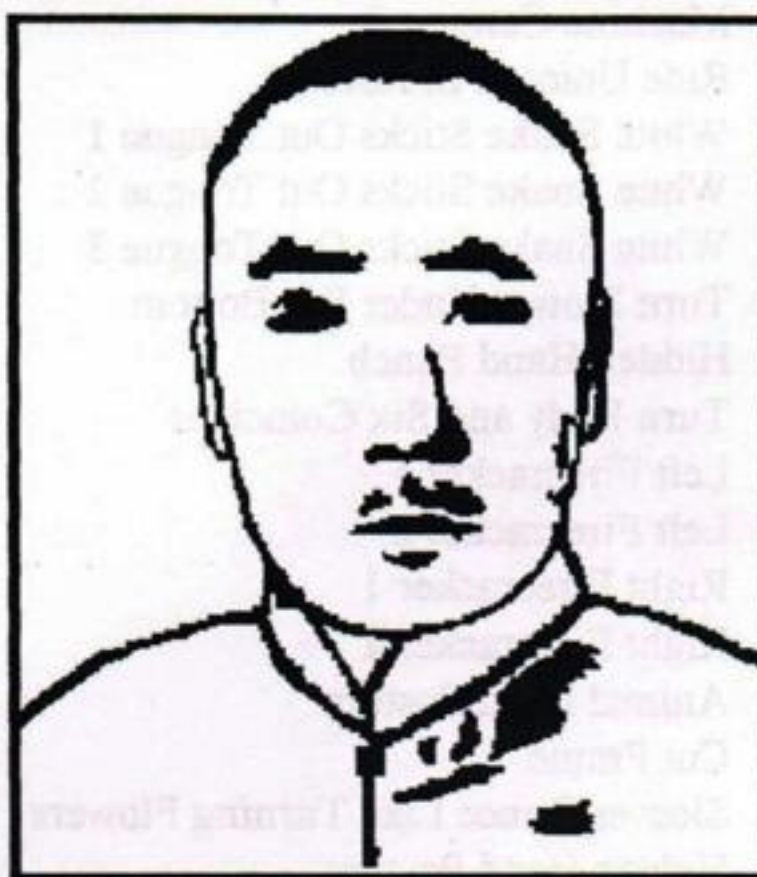


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Paochui, Chen's second routine, is a more complicated set of movements with more firmness and less softness than the first routine. Paochui emphasizes elbow, split, pull-down and shoulder-strike, otherwise known as the Four Corners. The Four Directions—ward-off, roll-back, press and push—play supplemental roles. Thus, the relative emphasis on the practice of the Four Corners and Four Directions is reversed from that of the first lu. Quality and quantity of movement require solidity and firmness, and fast action is important. The style of Paochui emphasizes hands leading the body (以手運身), i.e., when you fajing in order to punch forward, your body has to follow the direction of your hand or fist. In other words, a kick usually accompanies the attacking motion and pulls your body forward. In order for the attack to truly exhibit fajing, two basic requirements must be met. First, the entire body must fajing as a unit. The fajing cannot come only from the upper body; it must include the waist and legs as well. Second, the energy used in the fajing must be internal energy, not physical force. Otherwise, your attack will only be an external one such as that in the hard martial arts. External strength application cannot ever be used in Paochui. In terms of physical appearance, the first lu possesses slowness, softness and stability; the second lu possesses swiftness, hardness and high-jumping. As for quality and quantity of movement in both the first and second lu, Chen's taijiquan harmonizes softness and firmness. The movements alternate speed with slowness to form your taiji inner strength that, in turn allows fast responses to fast actions and slow responses to slow actions.

Paochui is shown here in the following diagrams. The names are keyed to numbers on the accompanying list. Most of the diagrams portray Chenfake (See Figure 1.4b), the grandson of Chenchangxin. Chenfake carried on the Chen family legacy and developed his own skill by practicing the taijiquan solo exercise twenty times every day. Even after he was sixty, he performed it ten times daily. Many other well-known taiji specialists studied under him when he came to Beijing.



Chenfake (1887-1957)
Figure 1.4b

Chen's second lu, Paochui:

- | | | |
|--|---------------|------|
| 1. Beginning of Paochui | Paochuiqishi | 砲捶起勢 |
| 2. King Kong Nailed Fist | Jingangdaodui | 金剛搗碓 |
| 3. Grasp Sparrow's Tail | Lanzhayi | 懶扎衣 |
| 4. 60% Open and 40% Closed | Liufengsibi | 六封四閉 |
| 5. Single Whip | Danbian | 單鞭 |
| 6. Deflect Downward, Intercept and Punch | Banlanchui | 搬攬捶 |
| 7. Guard the Heart Punch | Huxinchui | 护心捶 |
| 8. Side Walk and Twist Step | Xiexingaobu | 斜行拗步 |

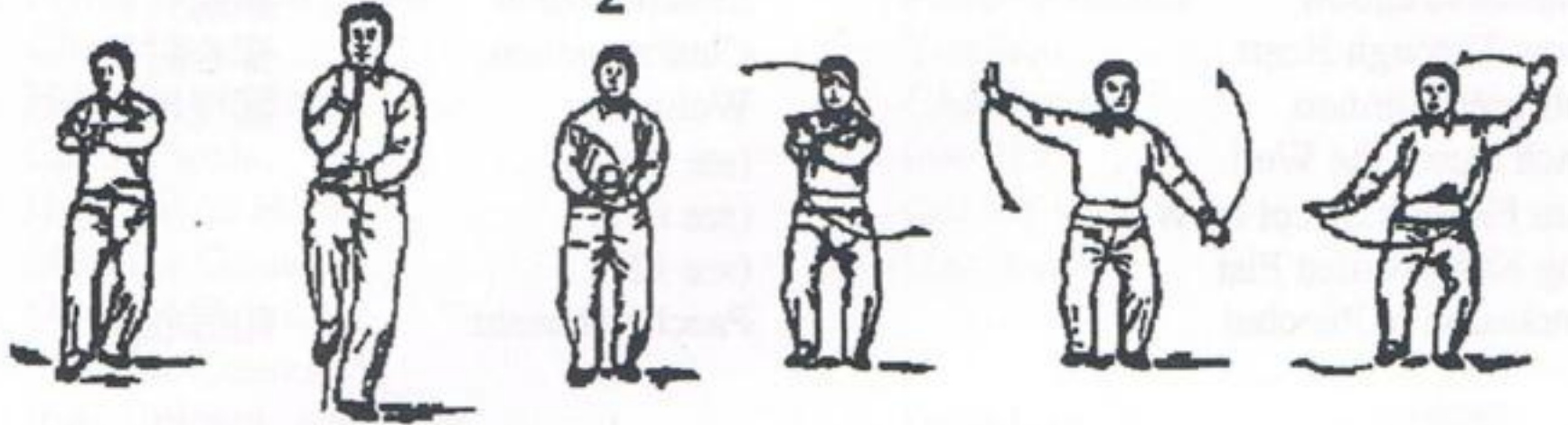
9. Sink Waist With Elbow, and Fist Down	Shayaoyazhouquan	煞腰压肘拳
10. Punch Down the Well	Jinglanzhi	井攬直入
11. Plum Flowers Swept by Wind	Fengsaomeihua	风掃梅花
12. King Kong Nailed Fist	(see #2)	
13. Hidden Body Punch	Bishenchui	庇身捶
14. Drape Over Body and Punch	Pishenchui	披身捶
15. Cut Hand	Zhanshou	斩手
16. Sleeves Dance Like Turning Flowers	Fanhuawuxiu	翻花舞袖
17. Hidden Hand Punch	Yanshougohchui	掩手肱捶
18. Flying Step and Elbow	Feibuaoluanzhou	飛步拗鸞肘
19. Cloud Hands	Yunshou	云手
20. High Pat on Horse	Gaotanma	高探马
21. Cloud Hands	(see #19)	
22. High Pat on Horse	(see #20)	
23. Machine Cannon 1	Lianzhupao	连珠砲
24. Machine Cannon 2		
25. Machine Cannon 3		
26. Ride Unicorn in Reverse	Daoqilin	倒騎麟
27. White Snake Sticks Out Tongue 1	Baishetuxin	白蛇吐信
28. White Snake Sticks Out Tongue 2		
29. White Snake Sticks Out Tongue 3		
30. Turn Flower Under Sea Bottom	Haidifanhua	海底翻花
31. Hidden Hand Punch	(see #17)	
32. Turn Body and Six Coincides	Zhuanshenliuhe	轉身六合
33. Left Firecracker 1	Zuoguobianpao	左裹鞭炮
34. Left Firecracker 2		
35. Right Firecracker 1	Youguobianpao	右裹鞭炮
36. Right Firecracker 2		
37. Animal Head Posture	Shoutoushi	兽頭勢
38. Cut Frame	Pijiazi	劈架子
39. Sleeves Dance Like Turning Flowers	(see #16)	
40. Hidden Hand Posture	(see #17)	
41. Subdued Tiger	Fuhushi	伏虎勢
42. Color Eyebrow Red	Momeihongquan	抹眉紅拳
43. Yellow Dragon Plays Water (Right)	Huanglongchushui	黃龍出水
44. Yellow Dragon Plays Water (Left)		
45. Turn Body and Kick Left	Zuodengyigen	左蹬一根
46. Turn Body and Kick Right	Youdegyigen	右蹬一根
47. Turn Flower Under Sea Bottom	(see #30)	
48. Hidden Hand Punch	(see #17)	
49. Sweep Ground with Leg	Saoditui	掃地腿
50. Hidden Hand Punch	(see #17)	
51. Left Rush	Zuochong	左冲
52. Right Rush	Youchong	右冲
53. Insert on Opposite Direction	Daocha	倒插
54. Turn Flower Under Sea Bottom	(see #30)	
55. Hidden Hand Punch	(see #17)	

56. Seize Upper Arm 1	Duoergong	奪二肱
57. Seize Upper Arm 2		
58. Machine Cannon	(see #23)	
59. Fair Lady Works at Shuttles	Yunuchuansuo	玉女穿梭
60. Turn Head and Cannon Forward	Huitondangmenpao	回頭當門砲
61. Fair Lady Works at Shuttles	(see #59)	
62. Turn Head and Cannon Forward	(see #60)	
63. Chop Opponent with Fist	(see #14)	
64. Twist Elbow	Aoluanzhou	拗鸞肘
65. Submissive Elbow	Shunluanzhou	順鸞肘
66. Elbow Through Heart	Chuanxinzhou	穿心肘
67. Embraced Cannon	Wolipao	窩裡炮
68. Punch Down the Well	(see #10)	
69. Plum Flowers Swept by Wind	(see #11)	
70. King Kong Nailed Fist	(see #2)	
71. Conclusion of Paochui	Paochuishoushi	砲捶收勢

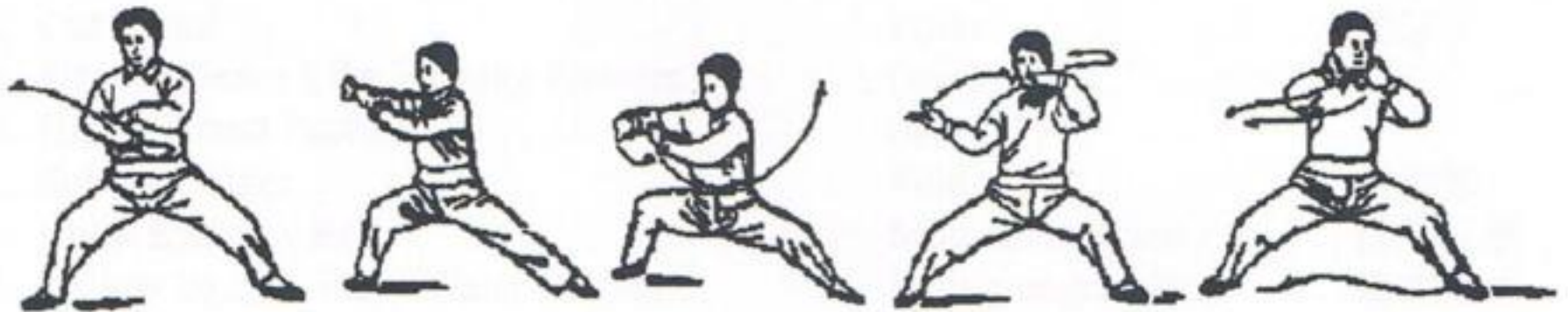
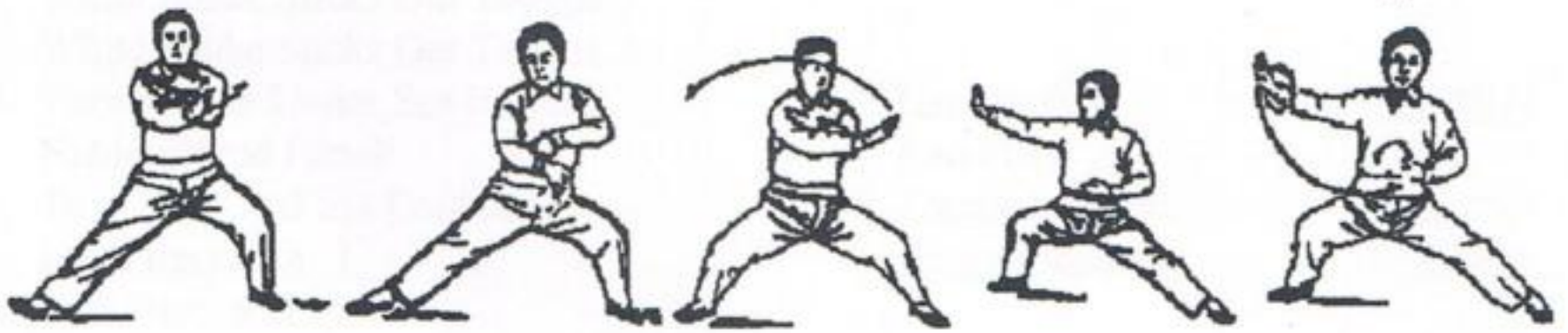
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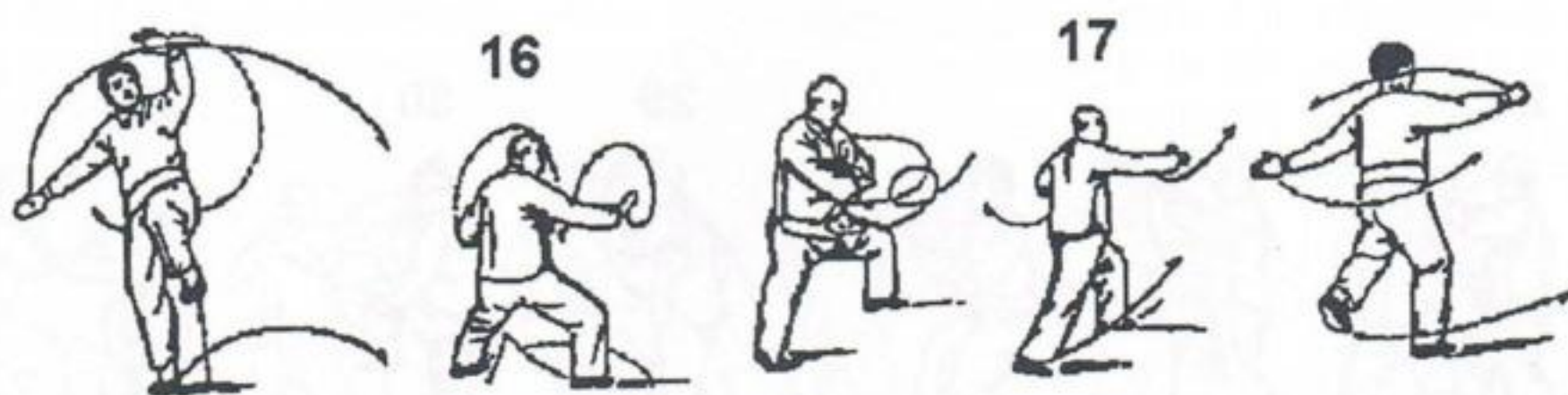
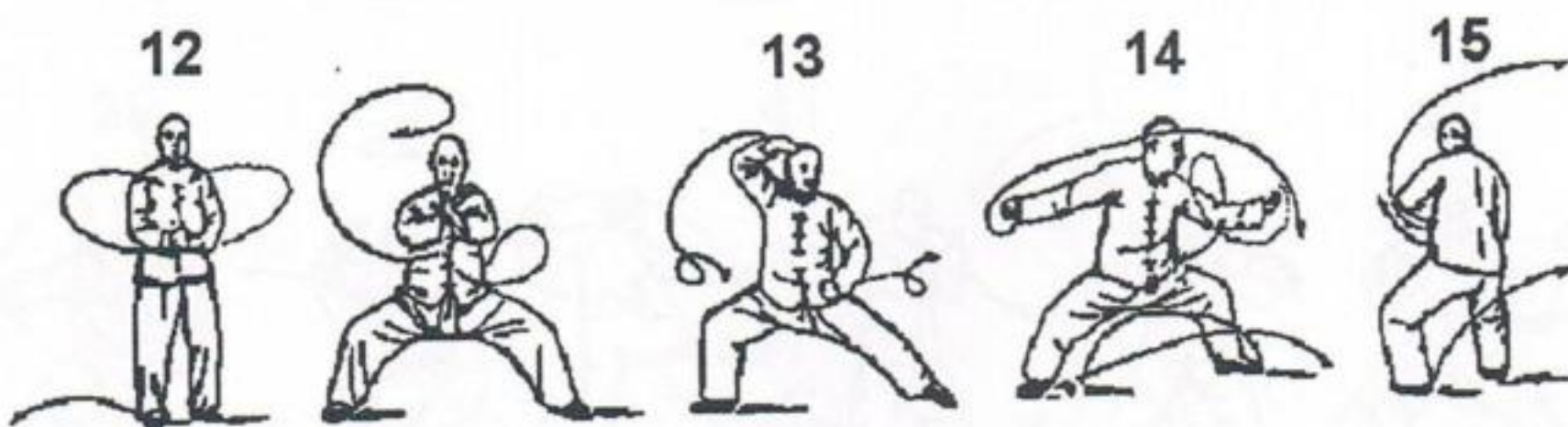
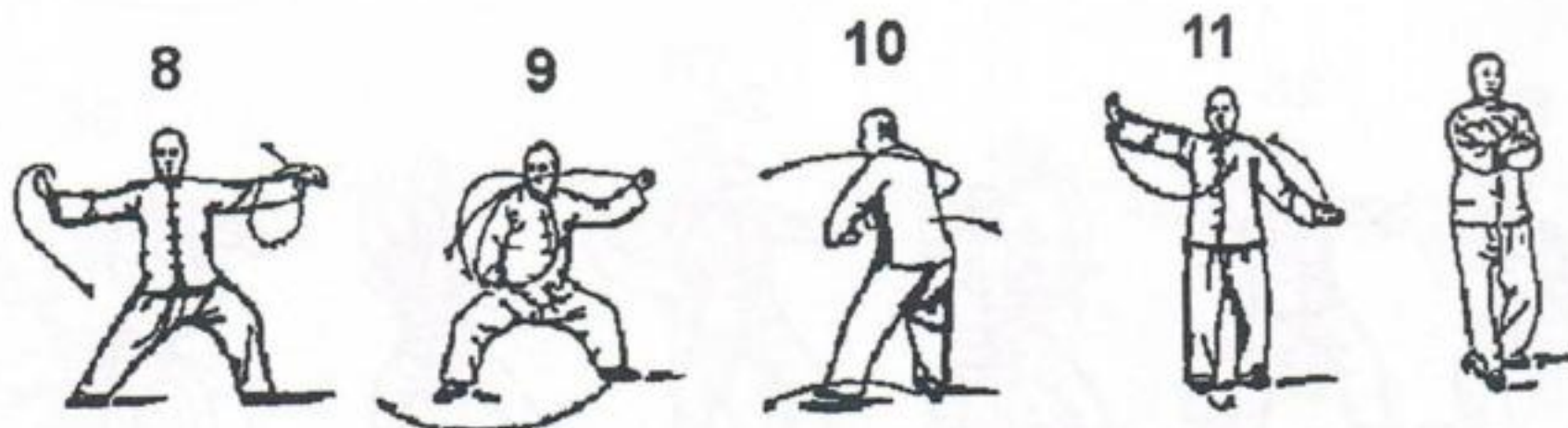
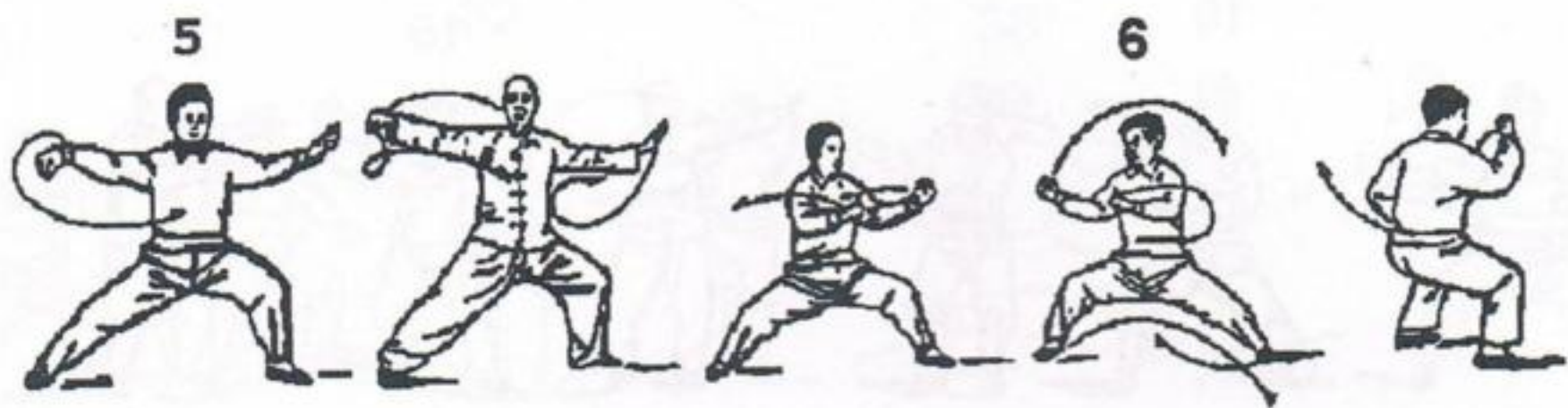


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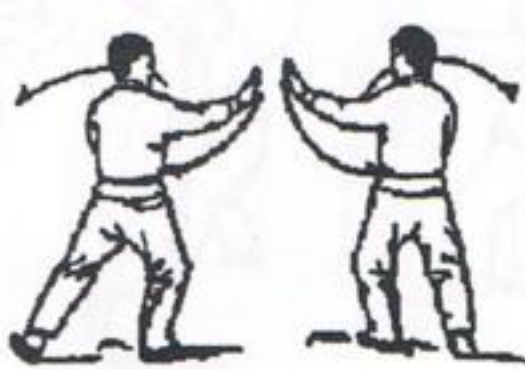
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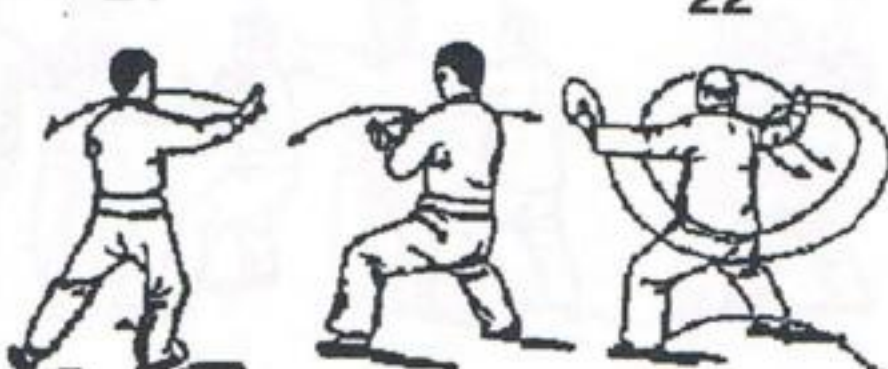
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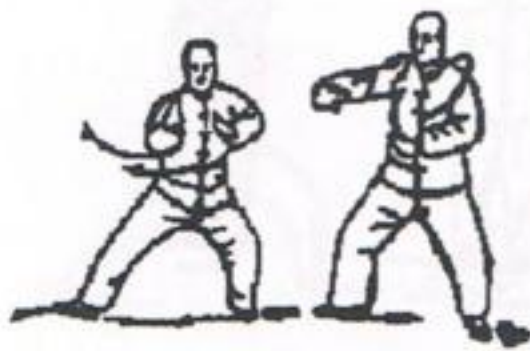
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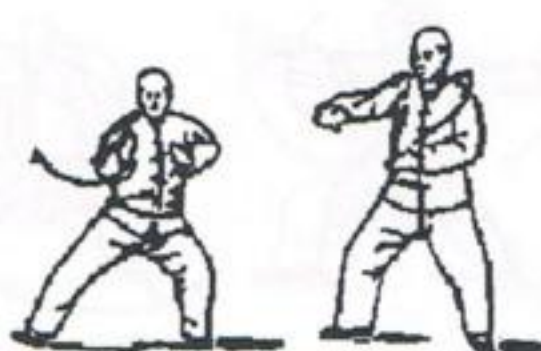
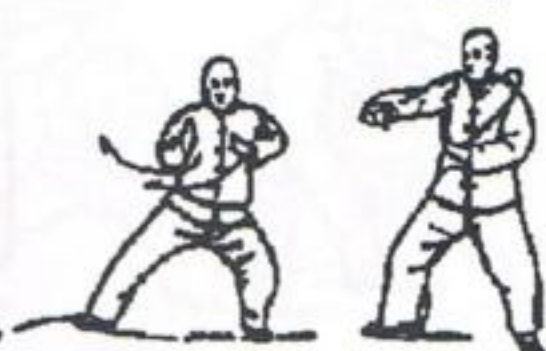
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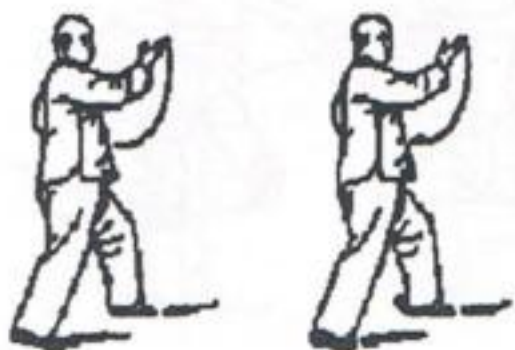
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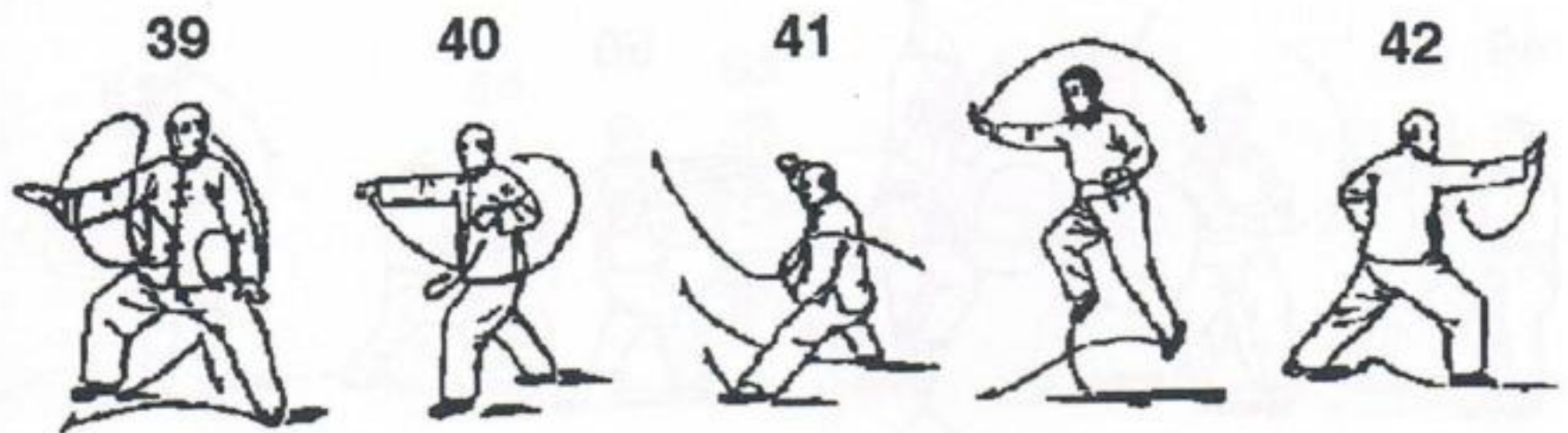
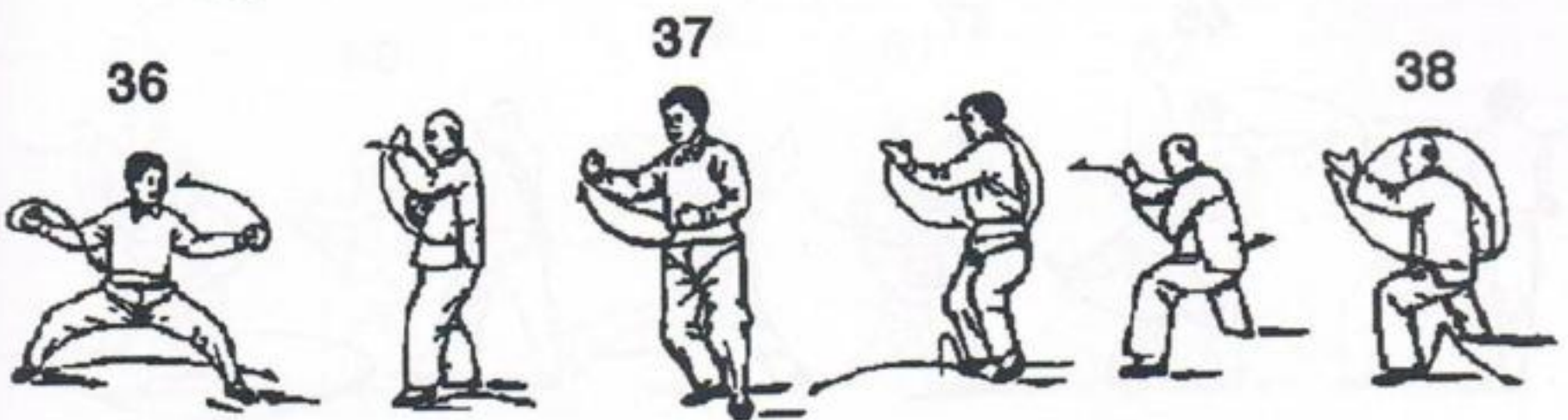
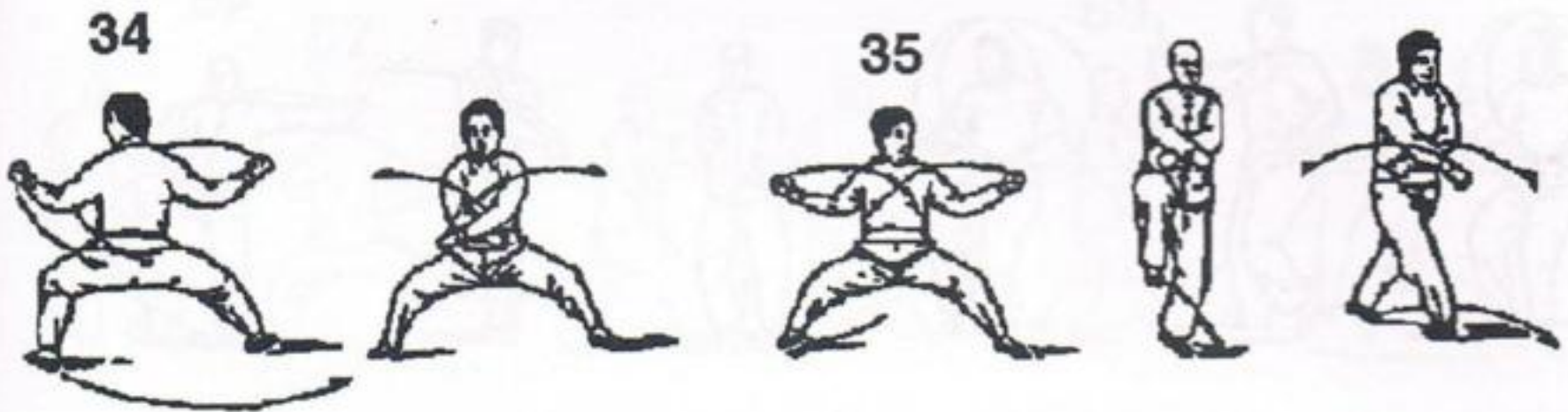
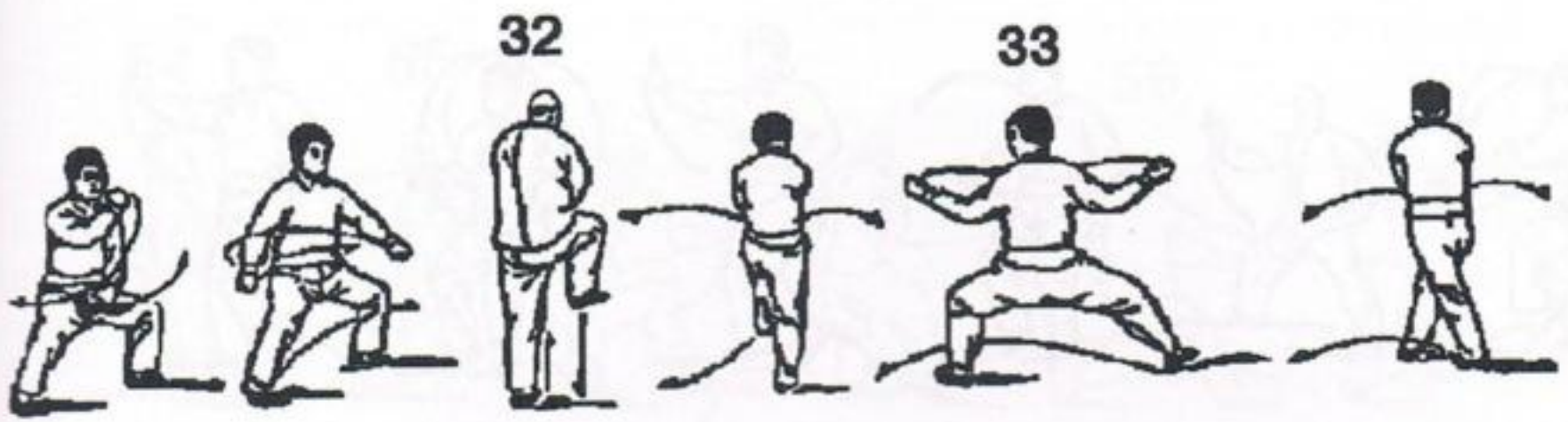


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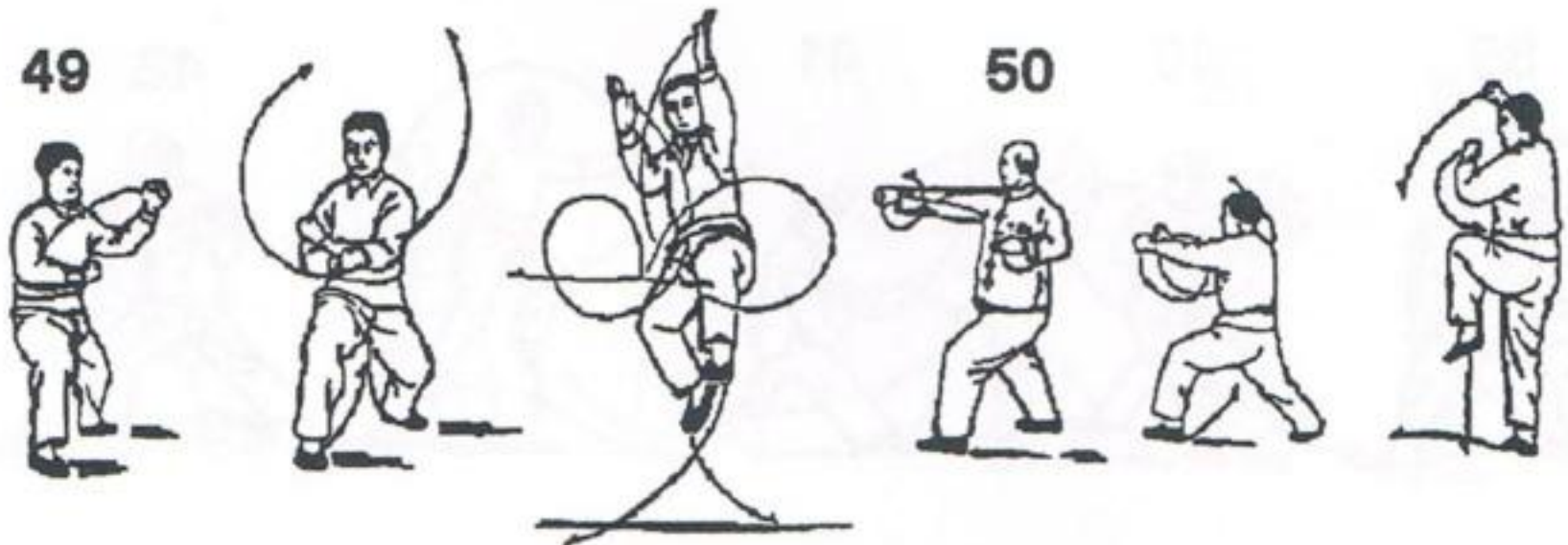
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1.5 The Yang Family's Taijiquan. Taijiquan was considered a treasure of the Chen family. It was kept secret and was rarely shown to people outside the family. For instance, Chenchangxin taught his son and his relatives, but only two persons with other family names: Yangluchan (揚露禪) and Libokui (李伯魁). Yang, especially, learned this extraordinary skill with extreme patience and effort.

Yangluchan (1799-1872 AD) was born in Hebei Province (河北省) in northern China. His ancestors were farmers. He was small and thin but fond of the martial arts. At first, he learned the thirty-three long form movements of a hard boxing style from Shaolin. An old boxer felt that Yang had great boxing talent and was capable of higher achievement if Yang could have the right guidance from a superior master. The old man told him of the Chens, and Yang went to them in hopes of becoming a student. However, since he had a family name other than Chen, he was refused. He stayed on as a farm worker to wait for any chance to learn taijiquan. Finally, Chenchangxin discovered Yang's intention. He was deeply impressed by Yang's sincerity and accepted him as a student. The story goes that Yang had worked on the farm for several years without learning anything about taijiquan. Then one night, awakening from his sleep, Yang heard the Hengha (哼哈) sound from the adjacent building. Peeping through the fence, he saw Chenchangxin teaching his students taijiquan. From then on, he watched and practiced before returning to the bedroom. Yang concentrated on these daily lessons, made surprising progress and on occasion was even able to beat Chen's advanced students. Chen realized Yang's talent and potential and taught him all of the skills, techniques and secrets of taijiquan.

After learning taijiquan from Chenchangxin, Yangluchan returned to his birthplace and gave taiji lessons to his neighbors. He had many students. At that time, taijiquan was called *huaquan* (化拳) or neutralizing form and *mian quan* (綿) or soft form because it turned defense to attack and was as soft as cotton. Years later, Yang left for Beijing to teach taijiquan to the royal family, and Yang's taiji became quite well-known.

Yang, who had a strong character, was very fond of contests of strength with other boxers. He traveled throughout northern China with both his luggage and his spear on his back. When he heard of any excellent fighters, he would visit them and match skills. Although he was skilled, he never in his life hurt anyone seriously. His enthusiasm for pugilistic art and his sense of honor won people's respect. Because he never lost a contest and had no rival, he earned the title Yang Wudi (无敌). Wudi means no enemy and no rival. Yang did not look like a boxer; however, he often lifted and flung his opponents despite the fact that they often weighed twice as much as he did. Nobody knew the source of his strength. Following are some of the many legends about him.

A rich man called Chang lived in Beijing and was fond of boxing. In fact, he had over thirty fighters as escorts. He admired Yang and invited him to his house. When the weak-looking Yang arrived, Chang misjudged him and indifferently treated him to a very plain dinner. Yang was well aware of the meal's meaning, but pretended that he did not care how he was treated, drinking and eating happily by himself. Chang rudely said to Yang, "I have heard your honorable name as well as of the renowned softness of taijiquan. Yet, I wonder if you and your taiji can defeat people."

"There are three kinds of people that I cannot beat," Yang quickly replied.

Chang asked, "What three kinds of people are they?"

"They are made of brass, iron, or wood. The rest I can defeat," said Yang.

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"I have an escort of thirty people. The best is Liu (劉) who can lift three hundred pounds. Would you like to compete with him?"

"Of course," answered Yang.

The contest began. Liu's entrance "sounded windy," which means he came in like the rushing wind, and he looked as violent as a tiger. As he approached Yang, Yang led him to emptiness with his right hand and pushed him gently with his left. Immediately Liu was thrown ten feet across the yard, like a flying kite with a suddenly broken string. Chang clapped his hands and laughed, "Taiji is indeed a wonderful art!" Chang ordered his servant to prepare a luxurious dinner, and Yang was respected as a Grand Master.

Yang was also master of the spear. He could gracefully lift light articles by touching them with his spear, thus utilizing his sticking energy. He never failed. If there was a fire, he tore down the wall with his spear to stop the fire from spreading. He shot arrows not with a bow but with his fingers, and he always hit the targets with one hundred percent accuracy.

In Guangping (廣平), Yang engaged in a contest high on top of the city wall. His opponent retreated to the edge of the city wall and finally fell, losing his balance. At this very critical moment, Yang jumped forward from five yards away and held this man's foot, saving his life. His agility was shown in other ways, too. One rainy day, Yang was sitting in the living room when his daughter stepped on the porch with a brass basin in her hands. Before entering the door, she slipped, and Yang rushed out to hold her arm so that she avoided a fall. Even the water in the basin did not spill.

During Yang's stay in Beijing, another boxer was jealous of Yang's title "No Rival" and challenged Yang. Yang said with a smile, "Since you insist upon battling, I will let you hit me three times." The challenger then struck Yang's stomach with great force. Yang laughed aloud, using the force in his abdomen to throw his opponent to the ground. Another day, Yang was fishing at the riverside when two boxers passed by on the bank behind and above him. These two men were afraid of Yang and wanted to dampen Yang's reputation by pushing him into the river. They approached stealthily. Yang, having special hearing ability, realized they were behind him and prepared for the attack. Using the posture High Pat on Horse, Yang raised his back, bowed his head, and flung the two men into the river.

Yangluchan had three sons. The eldest died in childhood. The second son was named Yangyu (楊鈺, 1837-1892); the third was Yangjian (楊鑑, 1839-1917). (See Figure 1.5a.) Both were famous taiji experts. When Yangluchan was very old and people still begged to be his students, Yangyu took over the role as their real teacher. Later many of Yangyu's students claimed that they were students of Yangluchan.

Yangyu learned taijiquan from his father, practicing all day, every day without stop, no matter how cold the winter or how hot the summer. Yangluchan never let his son Yangyu have a rest and often punished him with a whip. This harshness almost caused Yangyu to run away from home. Like his father, Yangyu had a strong character and liked to attack others. Those attacked by him were often hurt by being thrown almost ten feet away. When Yangyu was young, he had a contest with a strong fighter who grasped Yangyu's wrist. Using taiji's cool strength (冷勁), a sudden attack without warning, Yangyu beat the fighter. When Yangyu proudly told his father he had won, his father laughed at him and criticized, "It is good news; however, because your sleeve was torn, you did not have taiji strength. The theory of taiji is that nobody knows you, only you know them." Then Yangyu looked at his sleeve, which was indeed torn from using too much force. Although he was discouraged by his father's remark, he was also challenged. Practicing and studying twice as hard as before, he reached a very high level; however, he did not like to teach students. He did, however, like to test his inner force by

putting a few grains of rice on his abdomen, and while he was saying “Ha,” the grains were launched to the ceiling.

Yangjian was called “Mr. Number Three.” His father was so strict with his sons that Yangjian felt extremely exhausted and desperate. Yangjian planned several times to cut his hair and become a Buddhist monk, but he never succeeded because other family members stopped him. From this example, it can be imagined how much the students suffered during the learning of Yang's taijiquan. It was almost beyond normal tolerance. Yangjian, who was good-natured, had many students. He taught three styles: large, medium and small. His achieve-



楊健侯先生遺像

Yangjian
(1839-1917)
Figure 1.5a



楊少侯先生遺像

Yangzhaoxiong
(1862-1930)
Figure 1.5b

ment, harmony of firmness and softness, reached a high level. He often held a duster to practice taiji while his followers used swords. His opponents were often caught in a passive position, unable to approach him. He was an expert at playing with spears and sticks. Any strength and force he applied with spears or sticks would knock the other man down. He was also an expert in throwing bullet balls. He was able to shoot three flying birds with three bullet balls at one time. Moreover, he could fix birds his palm so that they could not fly away. When the birds attempted to sink down before flying, he let his palm sink so that they could not prepare to ascend. In his old age, he would practice his inner force in bed at midnight, and a strange rumbling noise could be heard. He died in 1917, a natural death without illness. It is said that since he dreamed his death a few hours before it came, he asked his students and family to come to bid him farewell. He took a bath, put on new clothes, and then passed away with a smile. He had three sons: the eldest was Zhaoxiong, the second died young, and the third was named Zhaoqing.

Zhaoxiong (兆熊, 1862 – 1930 AD, See Figure 1.5b), played taiji at age seven. Just like his uncle, Yangyu, Zhaoxiong had a strong character and liked to attack first. He mastered the application in taiji. His style was small but firm; his action fast and sinking, continuous and

tight. He taught aggressively and had only a few students because few people could bear his beatings. He reached high levels in taiji technique, but very few people now know his methods because he rarely taught. It is said that in Nanjing a boxer who once failed in a contest with him wanted to get revenge. This man threw lime powder in Yangzhaoxiong's eyes so he could not see, and then attacked Yang's face with his fists. Depending on his keen hearing ability, Yang escaped the thrusts and with light returns of his hands threw the attacker to the ground several feet away. Later it was said that "to beat the enemy with closed eyes is Yang's taiji." It is also said that once when he met a mad dog that ran to bite him, he raised his foot, throwing the dog yards away to its death. He could draw a candle flame close to him and push it away again, thus putting the fire out. This provides an example of so-called "spiritual force," but the secret to this was lost.

The Yang form has become the most popular of the taijiquan forms with thousands of people all over the world practicing it on a regular basis. However, two very serious questions remain unanswered: Even to today, why has no one been able to really demonstrate the abilities of Yangluchan and his two sons? What was lost along the way? All Yang players must seriously ponder this mystery.

Zhaoqing (兆清, 1883-1936 AD, See Figures 1.5c and d), was also named Chengfu (澄甫). He had a kind nature but was not fond of taijiquan as a child. It was his philosophy that "It is not worth learning to be one person's enemy (as in taiji fighting); it is worth learning to be the enemy of a thousand men." However, with his grandfather's instruction and advice, he realized that taijiquan could not only improve his health, but also cultivate the whole nation's physical condition and awaken the spirit of the entire country. He began to practice taijiquan at twenty but did not perceive its significance until his father's death. He then practiced and studied day and night to attain the skills of taijiquan. He succeeded to such an extent that he exhibited a soft outer appearance like cotton with an iron inner firmness. He exemplifies the highest natural talent and achievement in taijiquan since he was entirely self-taught after his father died. His great example is encouragement to develop on your own—even if excellent teachers are hard to find. To develop with or without a teacher, you must understand and apply the theories and principles of taijiquan. The current forms of Yang's taiji were defined and regulated by him. Yang's style, which is comfortable, generous, light and stable, has been recognized as the



楊澄甫先生五十四歲時像

Yangchengfu
Figure 1.5c



楊澄甫先生

Figure 1.5d

easiest and most popular one.

Yangzhaoqing had four sons. They had been recently teaching taiji in either Hong Kong or Hawaii. While their skills were comparatively good today, in relation to their ancestors they can evoke only a deep sigh. As you can see, there is also a life cycle in taijiquan. Fortunately, however, one of his students, Zhengmanqing (鄭曼青, 1901-1975 AD) reached the highest level of achievement in our present time. Zheng would often remind his students that as great as his skill was to them, so was his teacher's skill to him. He would demonstrate how none could lay a hand on him. Yet, he himself could not escape one finger of Yangchengfu, or remove it, once it had touched him.

Yang's taijiquan became very popular. Because of the multitude of people that learned this style, there are many variations of it today. Although the number and names of the postures in the many variations are the same, the movements are executed differently. One of these variations is Wujianquan's (吳鑑泉) form. This Wu form, which is popular in Southern China and Hong Kong, is well-known in the United States. It is a branch of the Yang School, however, and must not be confused with the third main branch of taijiquan, to be discussed later. Ultimately, Yangchengfu, Yangluchan's grandson, standardized the original large, high style as Yang's long taijiquan.

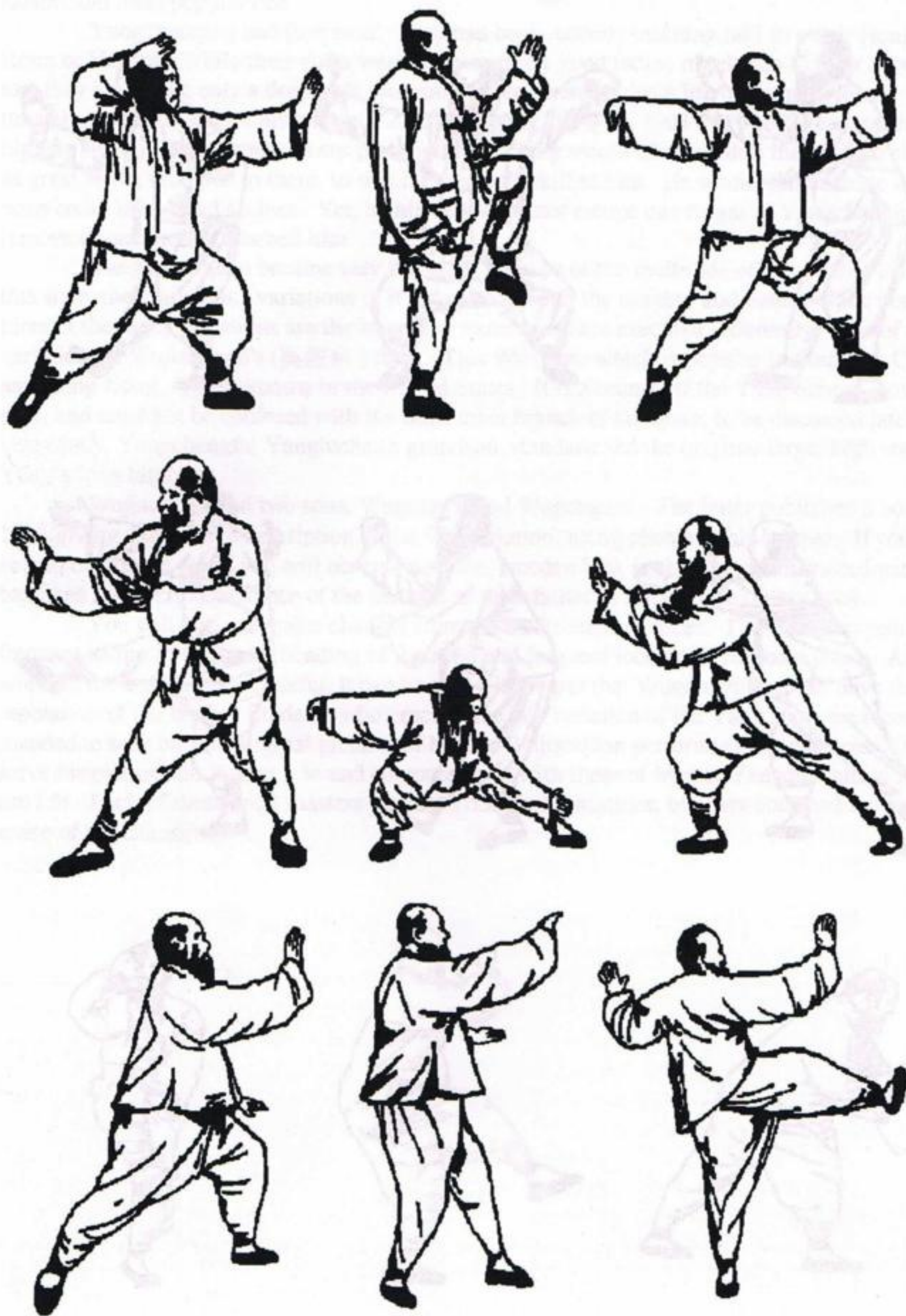
Wujianquan had two sons, Wugongyi, and Wugongzao. The latter published a book in 1980 giving a definitive description of the Wu variation, using photos of his brother. If you are able to obtain the work, you will observe a stilted, wooden look in the photos contrasted with the balanced and alert appearance of the pictures of their father in Figure 1.5e of this book.

You will also see major changes from the traditional practices. The changes include: frequent tilting of the torso, bending of the head and frequent locking of the knee joints. As to whether these changes are useful, it can be said with regret that Wugongyi does not have the reputation of the father. Students who practice the Wu variation of the Yang form are recommended to seek out the original pictures of Master Wujianquan performing the postures. Observe his pictures on Figure 1.5e and compare them with those of Master Yangchengfu in Figure 1.5f. Each of these great masters practiced different variations, but they both had the same grasp of the chansijing.



Master Wu Jianquan's postures
Figure 1.5e

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Master Yangchengfu's postures
Figure 1.5f



Master Zhengmanqing's postures
Figure 1.5g

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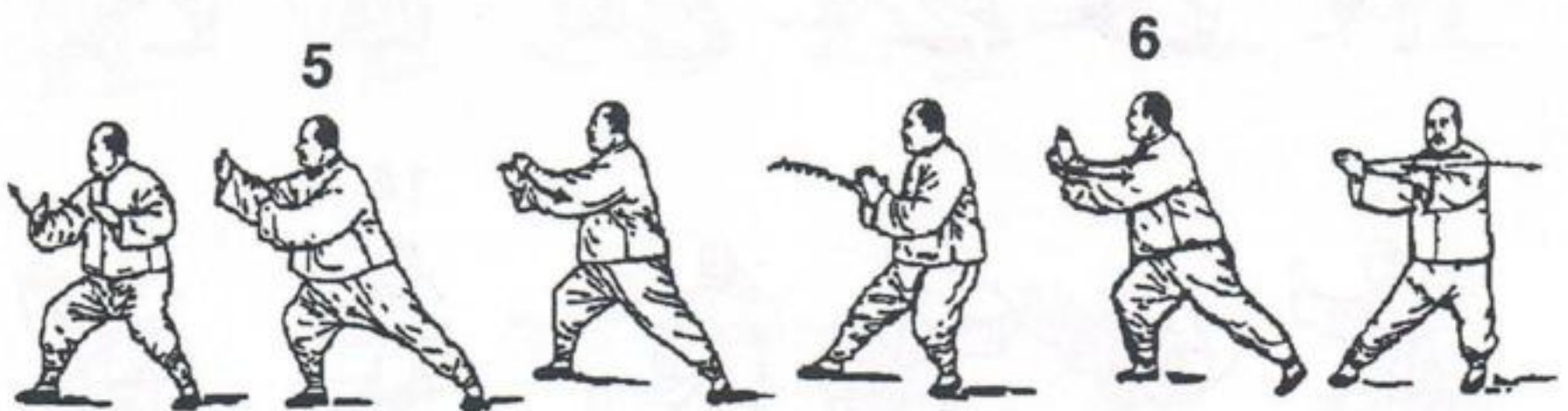
If you have not yet begun studying with a teacher, try the first paragraph of Yang's taijiquan (from movements 1 to 19) using the following illustrations. The pictures of Yang's long taijiquan depict Yangchengfu himself. See preceding pictures of Wu Jianquan, Yangchengfu and Zhengmanqing (Figures 1.5e, 1.5f, 1.5g). Except for slight differences, the postures of the two great masters Yang and Wu are essentially the same.

Yang's Long Taijiquan:

1. Beginning of Taiji	Taijiqishi	太極起勢
2. Ward-off Left	Zuobing	左棚
3. Ward-off Right	Youbing	右棚
4. Roll-back	Luo	捋
5. Press	Ji	擠
6. Push	An	按
(NOTE: #'s 2-6: Grasp Sparrow's Tail	Lanquewei	攬雀尾
7. Single Whip	Danbian	單鞭
8. Lift Hand	Tishouhangshi	提手上勢
9. White Crane Spreads Wings	Baiheliangchi	白鶴涼翅
10. Brush Knee and Twist Step, Right	Youlouxiaobu	右樓膝拗步
11. Playing Guitar	Shouhuipipa	手揮琵琶
12. Brush Knee and Twist Step, Right	Youlouxiaobu	右樓膝拗步
13. Brush Knee and Twist Step, Left	Zuolouxiaobu	左樓膝拗步
14. Brush Knee and Twist Step, Right	Youlouxiaobu	右樓膝拗步
15. Playing Guitar	(see #11)	
16. Brush Knee and Twist Step, Right	(see #10)	
17. Step Forward, Deflect Downward, Intercept and Punch	Banlanchui	搬攬捶
18. Withdraw and Push	Rufengsibi	如封似閉
19. Cross Hands	Shizishou	十字手
20. Embrace Tiger, Return to the Mountain	Baohuguishan	抱虎歸山
21. Grasp Sparrow's Tail	Lanquewei	攬雀尾
22. Diagonal Single Whip	Xiedanbian	斜單鞭
23. Fist Under Elbow	Zhoudikanchui	肘底看捶
24. Step Back to Repulse Monkey, Right	Youdaonianhou	右倒攆猴
25. Step Back to Repulse Monkey, Left	Zuodaonianhou	左倒攆猴
26. Step Back to Repulse Monkey, Right	Youdaonianhou	右倒攆猴
27. Diagonal Flying Posture	Xiefeishi	斜飛式
28. Lift Hand	(see #8)	
29. White Crane Spreads Wings	(see #9)	
30. Brush Knee and Twist Step	(see #10)	
31. Needle at Sea Bottom	Haidizhen	海底針
32. Fan through the Back	Shantongbei	扇通背
33. Turn Around and Chop	Zhuanshenpieshenchui	轉身撇身捶
34. Step Forward, Deflect Downward, Intercept and Punch	(see #17)	
35. Step Forward, Grasp Sparrow's Tail	Shangbulanquewei	上步攬雀尾
36. Single Whip	(see #7)	
37. Cloud Hands (three)	Yunshou	雲手

- | | | |
|--|-------------------|-------|
| 38. Single Whip | (see #7) | |
| 39. High Pat on Horse | Gaotanma | 高探马 |
| 40. Separate Right Foot | Youfenjiao | 右分脚 |
| 41. Separate Left Foot | Zuofenjiao | 左分脚 |
| 42. Turn Around and Kick with Left Sole | Zhuanshendengjiao | 转身蹬脚 |
| 43. Brush Knee and Twist Step, Right | (see #10) | |
| 44. Brush Knee and Twist Step, Left | (see #13) | |
| 45. Step Up and Punch Downward | Jinbuzaichui | 进步栽捶 |
| 46. Turn Around and Chop | (see #33) | |
| 47. Step Forward, Deflect Downward,
Intercept and Punch | (see #17) | |
| 48. Kick Right Foot | Youtijiao | 右踢脚 |
| 49. Hit Tiger at Left | Zuodahu | 左打虎 |
| 50. Hit Tiger at Right | Youdahu | 右打虎 |
| 51. Kick Right Foot | (see #48) | |
| 52. Strike Opponent's Ears with Fists | Shuangfengguaner | 双风贯耳 |
| 53. Kick Left Foot | Zuotijiao | 左踢脚 |
| 54. Turn Around and Kick with Right Sole | (see #42) | |
| 55. Step Forward, Deflect Downward,
Intercept and Punch | (see #17) | |
| 56. Withdraw and Push | (see #18) | |
| 57. Cross Hands | (see #19) | |
| 58. Embrace Tiger, Return to Mountain | (see #20) | |
| 59. Grasp Sparrow's Tail | (see #'s 2-6) | |
| 60. Diagonal Single Whip | (see #22) | |
| 61. Mustang Ruffling Its Mane, Right | Youyemafenzong | 右野马分鬃 |
| 62. Mustang Ruffling Its Mane, Left | Zuoyemafenzong | 左野马分鬃 |
| 63. Mustang Ruffling Its Mane, Right | Youyemafenzong | 右野马分鬃 |
| 64. Grasp Sparrow's Tail | (see #'s 2-6) | |
| 65. Single Whip | (see #7) | |
| 66. Fair Lady Works at Shuttles (1) | Yunuchuansuo | 玉女穿梭 |
| 67. Fair Lady Works at Shuttles (2) | | |
| 68. Fair Lady Works at Shuttles (3) | | |
| 69. Fair Lady Works at Shuttles (4) | | |
| 70. Grasp Sparrow's Tail | (see #'s 2-6) | |
| 71. Single Whip | (see #7) | |
| 72. Cloud Hands | (see #37) | |
| 73. Single Whip | (see #7) | |
| 74. Snake Creeps Down | Sheshenxiashi | 蛇身下势 |
| 75. Golden Pheasant Stands
with One Leg, Right | Youjinjiduli | 右金鸡独立 |
| 76. Golden Pheasant Stands
with One Leg, Left | Zuojinjiduli | 左金鸡独立 |
| 77. Step Back to Repulse Monkey, Right | (see #24) | |
| 78. Step Back to Repulse Monkey, Left | (see #25) | |
| 79. Step Back to Repulse Monkey, Right | | |
| 80. Diagonal Flying Posture | (see #27) | |
| 81. Lift Hand | (see #8) | |

- | | | |
|---|----------------------|--------|
| 82. White Crane Spreads Wings | (see #9) | |
| 83. Brush Knee and Twist Step | (see #10) | |
| 84. Needle at Sea Bottom | (see #31) | |
| 85. Fan Through the Back | (see #32) | |
| 86. Turn Body, and White Snake
Sticks Out Tongue | Zhuanshenbaishetuxin | 转身白蛇吐信 |
| 87. Step Forward, Deflect Downward,
Intercept and Punch | (see #17) | |
| 88. Step Forward and Grasp Sparrow's Tail | (see #35) | |
| 89. Single Whip | (see #7) | |
| 90. Cloud Hands | (see #37) | |
| 91. Single Whip | (see #7) | |
| 92. High Pat on Horse | (see #39) | |
| 93. Crossing Palm | Chuanshenshizizhang | 穿身十字掌 |
| 94. Turn Body and Cross-Form Kick | Zhuanshenshizitui | 转身十字腿 |
| 95. Punch Opponent's Groin | Louxizhidangchui | 搂膝指裆捶 |
| 96. Step Forward, Grasp Sparrow's Tail | (see #35) | |
| 97. Single Whip | (see #7) | |
| 98. Snake Creeps Down | (see #74) | |
| 99. Step Up to Form
Seven Stars of the Dipper | Shangbuqixing | 上步七星 |
| 100. Step Back to Ride Tiger | Zhuanshenkuahua | 转身跨虎 |
| 101. Turn Around and Sweep Lotus
with One Leg | Zhuanshenbailiantui | 转身摆莲腿 |
| 102. Shoot Tiger with Bow | Wangongshehu | 弯弓射虎 |
| 103. Step Forward, Deflect Downward,
Intercept and Punch | (see #17) | |
| 104. Withdraw and Push | (see #18) | |
| 105. Conclusion of Taiji | Hetaiji | 合太極 |

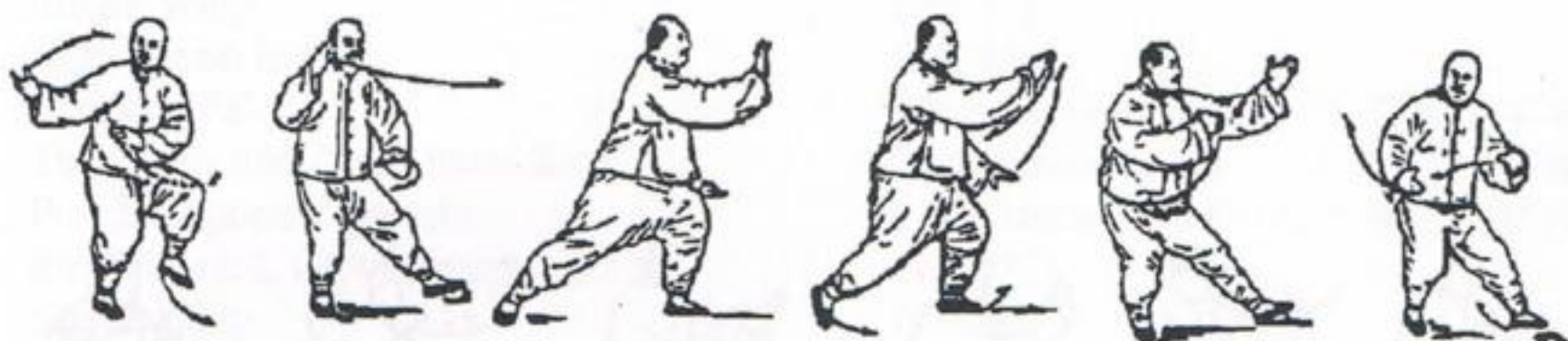


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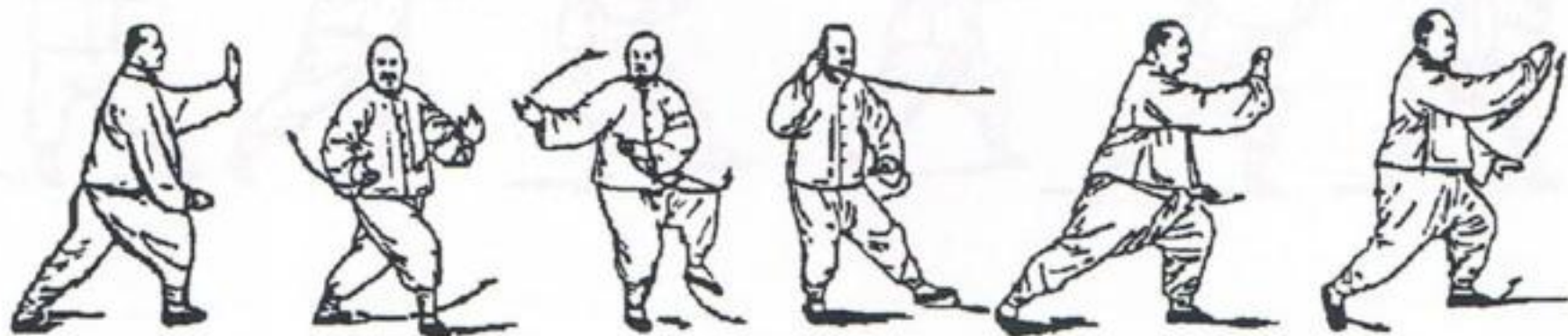


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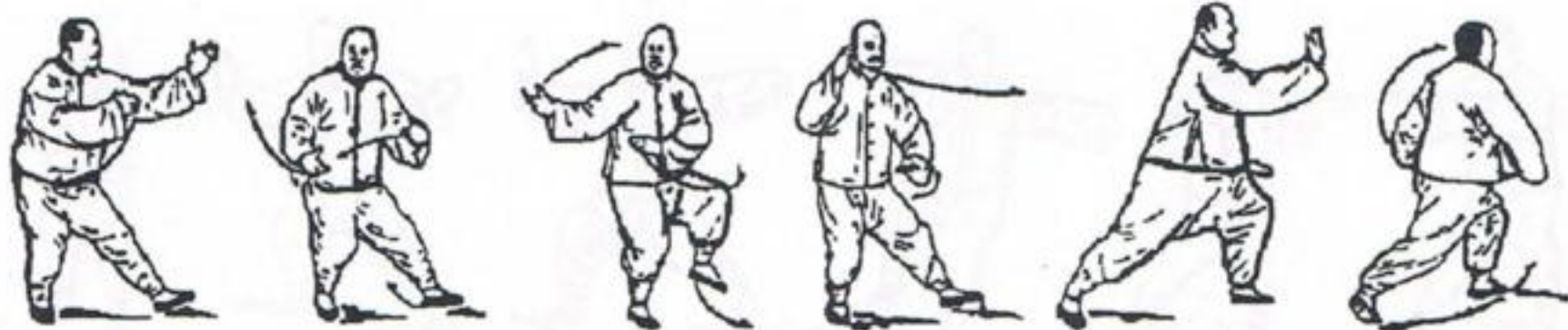
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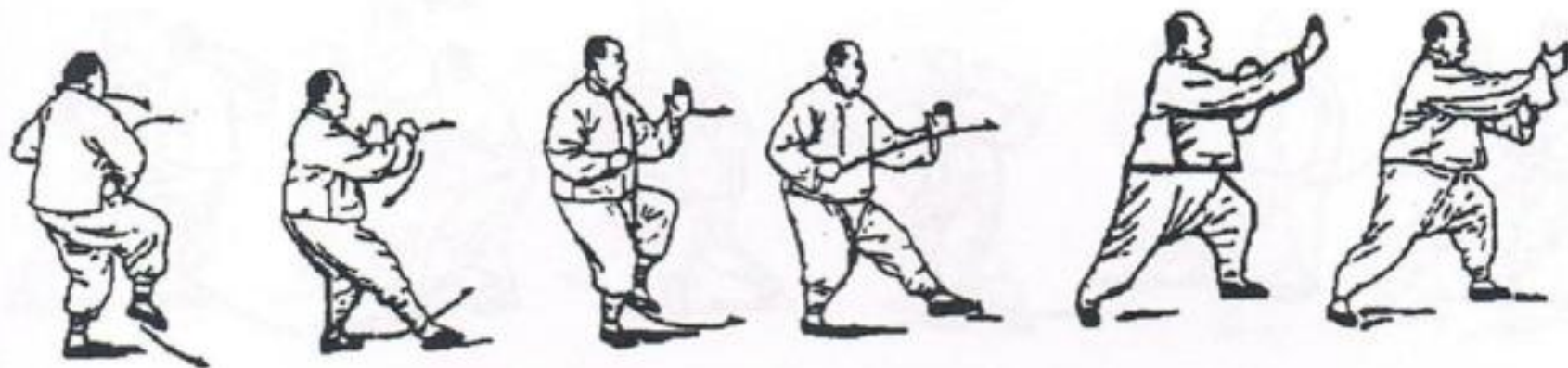


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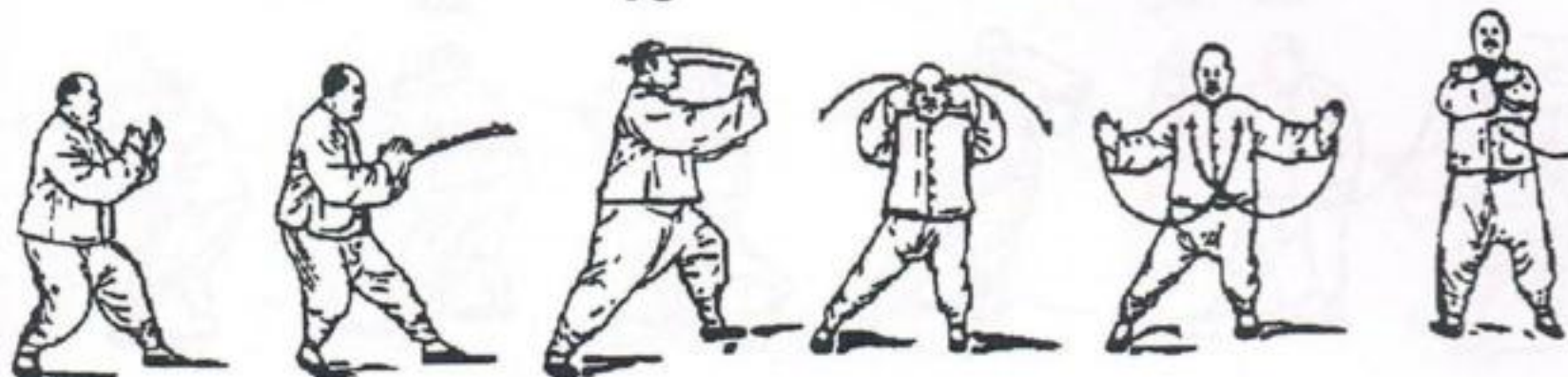


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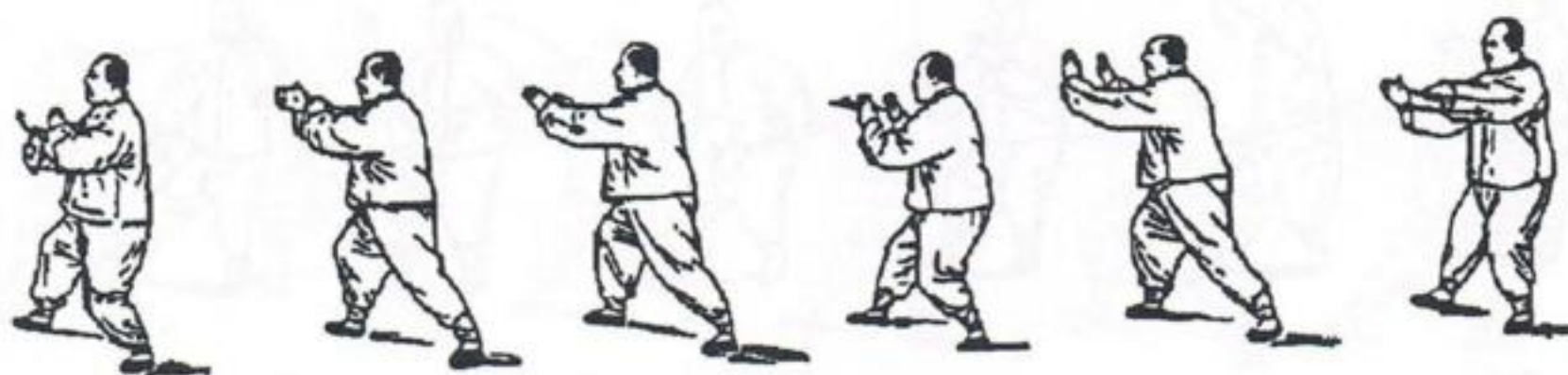
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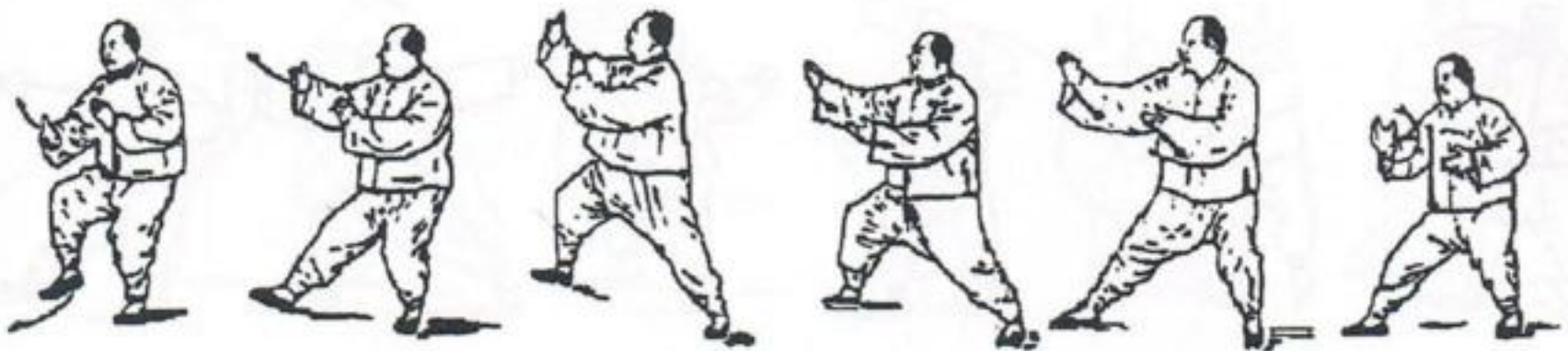
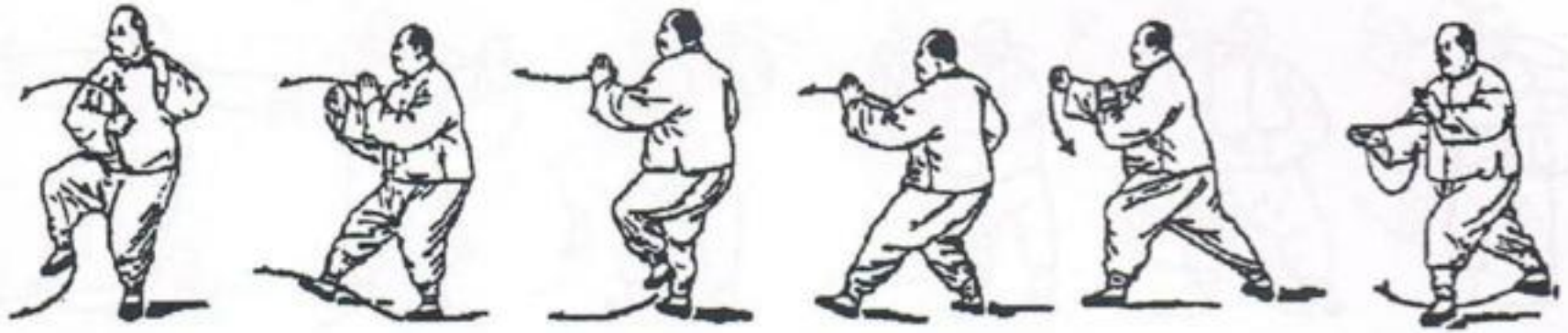
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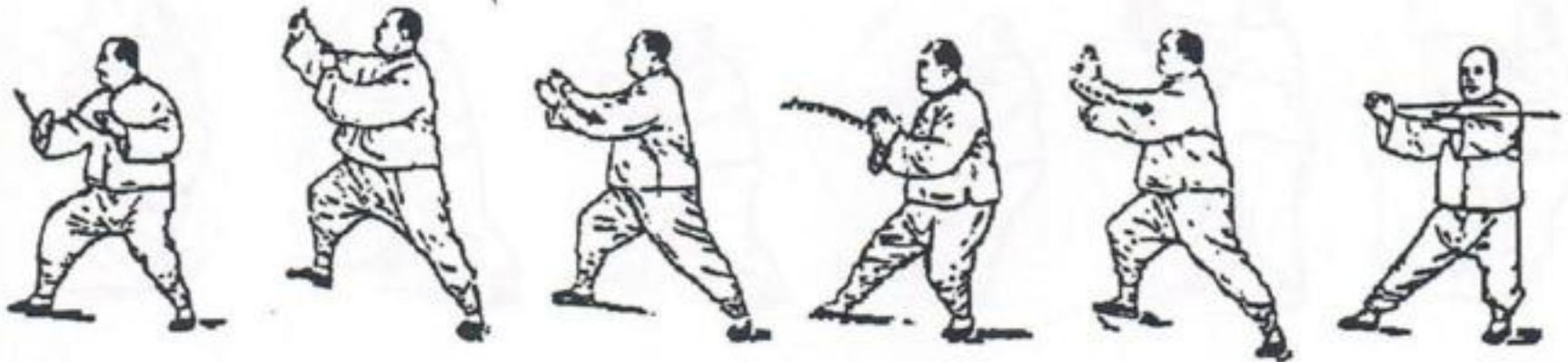
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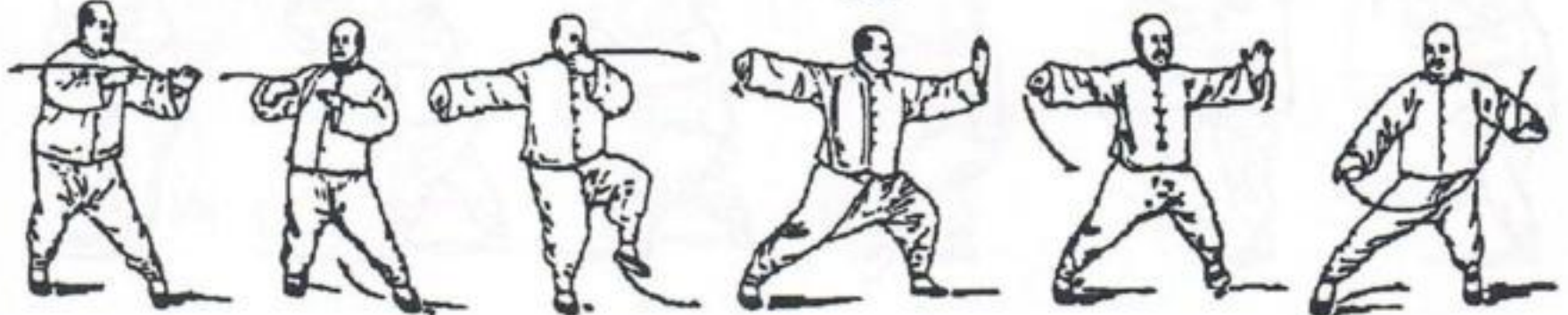
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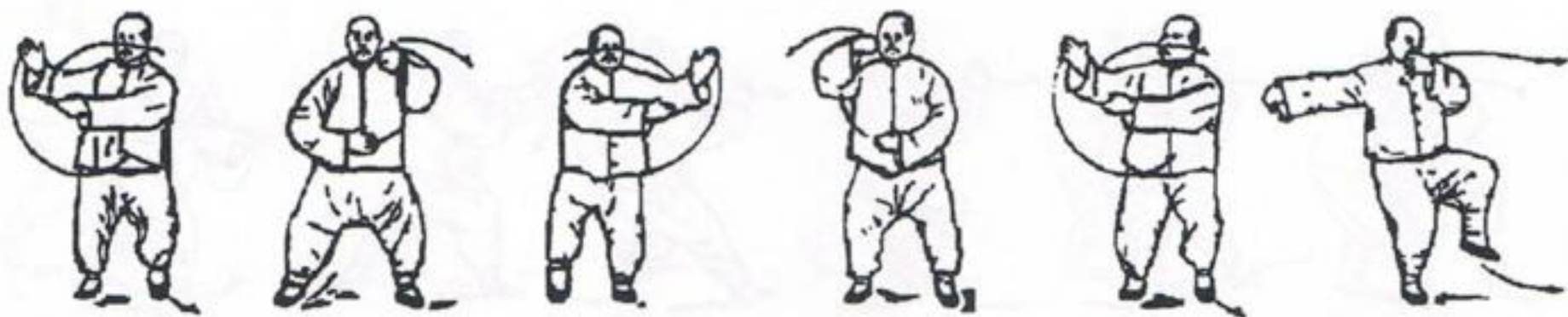
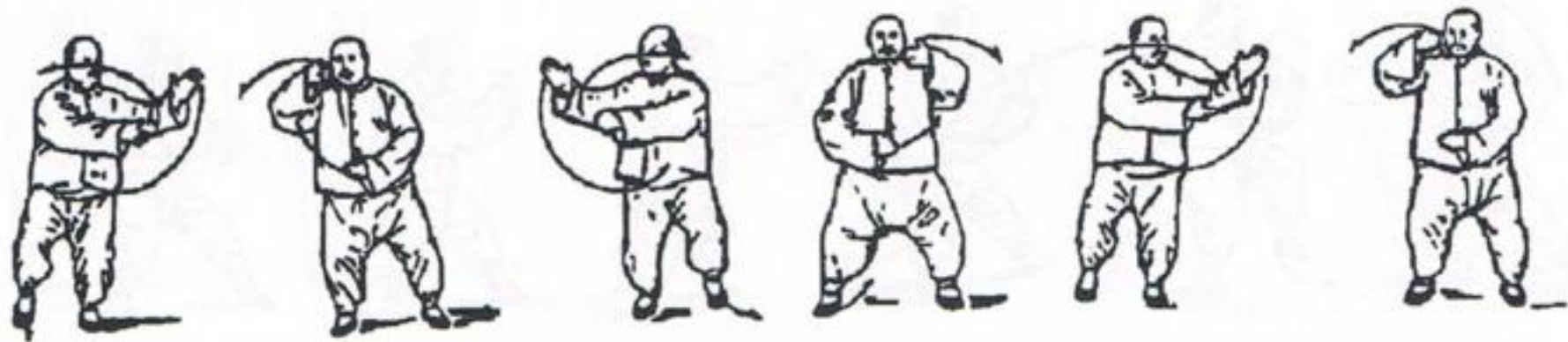


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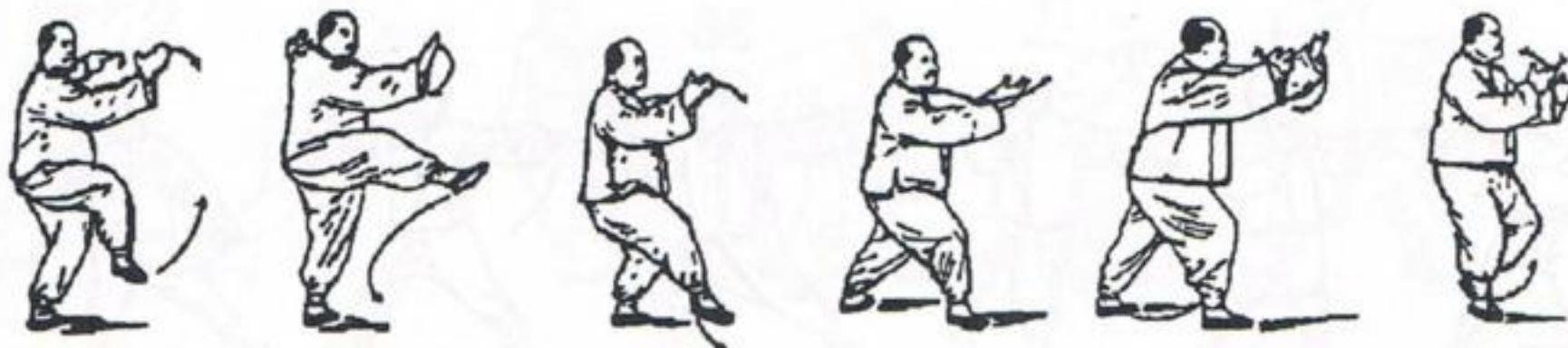
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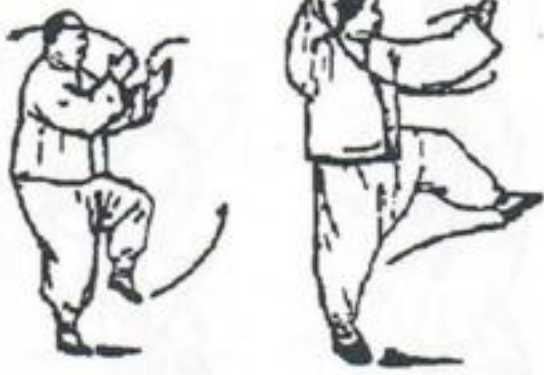
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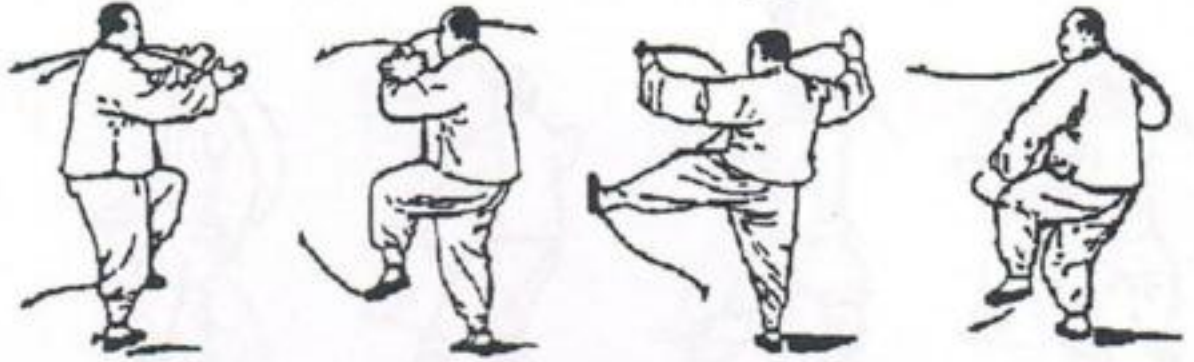
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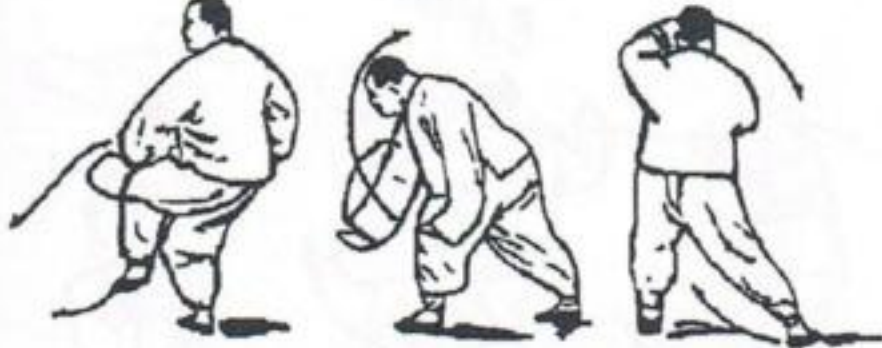
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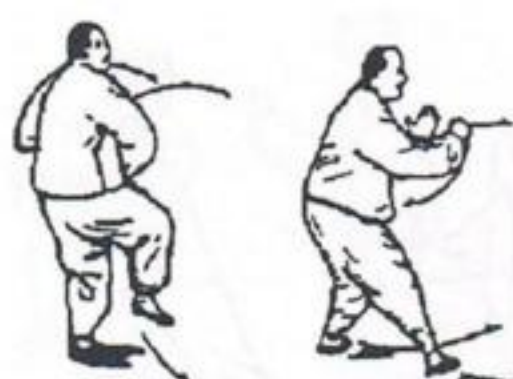
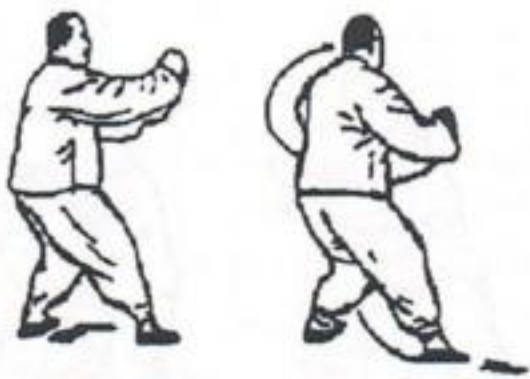
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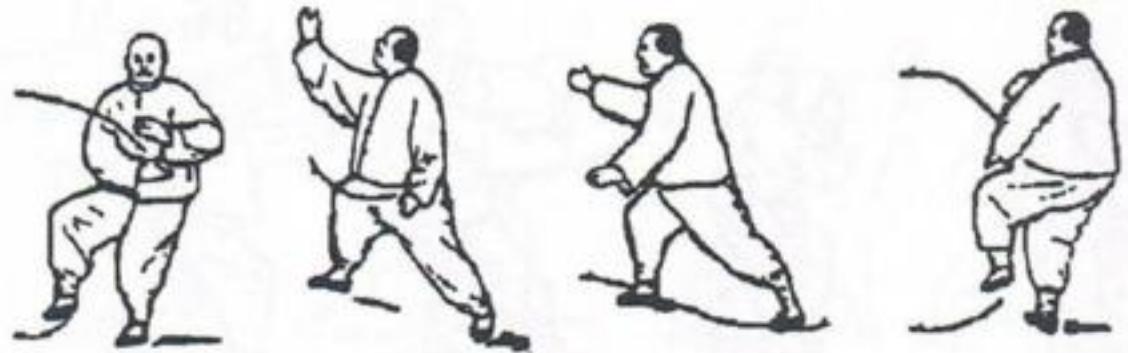
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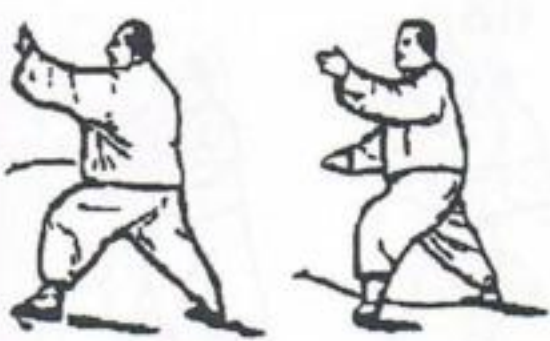
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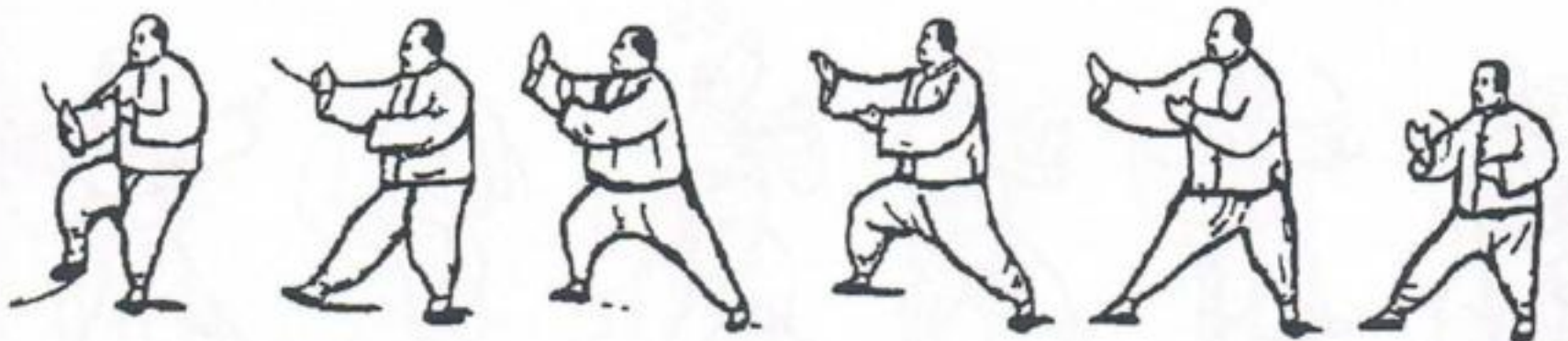
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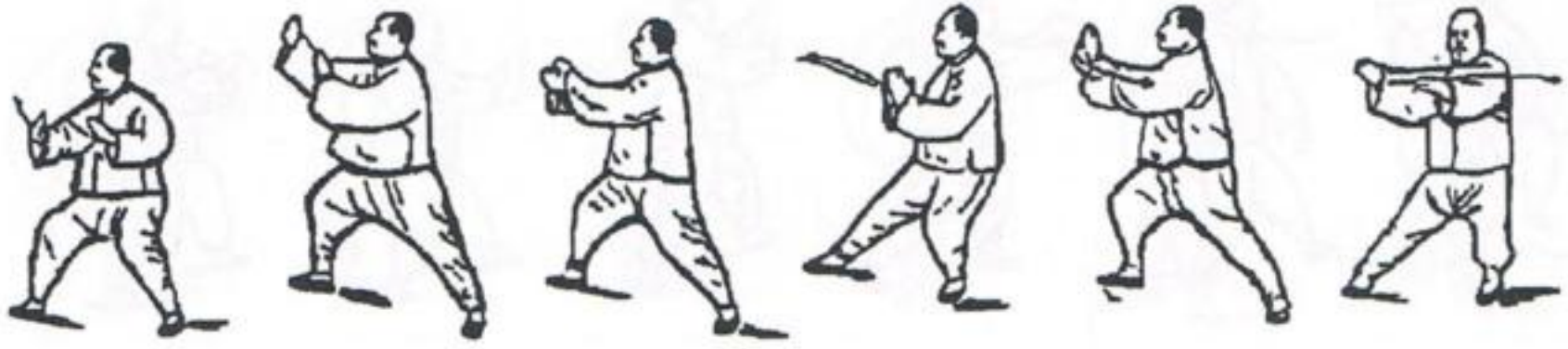
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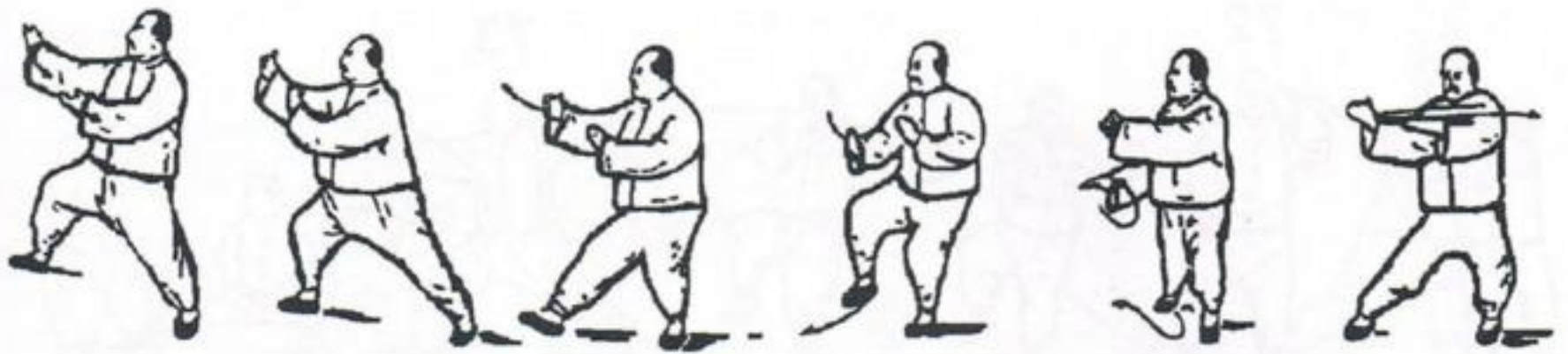


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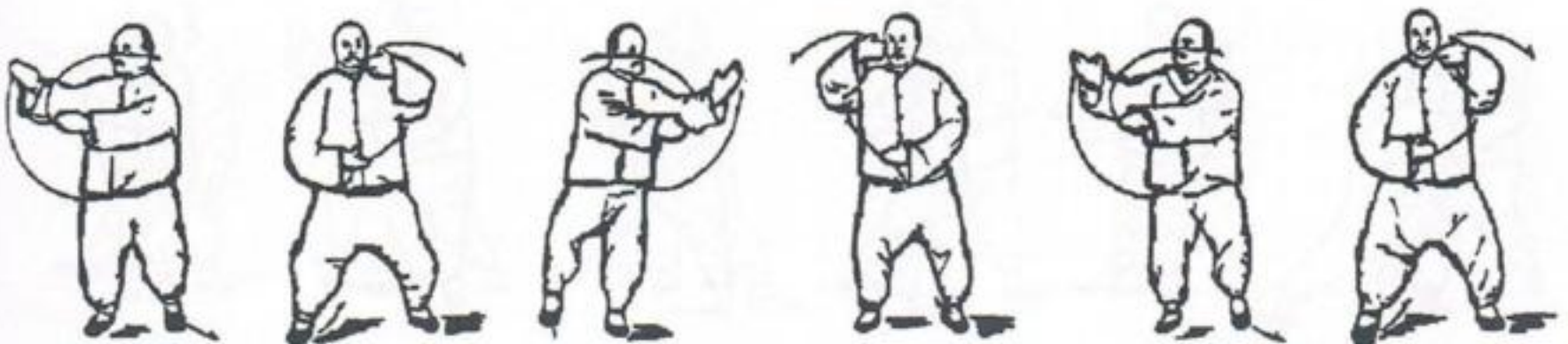


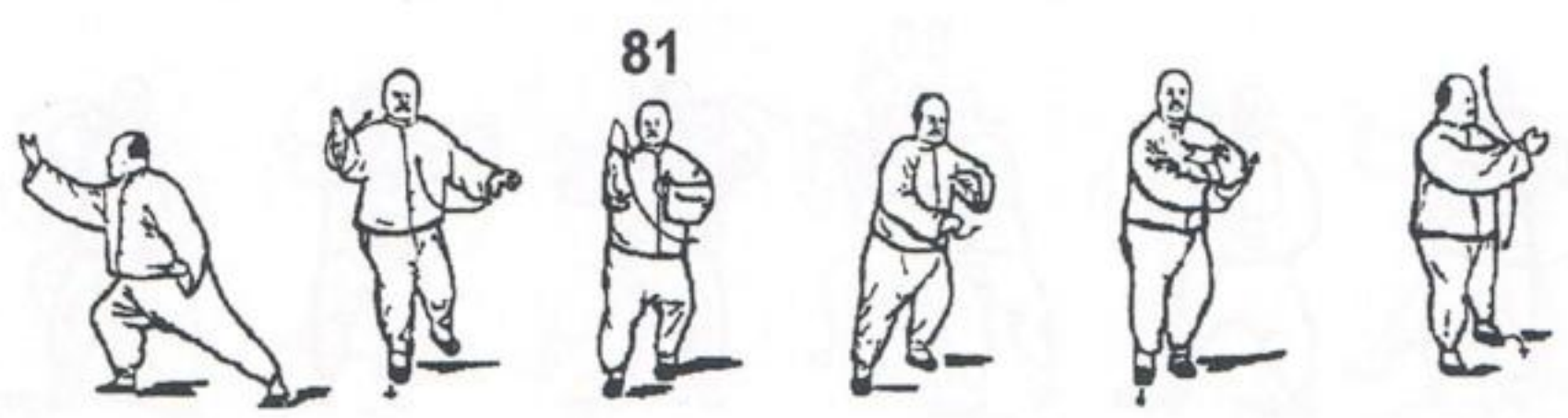
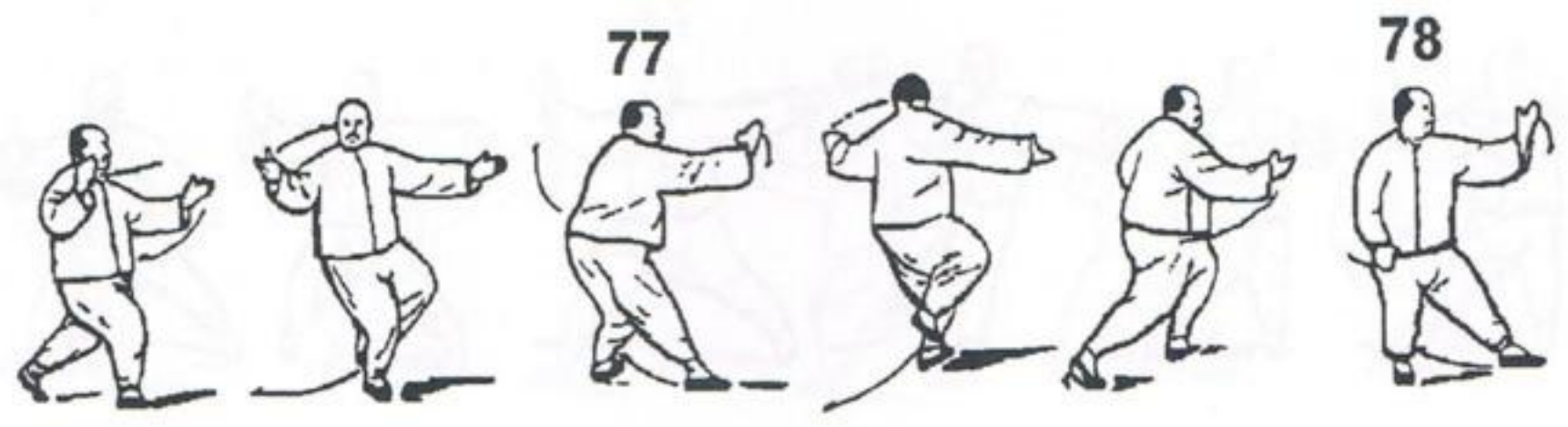
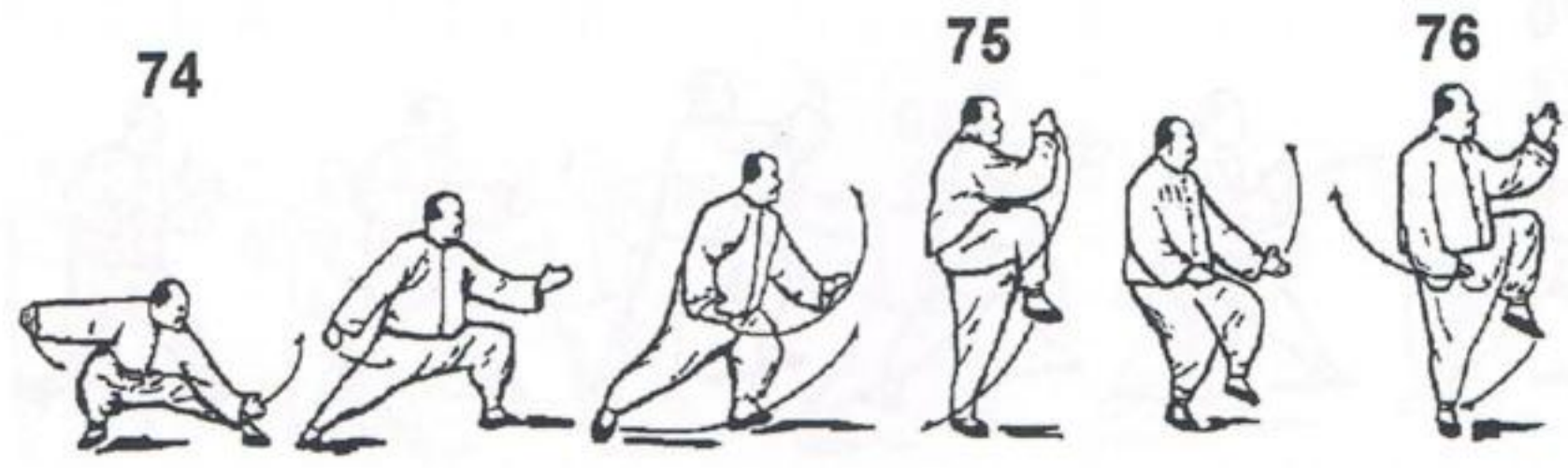
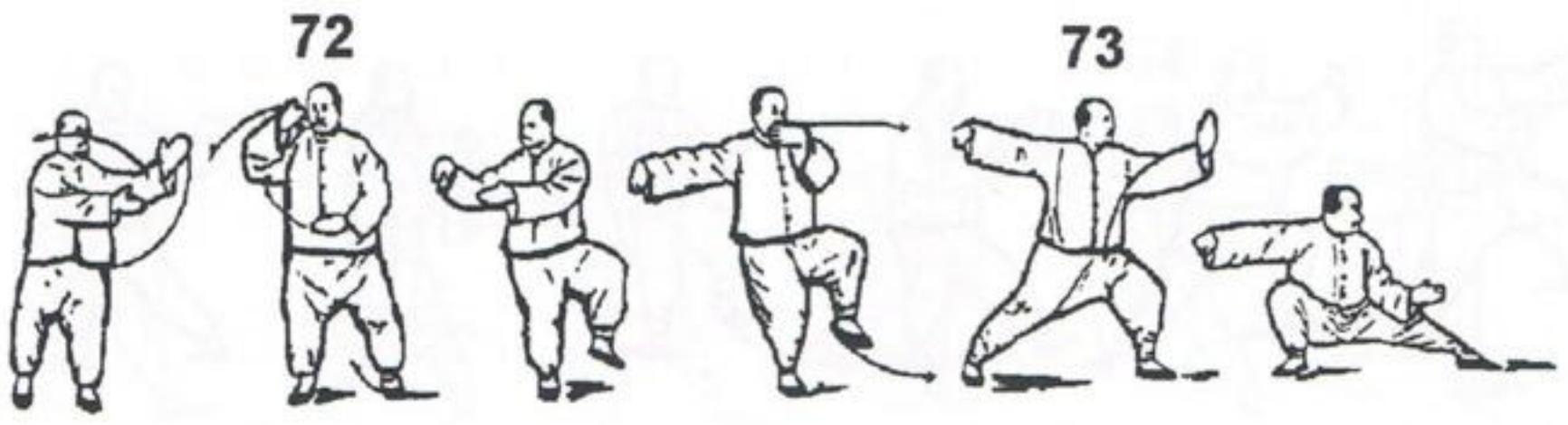


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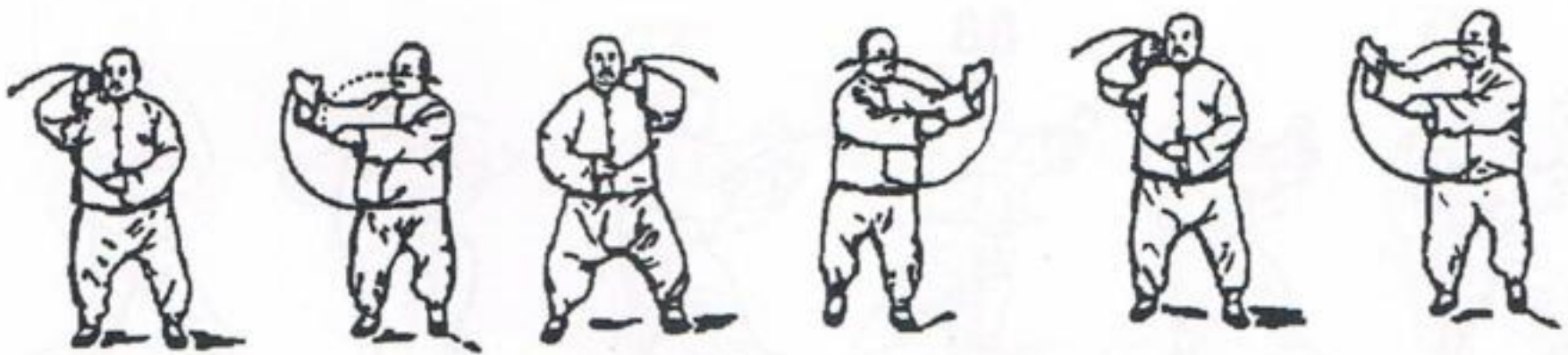
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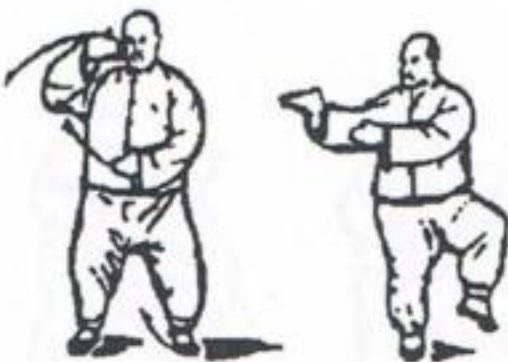
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1.6 The Wu Family's Taijiquan. Yangluchan had a student, Wuyuxiang (武禹襄, 1812-1880 AD) whose brother was a government official in Henan Province (河南省). Once, when Wu was on the way to visit his brother, he intended to see Chenchangxin in order to learn the first lu taijiquan and the second lu Paochui. When he arrived in Zhaobao (赵堡), midway to Chen's residence, he heard that Chenqingping (陳清萍), a man of very great achievement, taught *xiaojia* (小架) there. He then remained there and learned *xiaojia* from Chenqingping. Wu's taijiquan was called *xiaojia* because *xiao* means "small" and *jia* means "form;" thus it is the small style of Chen's taijiquan. In the meantime, Wu's brother happened to find Wangzongyue's *The Classics of Taijiquan* in a salt store, and immediately sent the document to Wu. By practicing and researching it very thoroughly, Wuyuxiang obtained more knowledge of taijiquan than anyone had done before. Later, his own experience and knowledge enabled him to write a famous treatise, *The Theories of Thirteen Postures*, which explains the practice and secrets of taijiquan. He sent copies of these two treatises to his former teacher, Yangluchan, who was teaching taijiquan in Beijing. Yang revealed the secrets and published the papers, and from that time on the secrets and principles of taijiquan were accessible to greater numbers of people. Though Wu did not have many students, one of them, his nephew Liyiyu (李亦畬, 1833-1892 AD) became very famous. Li wrote some important papers on taijiquan, and since his time, his theories have been recorded systematically.

The Wu family taught very few students outside of their family. Haoweizhen (郝为真, 1849-1920 AD) became a student of the Wu family and learned their style of taijiquan from Liyiyu. Hao became a popular master of the Wu style because he taught many students. That is why this particular Wu style taijiquan is sometimes referred to as the Hao Form.

Note that it is totally different from the Wu form of Wujianquan, which really is a variation of the Yang form.

There is also a variation of the traditional Wu form. It is known as the Sun Form. Haoweizhen had a student, Sunlutang (孫祿堂), who had previously learned the internal martial arts schools of bagua and xingyi. Sunlutang decided that certain elements of bagua and xingyi should be added to the Wu form to create a new form. In my opinion the only possible evolution of the Wu School is towards formlessness, and Sunlutang's efforts must be regarded as a variation of the Wu form and not as a new school of taijiquan.

When Haoweizhen died in 1920, his son and grandson continued in the Wu tradition. Figure 1.6a depicts Haoweizhen's grandson, Haoshaoru (郝少如) demonstrating how every posture of the Wu style has four states: start, connect, open and close. Each of them exemplifies a particular stage of the taiji principle.

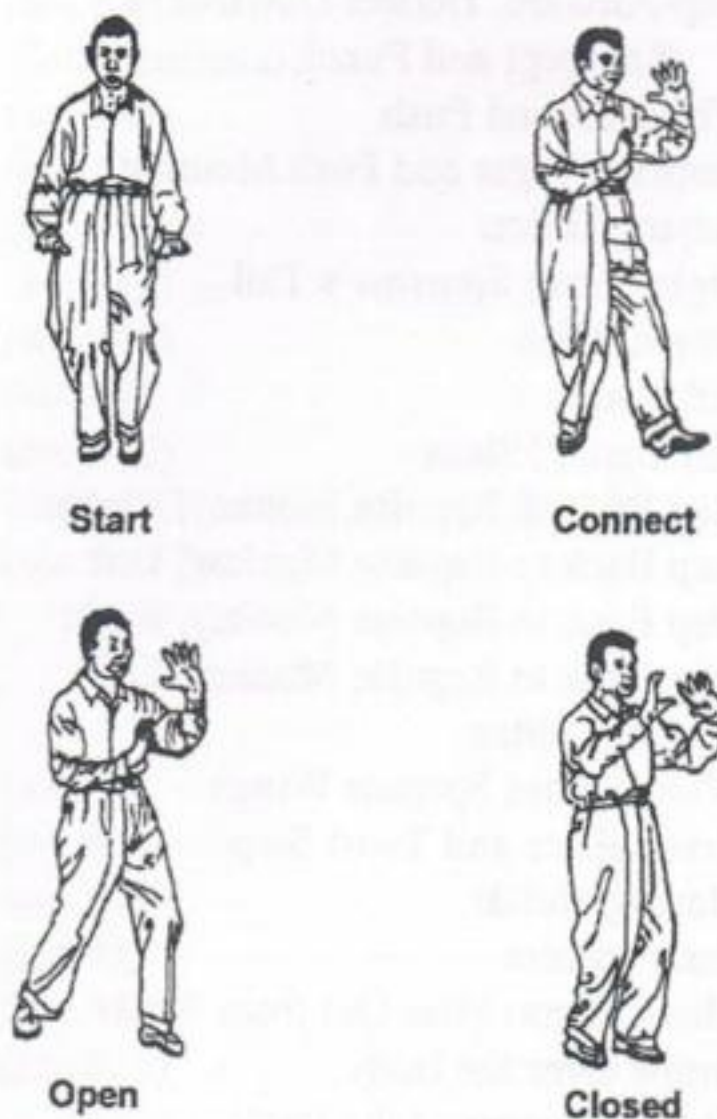


Figure 1.6a

Start. Describes the change from wuji to taiji when your thought or intention is about to be actualized.

Connect. Describes moving from taiji to yin/yang in order to differentiate every part of your body into solid (substantial) and empty (insubstantial).

Open. Describes initiating attack or retreat.

Close. Describes the action of attacking or retreating.

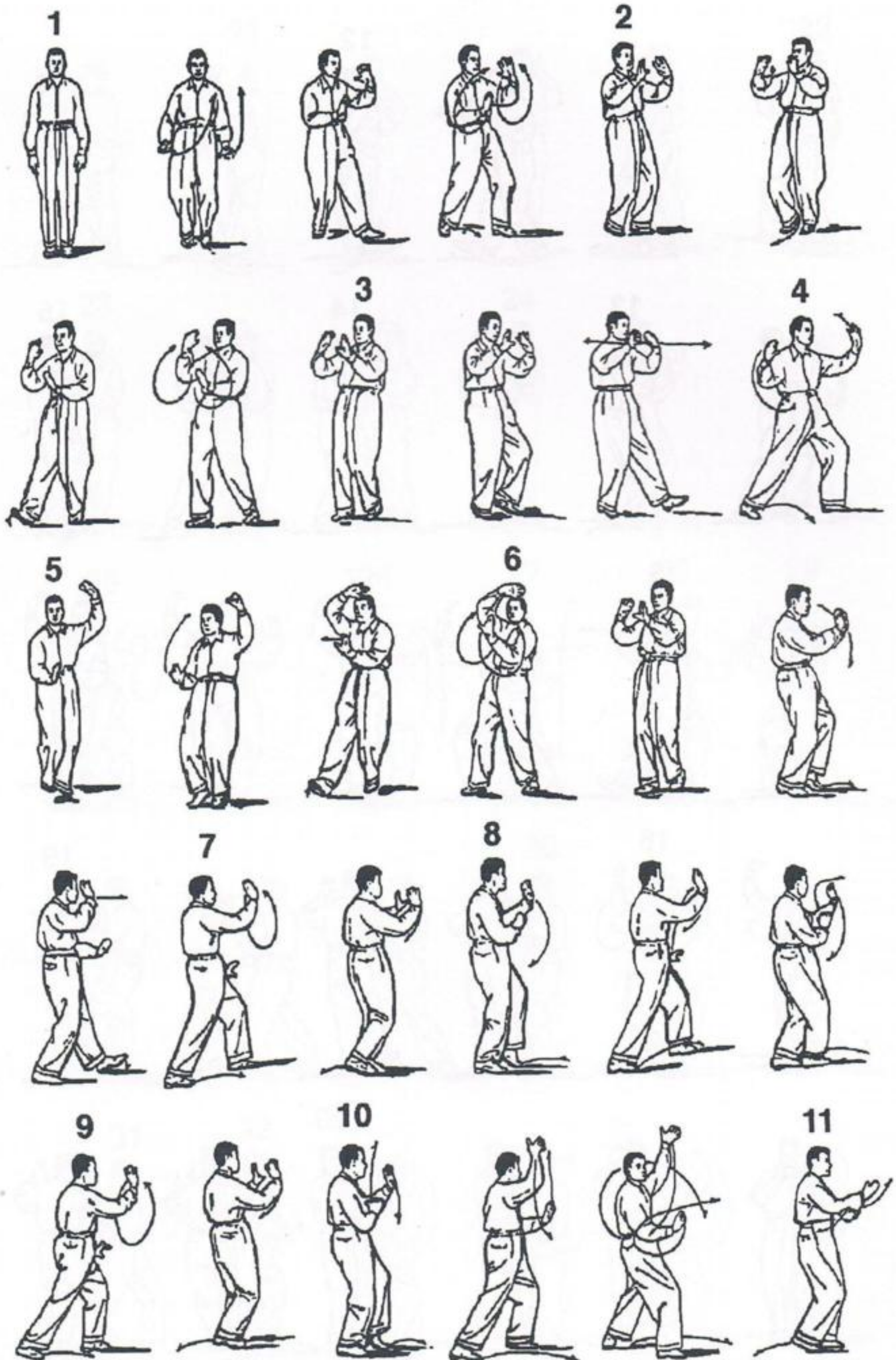
The concepts of open and close are very complicated and much more difficult to do than their short descriptions might indicate (See Chapter 4).

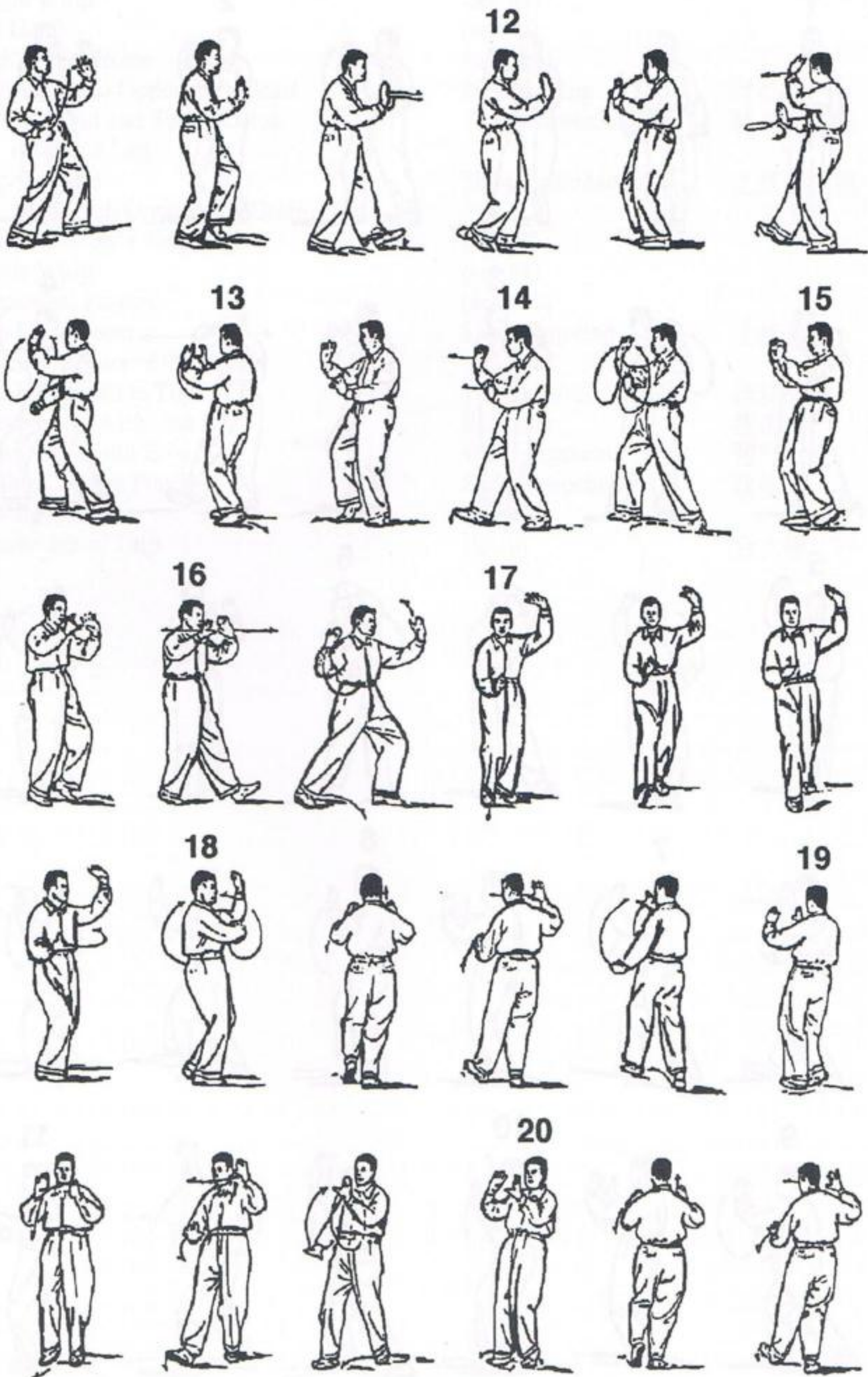
Wu's Taijiquan

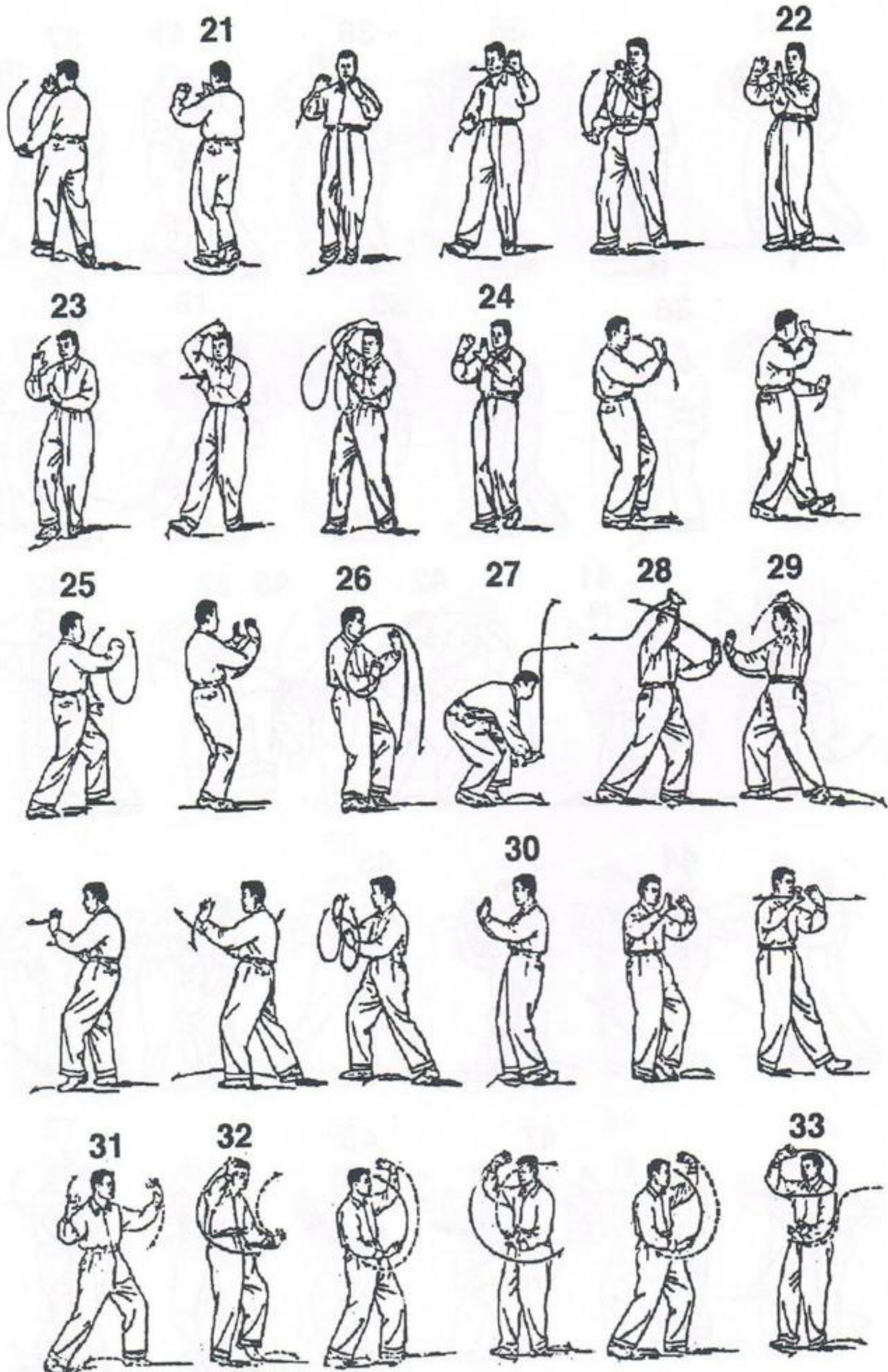
1. Beginning of Taiji	Taijiqishi	太極起式
2. Left Grasp Sparrow's Tail	Zuolangquewei	左攬雀尾
3. Right Grasp Sparrow's Tail	Youlangquewei	右攬雀尾
4. Single Whip	Danbian	單鞭
5. Lift Hand	Tishouhangshi	提手上勢
6. White Goose Spreads Wings	Baiwoliangchi	白鶴涼翅
7. Brush Knee and Twist Step	Louxiaobu	摟膝拗步
8. Playing Guitar	Shouhuipipa	手揮琵琶
9. Brush Knee and Twist Step	(see #7)	
10. Playing Guitar	(see #8)	
11. Step Forward, Deflect Downward, Intercept and Punch	Banlanchui	搬攔捶
12. Withdraw and Push	Rufengsibi	如封似閉
13. Embrace Tiger and Push Mountain	Baohutuishan	抱虎推山
14. Playing Guitar	(see #8)	
15. Right Grasp Sparrow's Tail	(see #3)	
16. Single Whip	(see #4)	
17. Lift Hand	(see #5)	
18. Fist Under Elbow	Shoudikanchui	肘底看捶
19. Step Back to Repulse Monkey, Right	Youdaonianhou	右倒攆猴
20. Step Back to Repulse Monkey, Left	Zuodaonianhou	左倒攆猴
21. Step Back to Repulse Monkey, Right	(see #19)	
22. Step Back to Repulse Monkey, Left	(see #20)	
23. Playing Guitar	(see #8)	
24. White Goose Spreads Wings	(see #6)	
25. Brush Knee and Twist Step	(see #7)	
26. Playing Guitar	(see #8)	
27. Push Posture	Anshi	按勢
28. Blue Dragon Flies Out from Water	Qinglongchushui	青龍出水
29. Drape Over the Body	Pishenshi	披身式
30. Three Changes of the Back	Sanyongbei	三甬背
31. Single Whip	(see #4)	
32. Downward Posture	Xiashi	下勢
33. Clouds Hands	Yunshou	雲手
34. Single Whip	(see #4)	

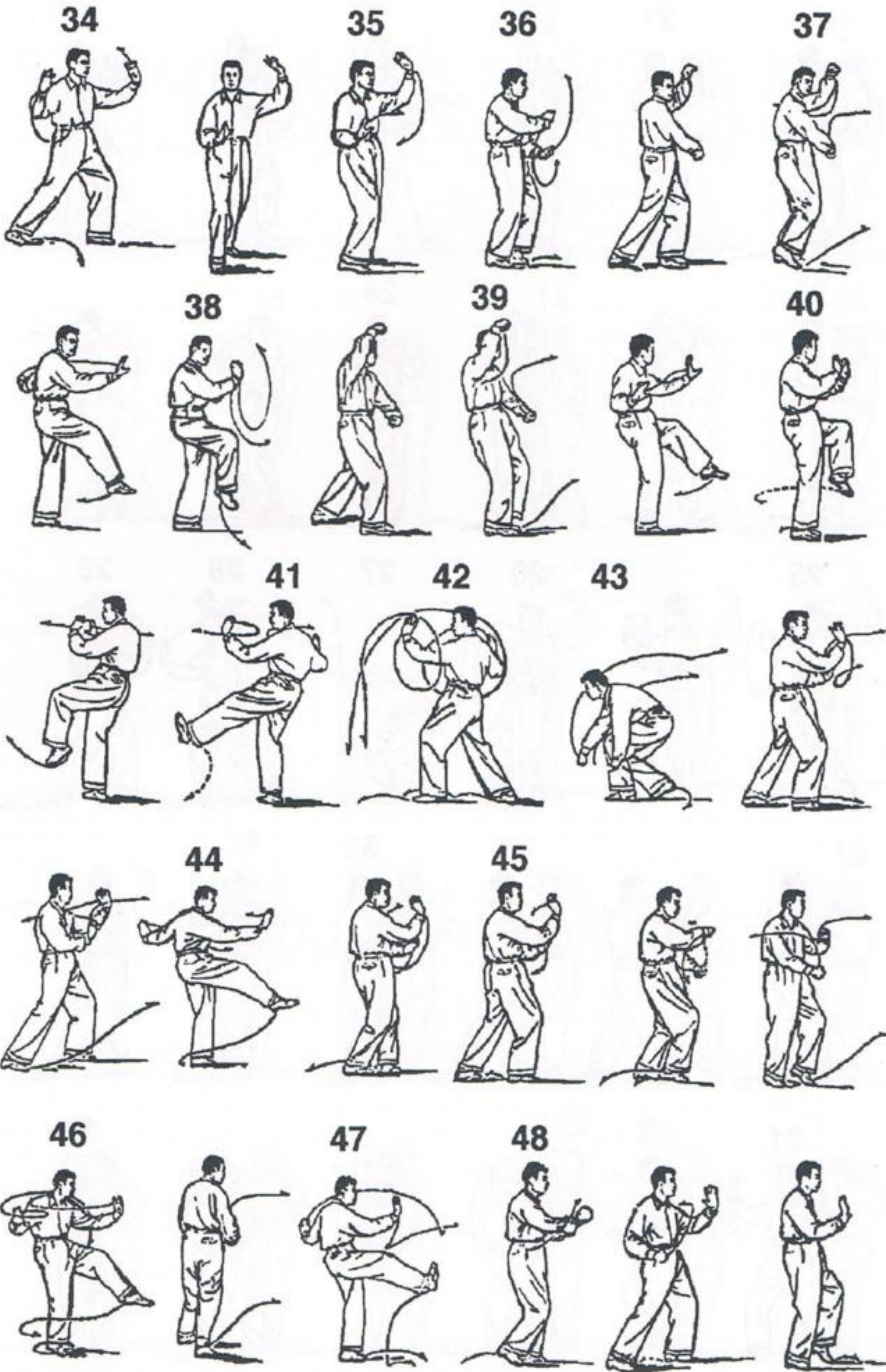
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| 35. Lift Hand | (see #5) | |
| 36. High Pat on Horse | Gaotanma | 高探馬 |
| 37. Submissive Tiger Posture, Left | Zuofuhushi | 左伏虎式 |
| 38. Separate Right Foot | Youfenjiao | 右分腳 |
| 39. Submissive Tiger Posture, Right | Youfuhushi | 右伏虎式 |
| 40. Separate Left Foot | Zuofenjiao | 左分腳 |
| 41. Turn Body and Kick Right Foot | Zhuanshenyoutijiao | 轉身右踢腳 |
| 42. Single Whip | (see #4) | |
| 43. Jump Forward and Punch Downward | Jianshendachui | 踐身打捶 |
| 44. Jump High and Kick Twice | Fanshenerqi | 翻身二起 |
| 45. Turn Body Posture | Zhuanshenshi | 轉身式 |
| 46. Withdraw and Kick | Tibutitui | 退步踢腿 |
| 47. Turn Body and Kick with Right Heel | Zhuanshendengjiao | 轉身蹬腳 |
| 48. Step Forward, Deflect Downward,
Intercept and Punch | (see #11) | |
| 49. Withdraw and Push | (see #12) | |
| 50. Embrace Tiger and Push Mountain | (see #13) | |
| 51. Playing Guitar | (see #8) | |
| 52. Grasp Sparrow's Tail, Right | (see #3) | |
| 53. Diagonal Single Whip | Xiedanbian | 斜單鞭 |
| 54. Downward Posture | (see #32) | |
| 55. Mustang Ruffling Its Mane | Yemafenzong | 野馬分鬃 |
| 56. Single Whip | (see #4) | |
| 57. Fair Lady Works at Shuttles | Yunuchuansuo | 玉女穿梭 |
| 58. Playing Guitar | (see #8) | |
| 59. Grasp Sparrow's Tail, Right | (see #3) | |
| 60. Single Whip | (see #4) | |
| 61. Downward Posture | (see #32) | |
| 62. Cloud Hands | (see #33) | |
| 63. Single Whip | (see #4) | |
| 64. Downward Posture | (see #32) | |
| 65. Golden Pheasant Stands with One Leg | Gengjiduli | 更雞獨立 |
| 66. Step Back to Repulse Monkey, Left | (see #19-20) | |
| 67. Step Back to Repulse Monkey, Right | | |
| 68. Step Back to Repulse Monkey, Left | | |
| 69. Step Back to Repulse Monkey, Right | | |
| 70. Playing Guitar | (see #8) | |
| 71. White Goose Spreads Wings | (see #6) | |
| 72. Brush Knee and Twist Step | (see #7) | |
| 73. Playing Guitar | (see #8) | |
| 74. Push Posture | (see #27) | |
| 75. Blue Dragon Flies Out from Water | (see #28) | |
| 76. Turn Body Posture | (see #45) | |
| 77. Three Changes of the Back | (see #30) | |
| 78. Single Whip | (see #4) | |
| 79. Downward Posture | (see #32) | |
| 80. Cloud Hands | (see #33) | |

81. Single Whip	(see #4)	
82. Lift Hand	(see #5)	
83. High Pat on Horse	(see #36)	
84. Palm Strike to Opponent's Heart	Duixinzhang	对心掌
85. Turn Around and Sweep Lotus with One Leg	Zhuanshenbailiantui	转身摆莲腿
86. Step Forward and Punch Opponent's Groin	Shangbuzhidangchui	上步指挡捶
87. Grasp Sparrow's Tail, Right	(see #3)	
88. Single Whip	(see #4)	
89. Downward Posture	(see #32)	
90. Step Up to Form Seven Stars of the Dipper	Shangbuqixing	上步七星
91. Step Back to Ride Tiger	Tuibukuahu	退步跨虎
92. Sweep Lotus with One Leg	Bailiantui	摆莲腿
93. Shoot Tiger with Bow	Wangongshehu	弯弓射虎
94. Double Cannon Punch	Shuangpaochui	双炮捶
95. Playing Guitar	(see #8)	
96. Conclusion of Taiji	Hetaiji	合太極

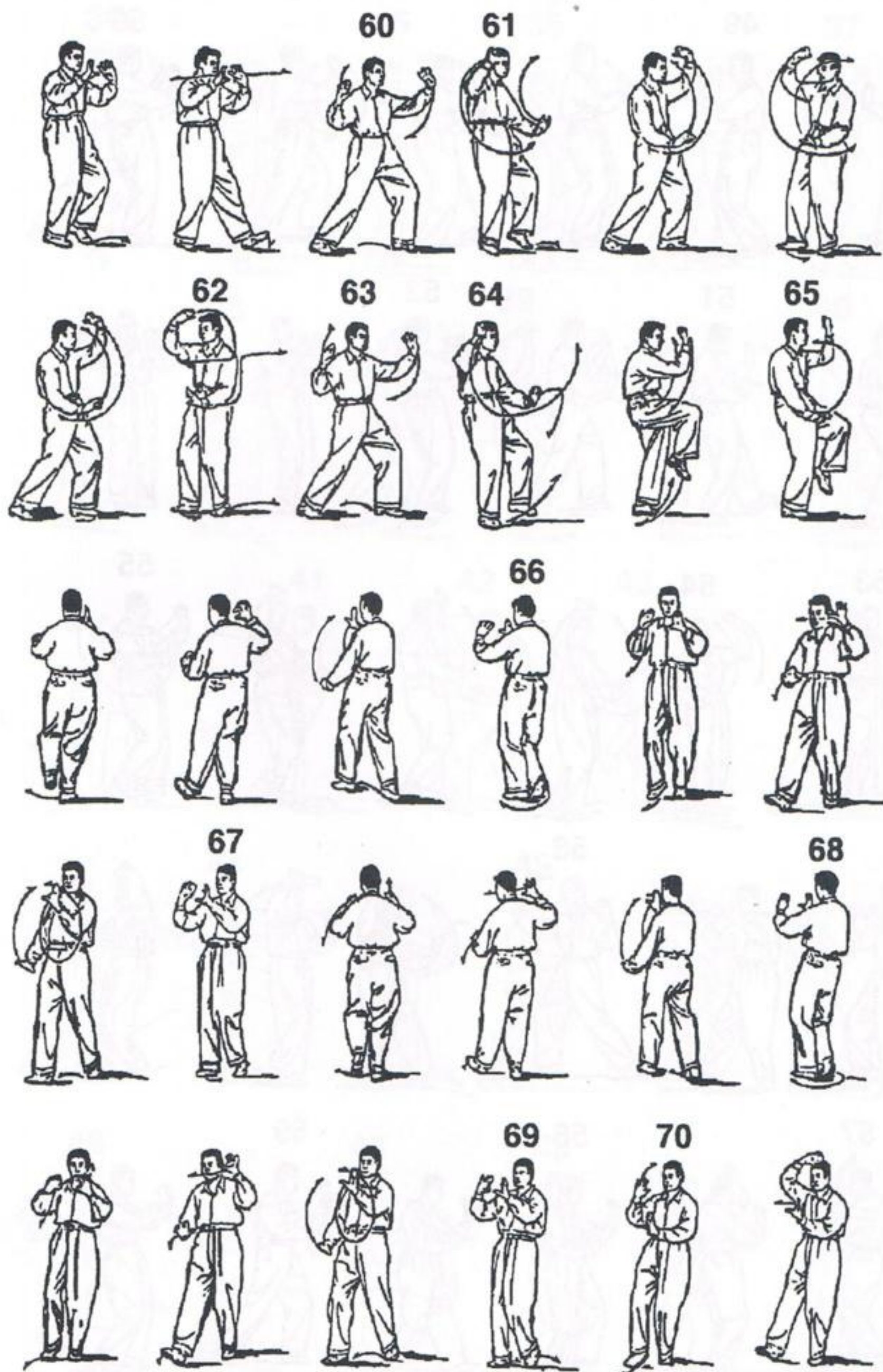


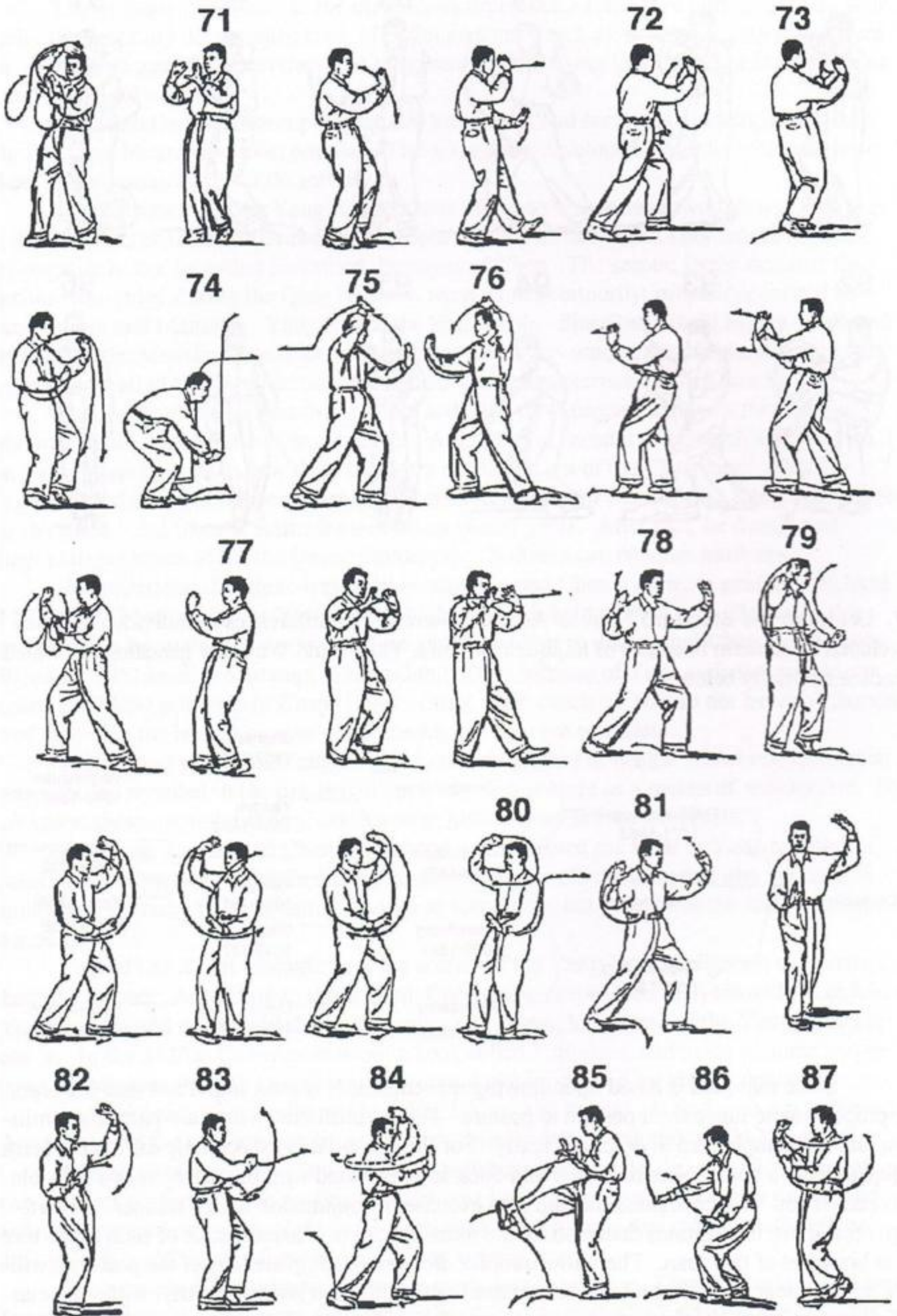




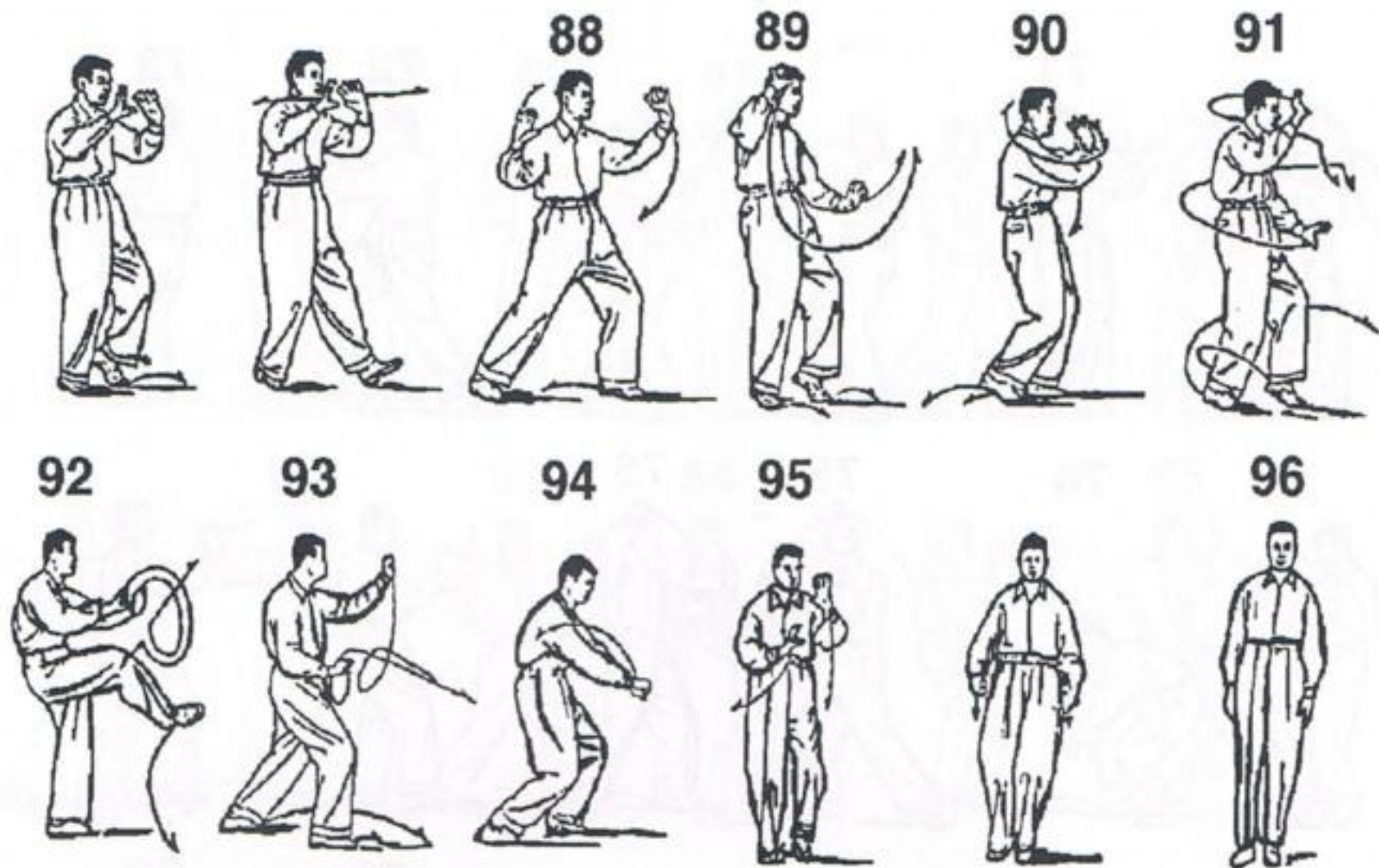




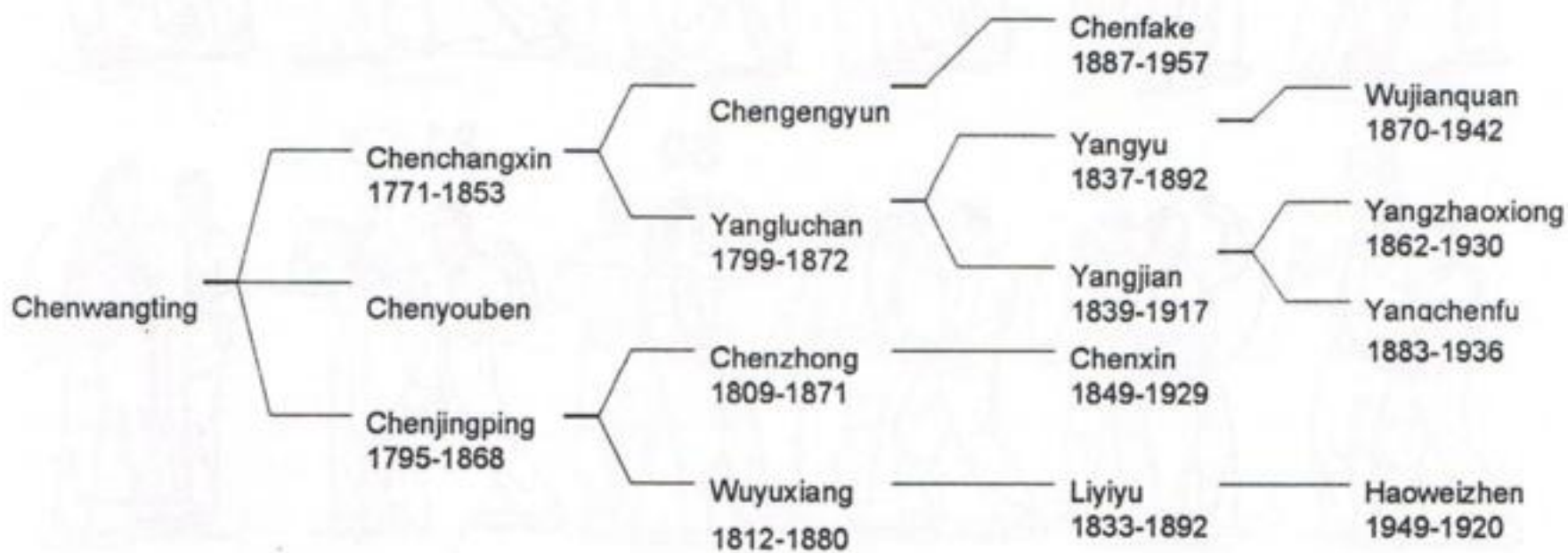




The Dao of Taijiquan



1.7. Learning the Standard Forms. As you have read, the differences in individual's styles developed three main branches of taijiquan: Chen's, Yang's and Wu's, the genealogy of which is indicated briefly below:



Since taijiquan is based upon flowing movements, it is most important that you learn the proper way to move from posture to posture. These transitions, which are part of a continuum, are too complicated to describe clearly. For this reason it is exceedingly difficult to learn taijiquan from a book. Nonetheless, a taiji book supplemented with photographs is a valuable reference if you have concluded the taiji solo exercise in conjunction with a teacher. Accordingly, the above illustrations demonstrate the most important characteristics of each of the three main branches of taijiquan. These illustrations, along with complete lists of the postures, will give an experienced student a basis for comparing the different styles. Clearly, without a masterful teacher, these illustrations alone are patently insufficient for learning taiji. Such instruction could best be accomplished through films rather than with still photos.

The individual histories of the three styles derive their respective purposes. Chen style is really the first fully documented form of taijiquan from which all other taijiquan forms were born. Its highest goal is the development of chansijing and fajing in a form that is 50% soft or yin and 50% hard or yang.

Although the Chen form preceded the Yang form and served as its basis, it was the Yang form that became the most popular. The Yang form developed into a form in which the highest goal emphasized is 100% soft or yin.

Legend states that the Yang form became 100% soft because of two factors. One was that the members of the court tended to be people who led an easy life. They would have reacted negatively to a form that contained the rigors of Chen. The second factor was that the Manchus, who ruled during the Qing Dynasty, were a racial minority; prejudices existed between the Han and Manchus. Yang was of the Han people. Since teaching a highly developed martial art to the Manchus would have caused fear and worry among the people, it is said that Yang removed all of the hard martial aspects that were characteristic of the Chen form.

The result of all this was the graceful and fluid form present today—a form that is many times more popular than Chen and Wu. After several decades of research and practice, I have a strong opinion about how the Yang form developed out of the Chen form. This big change obviously did not happen overnight. Let us first consider the fact that Yangluchan practiced the Chen I and Chen II forms for more than twenty years. After that, he finally had enough enlightenment about the Daoist philosophy, “Softness can conquer hardness.”

He understood that there was another stage beyond Chen’s ultimate goal of 50% hard and 50% soft. That is why the Yang form’s highest goal is being 100% soft. However, this stage can never be attained if you do not first make the effort to understand Chen’s foundation of 50% soft, 50% hard. To attempt to exhibit 100% softness of Yang style before understanding the 50/50 principle of Chen is like writing a bad check. If you do not have the foundation of money in the bank, you may write checks, but they are worthless.

The highest use of the Yang form is in the cultivation of health. However, its martial arts aspects are revealed in the practice of applying each posture as a means of self-defense. For many years, these martial arts applications were hidden from taiji practitioners.

Zhaoqing, also named Chengfu, defined and regulated the form of Yang taiji that is popular today. However, Chengfu did not reveal the highly effective martial arts application techniques or sparring that his family devised to accompany the practice of the soft, comfortable Yang postures.

Legend has it that Chengfu kept the secrets of the Yang form application or sparring locked in a drawer. According to this legend, Chenyanlin (1906-1985 AD) tutored the children of Yangchengfu and discovered the drawer unlocked. Thus, he learned of the Yang form’s application. In the 1920’s, Chenyanlin wrote a book called *Taijiquan*, and using pictures and explanations, revealed the taiji application or sparring system devised by Yang’s family.

In 1980 I met Chenyanlin in Shanghai, China, and he told me that contrary to legend he had learned of the taiji application or sparring directly from Chengfu’s uncle, Yangyu.

The applications of the Yang form are both beautiful and deadly. The flowing motions of two partners performing the application is almost like a dance, with its precise timing and coordinated movements. Yet, at the same time, each movement is designed for self-defense, and if applied, could break a limb or even kill an opponent.

The practice of application requires a great deal of practice. First, you must learn two different sequences of 44 postures each, typically referred to as the “A” side and the “B” side. These postures are taken directly from the Yang form, but their sequence is ingeniously devised

so that each posture of A can be matched with each posture of B. Once the sequence is learned, two partners, one performing A and the other B, can match together for a flowing exercise of taiji sparring. Each posture of A is matched by a posture of B, which in turn is followed by a posture of A, and so on, through the 44 postures on each side.

The matching together of the 88 postures is so intricate and effective that you have to marvel at the cleverness of Yang's family in developing such an effective system of application. By means of precise timing and a perfect matching together of the movements, taiji application teaches you to neutralize or *hua* (化) your partner's force, control or *na* (拿), and attack or *da* (打).

But the student seeking the highest achievement, whether in martial arts or healing, should turn to the Wu form after a strong groundwork in the Chen and Yang. With the Wu form, formal exterior movements ultimately disappear into formlessness that can appear like ordinary movements, while inside there is an intense practice of the discipline of those of the other forms. The three main branches of taijiquan differ in style but remain within the framework of basic taiji principles and the *Yijing* theory. It is important not to change these basic styles of taijiquan because to do so upsets a complicated and carefully balanced system. Great skill and talent, as well as the practical and theoretical mastery of the underlying principles and generations of refinement were all necessary to develop these three diverse styles, without violating the fundamental principles.

Some people may think that modifying taijiquan is simple, so they attempt to do so. Since taijiquan is really an art, changing it is like editing a Beethoven symphony. Omitting any part of the three main styles of taijiquan is also like chopping words out of a poem; to do so destroys its meter, rhyme and meaning. If you have not devoted many years of study to such an art, you should avoid introducing personal variations into the form, especially when teaching beginners. The situation is the same as teaching handwriting to children. Whatever one's own personal style of calligraphy, in the classroom the standard form of each letter is taught. No matter what school you may go to, the standard written or printed alphabet is the same. In the same way we have our alphabets of taijiquan, which are the postures of the standard Chen, Wu and Yang styles of taijiquan. It is the duty of taiji teachers to teach their students one of these standard forms, just as it is the duty of handwriting teachers to teach their students the standard alphabet. To do this, the teacher uses a text showing the standard letter. In taijiquan we also have such standards since there are photographs of the great masters of the Chen, Wu and Yang schools. For example, if you wish to teach the Yang style, you should use available pictures of Yangchengfu in executing the forms.

If you do not have much time to practice taijiquan, it is better to practice only a part of a routine than to alter or simplify its basic form. When you do not have time to read a whole book, it is better to read only a chapter or so and return later to where you have left off. To leave out chapters would cause you to lose important parts of the story and interrupt the book's continuity. If you object that the form is not balanced, the solution is simply to do both the right and left forms, not to add some postures from the left form to the right form.

Therefore, a beginner of taijiquan should study Chen's, Wu's or Yang's style diligently, progressing with each step in the proper sequence. In this way, the full value of taijiquan is gained and its profound principles are better understood. Moreover, it is the duty of anyone intending to study taijiquan to determine if a teacher does in fact teach at least one of the three standard styles, as well as his or her own personal variations. Personal creativity is necessary but never to the exclusion of the original forms. Remember! Without a standard alphabet and standard spelling it would not be possible for me to write these words or for you to understand

them. The illustrations are intended to serve as standards to judge against and as a device to provide for better communication among all students of taijiquan. It is my purpose to encourage communication between all students and teachers of taijiquan, so I have provided illustrations of teachers and practitioners who best exemplify a particular style.

1.8. The 42-Step Taijiquan Compulsory Routine. A special taijiquan form has recently been synthesized in an attempt to provide standardization in the practice of taijiquan. A department of the Chinese government asked many taiji experts to work together to create standards for taiji postures, competition rules, timing of form execution, standard rules for uniforms, etc. The result is a taijiquan set known as the 42-Step Taijiquan Compulsory Routine. There are both positive and negative factors to this event.

The positive side of the creation and propagation of this new form is that it is helping to make taijiquan more popular worldwide. With standards, taijiquan competitors will enter the mainstream of the sports world, and many athletic departments of schools can easily implement taijiquan training into the physical education curricula. In fact, there has been talk of accepting taijiquan into the Olympics with the 42-Step Taijiquan Compulsory Routine Form.

However, there are also several negative aspects as well. The main issue is that the new form is synthesized from many different taijiquan styles and is not based on any tradition whatsoever. A few postures have been pulled here and there from Chen, Yang, Wu (of Wujianquan who derived his form from the Yang form) and Sun (of Sunlutang who derived his form from Wujianquan's form). The various postures have been assembled together as this new taijiquan set of 42 postures. By doing this, all of the principles, stages of development and benefits of the traditional forms have been destroyed.

Another grave error is the inclusion of the two non-traditional forms (Sun and Wu) and the exclusion of an important traditional school—the Wu school of Wuyuxiang. As previously mentioned, the Wu form of Wujianquan is not a traditional form, but is merely a variation of the traditional Yang Form. It is very sad that a traditional school has been completely rejected by the creators of the 42-Step Taijiquan Compulsory Routine Form.

Imagine if we thought it would be a grand idea to mix a few meters of classical music together with some rock and roll and further mix it with rock and roll which had already been mixed with some other form of music. The result would be disjointed disharmony in which the principles of each of the traditional forms of music have been lost. Yet, this is the mentality behind the creation of the 42-Step Taijiquan Compulsory Routine Form.

I also do not agree with many of the standards that have been set. For example, the Compulsory Routine stresses minute details such as how your fingers should be positioned, how high up your hands must be when pushing, etc. All of these trivial details have been given so much importance that the truly important points have been lost, such as the very core definition of taijiquan—the torso method.

The latest news from the International Wushu Federation's Technical Committee suggests that this present 42-step routine will be replaced after 1999. The new compulsory routine will likewise have elements of the Chen, Yang, Wu (Wujianquan) and Sun styles, but will also now include elements of the traditional Wu style (of Wuyuxiang). Nonetheless, the creation of this different compulsory routine still will not stress the core torso method or any core principles of the traditional schools of taijiquan.

If standards are set for competitive purposes, then let us at least consider making the standards based on the traditional principles of taijiquan. For example, we could consider each traditional taijiquan form and the principles it seeks to develop in the taiji player.

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Therefore, a beginner of taijiquan should study Chen's, Wu's or Yang's style diligently, progressing with each step in the proper sequence. In this way, the full value of taijiquan is gained and its profound principles are better understood. Moreover, it is the duty of anyone intending to study taijiquan to determine if a teacher does in fact teach at least one of the three standard styles, as well as his or her own personal variations. Personal creativity is necessary but never to the exclusion of the original forms. Remember! Without a standard alphabet and standard spelling it would not be possible for me to write these words or for you to understand

them. The illustrations are intended to serve as standards to judge against and as a device to provide for better communication among all students of taijiquan. It is my purpose to encourage communication between all students and teachers of taijiquan, so I have provided illustrations of teachers and practitioners who best exemplify a particular style.

1.8. The 42-Step Taijiquan Compulsory Routine. A special taijiquan form has recently been synthesized in an attempt to provide standardization in the practice of taijiquan. A department of the Chinese government asked many taiji experts to work together to create standards for taiji postures, competition rules, timing of form execution, standard rules for uniforms, etc. The result is a taijiquan set known as the 42-Step Taijiquan Compulsory Routine. There are both positive and negative factors to this event.

The positive side of the creation and propagation of this new form is that it is helping to make taijiquan more popular worldwide. With standards, taijiquan competitors will enter the mainstream of the sports world, and many athletic departments of schools can easily implement taijiquan training into the physical education curricula. In fact, there has been talk of accepting taijiquan into the Olympics with the 42-Step Taijiquan Compulsory Routine Form.

However, there are also several negative aspects as well. The main issue is that the new form is synthesized from many different taijiquan styles and is not based on any tradition whatsoever. A few postures have been pulled here and there from Chen, Yang, Wu (of Wujianquan who derived his form from the Yang form) and Sun (of Sunlutang who derived his form from Wujianquan's form). The various postures have been assembled together as this new taijiquan set of 42 postures. By doing this, all of the principles, stages of development and benefits of the traditional forms have been destroyed.

Another grave error is the inclusion of the two non-traditional forms (Sun and Wu) and the exclusion of an important traditional school—the Wu school of Wuyuxiang. As previously mentioned, the Wu form of Wujianquan is not a traditional form, but is merely a variation of the traditional Yang Form. It is very sad that a traditional school has been completely rejected by the creators of the 42-Step Taijiquan Compulsory Routine Form.

Imagine if we thought it would be a grand idea to mix a few meters of classical music together with some rock and roll and further mix it with rock and roll which had already been mixed with some other form of music. The result would be disjointed disharmony in which the principles of each of the traditional forms of music have been lost. Yet, this is the mentality behind the creation of the 42-Step Taijiquan Compulsory Routine Form.

I also do not agree with many of the standards that have been set. For example, the Compulsory Routine stresses minute details such as how your fingers should be positioned, how high up your hands must be when pushing, etc. All of these trivial details have been given so much importance that the truly important points have been lost, such as the very core definition of taijiquan—the torso method.

The latest news from the International Wushu Federation's Technical Committee suggests that this present 42-step routine will be replaced after 1999. The new compulsory routine will likewise have elements of the Chen, Yang, Wu (Wujianquan) and Sun styles, but will also now include elements of the traditional Wu style (of Wuyuxiang). Nonetheless, the creation of this different compulsory routine still will not stress the core torso method or any core principles of the traditional schools of taijiquan.

If standards are set for competitive purposes, then let us at least consider making the standards based on the traditional principles of taijiquan. For example, we could consider each traditional taijiquan form and the principles it seeks to develop in the taiji player.

We can see that the Chen I routine emphasizes chansijing, and the Chen II form emphasizes fajing. In a competition situation, the taiji player who could best express the principles of the form should receive the highest score. Players who score the best in the Chen category could then train in Yang style and then compete with the Yang form based on the Yang principles of internalizing chansijing and fajing with 100% softness. The postures become even smaller and compact as the principles are further internalized in the traditional Wu form.

Most of all, central to all taijiquan is the requirement of the torso method. An event that does not allow the demonstration and evaluation of the torso method cannot even be considered a taijiquan competition.

The 42-Step Taijiquan Compulsory Routine:

1. Commencing	Qishi	起势
2. Right Grasp Sparrow's Tail	Youlanquewei	右揽雀尾
3. Left Single Whip	Zuodanbian	左单鞭
4. Lift Hand	Tishou	提手
5. White Crane Spreads Wings	Baiheliangchi	白鹤亮翅
6. Brush Knee and Step Forward (2)	Louxiaobu	楼膝拗步
7. Sidle and Punch	Pieshenchui	撇身捶
8. Roll-back and Press Posture	Luojishi	捋挤势
9. Step Forward, Deflect Downward, Intercept and Punch	Jinbubanlanchui	进步搬拦捶
10. Withdraw and Push	Rufengsibi	如封似闭
11. Open and Close Hands	Kaiheshou	开合手
12. Right Single Whip	Youdanbian	右单鞭
13. Fist Under Elbow	Zhoudichui	肘底捶
14. Turn Body and Push (2)	Zhuanshentui Zhang	转身推掌
15. Fair Lady Works at Shuttles (2)	Yunuchuansuo	玉女穿梭
16. Right and Left Heel Kicks	Youzuodengjiao	右左蹬脚
17. Hidden Hand Upper Arm Rolls Punch	Yanshougohchui	掩手肱捶
18. Mustang Ruffles Its Mane (2)	Yemafenzong	野马分鬃
19. Cloud Hands (3)	Yunshou	云手
20. Stand Up and Hit Tiger	Dulidahu	独立打虎
21. Separate Right Foot	Youfenjiao	右分脚
22. Strike Ears with Both Hands	Shuangfengguaner	双峰贯耳
23. Separate Left Foot	Zuofenjiao	左分脚
24. Turn Around and Tap Right Foot	Zhuanshenpaijiao	转身拍脚
25. Step Up and Punch Downward	Jinbuzaichui	进步栽捶
26. Diagonal Flying Posture	Xiefeishi	斜飞势
27. Single Whip Downward Posture	Danbianxiashi	单鞭下势
28. Golden Pheasant Stands with One Leg (2)	Jinjiduli	金鸡独立
29. Withdraw Step and Thrust Left Palm	Tuibuchuanzhang	退步穿掌
30. Empty Step and Pressing Palm	Xubuyazhang	虚步压掌
31. Lift Right Leg and Right Palm Up	Dulituo Zhang	独立托掌
32. Left Shoulder Strike with Horse Stance	Mabukao	马步靠
33. Turn Body and Strike with Hand	Zhuanshendaluo	转身大捋
34. Capture and Punch in an Empty Step	Xiebuqinda	歇步擒打

Chapter One Roots

- 35. Thrust Palm and Sweep Down
- 36. Step Up to Form the Seven Stars of the Dipper
- 37. Step Back to Ride the Tiger
- 38. Turn Around and Sweep Lotus with One Leg
- 39. Shoot Tiger with Bow
- 40. Left Grasp Sparrow's Tail
- 41. Cross Hands
- 42. Conclusion of the Form

Chuanzhangxiashi
Shangbuqixing

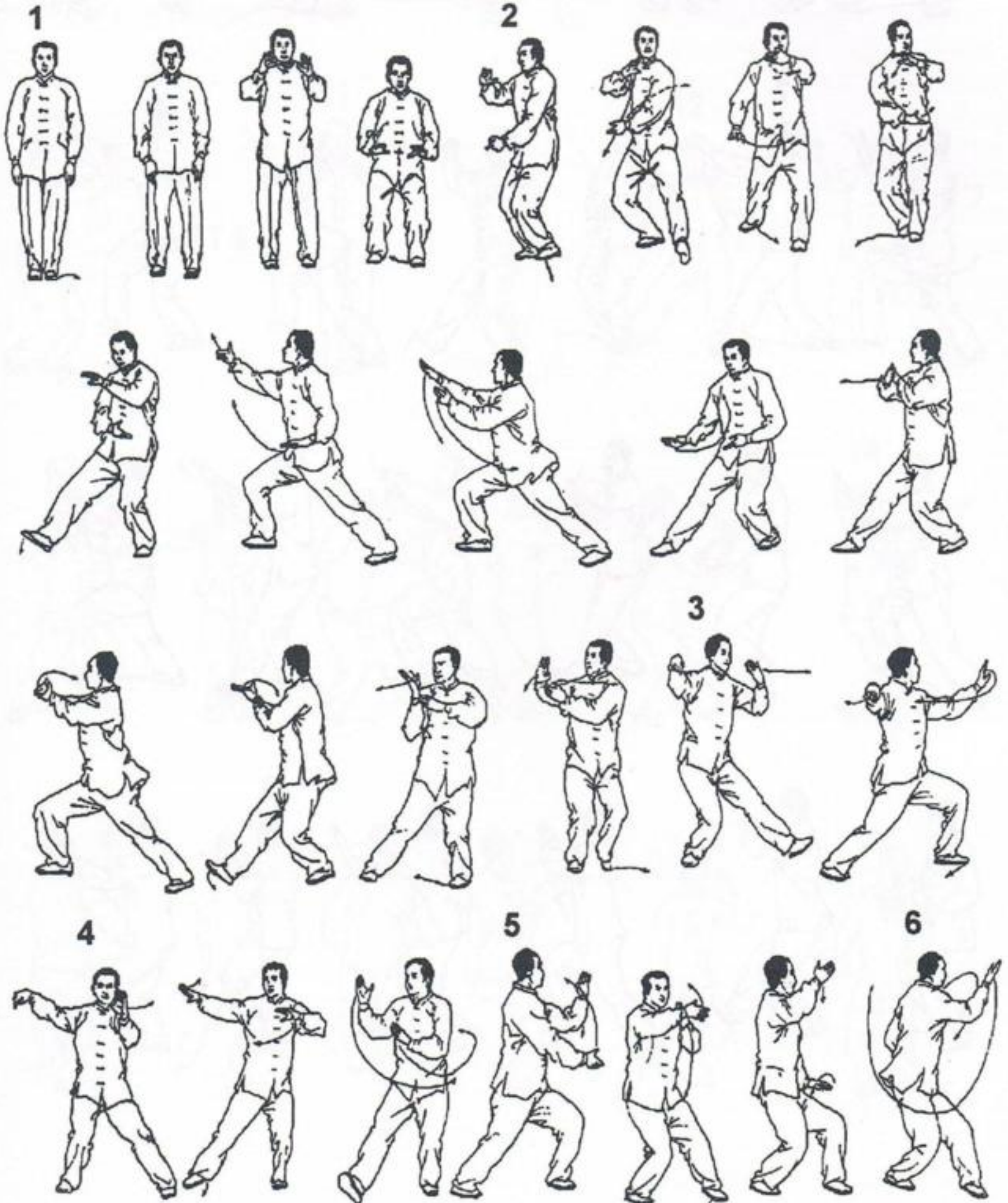
穿掌下势
上步七星

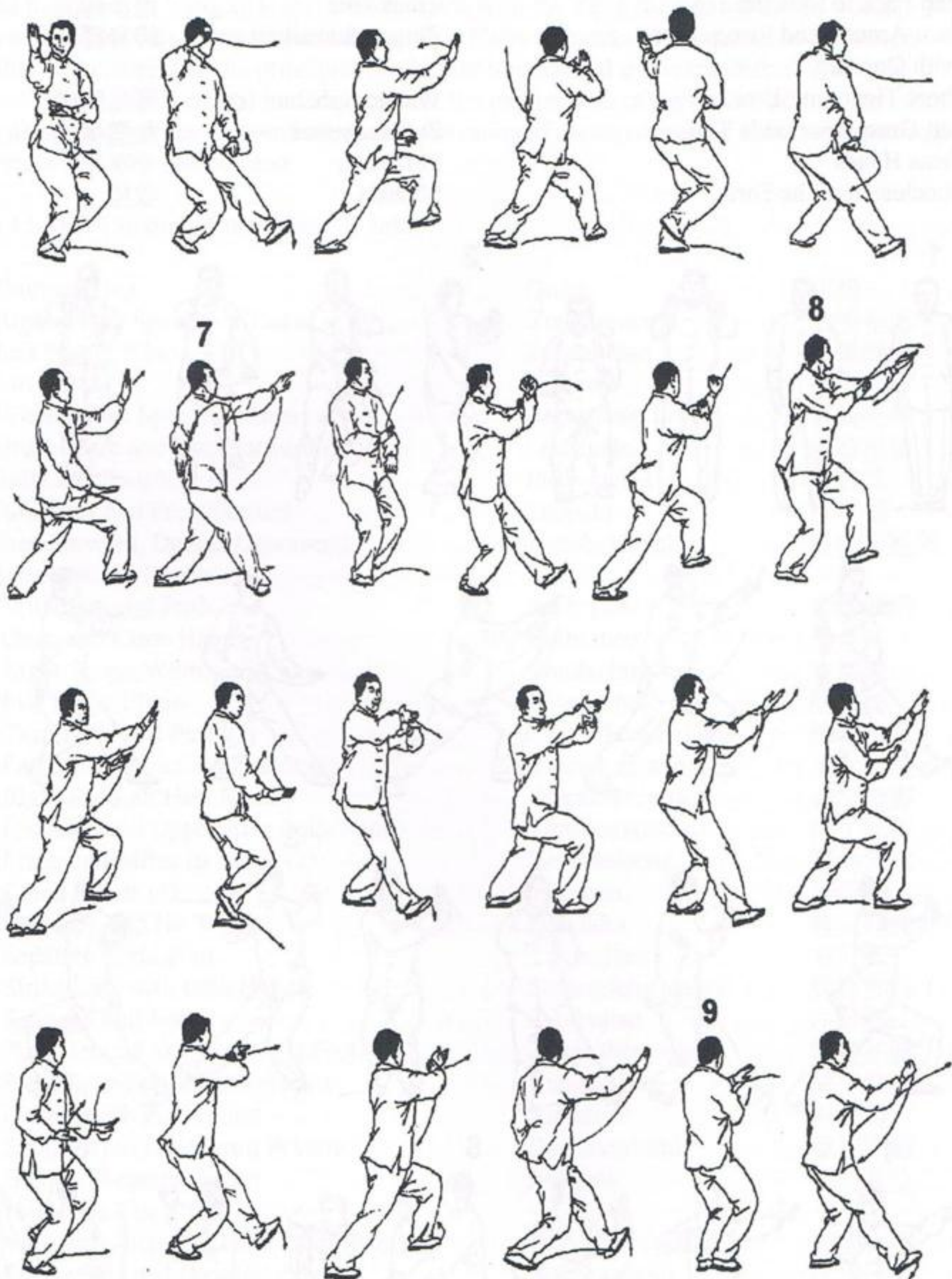
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Zhuanshenbailian

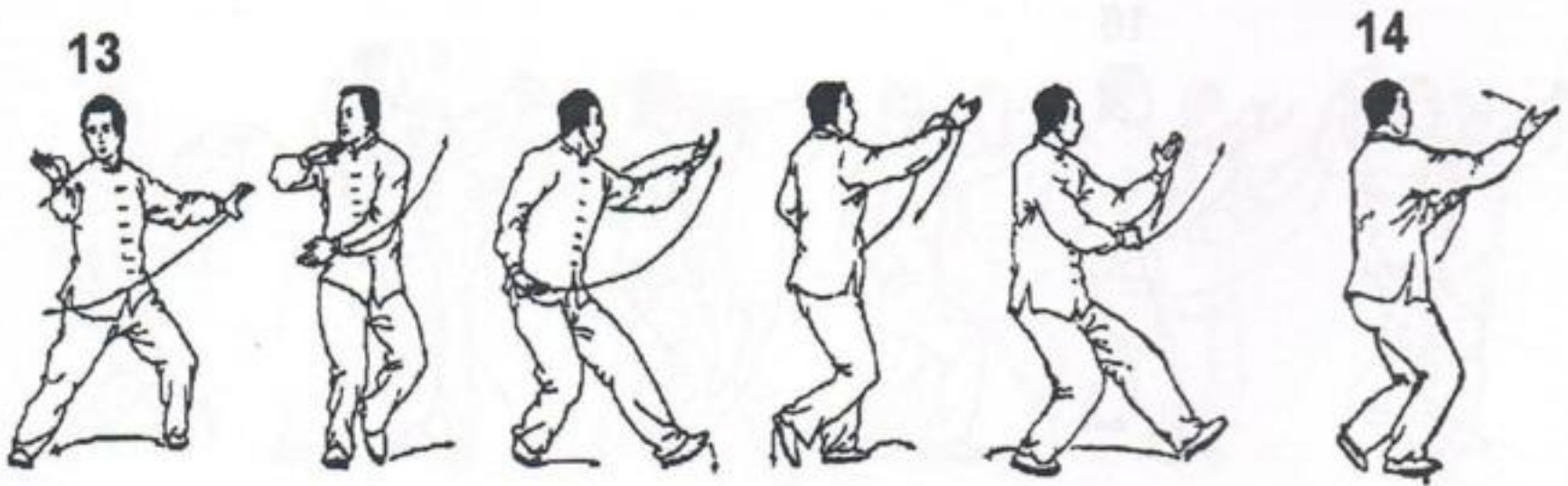
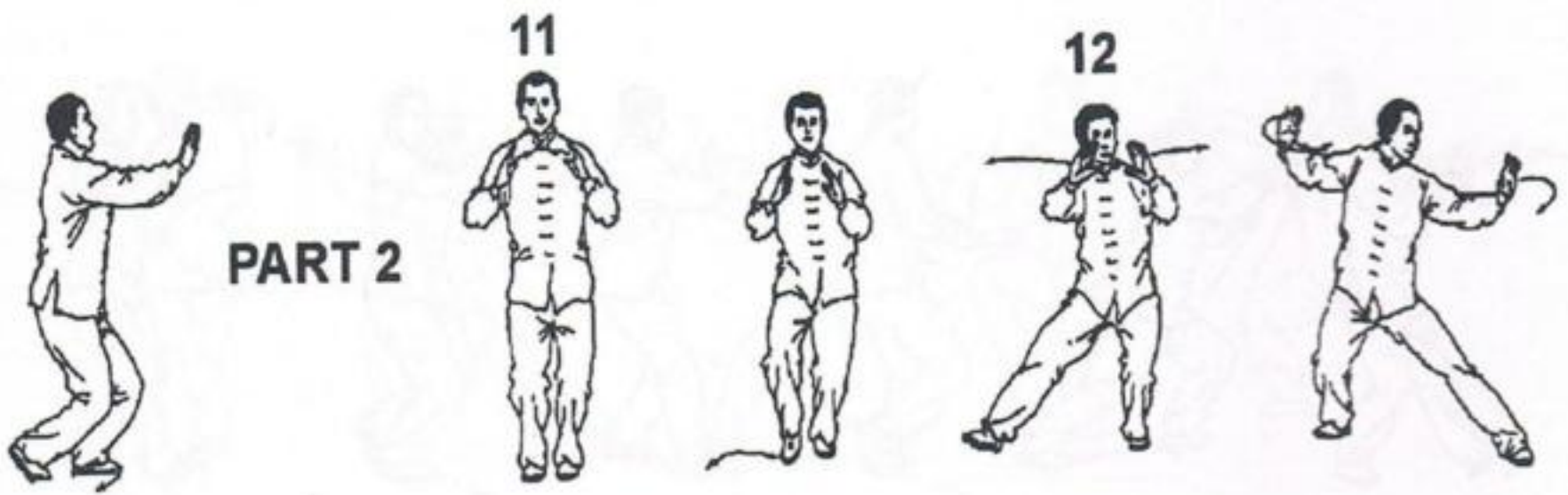
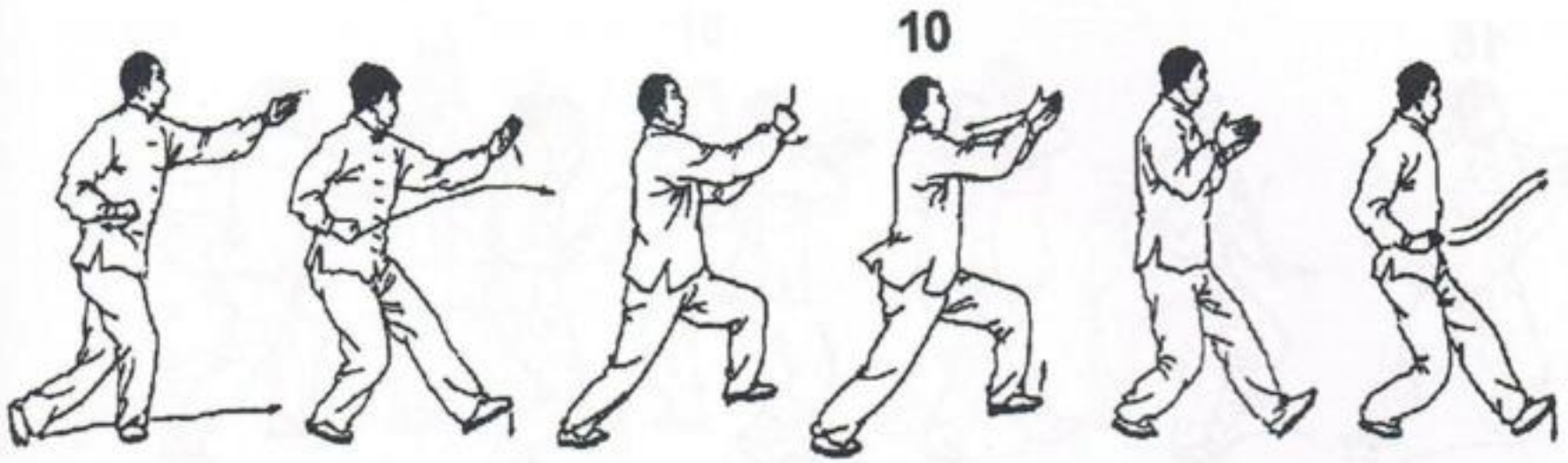
退步跨虎
转身摆莲

Wangongshehu
Zuolanquewei
Shizishou
Shoushi

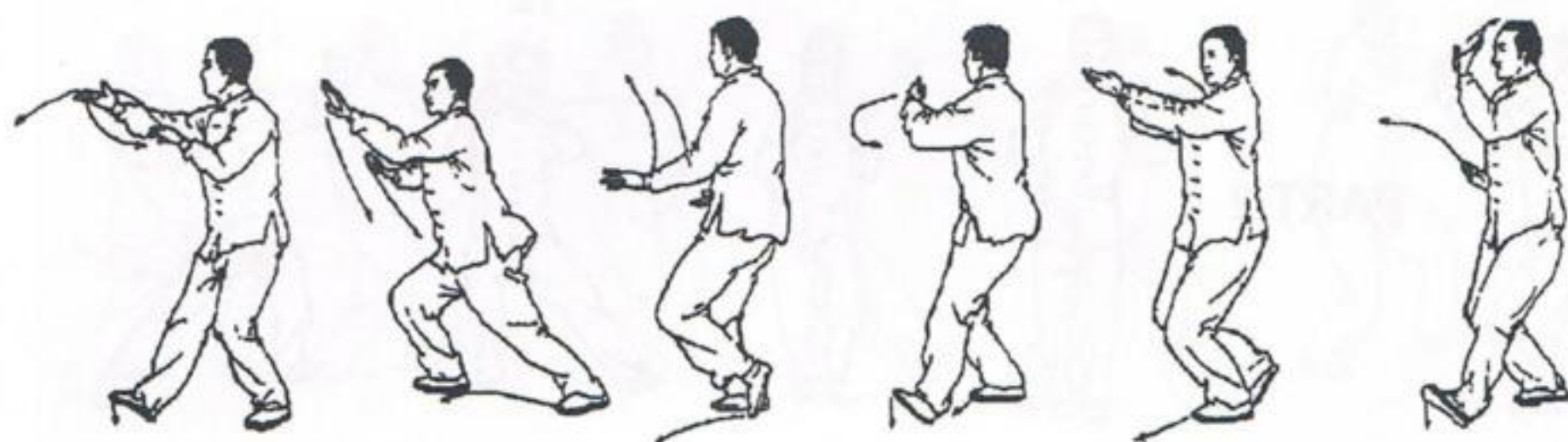
弯弓射虎
左揽雀尾
十字手
收势



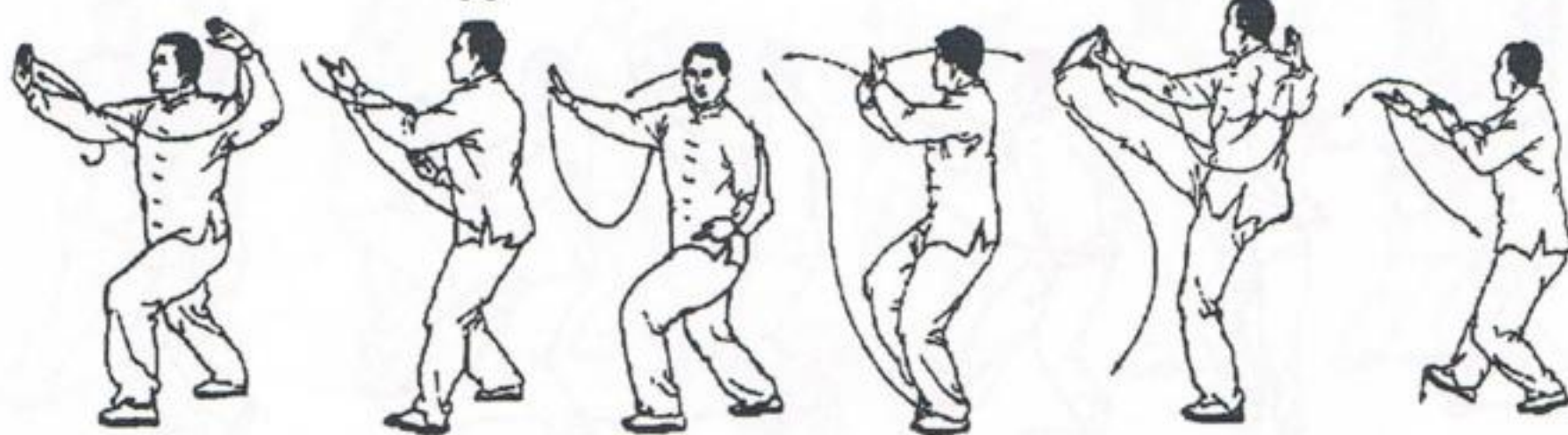




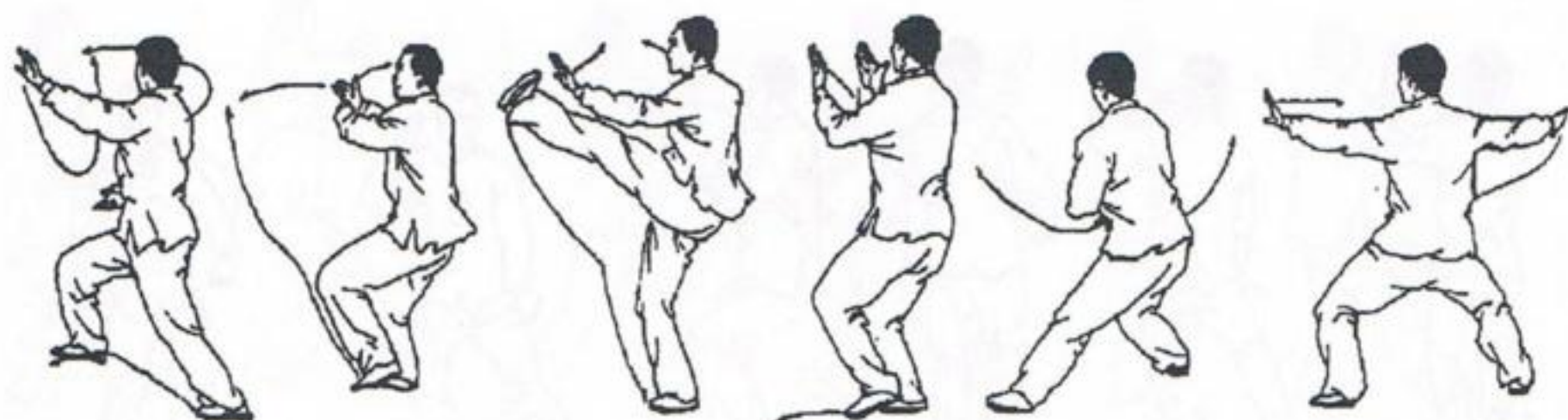
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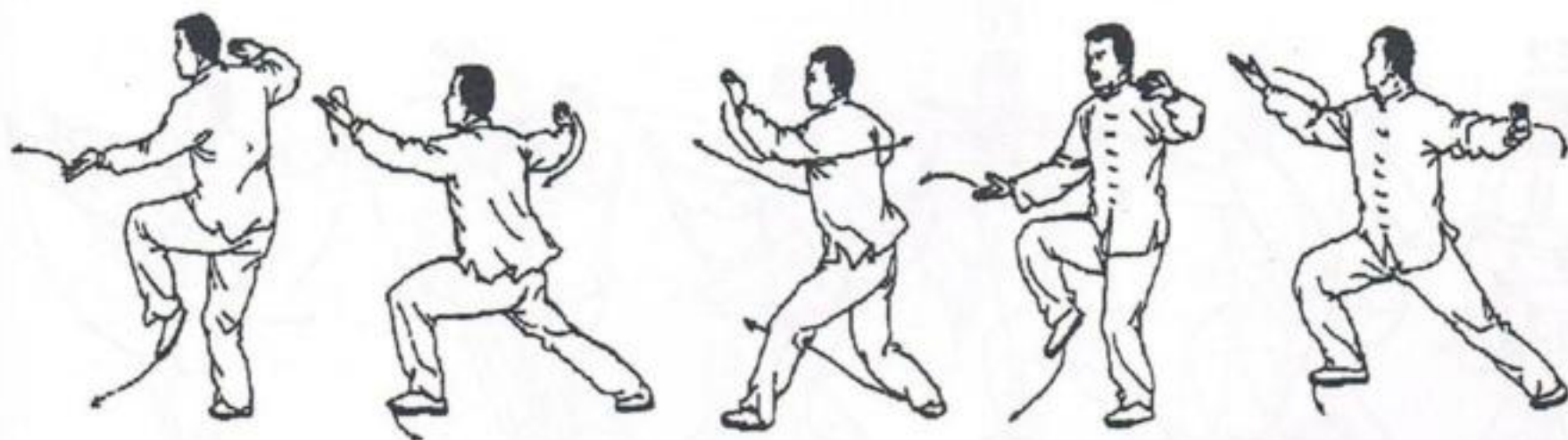
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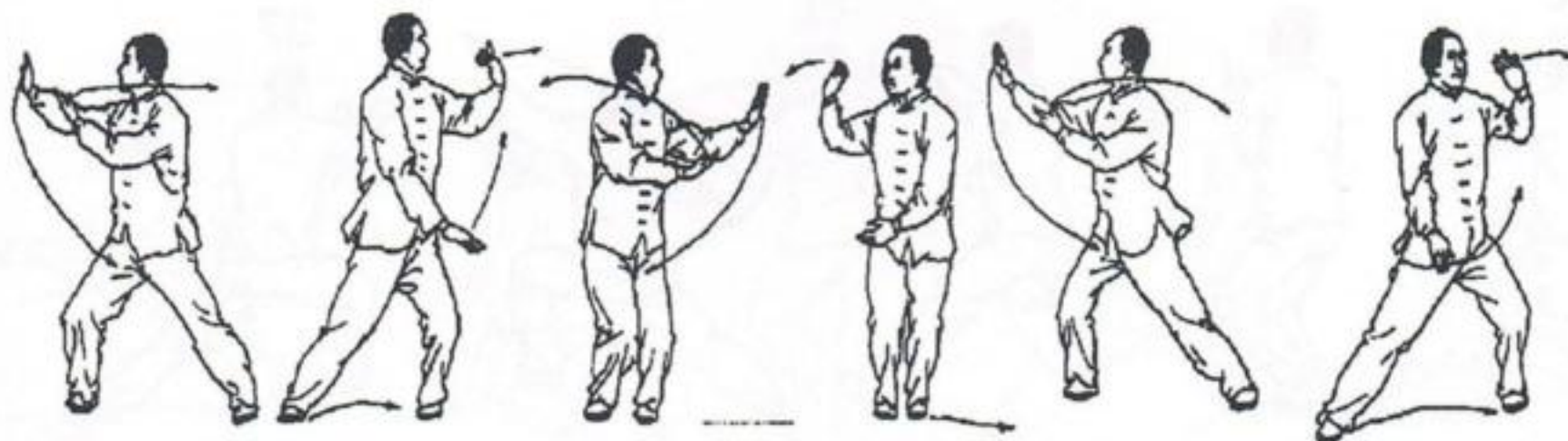
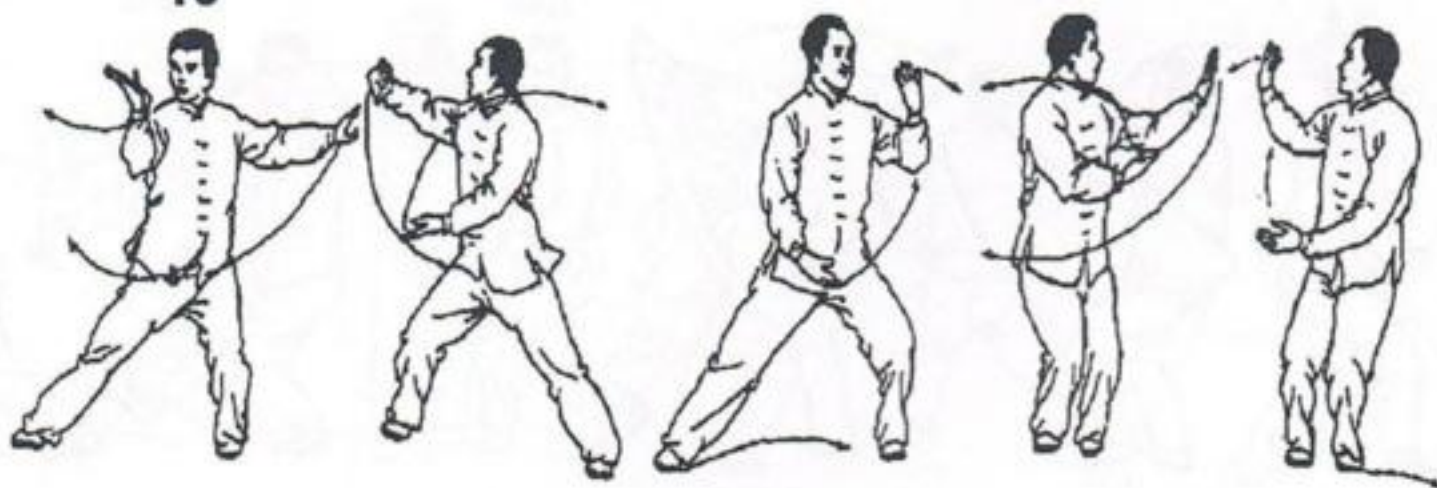


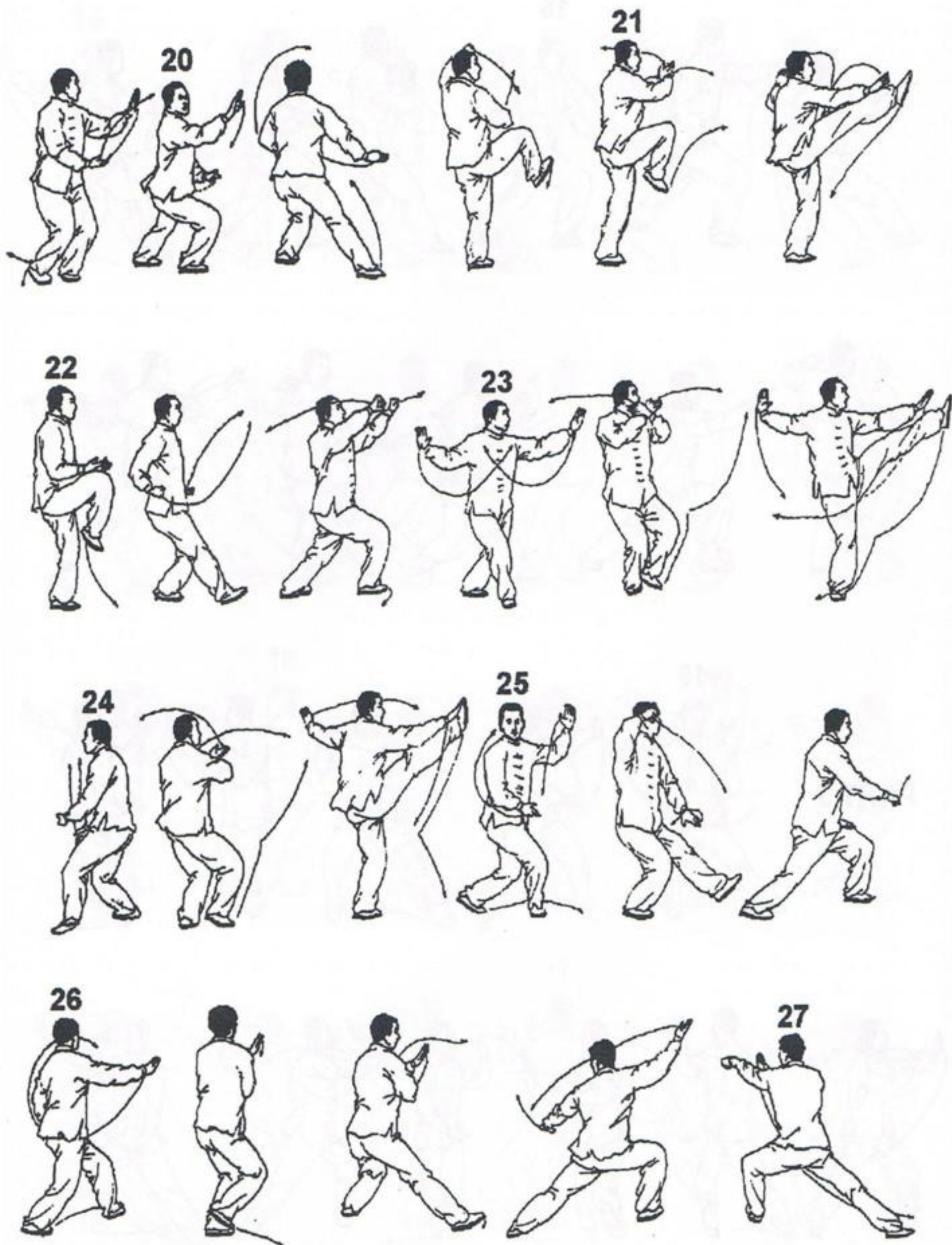
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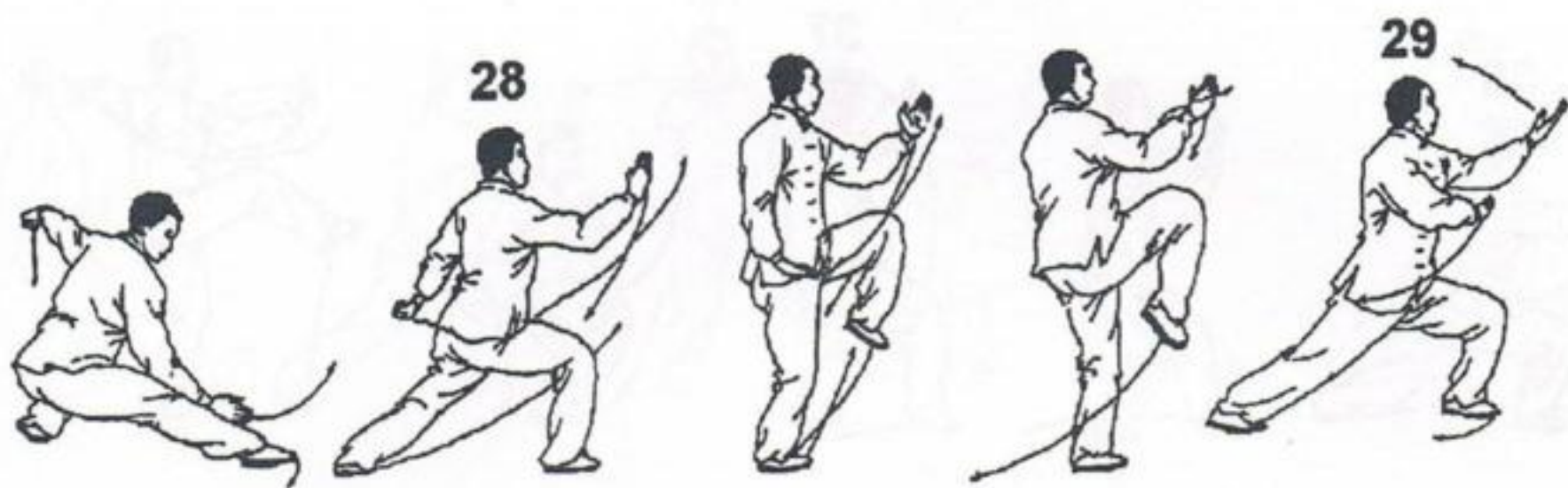


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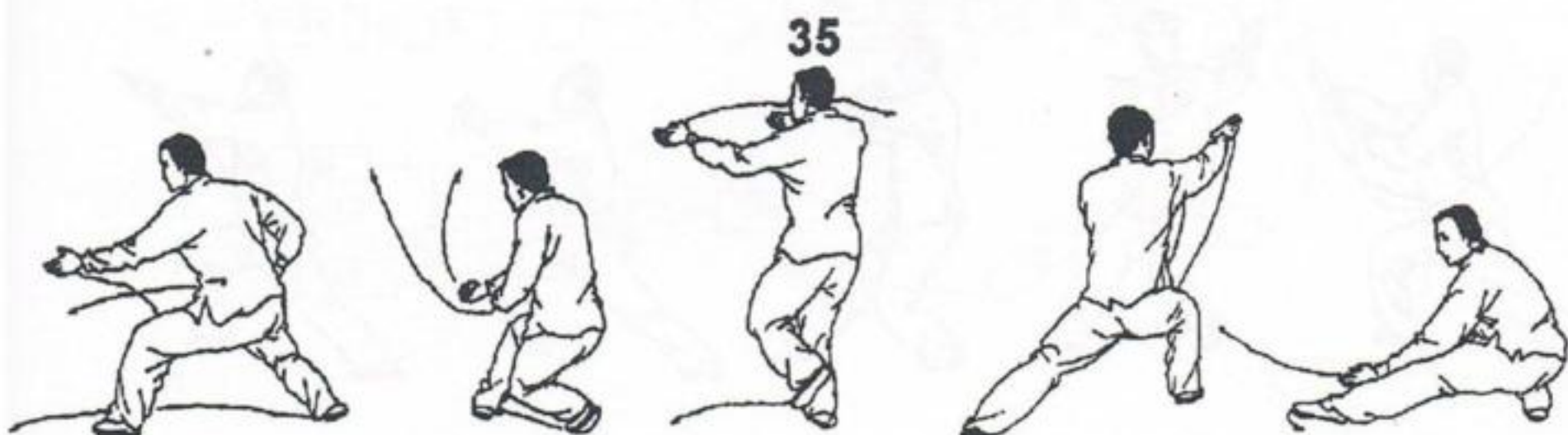
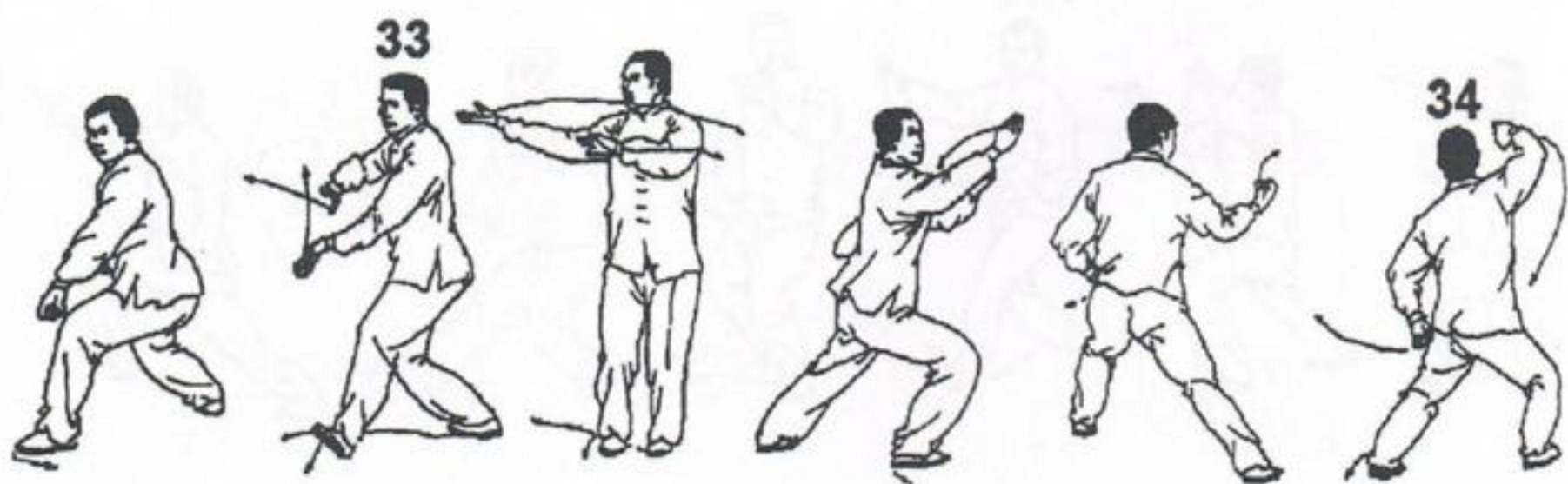
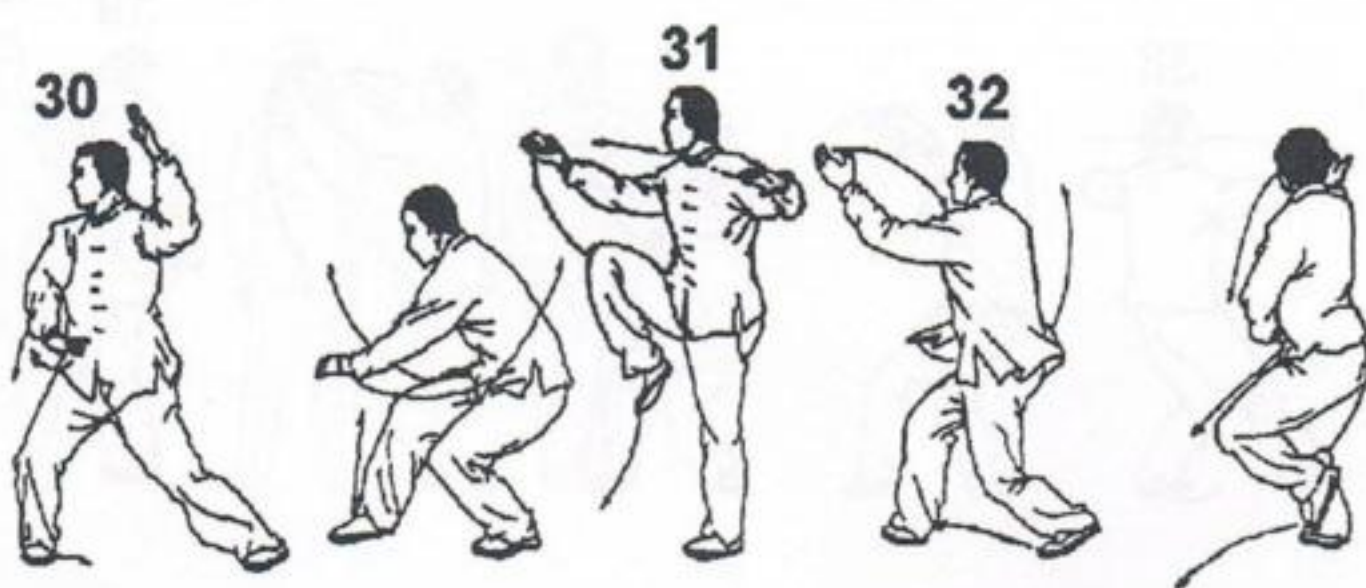
PART 3

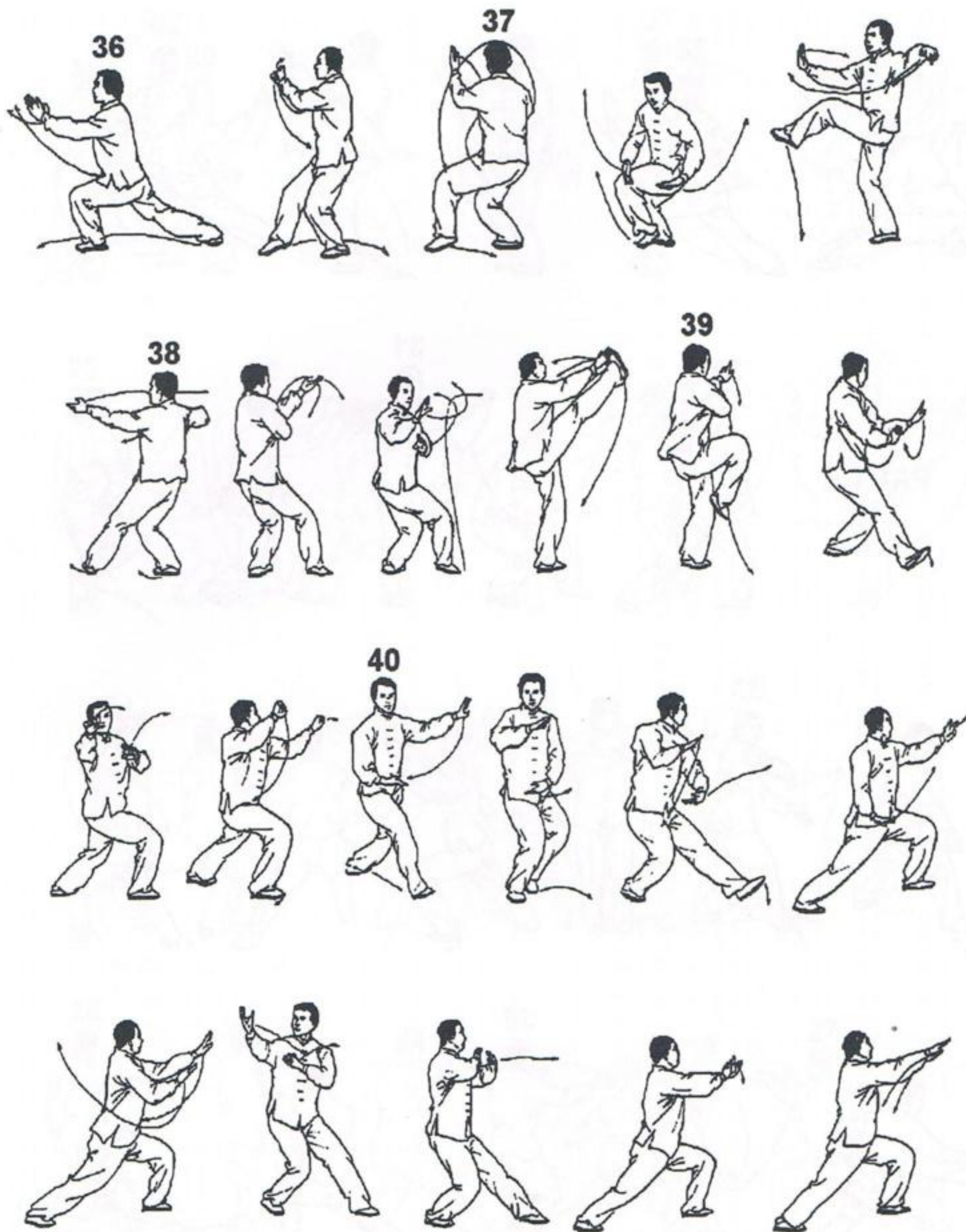


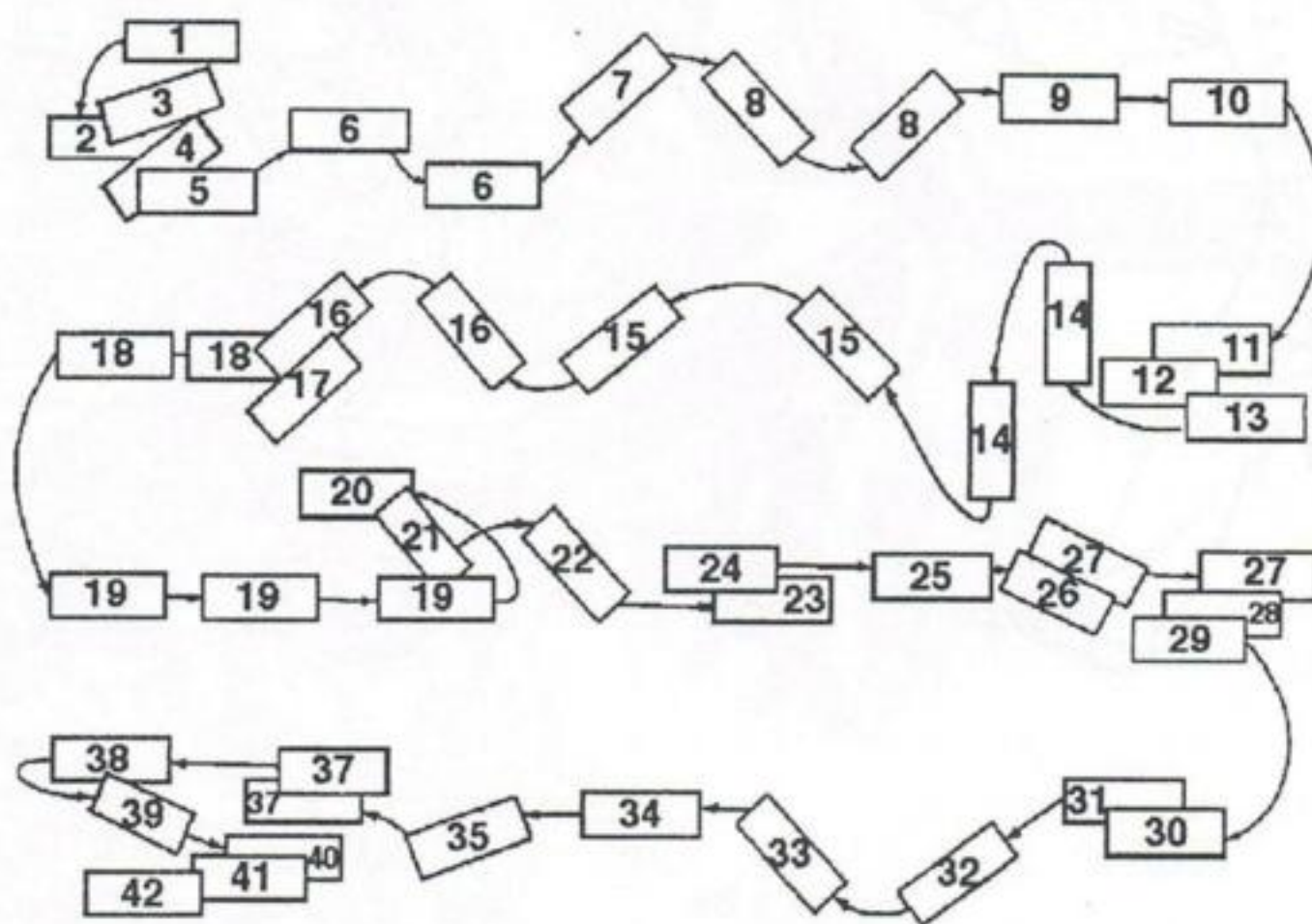
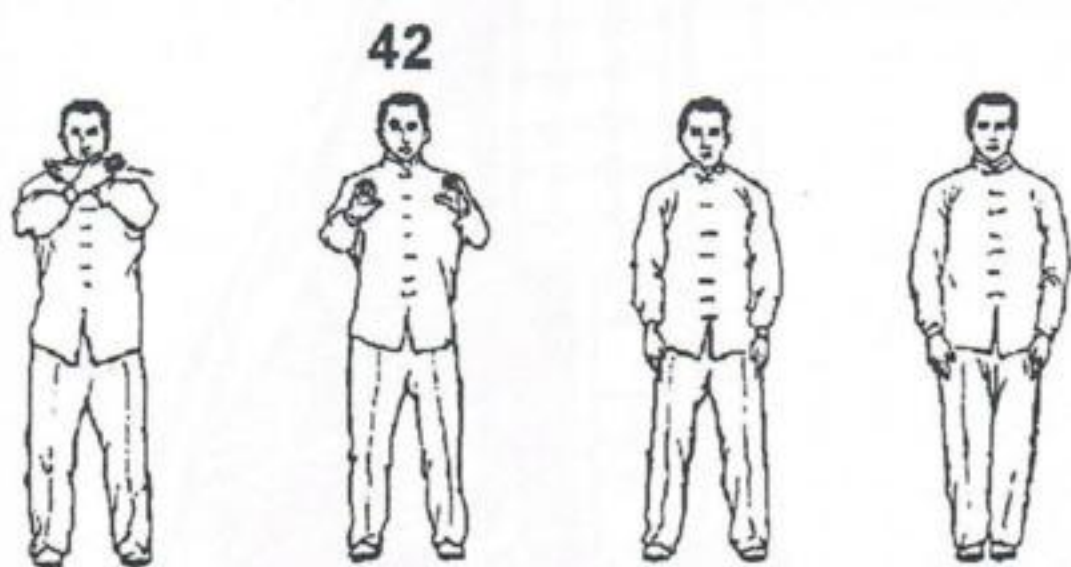
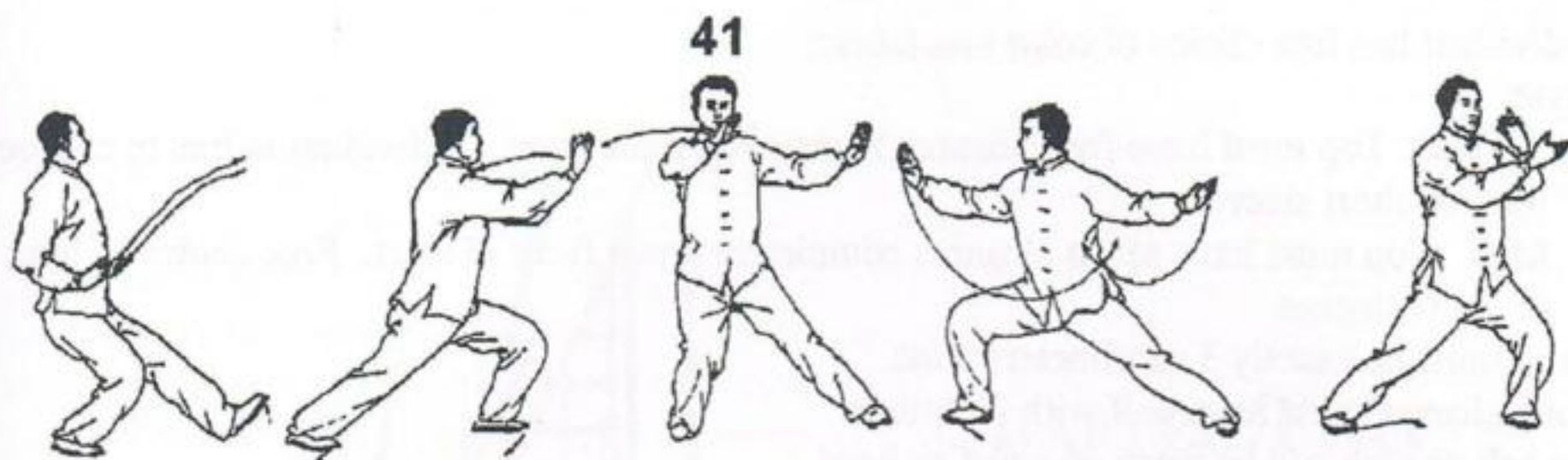




PART 4







Uniform Requirements for 42-step Taijiquan Compulsory Routine Competitions:

1. Individual has free choice of color and fabric
2. Style:
 - Women: Top must have five closures $\frac{1}{2}$ -way down the front. Individual is free to choose long or short sleeves.
 - Men: Top must have seven closures completely down front of shirt. Free choice of long or short sleeves.
3. Trim must be exactly 3 centimeters wide.
4. Long sleeves must have cuff with 2 buttons.
5. No belt or sash can be worn on waist or head.
6. Pants must have elastic or drawstring waist and legs with cuff (See Figure 1.8a).

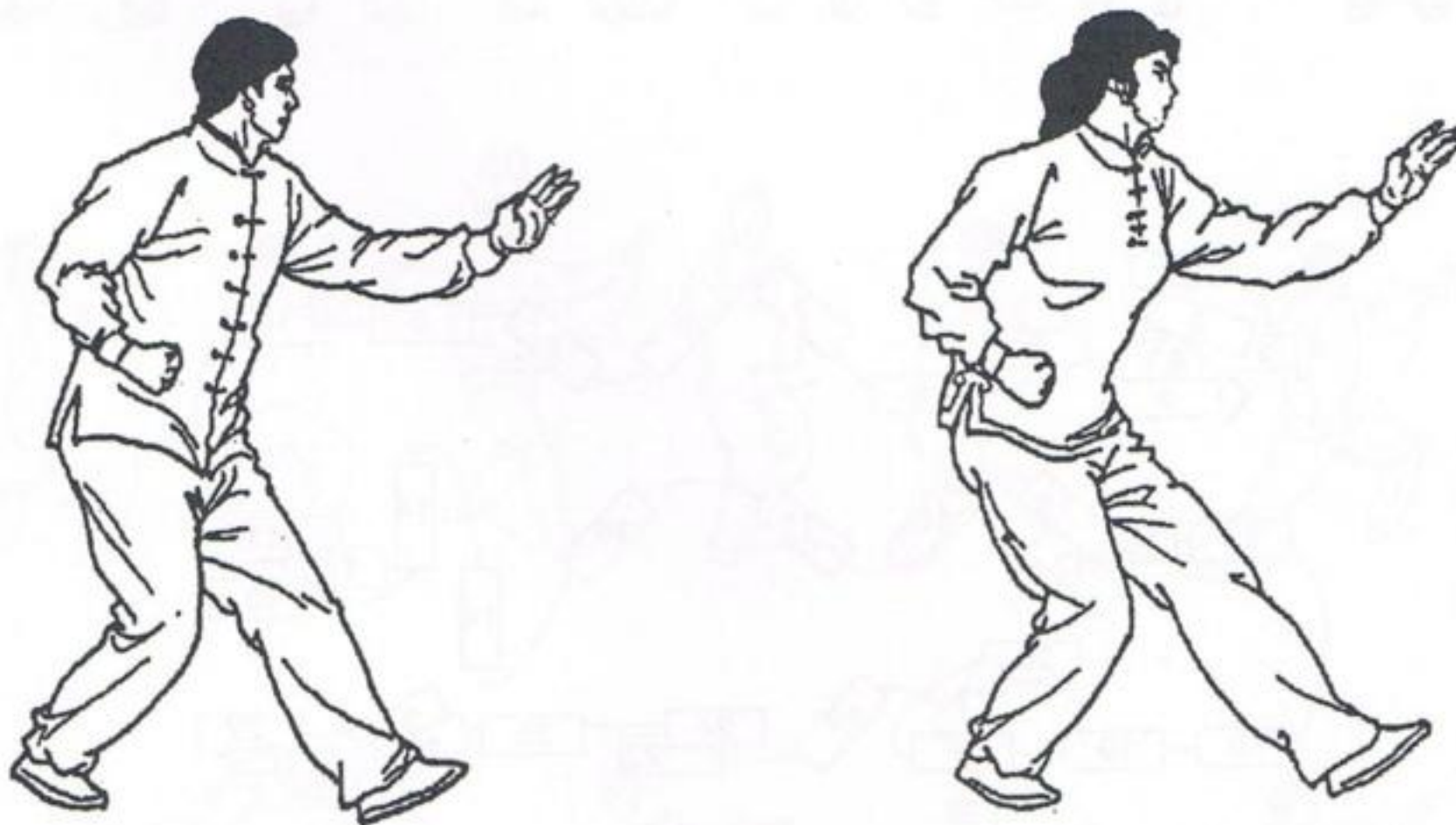


Figure 1.8a

CHAPTER TWO

PHILOSOPHY



CHAPTER TWO

PHILOSOPHY

Imagine yourself trying to peer through a window with the curtains drawn. It is not possible. You cannot judge what is inside because the curtains obscure a clear view. Every taiji movement involves the taiji philosophy of time and space. Likewise, to understand taijiquan by only the outer movements is like trying to look inside a room through drawn curtains. You must go into the room to see clearly; you must understand taiji philosophy to view the full picture of taijiquan. Its philosophy is the core, the inner room, of taijiquan, and it harmonizes Western scientific knowledge and ancient Chinese wisdom. Traditionally, these two areas of study have remained quite separate. In reality, the two are actually closely related; taiji is both scientific and philosophical. In this chapter, I will explain taiji philosophy in a more “scientific” manner so that you can readily understand it.

2.1. The Foundation of Taiji Philosophy. Taiji philosophy is founded in many underlying principles. Three basic principles are discussed in this section: the relationship between wuji and taiji, the relationship of yin and yang, and the interpretation of the taiji diagram. It is important to remember that they are all interrelated: for example, the taiji diagram *is* yin and yang, and yin and yang are taiji born of wuji.

Wuji and taiji. Ancient Chinese philosophers called the void and boundless state that prevailed before the world was created the “ultimate nothingness” or *wuji* (无极). From wuji the universe was formed. Although it seems that before creation time was nothing, certainly there must have been something. We do not know what that something is, nor do we know what that something comes from; but certainly something was there. It simply cannot be comprehended rationally—its existence is only implied, like an object you almost catch sight of in a fog. Ancient Chinese philosophers described it as the phenomenon of nothingness (无物之物); it has form, yet is unformed. It has shape that is still without shape. You meet it, and it has no front; you follow, and there is no rear. This phenomenon of nothingness is the source of movement and stillness. Everything in the universe, including yin and yang, is believed to evolve continually from this imperceptible source. Laozi (老子) called it *Dao* (道), the *Yijing* (易经) named it *taiji* (太极) and Wangzongyue (王宗岳) in his *Theory of Taijiquan* commented:

“Taiji is born of wuji. It is the origin of dynamic and static states and the mother of yin and yang. If they move, they separate. If they remain static, they combine.”

The concepts of wuji and taiji describe not only the aspects of creation of the universe, but also stages of all relationships between people, between objects, and between people and objects. For example, before you enter a room, the room is in the wuji stage. When you go into the room, you bring movement and taiji begins. Taiji is therefore the source of yin and yang. The relationship between you and a piano is wuji if you have no intention to play it. When you start to play the piano or even intend to play, the relationship becomes taiji. Wuji then exists before anything happens—even the intention to act arises from wuji.

Yin and yang. When something arises from wuji, the original state of nothingness no longer

exists, and the state of taiji begins. At this point of change, the situation always displays two qualities, yin and yang. The void of wuji is *yin* (陰) and the something originating from wuji is *yang* (陽). Yin and yang are complementary opposites that unite to form a whole. They are opposite in nature, yet there is a harmonious relationship between them; you must have one to have the other. For example, day is yang, night is yin. Where there is day there must be night; where there is night there must be day. We think of day and night as simply opposites, yet they are more than that. They mutually coexist and are inseparable—you cannot have day without night. Another example of the yin and yang complement is the relationship between the sky and the earth. The sky is yang and the earth is yin. Among human beings, man is yang and woman is yin.

Both yin and yang have characteristics unique to themselves. The characteristics of yang are heat, motion and outward centrifugal force; whereas cold, stillness and inward centripetal force are the characteristics of yin. The idea of yin and yang can be illustrated by the various stages of an object's movement. The beginning of the motion is the birth of yang and the end of the motion is the birth of yin. The beginning of stillness is the birth of mildness, and the end of stillness is the birth of rigidity. Compare yin and yang to the various states of water. At the boiling point, water becomes steam and produces tremendous power. This is yang. At the freezing point, water becomes ice and enters its still (but no less powerful) stage. This is yin.

Apply the principles to yourself. In prime condition, you are full of energy. You have a strong mind, warmth in your limbs and an active and ambitious spirit. At this point, the function of yang has reached its peak and excellent opportunities are within your grasp. You are like a river that has swelled to the edge of its banks: it has no way to flow but outward.

Conversely, if not at your peak you lack energy. Your mind is unsound, your limbs are cold, your movements and temper are uneven and your attitude towards life is pessimistic. The function of yang is at its lowest point, and the function of yin is high. At this stage, confine yourself and stay with the present situation. An attempt to advance would only invite failure. This withdrawal should not be negative or permanent. By retreating with yin's character as a guideline, use this time to cultivate your positive side.

Learning from yin is easy. If there is sunshine, there will be rain. After the rain, sunshine follows. Faced with slight failure, do not complain of bad luck. If you feel lost and confused, you do not understand the yin/yang theory. You simply cannot be happy without having been sad. You cannot enjoy the thrill of success if you have never failed.

The same is true in taijiquan, and you must learn and apply the yin/yang theory directly to taijiquan. For example, push-hands trains you to relax for defense and to move to a better position, but never to abandon your place and retreat. Just as in the winter a tree drops its leaves and waits for spring to leaf and grow again, you must utilize the character of yin to cultivate a turning point for progress. When you reach the extreme of yin, you will find the beginning of yang and have the chance to counter your opponent.

The taiji diagram. The taiji diagram illustrates how two opposites can be harmonized into a complete interrelated unit. Like other principles of taiji, this one can apply to natural as well as human relationships. For example, positive and negative polarities in electricity can be seen in terms of yin and yang harmony. Neither a positive electric charge nor a negative one can separately produce light or heat. These opposites need each other to become electricity, just as both yin and yang are necessary to form a taiji unity.

The taiji diagram can also illustrate the relationship of a married couple. By comple-

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menting each other in spite of emotional and physiological differences, a couple will live in harmony. Instead of fighting, they can help each other to create a peaceful family unit. Although traditional interpretations of yin/yang relationships considered women more passive and subordinate to men, various aspects of a marital system may be stable in one of three ways: the submission of one partner to the other, the submission of the other partner to the first, and equal cooperation between the two partners. In reality, any relationship combines these three general attributes with varying degrees of emphasis. The same principles can apply to the reconciliation of opposites for any one person or human interaction.

Up to this point, the yin/yang theory has been explained with examples from human behavior and natural phenomena. It can also be explained by a graphical method called the taiji diagram, the diagram of the natural universe or the *Fuxitaijitu* (伏羲太极图, See Figure 2.1a).

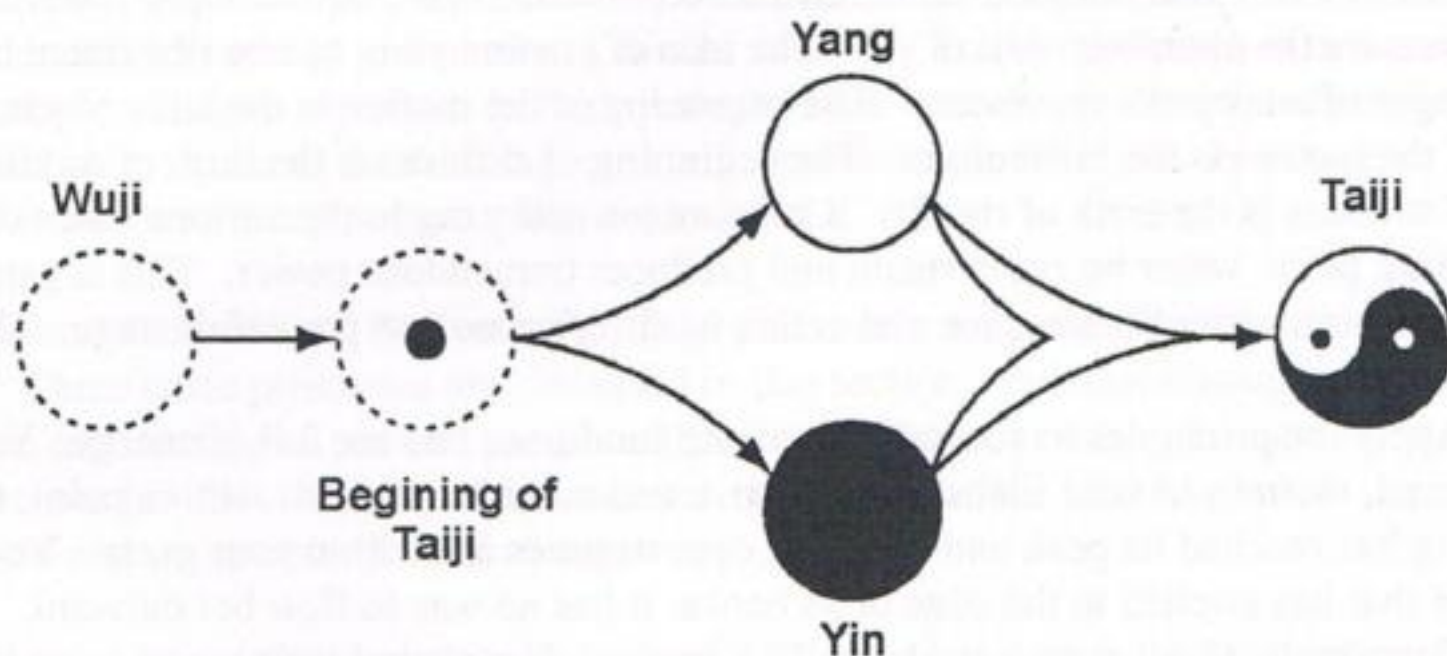
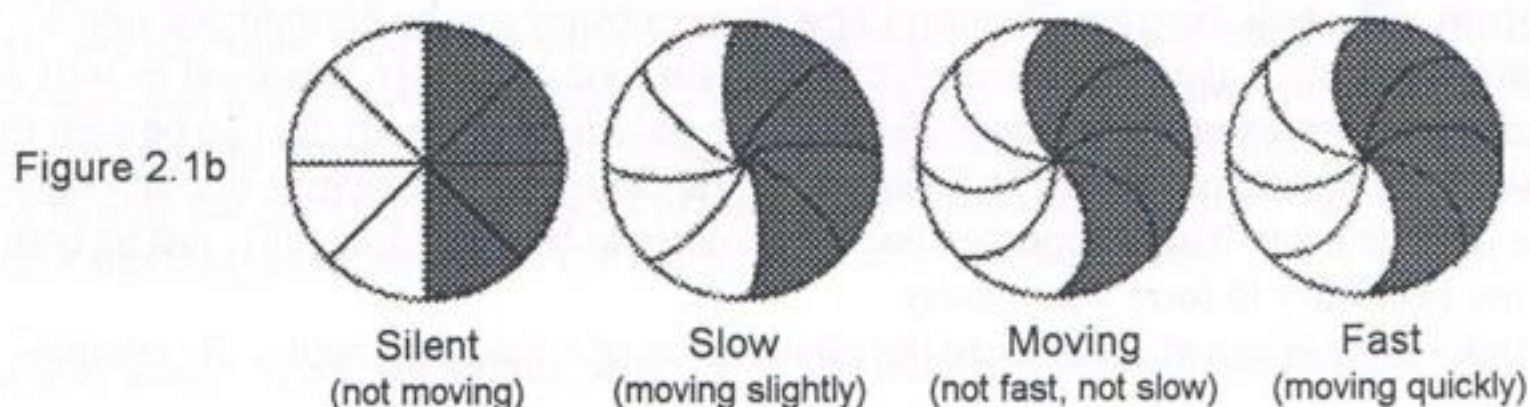


Figure 2.1a

Basic principles of taiji diagram. There are several principles that you must understand and subsequently apply to taijiquan:

1. **The dividing line for yin and yang in the diagram is curved and not straight.** If the dividing line were straight, it would indicate that taiji is in a motionless state. The curved line shows taiji is in a state of dynamic circular movement. Variations in the curvature of the line represent different speeds of movement. A small curvature means slow motion. This phenomenon can be demonstrated in the two ways described below.

First, divide a circle into eight equal segments by drawing four diameters. Color one half of the circle black and the other white. Because the diameters are straight lines, the circle looks motionless; but, if the four straight diameters are replaced with four curved lines passing through the center, the circle appears to be moving. As the curvature of the lines increases, so does the apparent speed of the movement (See Figure 2.1b).



In a second example, black and white viscous paints are placed in a shallow pan. Each color occupies one half of the pan. When the pan is spun, the dividing line for the black and

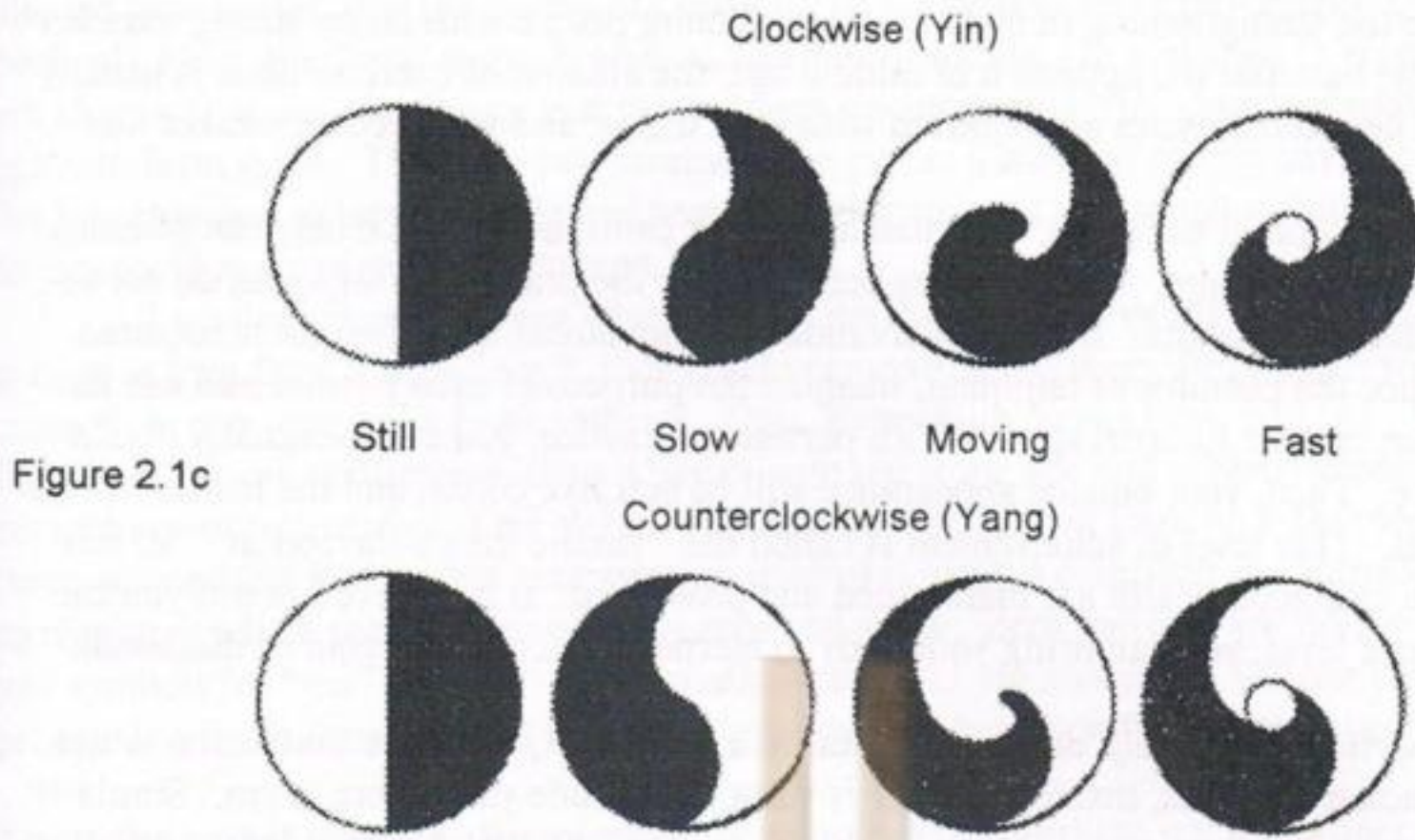


Figure 2.1c

white paint will change from a straight to a curved line. The faster the pan spins, the greater the curvature will be. Finally, a small circle appears in the center (See Figure 2.1c).

Using these two examples, notice that taiji is not only a circular plane figure in a still condition, but also a moving object like a rotating globe. This type of rotation affects the speed (fast or slow) as well as the direction (clockwise or counterclockwise) of the motion. You may observe that the taiji diagram accurately represents the circular motion of various objects, from whirlpools to spiral galaxies.

The continuous practice of taijiquan enables a master to develop a fast internal energy called reeling silk cocoon energy or chansijing (缠丝劲). The theory and practice of the silk cocoon energy will be described further in Chapter 3.4. Just as the turning wheel throws off objects that encounter it, so can a taiji expert throw opponents outward along the tangential direction. A true expert in taijiquan can show tremendous power just by standing still. When others only touch his or her body, they are thrown a few feet away.

2. The equally large black and white areas inside a taiji diagram represent yin and yang, respectively. The key is balance—equal portions of yin and yang. Each may change or move, and the other changes or moves, too, to maintain balance. Apply the principle of balance to your body.

If the outside of the human body is yang and the internal organs are yin, you can see how overdeveloped body muscles will cause an imbalance. The internal organs, such as the heart and kidneys, have to do extra work and will gradually weaken.

Overwhelming yang causes the retreat of yin. Strong yang, weak yin (阳盛阴衰), as this condition is called,



Figure 2.1d

is abnormal. Strong yin, weak yang (阴盛阳衰) is also abnormal. The only normal and desirable condition is yin/yang balance. These conditions are shown in Figure 2.1d.

Ironically, both Western-style athletics and Chinese arts such as boxing have as their primary purpose the strengthening of body muscles. Young people with large, strong muscles look very healthy, but after the approach of middle age, the amount of exercise done is usually quite limited. Then, the muscles are replaced with fatty tissue, and you become weaker and weaker.

Unlike most other exercises, taijiquan allows for continued balance between muscles and organs—despite your age. The exercises performed in the practice of taijiquan do not require awkward force or posture. Instead, relaxation and movement with thought is required. When you practice the postures of taijiquan, imagine the purpose of each posture and use the full concentration of your internal spirit. With persistent practice, you can eventually obtain yin/yang balance. Then, your outside appearance will be soft like cotton and the inside will be as strong as steel. This level of achievement is called the “needle inside the cotton.” In this condition, youth and good health are maintained and prolonged. It is believed that if you can reach this ultimate level, you can bring your body to eternal existence like gold or diamonds.

3. The black portion of the taiji diagram contains a white dot, whereas inside the white portion is a black dot. Thus, inside yin there is yang, and inside yang there is yin. Similarly, females (yin) have a small amount of male hormones (yang), and males (yang) have a small amount of female hormones (yin).

This interrelationship of yin and yang is shown well in taijiquan. The taiji postures should be neither totally relaxed (yin) nor totally tense (yang). Taiji aims to combine relaxation with awareness for yin/yang balance. In addition, a step forward always contains the intention to withdraw, and a step backwards always includes the intention to advance. When you are very experienced in taijiquan training and practice push-hands with another, a small step forward with a slight withdrawal of the body will throw your opponent several feet away.

4. The point where the white portion reaches its maximum size is the beginning of the black portion, and vice versa. Thus, the extreme of yin is the creation of yang, and the extreme of yang is the creation of yin. The daily changes in the position of the sun illustrate this principle. When it is high noon, the sun is in its most powerful stage; but, at the same time, it is the beginning of sunset. The transportation system in the United States is another example. Americans now have super highways, mass production automobiles and one or more cars for each family. The result of this extreme convenience is inconvenience: traffic jams, limited parking spaces, air pollution, and the high cost of cars and gasoline. If convenience is yang, inconvenience is yin. The extreme of yang is the creation of yin in this situation, just as it is in all others. Conversely, European countries have now begun to use bicycles to replace the troublesome automobile. In doing so, they free themselves from the high price of gasoline and problems with traffic and parking. In this case, the extreme of yin leads to the creation of yang.

According to the principles of taijiquan, extreme softness is followed by extreme hardness. Thus, in the practice of taijiquan, awkward force must be given up completely. Show total softness in your body, but concentrate strength in your inner spirit. The longer you practice taijiquan, the better the results. At the highest level of achievement, you will not give away the presence of your great strength. Your movement is unpredictable at this stage. A slight shifting of the body will appear soft, graceful and powerless; yet, this ultimate strength of taijiquan can defeat every other kind of strength that exists.

5. Laozi said in the *Daodejing* (道德经) “The way begot one, the one became two, then the two begot three. From three came everything else.” “The way begot one” describes wuji's generation of taiji. Although wuji, which existed before the universe formed, is intangible and immaterial, it is the source of creation. At the beginning of movement, taiji (the “one”) evolved. Next, the “two” were created, as motion caused the yin and yang to separate. Since yin always contains some yang and yang always contains some yin, yang can combine with yin again to form three. Thus, the two created three just as a married couple have a child. After the two changed to three, a cycle had begun; production and reproduction continue ceaselessly, as more and more is endlessly created.

Laozi concluded, “From what-is all of the things of the world were born, but what-is sprang in turn from what-is-not.” Everything came from the three, three came from two, two came from one, one came from nothing. Thus, everything comes from nothing. For example, first there was no civilization, then it began with the stone age and evolved gradually into our current age of technology. Our elaborate technology developed from no technology. It has become so complex that we use computers to control it, yet the computer is controlled by the binary system which uses two numbers: a zero and a one. Zero and one are simply the mathematical symbols for “yes” and “no”—essentially a return to yin and yang. So, our technological process is a cycle from the taiji to everything else and then back from everything to taiji again.

Apply the taiji diagram to the practice of taijiquan. In working out the proper combinations of yin and yang in taiji, find guidance in Confucianism and Daoism—the two major schools of Chinese philosophy. Confucian philosophy emphasizes moderation and standards of proportion, otherwise known as the “golden mean” philosophy (中庸之道) that can be seen in Western thought in the development of notions of proportion. Daoism emphasizes the continuous importance of changes, which makes any rigid standards for behavior inappropriate.

We can see the two approaches at work in an example of a man who earns \$100. How much ought he to spend and how much save? The Confucian approach might say, “Save \$50, spend \$50.” The Daoist might reply, “If he does not need any money at the moment, he cannot spend a penny. But if he truly needs to, he may spend the whole \$100.”

In taiji, the hard tenseness or soft suppleness in which the hands are held, shows the application of these two concepts. First, the hand is never held totally soft, because then it is not useful and called dead. Similarly, it is never held totally rigidly in an outward attack gesture; this would also develop poor balance. Study the hands of Masters Yangchengfu and to better understand the proper amounts of softness and hardness (See Chapter 1.5).

In the beginning, practice the yin/yang cycle by making your palm hard at the full extension of a gesture and soft at its complete retraction. Study the yin/yang changes by making the transition back and forth as smoothly and evenly as possible. After long practice, you may then practice the “belly of the fingers” to express hardness in the Chen form. Here, instead of making your whole palm hard, apply force only to the belly (proximal segments) of your fingers; keep the rest of your hand supple.

Finally, you will evolve to a practice in which your palm remains completely soft in appearance, yet is completely energized inside. This inside force is not manifested but is ready to be called upon at any time.

In taijiquan itself, the highest achievement combines the attributes of both yin and yang. The taiji master can choose how to respond to any situation. In response to an attack, s/he can disappear like the fog, resist like a mountain, or fight back like a tiger. Thus, the master understands the separation and combination of yin and yang.

2.2. The Five Elements or *wuxing*. Over two thousand years ago, the Chinese Naturalist School or *Yinyangjia* (阴阳家) developed the theory of the five elements or *wuxing* (五行). Unfortunately, “five elements,” the usual English translation for *wuxing*, fails to convey the idea of movement implied in the Chinese term *xing*. The five elements—water, fire, wood, metal and earth—are not considered types of inactive matter, but dynamic processes basic to an understanding of the natural world. The characteristic qualities of each of the *xing* was derived from the careful observation of natural events. Thus, water has the properties of soaking and descending (since water flows downward). Fire heats, transforms and moves upward (since flames rise to into the air). Wood allows its form to be shaped into straight or curved pieces. Wood is also flexible when young and healthy but when old or dead, it is rigid. Metal can be melted, molded, and then hardened; it allows water to easily condense on it. Earth’s properties include the provision of nourishment through sowing, reaping and absorbing. These elements have been used both as categories for classifying many phenomena and as images/symbols in dynamically interrelated systems. Four major principles describing changes in and interrelationships among the five elements were also developed: mutual creation, mutual closeness, mutual destruction, and mutual fear.

According to the principle of mutual creation (相生), the five elements produce each other: “Wood creates fire, fire creates earth, earth creates metal, metal creates water, and water

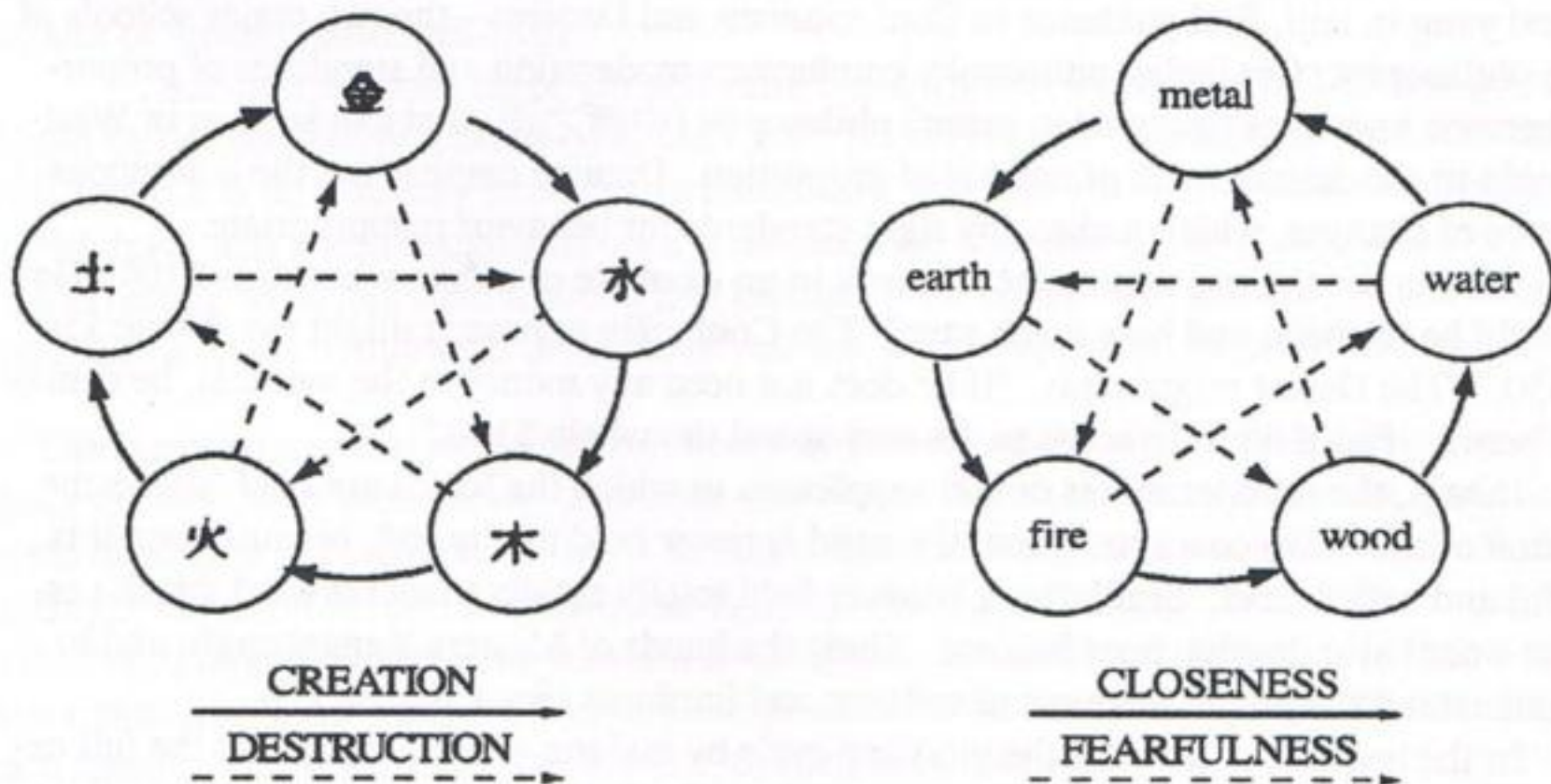


Figure 2.2a

creates wood.” Wood creates fire since fire results from rubbing two pieces of wood together; wood fuels fire. In leaving ashes that become part of the soil, fire creates earth. Metallic ores are found in the earth; thus earth creates metal. Metal creates water because silver metal mirrors when exposed at night (an old ritual practice) collect dew, or because metal becomes liquid when heated. Finally, water creates wood by nourishing the growth of plants.

The same pairs of elements are related to each other by the principle of mutual closeness (相亲). Each element is considered attracted to its source. Thus, wood is close to water, water to metal, metal to earth, earth to fire, and fire to wood. The close relationship between

these pairs of elements is like that between a mother and child. An element becomes close to its creator in much the same way that a child is close to its mother.

The principle of mutual destruction (相克) describes the series of conflicts between pairs of elements. Wood weakens earth by breaking it up and removing nutrients from the soil. Earth limits water with the banks of natural bodies of water and with man-made dams. Water extinguishes fire. Fire conquers metal by melting it. Metal, in the form of axes and knives, cuts down trees and carves wood.

According to the principles of mutual fear (相畏), an element respects or fears the element that could destroy it. Wood fears metal; metal fears fire; fire, water; water, earth; and earth, wood.

The cycles involving the four principles of mutuality are shown graphically in Figure 2.2a. The similarities and differences among the principles reflect both yin and yang. Creation and closeness, both constructive principles, are considered yang, whereas destruction and fearfulness, their opposites, are viewed as yin.

In addition to representing forces in the natural world, the five elements provide guiding principles for physiology, pathology, diagnosis and therapy in traditional Chinese medicine. In the human body, the internal organs are divided into two groups: the five *zang* (五脏), solid or yin organs, and the six *fu* (六腑), hollow or yang organs. Each of the yin and yang organs is identified with one of the elements. The heart (yin) and small intestine (yang) are associated with fire, the spleen (yin) and stomach (yang) with earth, the lungs (yin) and large intestine (yang) with metal, the kidney (yin) and bladder (yang) with water, and the liver (yin) and gallbladder (yang) with wood (See Table 2.2a).

Table 2.2a

Five Elements	Wood	Fire	Earth	Metal	Water
Directions	East	South	Center	West	North
Seasons	Spring	Summer	Long Summer	Autumn	Winter
Colors	Green	Red	Yellow	White	Black
Flavors	Sour	Bitter	Sweet	Pungent	Salt
Yin Organs	Liver	Heart	Spleen	Lung	Kidney
Yang Organs	Gallbladder	Small Intestine	Stomach	Large Intestine	Bladder
Sense Organs	Eye	Tongue	Mouth	Nose	Ear

Chinese physicians began applying the theory of the five elements to the maintenance of health and the cure of illness thousands of years ago. In time, clinical experience led to the development of sophisticated theories based on the five elements. For example, the five element medical model stresses interrelationships among the internal organs rather than their individual functioning. Using the principles of mutual creation and mutual destruction, Chinese medicine explains that both excesses as well as deficiencies in one organ may affect another organ. Consequently, problems with one organ may be cured by the treatment of one or more related organs. This approach contrasts with the tendency in Western medicine to cure sickness by treating only the diseased organ instead of considering the whole system of organs within the body. The five element model is also used to classify powdered medications. In sensitively evaluating both the effects of medicines and the illness of the organs in terms of the five-element theory, Chinese doctors exemplified an understanding of wholeness and harmony in the body's ability or inability to function.

As a system of health, taijiquan employs not only yin/yang principles but also the five-element theory. Each of the fundamental movements in taijiquan represents one of the five elements. A step forward (前进) is identified with metal, withdrawal (后退) with wood, looking left (左顾) is associated with water, looking right (右盼) with fire, and central equilibrium (中定) is connected to earth. In addition to developing a healthy yin/yang relationship between mental activity and physical movement, taiji is designed to balance the internal organs and promote equilibrium in the entire body. Maintaining a dynamically balanced system preserves health by preventing illness and, thus, improves the quality and length of life.

2.3. The Eight Trigrams. Just as in analytical geometry, in which a graphic method is used to explain equations, three layers of yin/yang symbols are used to represent each category in the taiji system. These symbols are called the eight trigrams. They are used to classify all of the phenomena of the universe into eight categories and to analyze natural and social events with a logical method that searches for mutual relationships of their principles, phenomena and quantities. The taiji system can be widely applied and is not limited to the analysis of one particular object or event. Below is an ancient Chinese mnemonic for memorizing the eight trigrams:

<i>qian</i>	乾	Three Continuous	<i>sanlian</i>	三連
<i>kun</i>	坤	Six Broken	<i>liuduan</i>	六斷
<i>zhen</i>	震	Upwards Cup	<i>yangbei</i>	仰杯
<i>gen</i>	艮	Overtured Bowl	<i>fuwan</i>	覆碗
<i>li</i>	離	Broken Middle	<i>zhongduan</i>	中斷
<i>kan</i>	坎	Full Middle	<i>zhongman</i>	中滿
<i>dui</i>	兌	Deficient Top	<i>shangque</i>	上缺
<i>sun</i>	巽	Broken Bottom	<i>xiaduan</i>	下斷

These eight trigrams are the maximum number of figures that can be formed from two kinds of lines in groups of three. It was the Emperor Fuxi (伏羲, 2852-2738 BC), the first ruler in Chinese history, who applied the eight trigrams to the taiji diagram in order to demonstrate how yin and yang interact with each other. Fuxi's circular arrangement of the eight trigrams is called the Fuxi or *xiantian* eight trigrams (先天八卦, see figure 2.3a). *Xiantian* means "the stage before the universe is created."

Along with the *xiantian* eight trigrams just described, there is another method of arrangement called the *houtian* eight trigrams (后天八卦). According to legend, it was drawn around 1143 BC by *Zhouwenwang* (周文王), the founder of the Zhou Dynasty at about 1143 BC and is based upon the *Yijing* which says:

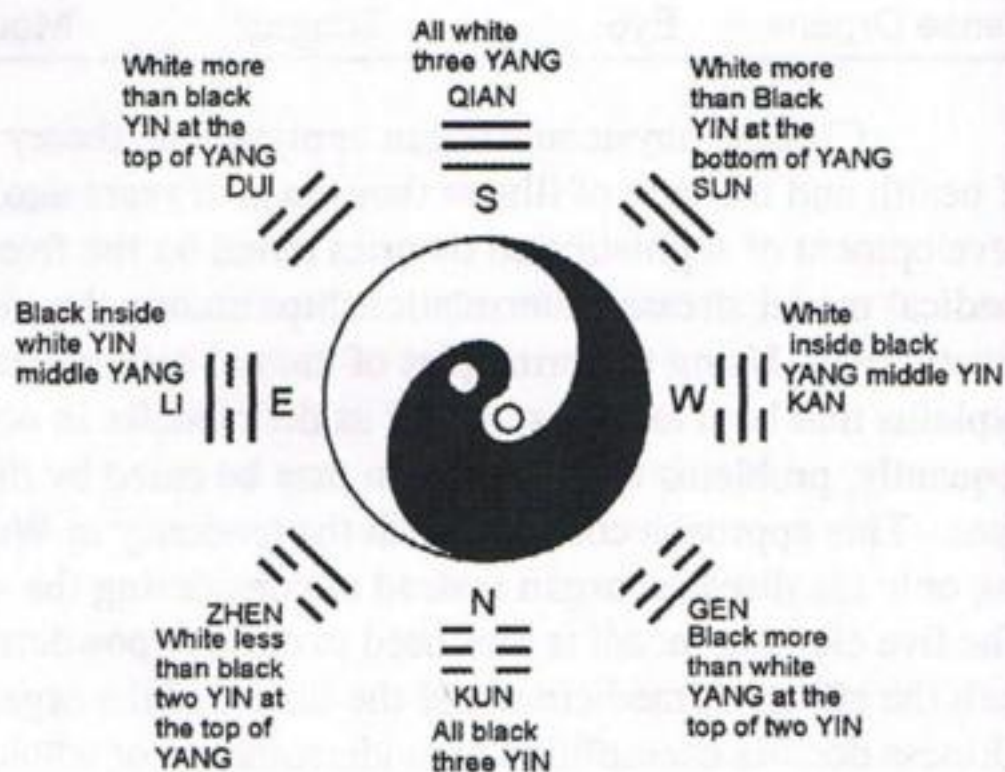


Figure 2.3a

“The ruler comes forth in *zhen* to start his creation. He completes everything in *sun*. He manifests things to see one another in *li* and causes them to serve each other in *kun*. He rejoices in *dui* and battles in *qian*. He is comforted and takes rest in *kan* and finishes his work of the year in *gen*.”

Starting from the east, the order of the houtian eight trigrams is in a clockwise sequence of zhen, sun, li, kun, dui, qian, kan and gen. This sequence is used to explain the principle of the motion of the universe and was the basis for the development of the Chinese calendar (See Figure 2.3b).

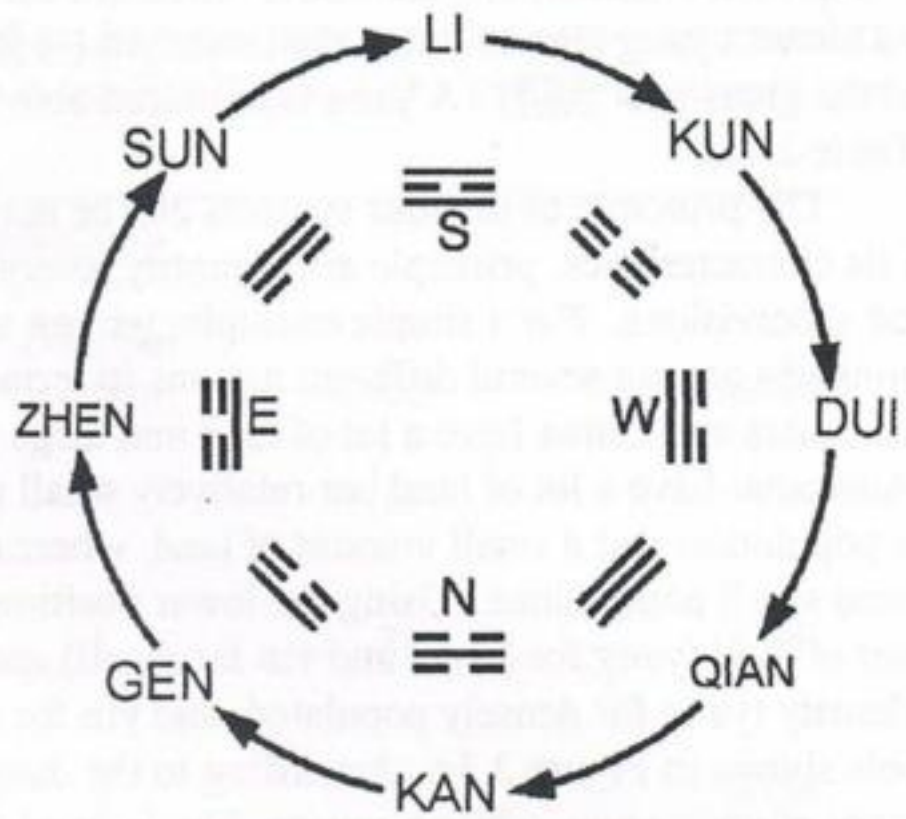


Figure 2.3b

Formation of the eight trigrams.

The *Yijing* tells of the formation of the eight trigrams or *bagua* (八卦). According to the *Dazhuan* (大篆):

“In the system of the *Yijing*, there is the Grand Terminus or taiji, which generated the two forms or *liangyi* (兩儀). Those two forms generated four symbols or *sixiang* (四象). Those four symbols divided further to generate the eight trigrams or *bagua*.”

The “Two.” The taiji is the very first dot that emerges from the emptiness of the wuji. It contains the moving power of both dynamic and static states and is the source of yin and yang. In the static state, yin and yang are combined to form a whole, but in a state of motion they separate, generating the two forms or *liangyi*.

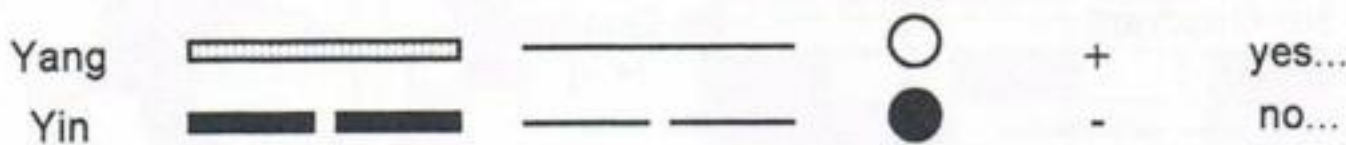


Figure 2.3c

Yang is often represented by a line segment or a small white circle. Yin is usually represented by two broken line segments or by a small black circle. Different symbols for yin and yang are shown in Figure 2.3c.

The properties of the two forms can be explained with the use of a straight directional line. Assuming that the point of origin is the taiji, yin and yang indicate negative and positive direction. Figure 2.3d shows that yang can be represented by the positive direction, and yin by the negative direction.



Figure 2.3d

The "Four." The four symbols are the result of the combination of the two forms. Two yang symbols placed together, one above the other, are called the great yang (太阳). A yin sign placed above a yang sign is called the lesser yin (少阴). One yin sign placed above another is called the great yin (太阴). A yang sign placed above a yin sign is called the lesser yang (少阳, See Table 2.3a).

The principle of the four symbols can be applied to every object or situation. Based upon its characteristics, principle and quantity, everything can be divided into four mutually related subdivisions. For a simple example, we can use yin and yang symbols to describe the relationships among several different nations in terms of population and land. Nations like the United States and China have a lot of land and large populations. Some nations, like Canada and Australia, have a lot of land but relatively small populations. A country like Japan has a dense population and a small amount of land, whereas countries like Iceland have both little land and small populations. Using the lower position of the four symbols to indicate the amount of land (yang for large, and yin for small) and the upper position to indicate the population density (yang for densely populated, and yin for sparsely populated), notice the comparative symbols shown in Figure 2.3e. According to the diagram, China and the United States are countries of great yang, while a country like Iceland is one of great yin.

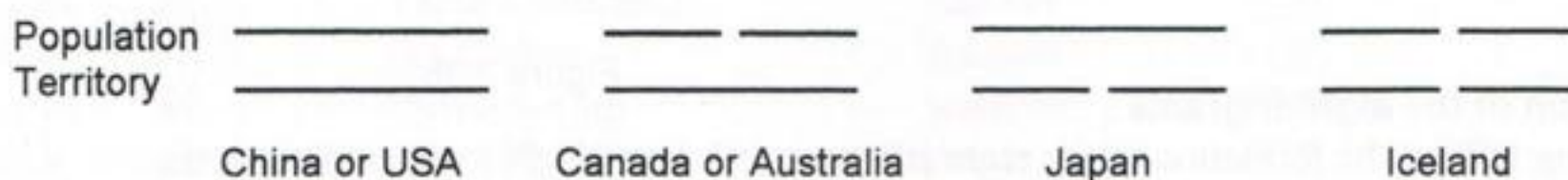


Figure 2.3e

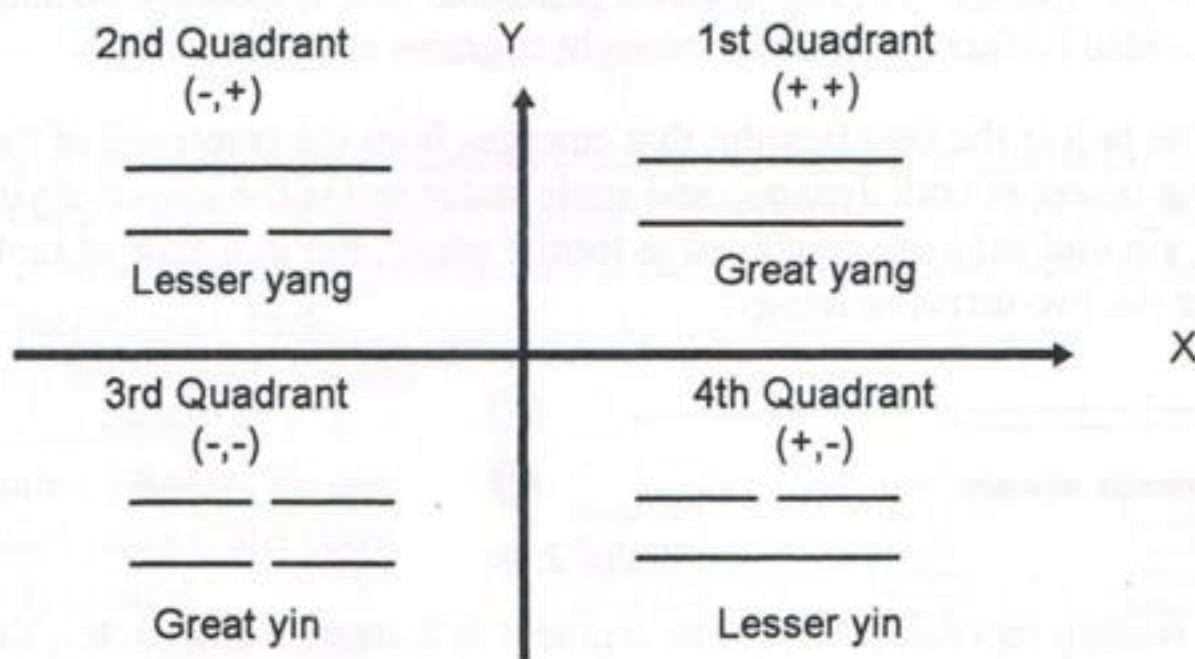


Figure 2.3f

The geometric equivalents of the four symbols are the four quadrants of a rectangular coordinate plane. As in the two forms, yang represents positive direction and yin represents negative direction. Figure 2.3f demonstrates the relationships between the four symbols and the four quadrants.

Now reflect on the yin/yang relationship another way. Using numerical symbols, the *Yijing* represents taiji as zero, yang as one (an odd number), and yin as two (an even number). It is more effective, however, to use the binary system to illustrate the properties of yin and yang.

If zero represents yang and one represents yin, the properties of the four symbols, taken in order, can be explained from the numerical point of view (See Table 2.3a).

The "Eight." Diagrams on the development of the taiji system help to demonstrate how the taiji produced the two forms and the two forms produced the four symbols, which produced the eight trigrams. Three different methods are used to explain this process. One uses a circular form (See Figure 2.3g), another uses a rectangular form (See Figure 2.3h), and the third uses a tree diagram (See Figure 2.3i).

Table 2.3a

Four Symbols	Symbol	Binary System	Decimal System	Order	Odd/Even
Great Yang	☰	00	0	1	Even
Lesser Yin	☷	01	1	2	Odd
Lesser Yang	☱	10	2	3	Even
Great Yin	☶	11	3	4	Odd

Principles from the taiji system also lend themselves to describing relationships in geometry. Figure 2.3j uses three-dimensional space coordinates to show the difference between the right-handed and the left-handed systems. Whether in a right-handed or a left-handed system, the three coordinate planes divide the space into eight parts called octants. Mathematicians still have not determined the order of the octants. However, if you assume that yang is the

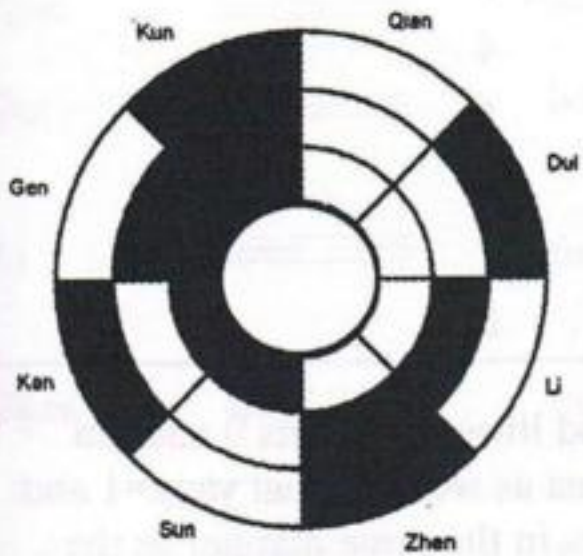


Figure 2.3g

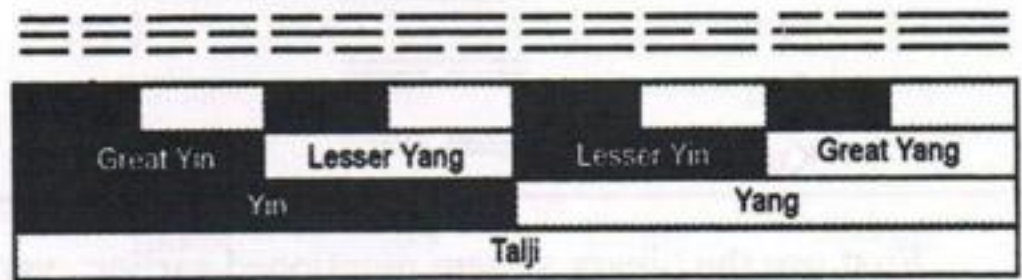


Figure 2.3h

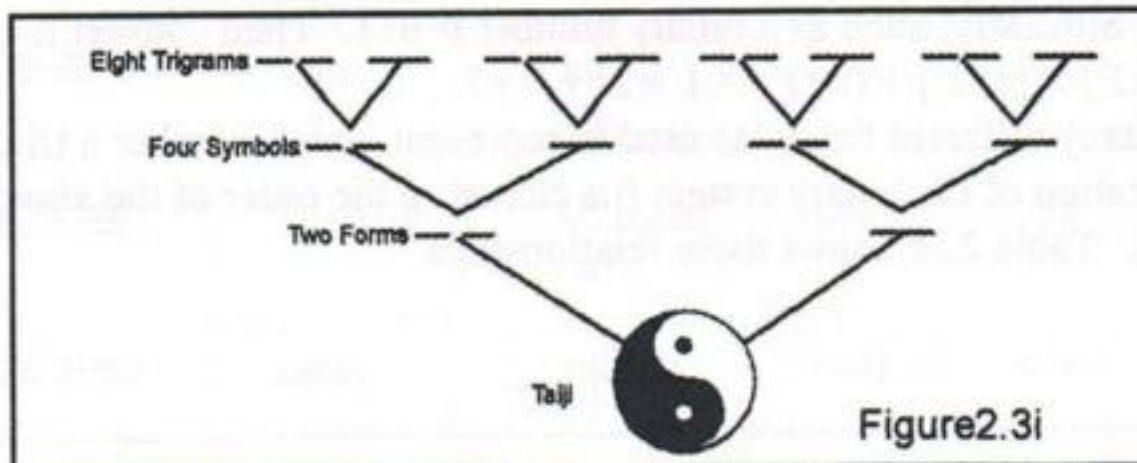


Figure 2.3i

positive direction and yin is the negative direction of each axis and use the arrangements of xiantian and houtian eight trigrams as references, it is easy to determine the order of the octants (See Table 2.3b).

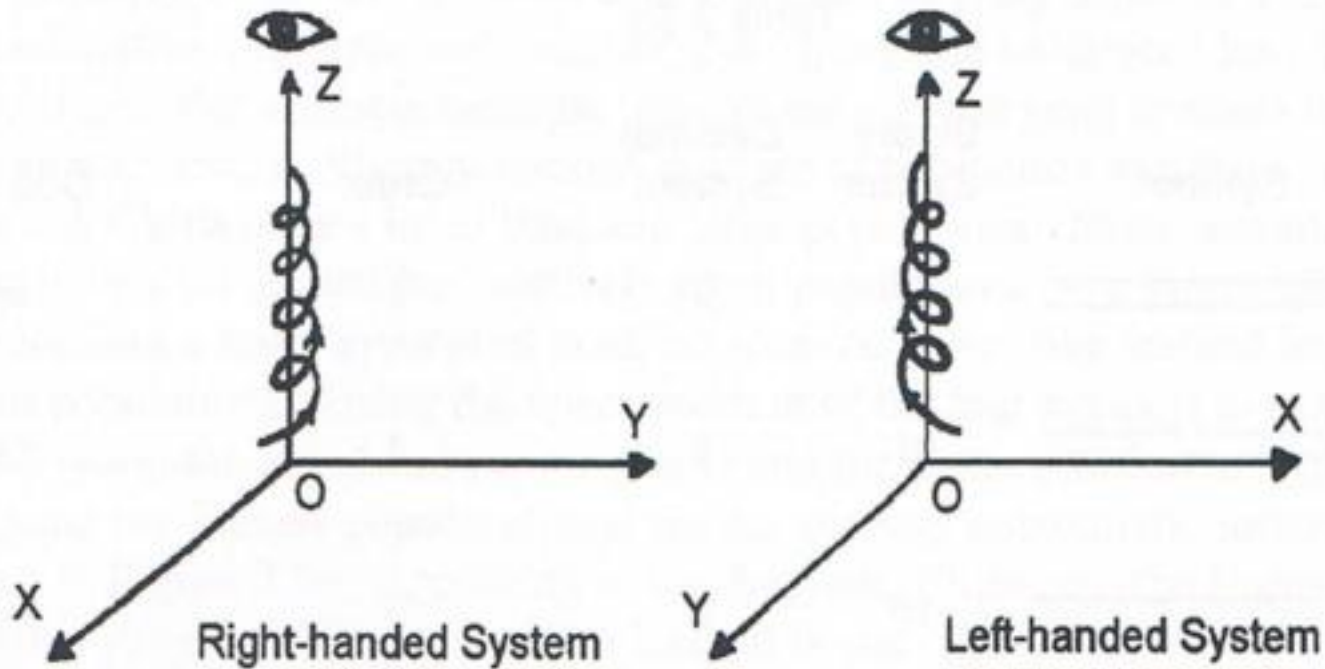


Figure 2.3j



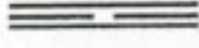
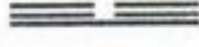
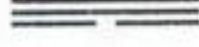
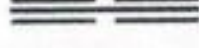
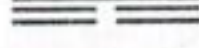
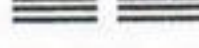
Table 2.3b

Trigram	Symbol	Octant	Order
Qian	☰	(+,+,+)	1
Dui	☱	(+,+,-)	2
Li	☲	(+,-,+)	3
Zhen	☳	(+,-,-)	4
Sun	☴	(-,+,+)	5
Kan	☵	(-,+,-)	6
Gen	☶	(-,-,+)	7
Kun	☷	(-,-,-)	8

First use the binary system mentioned earlier: yang (solid line) represents 0 and yin (broken line) represents 1. (Please keep in mind that you could just as well say that yang=1 and yin=0.) A trigram is read from the bottom to the top. It progresses in the same manner as the binary system, but the binary system reads right to left. For example, Kan is 101 in the binary system. Convert this from binary to decimal system: $(1 \times 2^0) + (0 \times 2^1) + (1 \times 2^2) = 1 + 0 + 4 = 5$ in the decimal system. Similarly, zhen as a binary number is 011. Then convert it back into the decimal system: $(1 \times 2^0) + (1 \times 2^1) + (0 \times 2^2) = 1 + 2 + 0 = 3$.


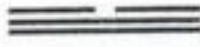

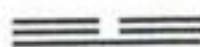
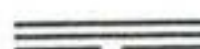
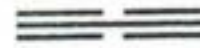

There are many different formulas used to represent which number a trigram may equal, but this application of the binary system fits closest to the order of the xiantian arrangement of the trigrams. Table 2.3c shows these relationships.

Table 2.3c

Trigram	Symbol	Binary System	Decimal System	Order
Qian		000	0	1
Dui		001	1	2
Li		010	2	3
Zhen		011	3	4
Sun		100	4	5
Kan		101	5	6
Gen		110	6	7
Kun		111	7	8

The binary system was developed by the German mathematician Leibnitz in the nineteenth century. However, the ancient Chinese were familiar with the idea of the binary system through the eight trigrams five thousand years ago! Furthermore, each of the eight trigrams represents both a numerical concept and suggests the nature of the object it symbolizes. The relationships between the trigrams and other categories shown in Table 2.3d were created thousands of years ago.

Table 2.3d

Trigram	Symbol	Image	Family Relative	Body	Animal	Characteristic strength
Qian		heaven	father	head	horse	strength
Dui		lake	youngest daughter	mouth	sheep	pleasure
Li		fire	middle daughter	eye	pheasant	clinging
Zhen		thunder	oldest son	foot	dragon	shaking
Sun		wind	oldest daughter	thigh	rooster	gentle
Kan		water	middle son	ear	hawk	abysmal
Gen		mountain	youngest son	hand	dog	stillness
Kun		earth	mother	belly	cow	accepting

Taijiquan has eight basic postures which are symbolized by the eight trigrams: ward-off (棚), roll-back (掎), press (擠), push (按), pull-down (採), split (捌), elbow (肘) and shoulder-strike (靠). Each is related to qian, kun, kan, li, sun, zhen, dui and gen, respectively. These postures are explained in Chapter 6.1.

2.4 The *Yijing* and Taijiquan. The text of the *Yijing* was prepared before 1000 BC, some time during the last days of the Shang Dynasty (商朝, 1766-1150 BC) and the beginning of the Zhou Dynasty (周朝, 1150-249 BC). It was one of the five classics (五经), edited by Confucius or Kongzi (孔子, 551-479 BC), who is reported to have wished he had fifty more years to study it. The *Yijing* has still not lost its enormous significance. Representatives from every segment of Chinese society—Confucianists and Daoists, learned literary scholars and street shamans, the official state cult and private individuals—have at one time or another consulted the *Yijing*.

The *Yijing* is not a religious book, but rather a book of profound wisdom that describes nature in terms of linear symbols. The method used in the *Yijing* analyzes every phenomenon into six stages. The symbols of yin and yang indicate the process of change. No matter how complex the event, the *Yijing* can trace the past, explain the present and predict the future. *The Great Treatise or Dazhuan* (大篆) describes the wide applicability of the *Yijing*.

“The use of the *Yi* is wide and great! If we speak of what is far, no limit can be set to it; if we speak of what is near, it is still and correct; if we speak of what is between heaven and earth, it embraces everything.”

From the above comments, we can see that the domain of the *Yijing* is as profound and all encompassing as the universe. Not only does it explain the relationships among people in society, but it also can provide an explanation for the ever-changing phenomena of the natural world. Within the changing processes of the universe, the *Yijing* searches for the unchanging truth of the entire process of origin, development and outcome.

The Chinese character *yi* was created by combining symbols for the sun (日) and the moon (月). The sun symbol representing the yang force was placed on top of the moon symbol indicating the yin force. Based on the principles manifested in such natural phenomena, *yi* has three meanings: the easy, the changing, and the constant.

The book starts with the observation of natural events and daily life. These things are simple and easy to understand, e.g., a decayed willow sprouting flowers. *Dazhuan*, one of the oldest commentaries on the *Yijing*, describes the results of following the way of the easy and simple.

“Qian knows through the easy.
Kun does things simply.
What is easy is easy to know.
What is simple is simple to follow.
He who is easy to know makes friends.
He who is simple to follow attains good works.
He who possesses friends can endure forever.
He who performs good works can become great.”

The *Yijing* also describes the constant and the changing as follows: The wind changes the mirror image of a white cloud reflected in a stream, but the substance (i.e., the white cloud itself) is still unchanged. Although this change appears natural and simple, it is complicated in

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meaning. In order to understand the concept of change, you must first consider the opposite of change. You might think that the opposite of change is rest or standstill; however, these are but aspects of change. According to Chinese philosophy, the opposite of change is the growth of what ought to decrease, the downfall of what ought to rule. Change, then, is not an external principle that imprints itself upon phenomena; it is an inner tendency by which development naturally takes place. Although the phenomena of the universe are continually changing, underlying their changes is the principle of constancy. For example, if there is lightning, thunder must follow; after the moon is full, it must wane; if a decayed willow produces flowers, they will not last long.

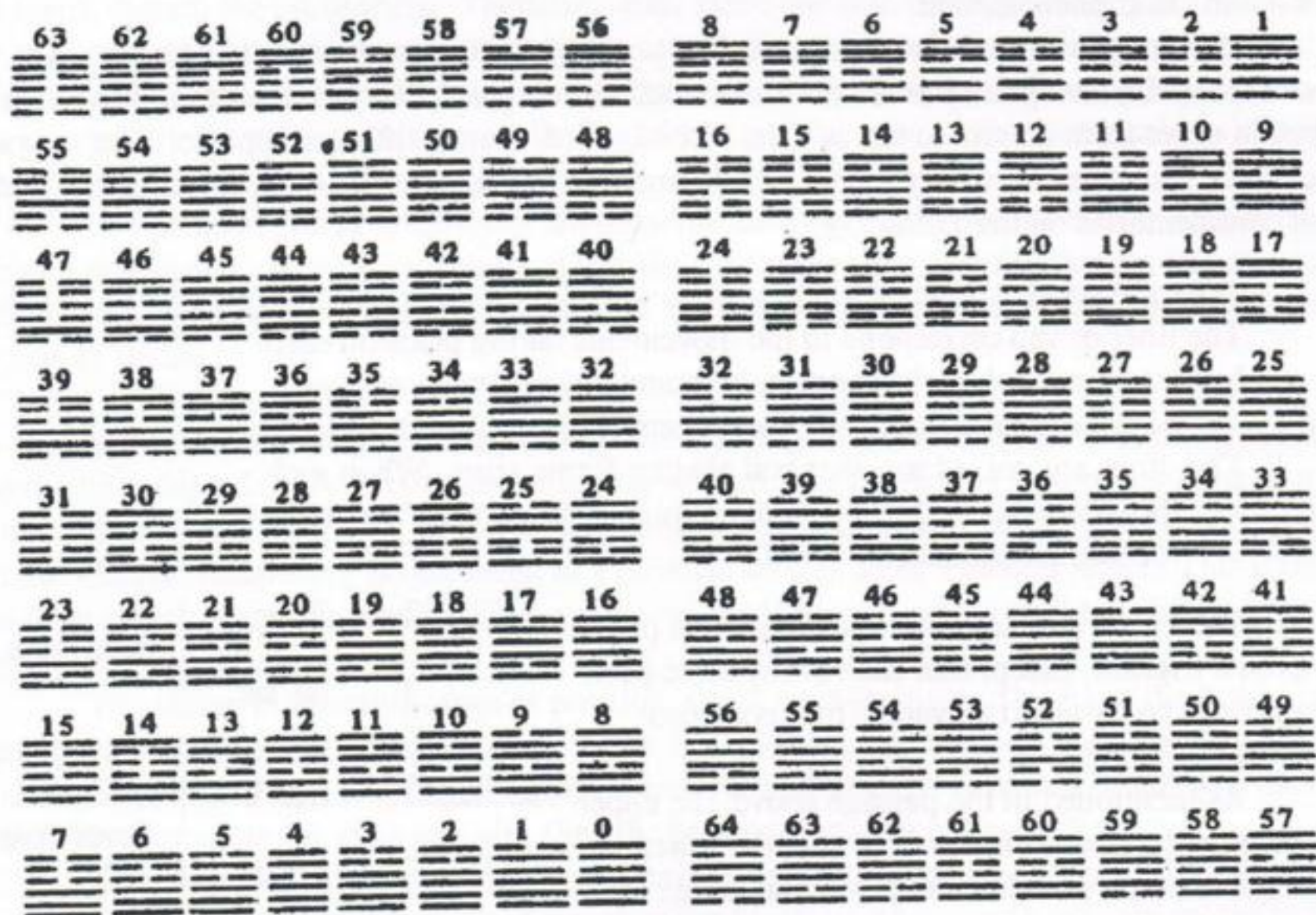


Figure 2.4a

The concepts in the *Yijing* are based on the taiji, which, as described earlier, develops into the two forms, which lead to the four symbols, which precede the eight trigrams. From the eight trigrams the 64 hexagrams are formed, as shown in Figure 2.4a.

Every pair of trigrams has its mutual relationship and purpose; put together, the two trigrams become a hexagram and form a logical whole with a unique meaning and developmental process. For example, if earth is below and heaven above, the proper balance is symbolized. If the position of the two trigrams be reversed, the opposite of the natural order, the meaning attached to the hexagram is weakness (See Figure 2.4 b).

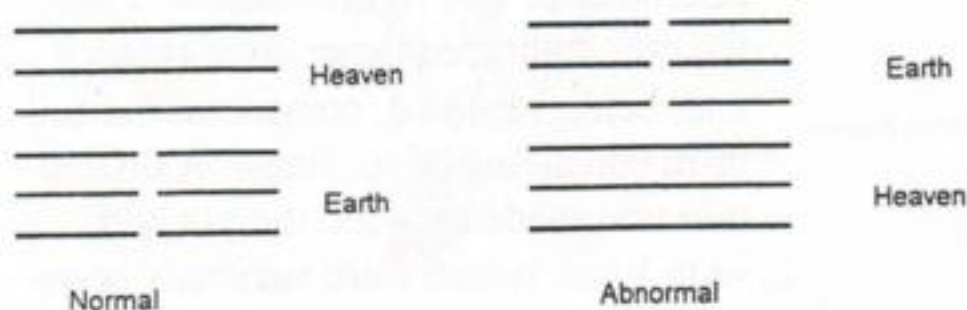


Figure 2.4b

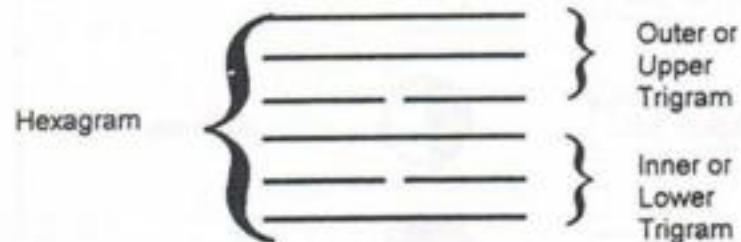


Figure 2.4c

As illustrated in Figure 2.4c, the name for the lower trigram is the inner trigram (内卦), while the upper one is called the outer trigram (外卦).

The inner and outer trigrams can be understood in terms of the development of a particular phenomenon. For example, when a stone is thrown into the water, ripples of concentric circles spread outward from the point of contact. The force of the throw determines the speed and size of the resulting ripples. Like the stone in this example, the inner trigram represents the foundation of a particular phenomenon. Like the ripples, the outer trigram illustrates the outward development of an event. The way in which an outside situation develops depends on its basic inner foundation. The inner trigram then is the cause, and the outer trigram the effect of each particular phenomenon.

Each trigram has three positions called *yao* (爻) for the arrangement of yin or yang lines. Since each hexagram has six positions, each has six yao. The yao in a hexagram are described in order from bottom to top as first, second, third, fourth, fifth and top yao. The six yao indicate the six stages necessary for the development of a phenomenon. According to the traditional commentaries on the *Yijing*.

“The yao speaks of the changes.

The lines of yao correspond to the movements taking place on earth.

In the trigrams, these lines are in high and low positions, and we designate them from their component elements; yin or yang.

The lines are mixed together and elegant forms arise. When such forms are not in their appropriate places, the ideas of good and bad fortune are produced.”

The yao in a hexagram follow the same pattern as in a trigram, except that each of the three powers or images consists of two yao. Their positions are shown in Figure 2.4d.

As mentioned in the passage above, the upper yao contains the image of heaven or sky, the lower yao the image of earth, and the middle yao the image of the humanity or man. These three images are called the three powers (三才) as indicated in Figure 2.4e.

The Treatise of Remarks on the Trigrams or *Shaokang* (少康) explains the development of the trigrams and hexagrams in the following way:

“When the ancient sages described the *Yi*, its figures conformed to the principles underlying the nature of men and things, and the ordinances appointed for them by Heaven. They exhibited the way of Heaven, calling the lines yin and

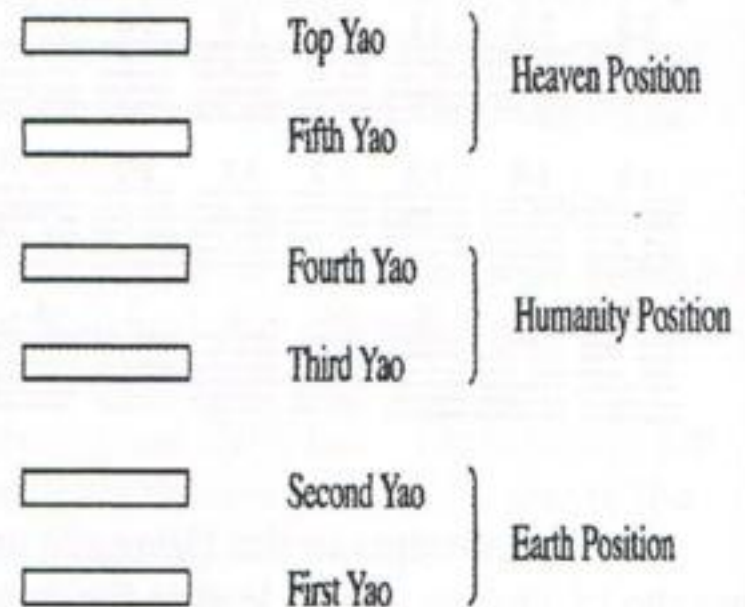


Figure 2.4d

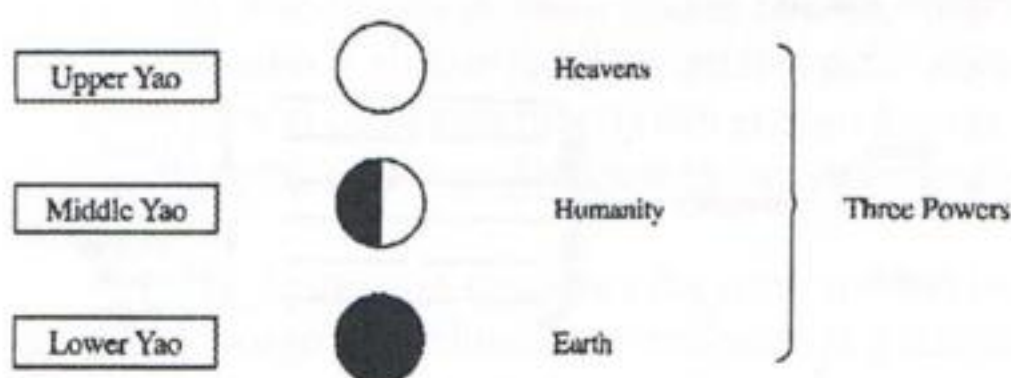


Figure 2.4e

yang; the way of earth, the weak (soft) and strong (hard); and the way of men, benevolence and righteousness. Each trigram embraced those three powers, and, being repeated, comprised the full form consisting of six lines. A distinction was made between the yin and yang lines, which were variously occupied by the strong and weak forms.

Thus, the figure of each hexagram was completed.”

Taijiquan was developed from these basic principles of the *Yijing*. In taiji, the inner trigram represents your state of mind and the outer one the condition of your body. These two sets of trigrams represent a series of continuous movements that incorporate the constant change between yin and yang. The principles of yin/yang changes apply to the visible outer movements as well as to the changes occurring inside your body and mind. In addition, balanced, harmonious movements and psychological well-being are interrelated. Compare your body to a car carrying passengers (the inner organs and the nervous system). If the driver of this car goes smoothly, the passengers will feel comfortable. Jarring movements, on the other hand, will disturb the passengers. Therefore, your mind needs to direct your body in the practice of smooth, continuous movements. At the same time, if you take care of the outside (i.e., the movements), the outside will automatically take care of the inside. Following taiji principles in your outside posture promotes a feeling of mental “stillness.” This inner calm will help you deal more easily with your life in general.

The principle ideas underlying taijiquan are easily grasped, but the movements need constant practice. Gradually, the physical and the psychological aspects of this art join in mutual harmony. You will eventually be in perfect accord with heaven and coexist peacefully with the way of nature.

2.5 Applying the Philosophy of Taijiquan. The starting stage of taijiquan can be compared to a seed being planted in the ground in the spring. Something inside this seed is changing to a sprout. In much the same way the concept of practicing taijiquan is formed in the very first moment of change; everything is mobilized in a physical as well as in a mental sense. This transition from outer stillness to readiness for movement is called going from wuji to taiji (无极而太极).

To assume the starting stage or position, stand erect facing north. Keep the head, neck and torso in one line, perpendicular to the earth, but relax. Avoid any nervous or muscular tension, any conscious facial expression. Empty your mind of thought. The result will be a look of serenity, representing the state of wuji. (See the beginning stance in Figure 2.5a).

Once you assume the starting stage of taiji, you have a strong intention to practice taijiquan. The weight of your body rests squarely on your feet; in other words, you are rooted to the

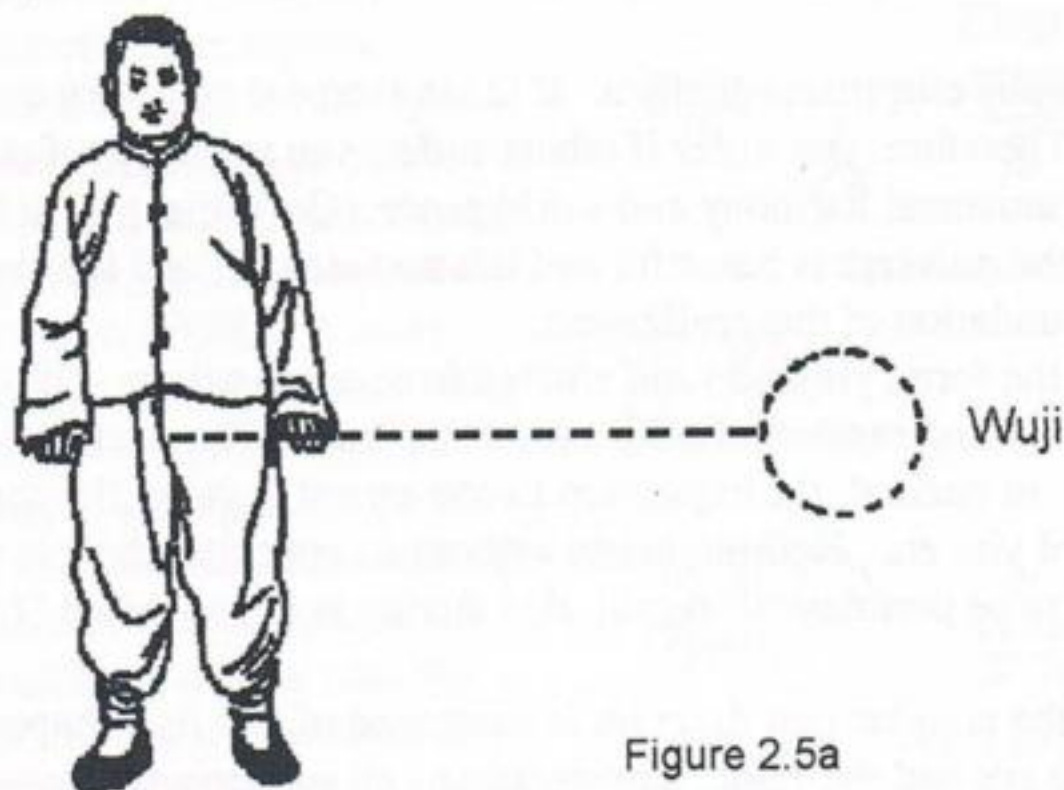


Figure 2.5a

ground. The Chinese say, “The root of the body is in the feet” (其根在脚); this rootedness evokes the image of the earth. In order for the spirit of vitality or *shen* (神) to ascend to the top of your head, hold your spine straight and your head as if it is suspended by a string from the ceiling. The image of the sky is evoked by the saying, “The shen reaches to the top of the head” or *xulingdingjing* (虚领顶劲). With a relaxed sense of alertness, “open” every bone and muscle. This allows your intrinsic energy or *qi* to sink to your dantian’s center, a point three fingers below the navel, and two fingers’ width inside your abdomen. This principle, represented by the image of humanity, is described as “the *qi* sinks to the dantian” (气沉丹田, See Figure 2.5b).

The idea of the three powers is very important in that it shows humanity living between earth and sky. When you practice taijiquan for years, gradually you will feel that every movement of taijiquan is the movement of the universe. You will feel as if you are moving like the

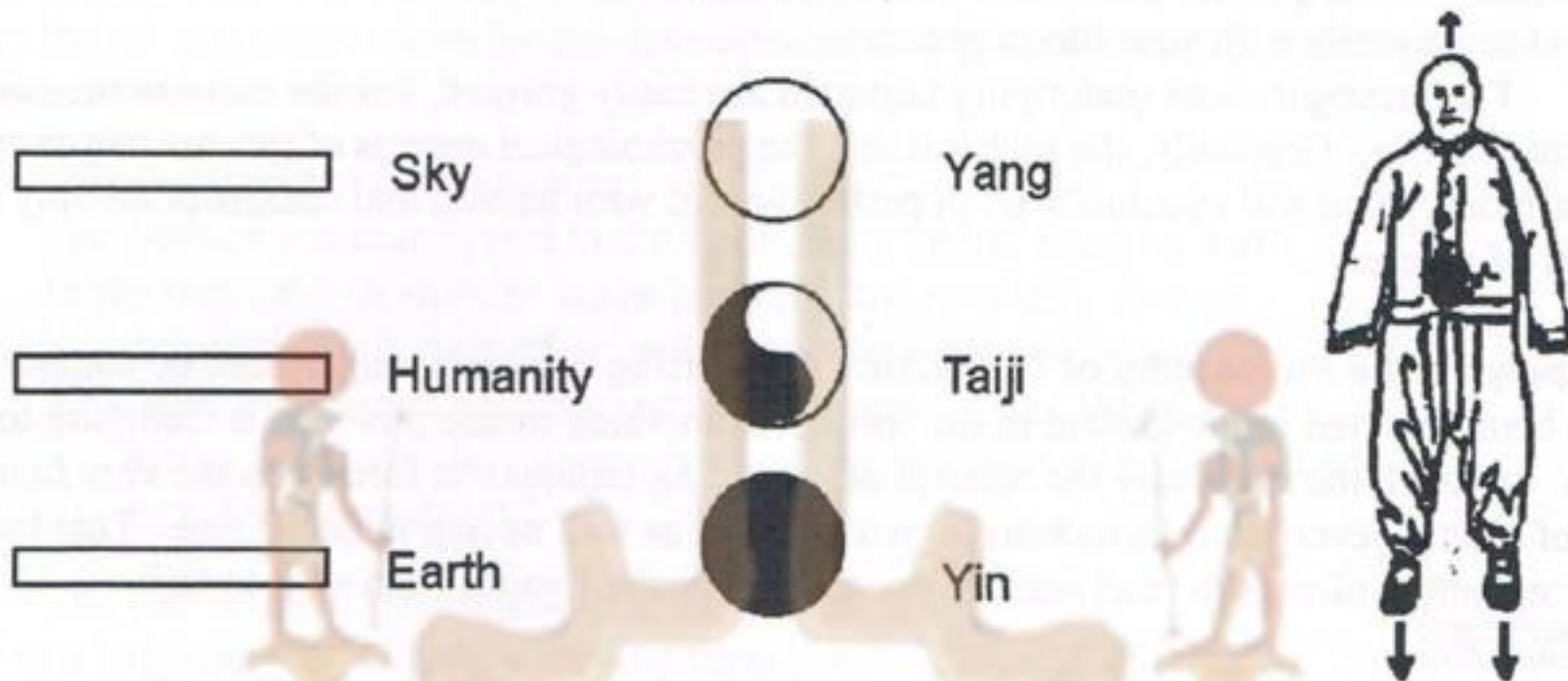


Figure 2.5b

branch of a tree, blown every which way by the wind. Your breathing will be part of the movement of the universe as well. The awareness of the environment being engaged in a gigantic cosmic dance will suddenly dawn on you. You and the universe will become identical, like the taiji diagram. You are then the taiji and the taiji will be you; you will be the universe and the universe will be you.

This taiji philosophy eliminates dualism. If the universe is you, then everything the universe reveals is you. Therefore, you suffer if others suffer; you are happy if others are happy. This is the foundation of universal harmony and world peace. Only after you achieve this realization can you feel that the universe is beautiful and life meaningful, and the starting stage, executed correctly, is the foundation of this realization.

Once you begin the form, yin and yang emerge from every action. Solidity and emptiness (虚实) or substantiality and insubstantiality start to separate. The stretch of your arms is yang, the withdrawal yin; in general, the expansion in movement is yang, the contraction yin; forward is yang, backward yin, etc. Nothing exists without its opposite; there is nothing that does not change in order to be permanent. Again, this duality is the so-called “two forms” of yin and yang.

Remember that the circular taiji diagram is composed of two fish-shaped designs that fit perfectly together—the yin and the yang. Consequently, all patterns and designs of taijiquan consist of arcs, circles and curves of all sizes, each which balance yin and yang. Like a scale in

which one side must be up when the other side is down, taiji movements contain yin and yang in balance.

Since yang has the image of substantiality or solidity, it follows that yin must have the image of insubstantiality or emptiness. Solid and empty, although opposites, are not in opposition; although different, they complement each other. Continuous movement occurs between them, without beginning and without end. When yin reaches its final moment, yang is created; when yang is completed, yin begins again.

It is important then in practicing taijiquan to distinguish solidity from emptiness (分清虛實). Within solidity there must be emptiness, just as there is yin in yang and yang in yin (see Figure 2.5c).

The development from the four symbols into the eight trigrams is the next step in taijiquan. The eight trigrams (八卦) represent the eight basic postures of taijiquan, also called the

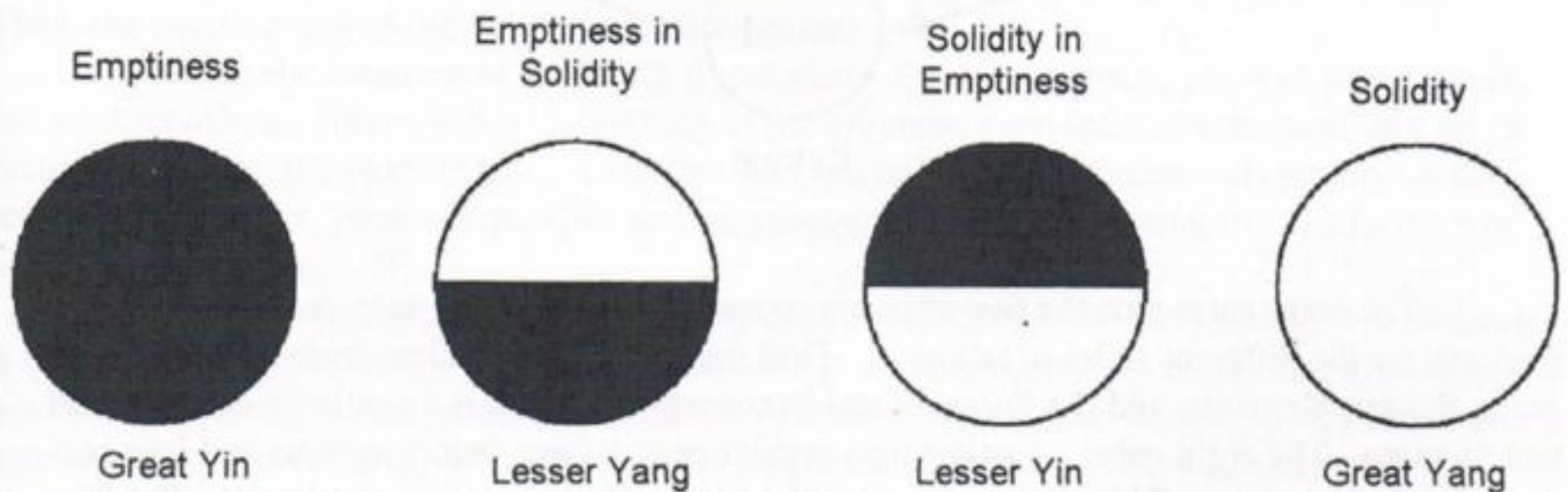


Figure 2.5c

eight gates or *bamen* (八門): ward-off or *bing* (棚), roll-back or *luo* (捋), press or *ji* (擠), push or *an* (按), pull-down or *cai* (採), split or *lie* (掙), elbow or *zhou* (肘), and shoulder-strike or *kao* (靠). The relationships between the eight gates and the eight trigrams are shown in Figure 2.5d.

Ward-off, roll-back, press and push are associated with the south, north, west and east, respectively. They are named the four directions or *sizheng* (四正). The positions of pull-down, split, elbow and shoulder-strike are associated with the southwest, northeast, southeast and northwest, respectively, so these are called the four corners or *siyu* (四隅). A more detailed explanation of the eight gates will be given in Chapter 6.

According to Zhangsanfeng's *Theory of Taijiquan*, "the five steps" or *wubu* of taijiquan are: advance, retreat, look to the left, gaze to the right and central equilibrium." As shown in Figure 2.5e, these five steps can represent the five elements: metal, wood, water, fire and earth.

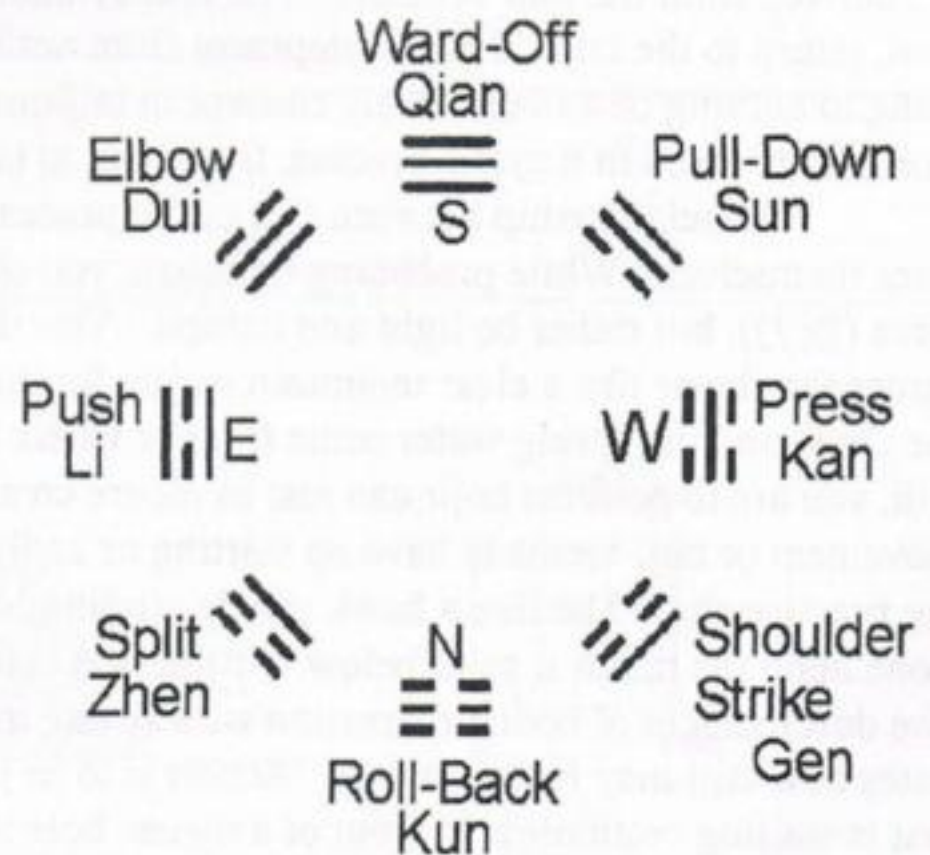


Figure 2.5d

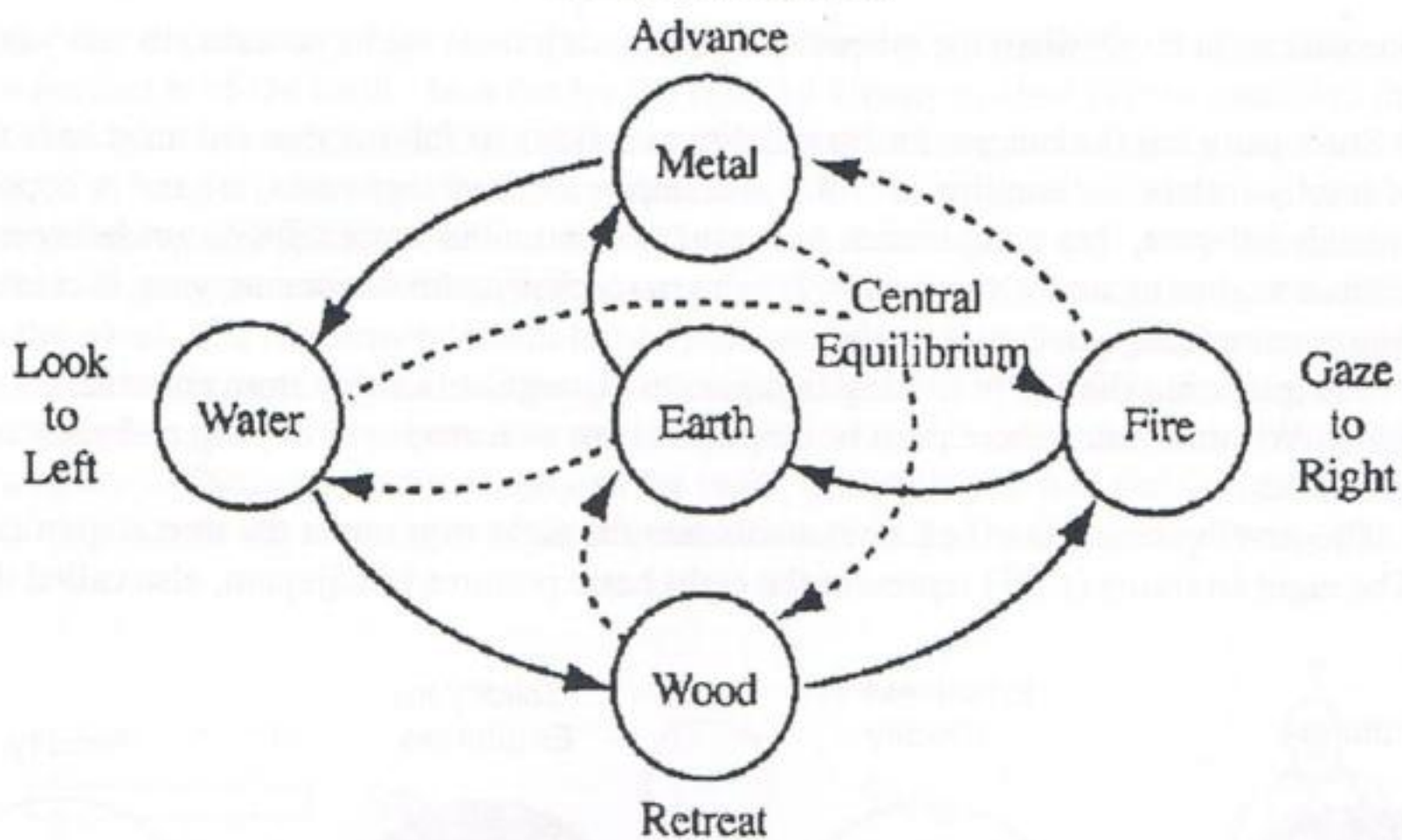


Figure 2.5e

The eight gates plus the five steps are termed the taijiquan thirteen postures (十三势), the basis for the different styles of taijiquan. Thus, taijiquan applies ideas from the taiji diagram, the five elements, and the *Yijing*. Total in concept, taijiquan is a synthesis of movement and function. The eight gates, constituting a regular octant, have four directions and four corners. Both are squares. This octant generates the hand and upper torso movements. The five steps form a circle, generating the leg and foot movements. The squares or octant and the circle are connected by the body. You could imagine the square and the circle as cardboard figures connected in the center, your dantian, by a string.

In fact, the circle and the square may be interchanged. That is, the circle may generate the square and vice versa. According to the *Yijing* theory, there is unlimited interaction. Yet all of these changes are confined to the domain of the changing eight trigrams, which themselves are derived from the four symbols. The four symbols, however, come from the two forms that in turn, return to the taiji. The development from nothing to something and the return from something to nothing describes a basic concept in taijiquan and Daoist philosophy. Everything in the world is involved in a cyclic process, from wuji to taiji and then back again to wuji.

The relationship between this cyclic process and taijiquan is clearly reflected in the postures themselves. While practicing taijiquan, you should not use even the slightest awkward force (拙力), but rather be light and natural. You should move like the white cloud passing across the sky or like a clear mountain spring forming a running creek. No one knows where the cloud and the spring water come from or where they will be going. Moving from wuji to taiji, you are to perform taijiquan just as nature creates the cloud and the water. Your outside movement or taiji seems to have no starting or ending point or wuji. In addition, the mind during practice should be like a hawk slowly circling high up in effortless flight, but falling like a stone upon the rabbit it spies below. Stillness is concealed within the constant flying action. The development of bodily relaxation with strong mental intention after constant practice illustrates how taiji may return to wuji. Action is to be hidden behind apparent stillness, just as a cat that is waiting motionless in front of a mouse hole is poised for a deadly pounce the instant the mouse appears. Thus, you should be totally concentrated at all times without using outer force.

Finally, although the movements are large and stretched at first, they become subtler during the more advanced stages. The emphasis shifts from the outside form to the inside one. During the final stage, no outward movement can be detected; yet a master, when touched, can throw an opponent across the room.

The result of long practice and proper execution of taijiquan comes into sight when the practitioner achieves an internal cleansing which is manifested as a clear flame or fire. This flame is the image of unity within the individual, resulting from disengagement from the confusing and distracting physical surroundings. Eventually, while practicing taijiquan time and space are no longer relevant. The practitioner does not even perceive the presence of other people. Neither sight, sound, nor the passing of time pierce concentration on the taijiquan. When this stage occurs, you are no longer a separate unity but mix with the universe and become reconnected to the unity of everything. You progress from achieving personal unity, the first great achievement in the practice of taijiquan, to the next step of synchronicity with the universe. Thus, the environment of the fourth dimension is near.

What is the meaning of the fourth dimension? From a geometric point of view, a point has no dimensions. Nevertheless, everything in the universe, even the universe itself, is a set of points. In reality, the point is taiji. A straight line has only one dimension—its length. A directed line, however, possesses positive and negative directions representing the two forms, yin and yang (See Figure 2.5f).

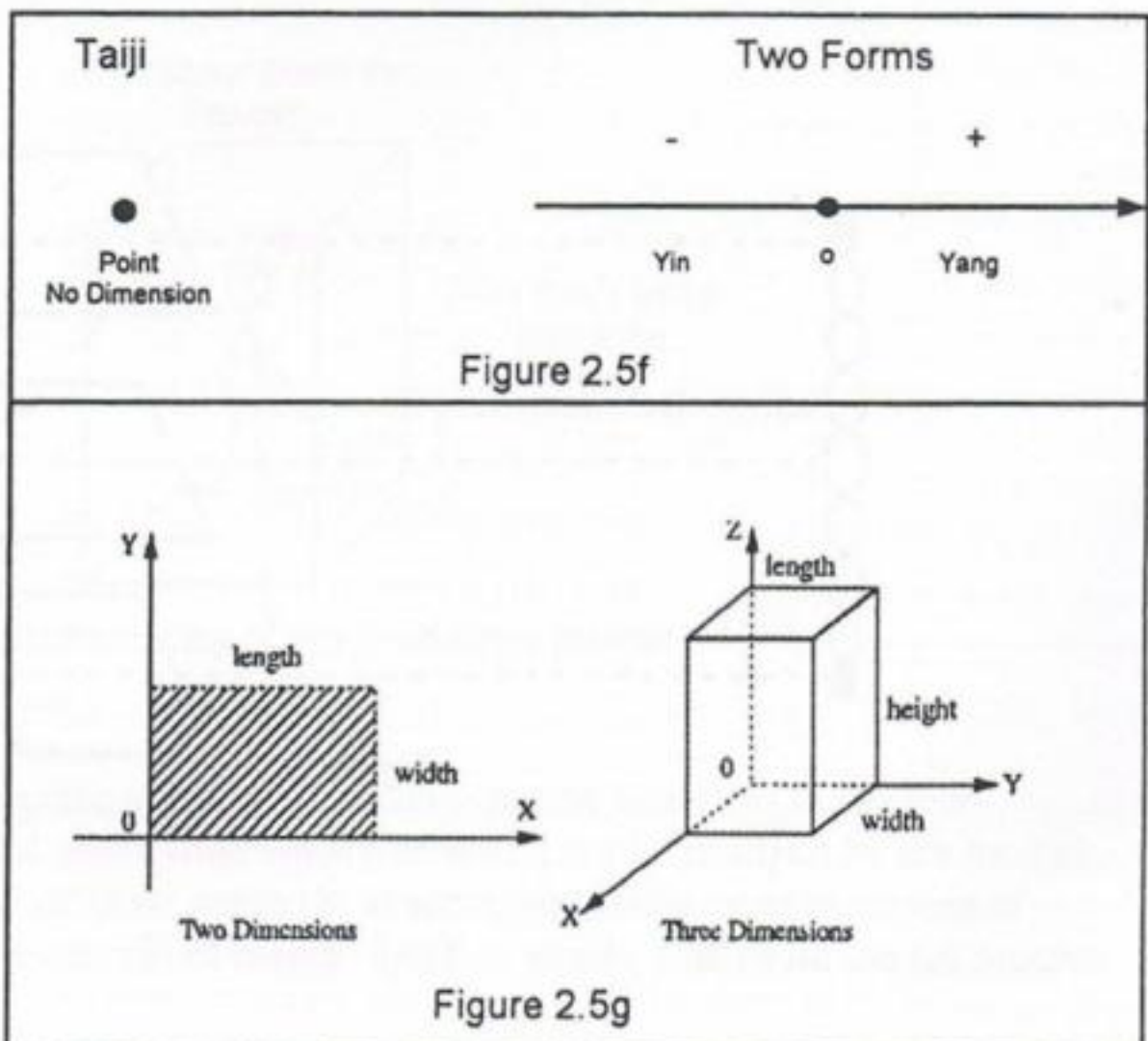
A plane has length and width bringing us to two dimensions. If a rectangle's coordinate is set, there are four quadrants, which represent the geometric equivalent of the four symbols. A hexahedron, having length, width and height is of a three dimensional nature. If a space coordinate is set, eight octants appear, providing the geometric equivalent of the eight trigrams (See Figure 2.5g).

In order to conceptualize the fourth dimension, add time to length, width and height. We call this the space-time dimension and represent it with the vectors [x, y, z and t].

In general we live in a three-dimensional world but are continually in contact with the flow of time. Therefore, our domain of thinking always reaches into the four-dimensional world.

Einstein's theory of relativity provides us with an example of how our thinking extends into the fourth dimension. Since relativity theory deals with the discovery of secrets relating time and space, it is difficult to understand and accept for most of us. Studying the *Yijing* diligently and practicing taijiquan regularly will open the essential harmony between Eastern wisdom and Western science.

Let us who live in a three-dimensional world take a look at something in a two-dimensional world and begin to understand the differences between dimensions.



Consider the following example of the two-dimensional world: a shadow has only the size of its shape but no thickness. Then imagine for a moment that this shadow has the ability to think and feel as we do. Under these circumstances what would the shadow's perception be of an apple falling from a tree? From our point of view it is so easy to describe and to talk about, but since the shadow lives in a two-dimensional world, lacking the sense of height, it will not know anything before the apple reaches or after the apple leaves the plane where the shadow exists. In other words, the shadow experiences only the intersection of the apple with the plane of its existence (See Figure 2.5h).

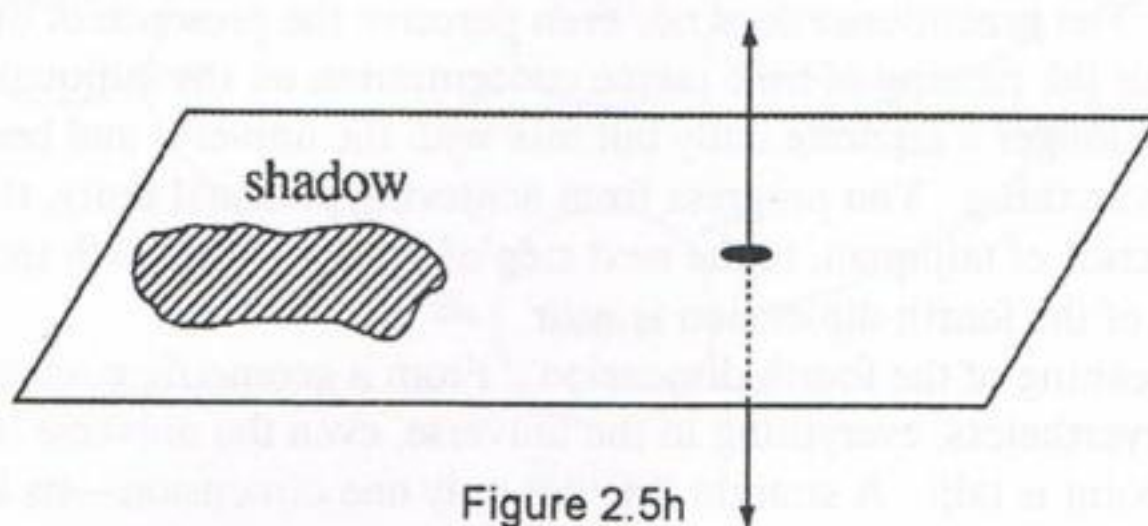


Figure 2.5h

At first, when the apple begins to touch the plane, the shadow can see a point of contact on the plane. When the apple falls further, the shadow will see a continued series of circles, which are the intersections of the plane and the bottom part of the apple. The further down the apple comes, the larger the circles will be until the maximum size is reached at the point where the middle of the apple intersects with the plane. After the intersection with the largest part of the apple, the circles seen by the shadow will steadily decrease in size. Finally, a point appears which is the intersection of the top of the apple just leaving the plane where the shadow exists. The above explanation is worthwhile to study since it gives us an understanding of the experience of a falling apple from a two-dimensional perspective, shown in Figure 2.5i.

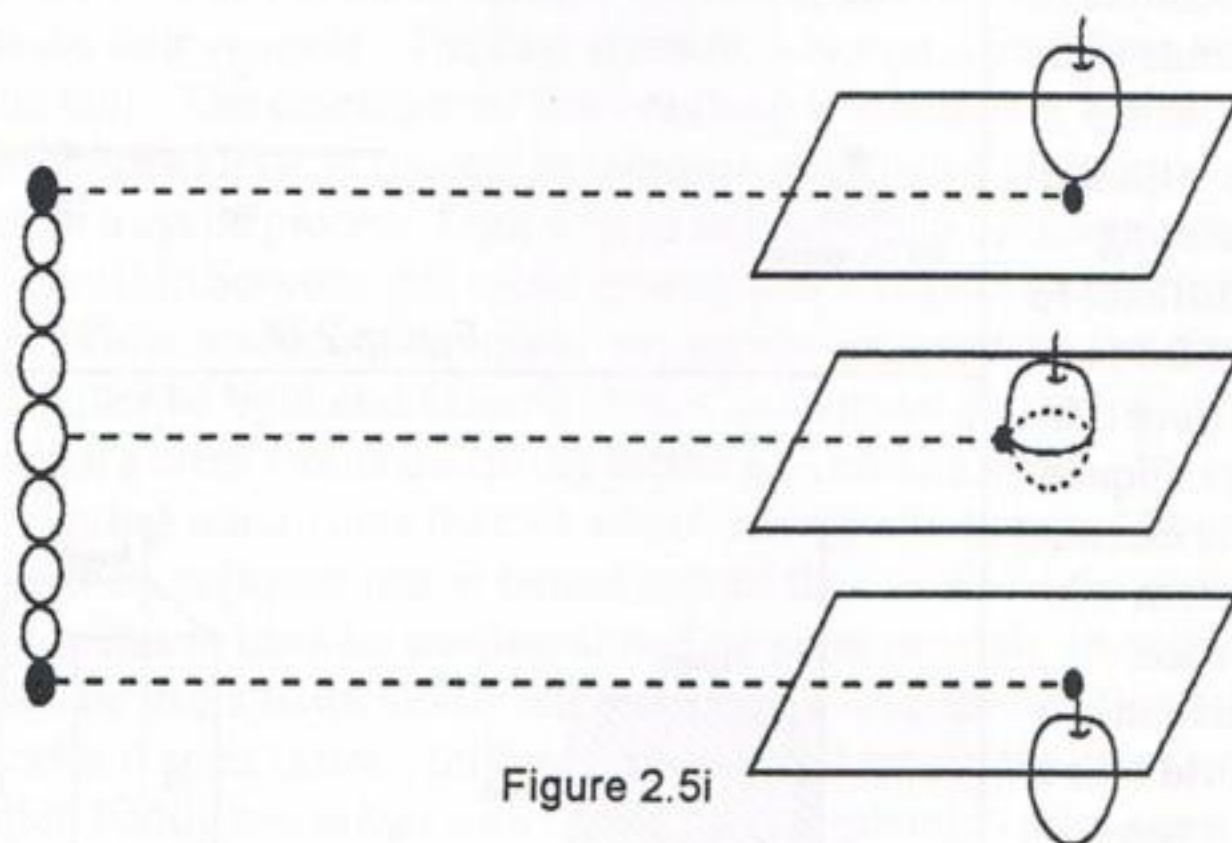


Figure 2.5i

The “real” situation, as we see it from a three-dimensional point of view is shown in Figure 2.5j.

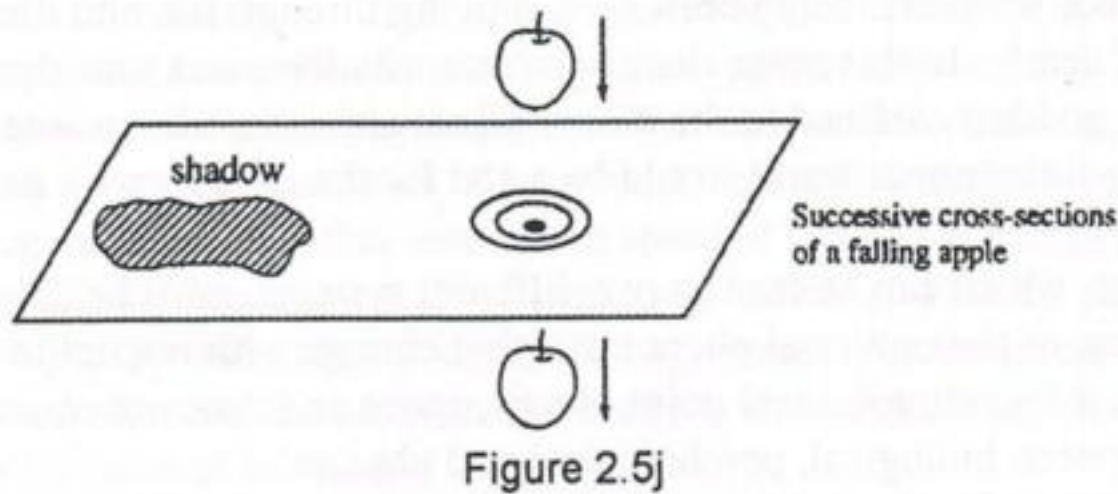
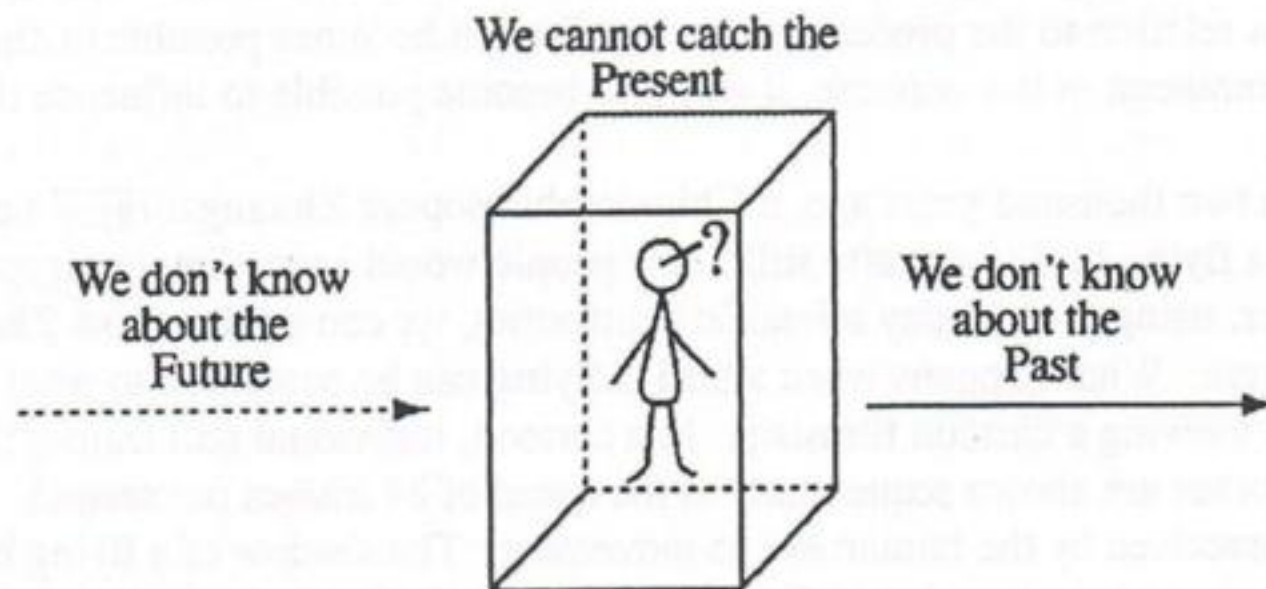


Figure 2.5j

The shadow has no way of understanding as we do the entire process of an apple's falling from a tree, nor does the shadow realize the entire shape of an apple since it has no sense of height. Its experience is limited to the width and length of the plane. Even if it were possible to tell the shadow what the shape of an apple is and that it first grew on a tree and then fell to the ground, it would not change the shadow's perception of the apple since its understanding is limited to two-dimensional concepts. For similar reasons, Einstein's theory of relativity is difficult for most people to comprehend. Since we are living in a three-dimensional world of length, width and height, we are not cognizant of the dimension of time; just as the shadow is ignorant of height. No person has ever seen the future; no shadow perceives any form before the apple reaches the plane where the shadow lives. No one has caught the past, nor is the shadow aware of how the apple came to penetrate its plane of existence. We can perceive only a continuous series of moments (the present), much as the shadow can “see” only the points and circles of the intersections of the apple with the plane of its existence. We are unable to grasp the meaning of this continuous “present,” just as the shadow cannot understand what the shape of the apple is like. No one knows where this continuous present came from and where it will go (See Figure 2.5k).



What is the meaning of this continuous present?

Figure 2.5k

One way to answer this question would be to find someone who lives in the four-dimensional world. S/He could tell us the truth since s/he would not be confined by our limited concept of time. S/He would be to us as we are to the shadow, and his/her understanding of time would be like our grasp of the concept of height. In other words, s/he could see the process

unfolding in time as we see the apple leaving the tree, traveling down and lying on the ground. Anyone living in a four-dimensional world knows the future and the past as well as the present. S/He perceives us as space travelers, being born here, moving through life and finally staying in one place at the time of death. In this sense then, someone who lives in a four-dimensional world is really a god or goddess, defined in the most modern and scientific manner. Likewise, a person living in a three-dimensional world would be a god for the shadow with its limited two-dimensional existence.

Time and space, which can be seen as two different systems, must be discussed in more detail. Time is one phase of the universal phenomena that change with respect to space. Theoretically speaking, from a four-dimensional point of view, space and time are equivalent. In our world time has three aspects: biological, psychological and physical.

Biological time is defined according to the biological changes in the human body during its life span. For instance, some people may turn gray while still in their twenties; others may not have a single gray hair even though fifty years old. Biological time differs for each individual.

Psychological time is defined by the activity of human consciousness. Examples of this kind of time include the speed with which time seems to pass whenever you are happily employed, and the feeling of time going slowly when you are kept waiting even for a short while. Psychological time changes with your reactions to the environment.

Physical time is shown on a clock for structure and calculations in everyday life. Modern physics knows that if a rocket is traveling near the speed of light, time will pass relatively slowly. If the rocket's speed increased to match the speed of light, time would be motionless. Theoretically, time would flow backwards once the rocket passed the speed of light. It is interesting to think that the passengers on a rocket traveling faster than the speed of light would apparently become younger and younger. Although this theory reveals that time is changing relative to speed, in reality we have not yet been able to build a rocket capable of moving at speeds that high. Time is not something that exists objectively by itself. It is a part of the universe. Space and time form a complex continuum that is undifferentiated, just like the relationship between height and the two-dimensional world. In the undifferentiated continuum of space and time, time occurs in relation to the process of change. Once it becomes possible to change the structure of the phenomena in the universe, it will also become possible to influence the speed of time.

More than two thousand years ago, a Chinese philosopher Zhuangzi (莊子) discovered that the shadow of a flying bird is actually still. Few people would immediately accept such a statement. However, using present-day scientific approaches, we can explain how Zhuangzi's description is accurate. What happens when a bird is flying can be compared to what the human eye perceives when viewing a cartoon filmstrip. In a cartoon, individual still frames that differ slightly from each other are shown sequentially at the speed of 24 frames per second. This sequence of stills is perceived by the human eye as movement. The shadow of a flying bird in one instant is actually only an image projected from the bird to the ground. In itself, it is motionless, but because the bird is flying at a certain speed, these images follow each other at a rapid rate and produce the illusion of movement. A bird's flying from position A to another position B requires a certain amount of time. However, although the shadow of the bird follows the bird's movement from A to B, it has no real activity of its own. Instead the shadow, a series of instantaneous motionless projected images, is in no way affected by time.

The most important principle in taijiquan is to seek stillness in movement (靜中求動). The outside appearance of taijiquan has soft and natural movements, like the bird flying in the

sky, but the mind governs the body. Play taijiquan as if it were the continuum of a series of projected images. Although each perception is a still image, a continuous series of these images creates the illusion of movement. This is "movement without movement." Since space and motion cannot be separated from time in relativity theory, your body while performing taijiquan will, like a flying bird, emerge in physical time. But like the projected image of the flying bird, your inner body is always keeping still. Therefore, it is not influenced by the current of biological and psychological time. In other words, the speed of biological and psychological time approaches zero as a limit, creating a state of emotional stillness. For this reason then, the persistent practice of taijiquan will imbue you with full spirits and rejuvenation. Taiji will, in fact, become a revelation showing the relationship between time and space, creating a gate through which the four-dimensional world can be entered.

CHAPTER THREE FOUNDATION



CHAPTER THREE

FOUNDATION

A strong foundation is the key to building a lasting structure—one that continues to increase in value as you renovate or refine it. The look and feel of the structure may change over time, but the essence of the building—the foundation—remains intact if it was laid with careful thought and hard work.

So, too, should you lay the solid groundwork when committing to taijiquan. By understanding and applying the basic principles to your taiji, your taiji will get better and better as you continue to refine it. If, however, you do not master the underlying principles, your refinements will be mere window-dressings; they may look good; you may sound knowledgeable but your taiji will be empty.

You will not reap all of the potential health benefits, maximize your martial capabilities, or achieve spiritual answers. Building the proper foundation is crucial to your future development as a taiji practitioner, and this chapter is devoted to explaining why and how you can build this foundation.

To begin, you must understand the roots of taijiquan. According to Chinese medical theory, special forms of exercise can both prevent and cure illness by facilitating the unobstructed circulation of qi and blood. Perhaps the most famous of these is the five animals exercise, where the exercises imitate the movements of the tiger, bear, ape, deer and crane. *Daoyin* (導引), the name given to the forms developed by the Daoists, affects both the outside and the inside of the body. Outside, the movement of every joint promotes good blood circulation. Inside, the qi and breathing are eventually brought to every part of the body.

Tuna (吐納) refers to qi exercises or qigong. Literally translated, *tu* is “the exhalation of carbon dioxide,” and *na* is “the inhalation of fresh air.” *Tuna* encompasses two major areas: the practice of the training itself and the method of letting the qi penetrate into every part of your entire body.

Taijiquan combines *tuna* and *daoyin* and incorporates the benefits of both. To reach the highest level of achievement in taijiquan, follow a special plan of training both these skills. Otherwise, your achievement will be limited even after twenty or thirty years of diligent practice.

3.1. Taiji Qigong. Qigong (氣功) is the development of the qi for special purposes, such as fighting or healing. Over the centuries, qigong exercises have been reduced to exercises that focus primarily on the use of the breath for qi development. Although breathing methods such as deep breathing can have noticeable effect on your body, there is a limit to what you can achieve by only focusing on the breath. This is analogous to a piano player who spends his/her entire life complacent with only playing piano with the fingers. Over the years, the most important point of qigong became the least mentioned—the use of the dantian.

Although sadly overemphasized, there are traditionally eight different types of breathing methods used in elementary qigong exercises. Below is a basic description of these methods to acquaint you with the way qigong is in practice today.

Some of these methods happen spontaneously: natural breathing, natural deep breath-

ing, sighing (a type of cleansing breath) and inhaling extra air for more energy (a type of tonic breath). Other methods require special practice: alternate breathing, post-birth abdominal breathing and pre-birth breathing. Cleansing or tonic breath may occur spontaneously or be practiced voluntarily in combination with pre- or post-birth breathing. The ultimate stage in breathing is called the tortoise breath. When reading the descriptions below, notice the difference between those methods that you do without thinking and the tortoise breath that you should strive to accomplish.

Natural breath. The regular breath you take constantly without thinking about it.

Cleansing (泄) breath. Inhaling through the nose and exhaling through the mouth. This kind of breathing emphasizes exhalation. Expelling the air takes longer than inhaling. The purpose of this type of breathing is to relax inner tension or to lower a fever. Sighing is a spontaneous manifestation of the cleansing breath.

Tonic (补) breath. Inhaling through the mouth and exhaling through the nose. This kind of breathing emphasizes inhalation, which is longer than exhalation. Through this method you can gain energy and improve blood circulation. Examples where tonic breathing tends to occur spontaneously are when you lift heavy weights and when you prepare to dive into a swimming pool.

Alternate breath. Inhaling through one nostril and exhaling through the other. At first this technique can be practiced with the aid of both index fingers. The right index finger closes the right nostril as you inhale through the left nostril. Then the left index finger closes the left nostril, and you exhale from the opened right nostril. Later practice without using the fingers. Eventually the breath, controlled by this method, becomes long, slow and deep. Achieving such control is easier said than done.

Alternate breathing might be used to relieve the pain of a headache. If the pain is on the right side of the head, inhale through the right nostril, hold and imagine the air mixing with the pain, then exhale the mixture through the left nostril. This breathing may also be used to relieve dizziness or states of emotional worry.

Natural deep breath. You do not need anyone to explain what a deep breath is. Wherever you find fresh air and open space, you automatically stretch your arms wide open and take a deep breath, be it on the top of a mountain or at the seashore.

Long breath or abdominal post-birth breath (后天呼吸). The long breath is a form of abdominal breathing. When inhaling, the lower abdomen expands because of the air coming in; during exhalation the lower abdomen contracts.

Pre-birth or prenatal breath (先天呼吸). According to traditional Daoist theory, pre-birth breathing imitates the general breathing pattern of the fetus in its mother's womb (胎息). Through the umbilical cord the fetus receives oxygen and food, and eliminates carbon dioxide and other waste products. When the umbilical cord is cut, pre-birth breathing ceases and post-birth breathing from the mouth and nose begins. Pre-birth breathing is most commonly understood as the contraction of the abdomen upon inhalation and the expansion of it during expiration. Hence, this breathing pattern is sometimes called "reverse breathing."

After more than 30 years of researching qi development in my practice of taijiquan, I have made a breakthrough in the understanding of qigong. Several old Daoist writings mention the phrase "breathing without breathing" *wuxizhixi* (无息之息). At first, this phrase looks like

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nonsense—after all, either you breathe or you do not!

Yet, the old Daoists were very clever. It is sad that their valuable information is lost simply because people did not understand it. Indeed, the key to developing the qi with pre-birth breathing lies in understanding the secret of “breathing without breathing.” To better understand this old eastern philosophy, let us explore a more contemporary albeit mundane analogy: “money without money.”

The phrase “money without money” also seems like nonsense, until you think about how you do business today. What is a check, if not “money without money”? On the check, you write the payee’s name, the amount of money and sign your name. Technically, the paper that is the check is worthless. That which is behind the check holds the real value. Perhaps, then, if you agree to the reality of “money without money,” you can begin to open your mind to the concept of “breathing without breathing.”

How can you begin to learn the value and the technique of breathing without breathing? Think of how you might learn to sing. When you first learn to sing, you concentrate on the requirements of the mouth: how to shape the mouth properly, where to place the tongue, etc. As you progress through your musical training, however, you are taught how to use your throat and then your diaphragm: how to push air through the vocal chords, how to increase your range of pitch, how to produce vibrato sounds, etc. When you reach the stage where you are concentrating on your throat’s contribution to your singing, your mouth’s responsibilities become secondary—more natural and effortless—and the use of the throat becomes more important.

Breathing without breathing is just like singing a song without focusing on the mouth. To advance to a higher level of singing, you must put more emphasis on that which is behind the mouth, that which truly adds value to the song and to your development. Similarly, a qigong practitioner must learn to put more emphasis on the dantian and less on the respiratory system. To learn breathing without breathing, start by continuously practicing the contraction and expansion of the dantian. If you truly have all of your mind focused on the movement of the dantian, you will not be conscious of breathing and “breathing without breathing” will happen naturally.

Look at this from the point of practicality. Focusing on your dantian makes more sense than focusing on your breath. After all, your dantian houses the physical center of your gravity and is the energetic source of your qi. The dantian controls your respiratory system; your respiratory system does not house or encompass your dantian.

You may ask, “When do I inhale and when do I exhale? How do I coordinate exhalation and inhalation with the abdominal movements?” The answer is simple. Reflect on the singer that does not emphasize singing from the mouth: when the focus is 100% on the throat and diaphragm, the mouth functions naturally. So too will your breathing if you focus on the movement of the dantian. In short, if you feel like you need to inhale, then inhale! If you feel like you need to exhale, then do so. Let it go. When you forget your breath, then you will have broken through and mastered one of the most important underlying concepts of taijiquan.

Arguments concerning the concept of pre-birth and post-birth breathing—and there are many!—exist because people are still focusing on the nose, mouth and lungs, rather than on the abdomen. The conflict between pre-birth and post-birth breathing plagued me at one time too. When I paid attention to inhalation and exhalation, there were still times I found myself short of breath. Once I started focusing only on the movement of my abdomen (thus, letting breathing occur naturally), I was not short of breath anymore—even during physical chores or fajing exercises.

Assiduous study and practice of breathing without breathing has also led me into a more complete understanding of pre-birth breathing. Pre-birth breathing is how nutrients and waste products are exchanged between a fetus and its mother. A “drawing in” force occurs at the fetus’ connection to the umbilical cord and nutrients enter its abdomen. This is then distributed to all parts of its body. When waste products are eliminated from the fetus to the umbilical cord, an “expanding out” force occurs as waste from all parts of the fetus’s body collect to its abdomen and exit via the umbilical cord. The significance of understanding this process is that when you pull in the abdomen, you must open all parts of the body from the dantian outwards to bring the qi to all parts of your body. Likewise, when you expand the abdomen to push out, you must close all parts of the body from the outside inwards to the dantian. By completing the cycle in this way, the effect of the pre-birth breathing spreads throughout your entire being. If this method seems difficult or esoteric, it is not. This is how we all breathed before we were born.

The ability to practice pre-birth breathing lies within each and everyone of us. No complicated classes, books or great teachers are needed. On the other hand, merely discussing it will accomplish nothing. You must reflect back to what it must have been like when you were a fetus and then practice...and continue to practice. Daoist philosophy is easy to understand, but difficult to apply.

Remember: the progress of our lives in time can be compared to a boat floating on a river. If no special methods of locomotion, such as oars or motors, are used, the boat will follow the river’s current downstream until the end of the river, just as our lives naturally follow the path from birth to death. If we can row the boat, we may be able to slow the boat’s movement, but the current is too strong for us to move the boat upstream. A more powerful kind of energy, such as that of a motor, is needed before the boat can progress against the river’s current. In taijiquan, pre-birth breathing is designed to provide the special kind of energy required for rejuvenation. According to Daoist theory, a number of different methods, such as diet, exercise and special breathing techniques, can slow the natural progress of life from birth to death. However, post-birth breathing cannot change the direction of this natural current. Only when the pre-birth breathing becomes the normal breathing pattern can the aging process actually be reversed.

Tortoise breath (龟息). Even pre-birth breathing alone will not enable you to reach the ultimate breathing stage. Forgetting the pre-birth method after its mastery over many years leads you to the tortoise breath. Even I did not believe that the tortoise breath was a meaningful development when I began the study of taiji. After many years, I have not reached this stage yet, but I have found profound changes and improvements that I did not expect. My normal breathing is slow and calm, like that of an athlete: 3 to 4 breaths a minute, as contrasted with 16 to 18 breaths for the average person. When I work very hard for one or two hours or sporadically perform very strenuous work, shortness of breath does not occur.

As mentioned above, taijiquan uses the pre-birth breathing method. Over the years, the importance of discovering the dantian’s mysteries was abandoned, and the qigong literature put more and more attention on respiration instead of the breathing of the dantian. For your knowledge, the following section describes the viewpoint of the more popular qigong literature. In my opinion, too much emphasis is on inhalation and exhalation, and thus the primary importance of the dantian is diminished.

Popular literature’s emphasis on breathing. According to popular literature, the atmospheric pressure and gases present in the abdominal cavity and inner organs of a fetus are known as the

pre-birth qi, or *xiantianqi* (先天气) which is yang. The air which the lungs bring into the chest capacity once the child is born is called the post-birth qi, or *houtianqi* (后天气) which is yin. The diaphragm becomes the divider between the two above-mentioned layers of qi as shown in Figure 3.1a.

The pre-birth breathing method can be described in terms of the combination and separation of yin and yang. Upon inhalation, the post-birth qi, which begins to fill the lungs, gradually approaches the diaphragm at the same time as the lower abdomen contracts and the pre-birth qi pushes up towards the diaphragm. Thus this type of inhalation combines the two qi's into a whole, or taiji, which is represented by the taiji diagram (see Figure 3.1b, left side). During exhalation, the two qi's separate; the post-birth qi leaves the body through

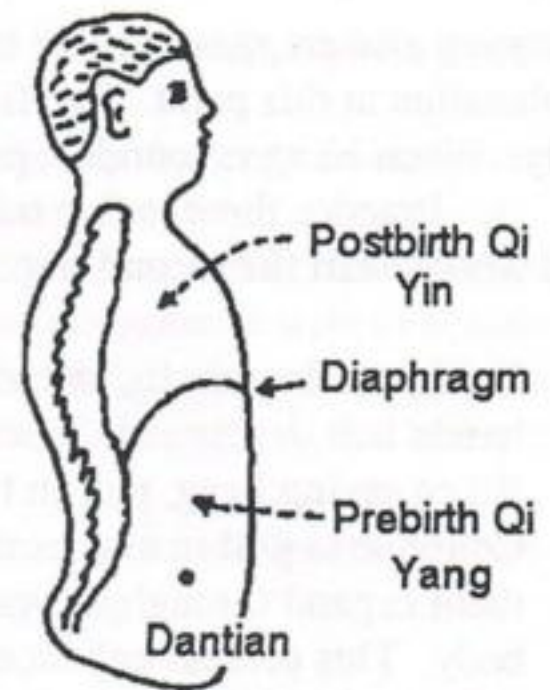


Figure 3.1a

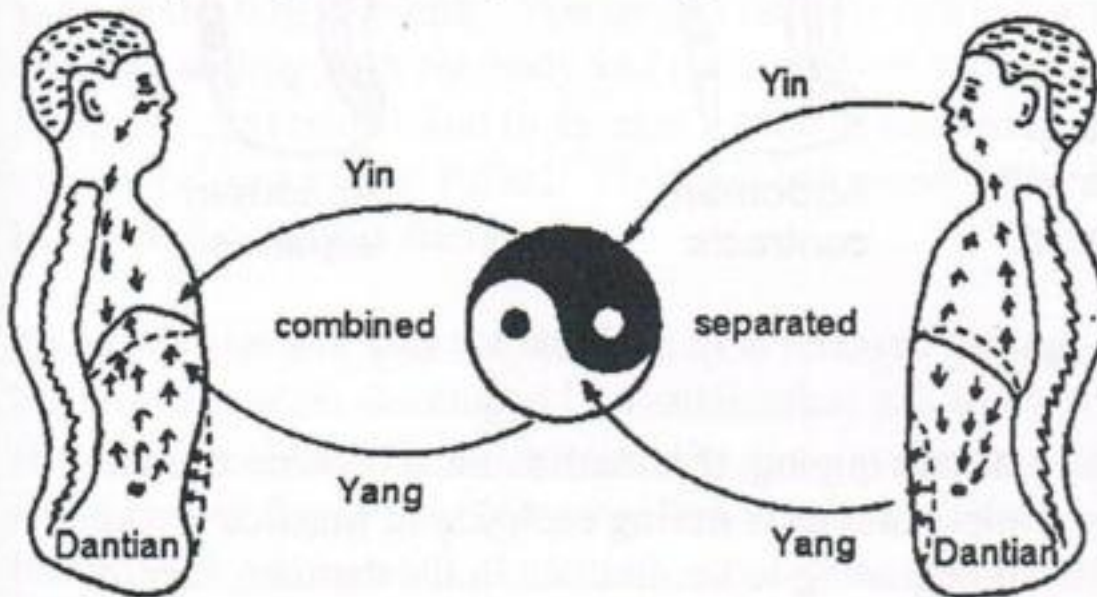


Figure 3.1b

the nose, while the pre-birth qi sinks to the dantian, a point found three finger-widths below the navel and two finger-widths inside, causing the lower abdomen to expand (see Figure 3.1b, right side).

The term for this kind of breathing is *qitong* (气通). *Tong* means "to permeate and mix." Thus *qitong* describes the diffusion and mixture of the pre-birth and post-birth qi.

After long practice of the "breathing without breathing" pre-

birth qigong, a tremendous energy called *jing* is produced by the reservoir of pre-birth qi in the lower abdomen. This energy is the source of force for the torso-bow or *shengong* (身弓, see Chapter 4.1). The development of *jing* is shown by a condition described as an "inner ball" or *neidan* (内丹); when pushed or punched, the abdomen of a person with *neidan* feels like an elastic ball. After long and diligent practice, conscious control of this inner ball will lead to extremely strong, possibly unlimited *jing*. An example of *jing*'s power can be seen in Yan-gluchan who, with a minute swelling of the abdomen at the instant he was hit, could throw the strongest boxer across the room.

Two sounds are incorporated in the practice of the pre-birth breathing: Heng (哼) and Ha (哈). These sounds were kept secret for many years, appearing only in an old song on taiji-quan from the reign of Qianlong (乾隆, 1736-1795 AD). The translation follows:

"Hold your dantian to practice qigong.
Hengha—the two qi's are very wonderful.
When they are in motion, they separate.
When they remain static, they combine.
Bend and stretch.
Let nature take its course.
Respond slowly and follow quickly.
Then you know everything from the truth."

The song also emphasized that this secret must be taught verbally; however, I wish to write an explanation at this point. The first step is to practice the hengha sounds while breathing naturally. When Heng is sounded, pull in the dantian; when saying ha, push it out (See Figure 3.1c).

Practice three to five minutes at a time, at least three times a day. After approximately two weeks, start the second step. The procedure for the second step is as follows:

- Hold your dantian lightly with your hands.
- When saying heng, pull in the dantian.
- Continue to pull in and let the movement expand throughout your entire body. This process enhances the tonic effect and lets the pre-birth qi and post-birth qi mix together to form a taiji diagram.
- Push out and say ha, thus enabling the post-birth qi to exit, while the pre-birth qi sinks to the dantian. The dantian will expand, and yin and yang are separated.

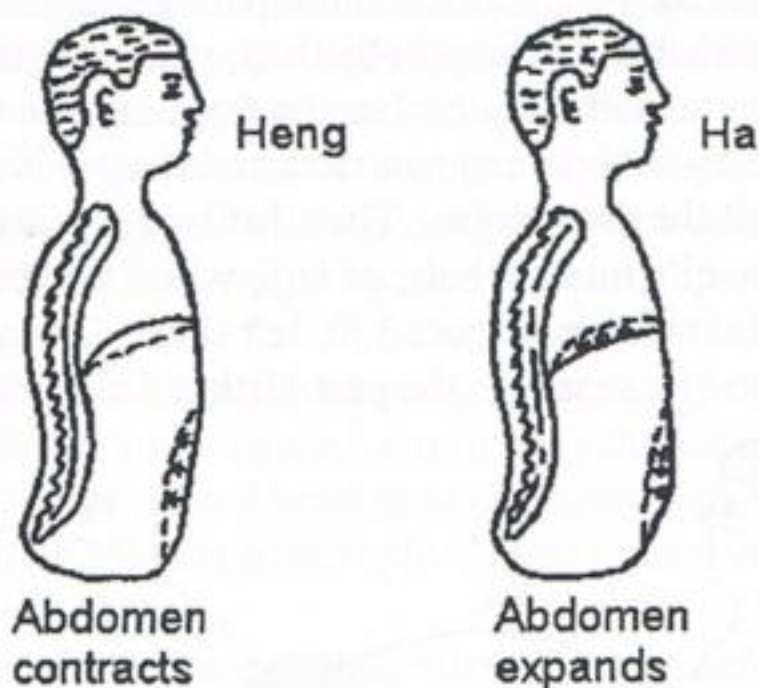


Figure 3.1c

The goal of the first stage of the taiji qigong is to be able to use the pre-birth breathing automatically. As the foundation of taiji qigong, this method must become an integral part of your life; take advantage of countless moments during each day to practice it. After about one year of practice you will find the qi beginning to accumulate in the dantian, very much like brooks, rivers and streams collect in the ocean.

The second part of the breathing method consists of letting the qi penetrate every part of the body. The Daoist term for this technique is *daoyin*, which literally translated means “to lead out.” *Daoyin* is the complement of *tuna*. Like a small pilot boat guiding a larger ship into or out of a harbor, *daoyin* embodies the process of moving the qi both from the outside to the inside and from the inside to the outside. In the former, you pull in, stretch the inner organs, and lead the movement of the qi by your outer movement, such as opening your arms. In the latter, the will and the movement send the qi from the inside of the body to the outside through, for example, the hands and arms. In meditation, you practice controlling the qi by using the will without body movement. Yet, if meditation and movement are combined, as in taijiquan, it will be much easier to control the qi.

3.2. The Practice of Taiji Qigong. Once the foundation for correct taiji qigong is established by practicing the hengha sounds and synchronizing them with the appropriate abdominal movements, you are ready to learn the taiji qigong itself.

The type of breathing in the taiji qigong is identical to that in taijiquan. In both, your dantian’s movements rhythmically combine the *tuna* and the *daoyin* so that your body’s movement guides the breath.

Learning the taiji qigong will facilitate learning taijiquan. For someone who has already practiced taijiquan, the diligent practice of the corresponding qigong may transform you into a tiger with wings (如虎添翼). By practicing the taiji qigong, you will progress more rapidly. In addition, you will gain greater understanding of the three ingredients necessary for

the mastery of this art: balancing the qi and the blood, building up inner energy, and knowing the secret of taijiquan known as the taiji qigong.

The taiji qigong, unlike purely physical exercise, is specifically designed to invigorate every internal organ of the body as well as to strengthen the general musculature. For the elderly and the infirm, the taiji qigong holds the promise of great reward, even when done only by itself. The exercise has the power to improve and fully rejuvenate your general state of health, and furthermore, to arrest the aging process. In short, benefits from its regular practice are valuable beyond description; it can truly transform your experience of aliveness to that of joyful self-expression.

Before learning the specific movements and their sequence, you are well-advised to observe and to cultivate each of the following principles of the taiji qigong.

Be natural, quiet and relaxed. In the usual waking state, both body and mind are generally more or less active. The relationship between activity and relaxation is reflected in the yin and yang of the taiji diagram. You cannot be fully relaxed while even partially active. Relaxation requires stilling both the body and the conscious mind; you must learn to relax the body and allow the conscious mind to assume a state of relaxed alertness. In the taiji qigong, the spirit of vitality or shen is also stilled. Thus you can avoid becoming tired, achieve a sense of well-being, and conserve energy.

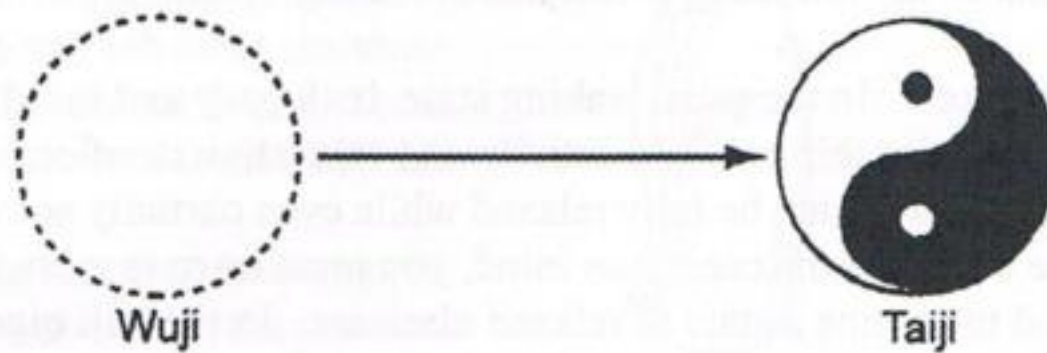
Combine the will and the qi. The qi is released through combining the pre-birth and post-birth qi, a process developed by visualization and practice. Control over the qi is achieved by the practice of consciously leading the qi so that eventually the conscious mind will automatically control the qi's movement within the body. When the internal and external movements become fully integrated, the breath naturally becomes slow, soft and deep.

Establish solidity in the lower body and legs. According to the Chinese medical tradition, the pre-birth qi is the source of all vital activities. It has important functions both in the creative processes of birth and growth and in the destructive processes of sickness, aging and death. When an infant is born, the lower body is quite solid or full in relation to the upper body. As the child grows to maturity, this fullness becomes displaced to the upper torso and arms. The instability exhibited by many older people while walking illustrates the weakness of their legs and feet supporting a relatively solid upper body. Practicing the taiji qigong will slow and even reverse this aging process, making the lower body more solid and stable, and reserving more qi in the dantian.

Move slowly and cultivate stability. All movement in the taiji qigong must be deliberate, slow and even-paced. Such control allows the breathing to become long, soft and deep. You must learn to expand and contract the dantian without conscious effort. During practice, the mind moves the limbs with minimal internal exertion and minimal externally visible force.

Practice diligently and regularly. Mental concentration on physical movement is necessary throughout the exercise. The mind must be disciplined to focus on the activity at hand and thereby to exclude other thoughts. The deliberate cultivation of the virtues of patience, perseverance and regular daily practice are essential to achieving the goal of conscious control of the qi.

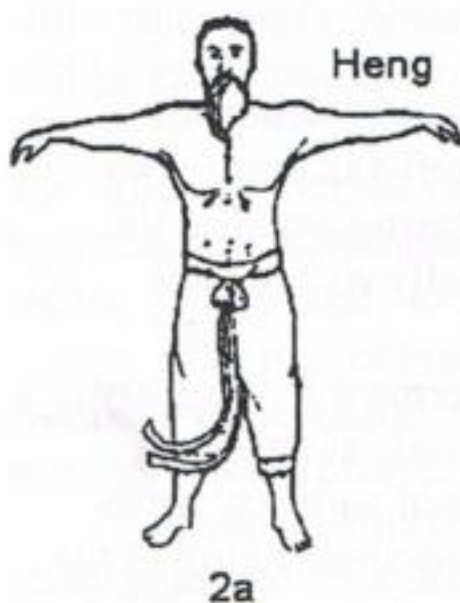
Observe moderation in the extent of movement. Limit the extent of individual movements so that excessive strain is not felt. Otherwise the gradual increase in range of motion to its natural limit ultimately will be retarded. For example, when bending forward at the waist, it is wise not to let your arms hang any lower than feels natural at the moment. Persistent practice without straining will soon enough allow your hands to reach the floor. Since the time needed varies greatly among individuals, it is not wise to attempt to compete with others in this respect. In the effort to achieve the purpose of the taiji qigong, such variations among individuals are irrelevant. What really matters is perseverance with intent toward mastery. Always do your best, but do not over do it.



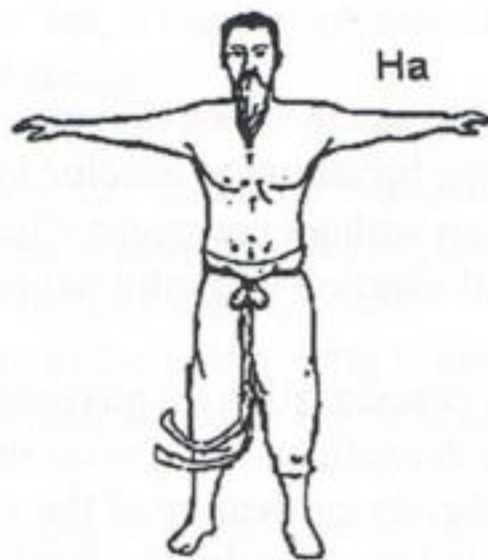
The following describes how to practice the movements in the taiji qigong.

Posture 1.

- Place feet shoulder-width apart with knees naturally straight, arms at the sides.
- The body is relaxed; the head and spine are straight.
- Let the breath go, and concentrate on the dantian.



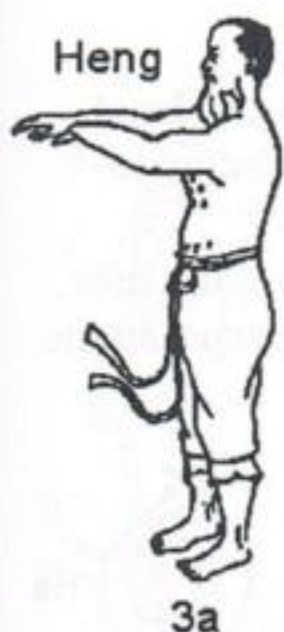
2a



2b

Posture 2.

- While you say the sound heng, pull in the dantian and open the body in order to slowly raise the arms, palms facing down, fingers gently stretched and wrists slightly limp (Posture 2a).
- As you say ha, push out the dantian, sending movement out and straightening your hands at the wrists. Fingers should point out and palms should face the earth (Posture 2b).

**Posture 3.**

- While you say the sound heng, pull in the dantian. Gradually let this movement move the hands horizontally to the front of the body as you cross the right wrist over the left, palms facing down (Posture 3a).
- As you say ha, push out the dantian and allow the hands to drop at the wrists, palms facing the body (Posture 3b).

Posture 4.

- While you say the sound heng, pull in the dantian, lower the hands and turn them inward, keeping the wrists crossed (Posture 4a).
- Simultaneously bend the knees as if to sit, but keep the spine straight. Breathe naturally.
- As the arms are unfolding and moving to the sides, gradually straighten the knees. At the same time, pull in the dantian (Posture 4b).
- Say ha as you close the body and push out the dantian. Sit down slightly and lift the palms upward and outward extending the arms to the front of the body (Posture 4c).

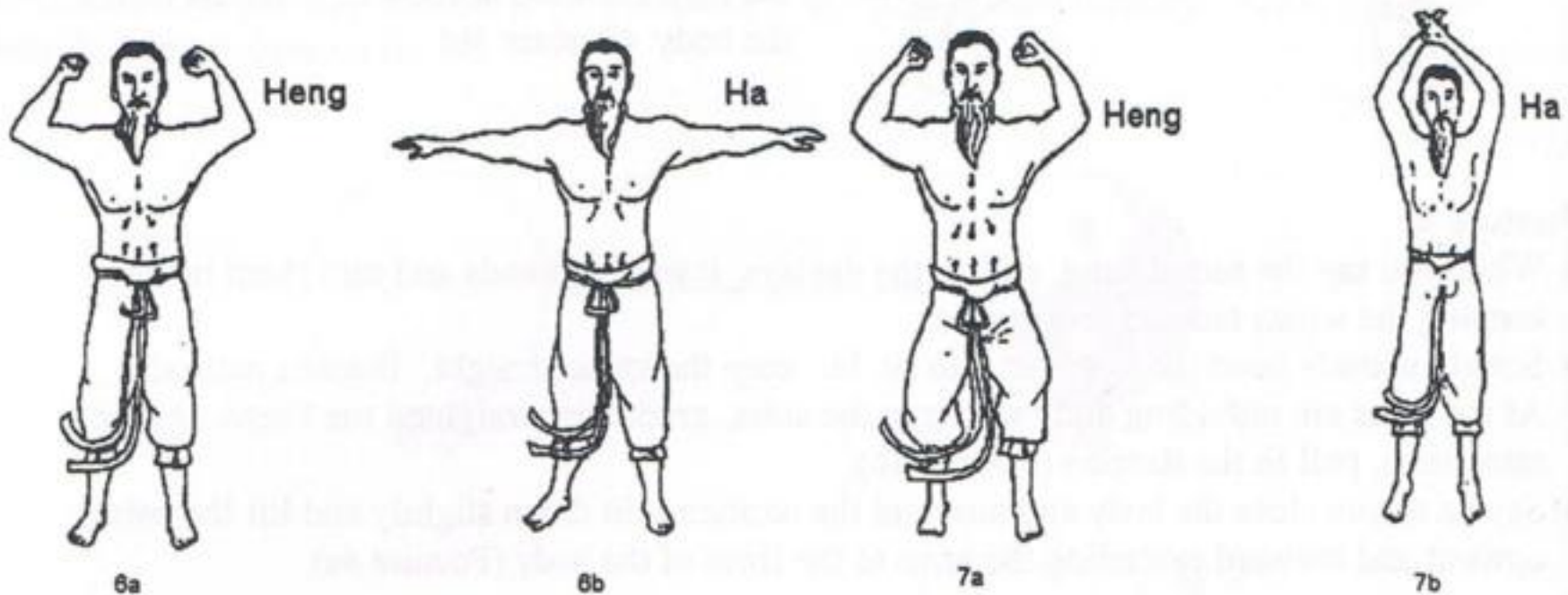
**Posture 5.**

- Say heng and contract the dantian. Hollow the chest and continue to pull in as you move your arms apart horizontally 180 degrees, palms facing up and legs straightened (Posture 5a).
- Say ha and expand the dantian. Simultaneously straighten the arms, open the hands and point the fingers out as far as possible with palms up (Posture 5b).



Posture 6.

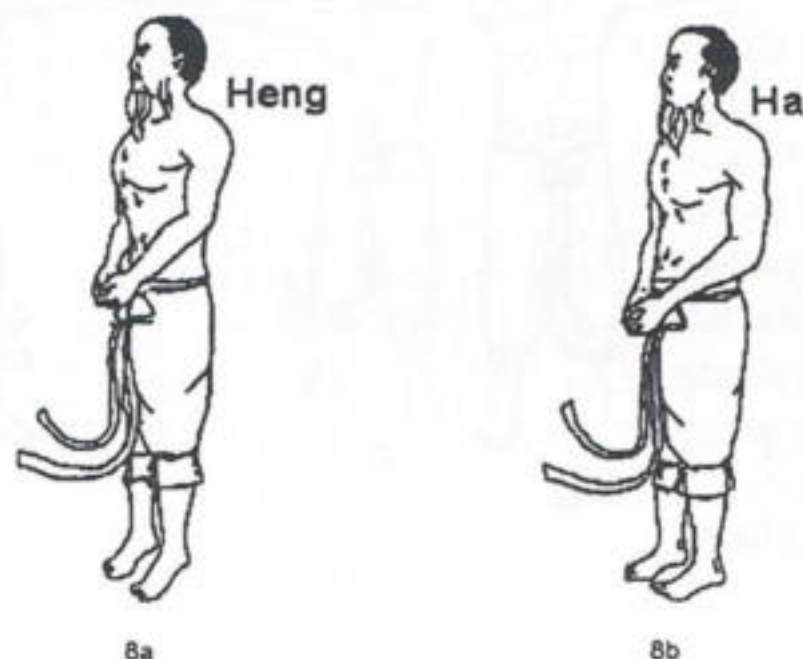
- Say heng, pull in the dantian and bend your knees as if to sit, keeping the spine and head straight as you pull in. The loose fists are brought next to the head, palms first facing towards the ears and then turned gradually to the front (Posture 6a).
- Say ha while pushing out the dantian. Let your lower abdomen expand. At the same time, straighten the legs and lower the arms to shoulder level, opening the fists and extending the fingers, palms down (Posture 6b).

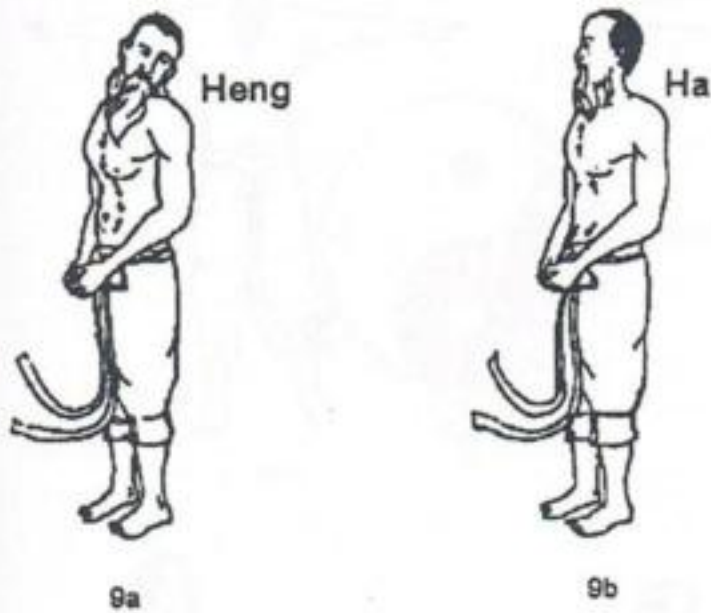
**Posture 7.**

- Say heng and contract the lower abdomen. Repeat Posture 6, except that as you pull in, bring the fists first next to your ears and then straight above the head (Posture 7a).
- Say ha as you push out the dantian, open your fists, extend your legs, standing on your toes and raising the arms and hands. Cross your hands over your head with palms facing forward (Posture 7b).

Posture 8.

- Remain on your toes as you say the sound heng. Pull in the dantian and gradually lower the arms. As you lower your arms, describe a circle so that they come naturally together with the hands in front of the lower abdomen, the back of the right hand on the left palm with the thumbs touching each other (Posture 8a).
- Hold the above position, then when you say the sound ha, push out the dantian and lower your body so that your heels are on the ground (Posture 8b).

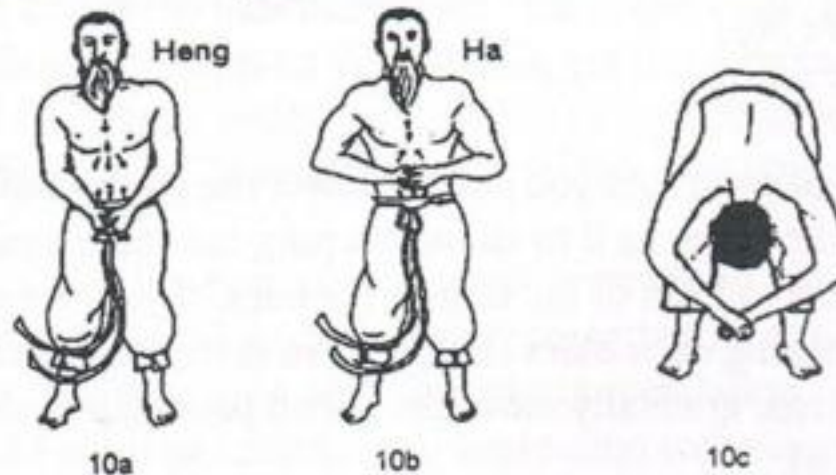


**Posture 9.**

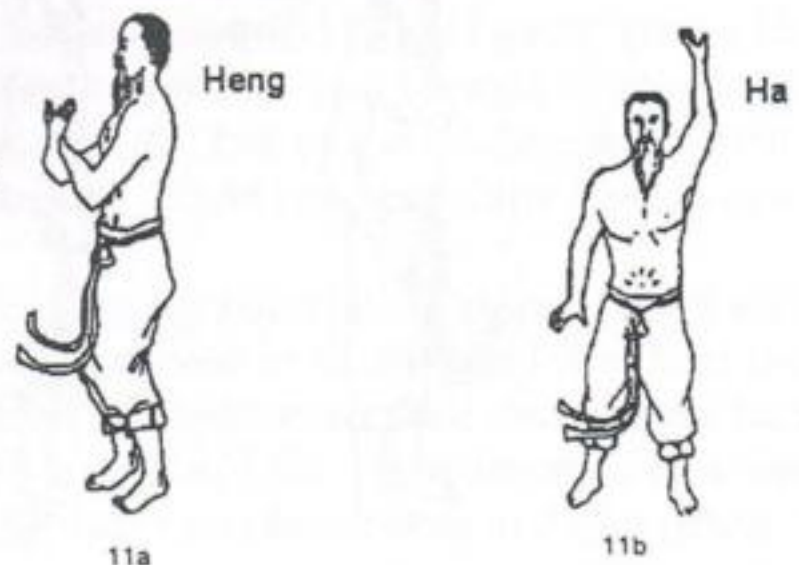
- Holding the body still when you say heng, pull in the dantian and turn your head to the left looking down over your shoulder at your left heel (Posture 9a).
- When you say ha and push out, hold the body still while turning the head gradually to look to the front (Posture 9b).
- Repeat Postures 9a and 9b, this time looking to the right and then to the front. The left and right forms of Postures 9a and 9b are counted as one sequence.
- This sequence may be repeated three to five times always ending on the right.

Posture 10.

- Hold your position while you say heng and contract the abdomen in order to pull in the dantian. Lift the joined palms to chest height (Postures 10a and 10b).
- Say ha and push out the dantian while you turn the palms face down and bring them to the floor, bending at the waist and keeping the knees straight, but not locked. (Posture 10c).
- This up-and-down series may be repeated three to five times. Ideally, the palms should be touching the floor in the last posture of the series.

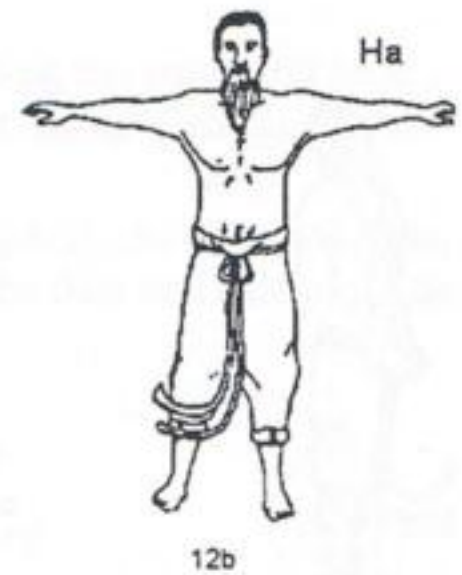
**Posture 11.**

- Say heng and pull in the dantian. Bend the knees as if to sit, crossing the wrists in front of the chest (right over left), palms facing the body (Posture 11a).
- Say ha and push out the dantian, straighten the legs, lift the left (inside) palm to the sky and push the right (outside) palm to the earth (Posture 11b).
- Repeat Postures 11a and 11b, this time using their mirror images, as follows:
 - Reverse Posture 11a, so that the left wrist is over the right, the left hand on the outside and the right hand on the inside.
 - In the mirror image of Posture 11b lift the right palm to the sky and push the left palm down to the earth.
- This combination is repeated three times, ending with the right palm to the sky.

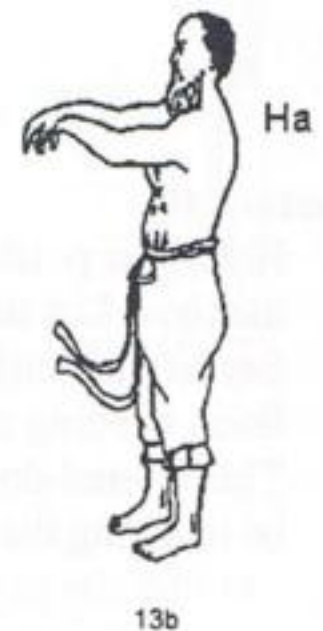
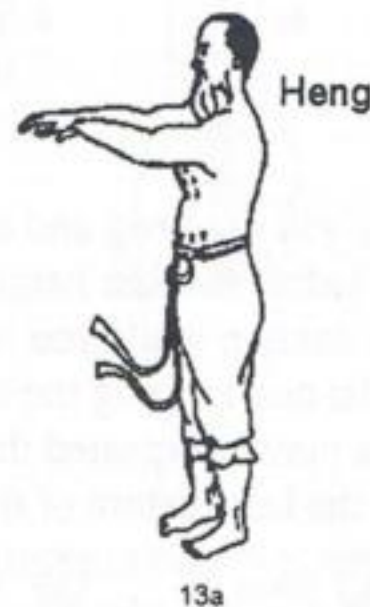


Posture 12.

- Hold the body still, say the sound heng and pull in the dantian. As you pull in, lower the right arm and raise the left, bringing the arms to shoulder-height with the palms facing down and the wrists bent (Posture 12a).
- Say ha and push out the dantian. Extend the hands and fingers, palms down (Posture 12b).

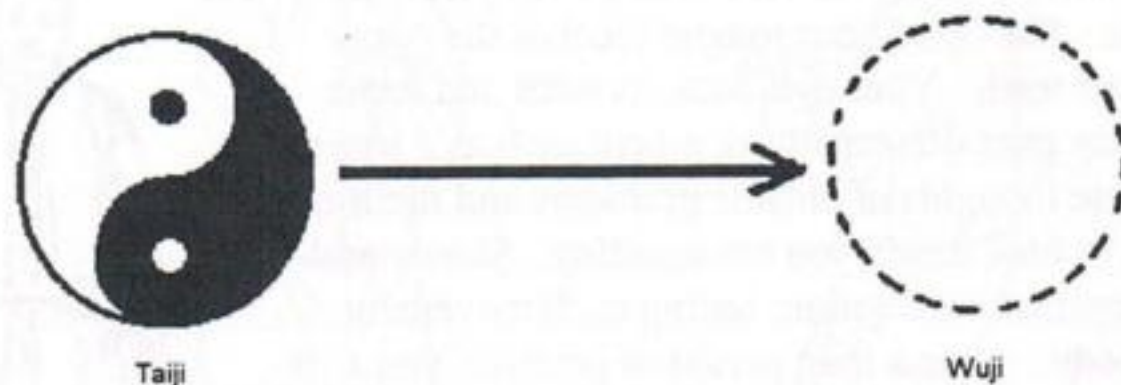
**Posture 13.**

- Say heng and pull in. As you pull in the dantian, gradually move the arms to the front of the body with the right wrist crossed over the left, palms facing down (Posture 13a is the same as Posture 3a).
- Say ha and push out the dantian, letting the hands drop at the wrists, with the palms facing the body. (Posture 13b is the same as Posture 3b).

**Posture 14.**

- Say heng and pull in the dantian. As you pull in, lower the hands and fold them inward, simultaneously bending the knees as if to sit but keeping the spine straight. After the arms have dropped and unfolded in front of the thighs, the back of your right hand lays on the left palm, the thumbs touching each other (Posture 14a is the same as Posture 8a).
- While straightening the legs, gradually move the joined palms up to the chest (Posture 14b is the same as Posture 10a).
- Say ha and push out the dantian, as you turn your joined palms downward. Separate them and allow them to float down, ending with the arms at the sides (Posture 14c).
- Hold the body at rest for a couple of minutes and feel the whole body gradually calm down. This is taiji returning to wuji.





3.3. Taiji Meditation. The main purpose of practicing taiji meditation or *jingzuo* (靜坐) and qigong is to cultivate qi (練氣) or pre-birth qi in the dantian. If you persist in practicing meditation and qigong two or three times a day, the pre-birth qi will overflow in your abdomen. The qi will then heave and subside with your breathing like waves beating against the shore. For this reason, the Daoists called the lower abdomen “the ocean of qi” or *qihai* (氣海). When you reach this stage, your abdomen becomes very pliable, yet like a balloon filled with air tending to expand. You then will have great vitality and should learn meditation to let the pre-birth qi circulate to every part of your body. If you learn qigong and meditation at the same time, they will complement each other.

Like taijiquan and other exercises or sports, meditation requires not only an understanding of basic principles and methods, but more importantly, energetic practice. Your body is the laboratory used for investigating and researching meditation. The purpose is to cultivate your physical and mental abilities according to meditation techniques. As a result, the pre-birth qi flows to every part of the body, improving your health and sense of vitality. Furthermore, with the help of natural ability to elevate your awareness and wisdom, meditation, like taijiquan, can lead you to the world of the fourth dimension and ultimate enlightenment. Although you begin meditation from the most elementary level, you must not forget its ultimate objective.

Meditation has different branches, each with its own special method of practice. Since taijiquan is a fruit of Daoism, elementary Daoist meditation methods will be introduced in this chapter. Both standing and sitting meditation techniques will be discussed.

The Chinese term for standing meditation is *zhanzhuang* (站桩), “to stand” (*zhan*) like a “stake” (*zhuang*). You should use your consciousness rather than your strength to let the soles of the feet softly touch the ground. You must imagine that the foot or feet bearing your weight sink into the ground and connect to the center of the earth. Stand twenty to thirty minutes at a time every day.

Beginning posture or *hunyuangong* (渾元功). Stand straight and place the feet parallel and shoulder-width apart. Feel comfortable and easy without tension or strain. Hold your head as if suspended by a string from above. Keep your shoulders low and loose so that the neck and back are free of tension. Your chest is neither pushed up nor hollowed out. Your abdomen must not protrude nor over-contract. Hang your arms naturally with your elbows loose and your palms

facing downward. Your legs are straight with flexible knee joints. In short, no joint is stiffened or locked (see Figure 3.3a).

Breathe naturally through the nose, and keep your lips and teeth lightly shut. The tip of your tongue touches the upper palate just behind your teeth. Your eyes look forward and focus with a quiet and steady gaze on something green, such as a tree or hill. To help eliminate thoughts of outside problems and facilitate concentration, think of how firmly you are standing. Slowly and gently expand and contract the dantian, letting each movement spread through the body. After a long period of practice, you will gradually feel the pre-birth qi starting to flow. Experiencing this process—the development of non-action or wuji into action or taiji—is the purpose of hunyuan gong standing meditation.

Single whip or *kaizhan* (开展).

The posture Single Whip is called “expanding” gong. Expand the joints of your whole body and let the pre-birth qi flow to the limbs. In the right form, approximately eighty percent of your weight is shifted onto your left leg; do not extend your knee beyond the toes. Your eyes are focused on your left hand, and your right hand is hooked to the rear. The left form is the mirror image of the right. Practice both the right and left forms (see Figure 3.3b).



Figure 3.3b

weight is placed on your left leg. In this posture, however, turn your shoulders forward, and hold your arms out as if wrapped around a very large jug. Move forward slowly until about eighty percent of your weight falls on the front leg. The left heel or toe should remain on the ground. Return slowly to the original position. This sequence is repeated for about five minutes in the left form and then five minutes in the right form (see Figure 3.3d).

Lift Hands. In fighting with an opponent, you will always use this posture for readiness; therefore, it is very important in taijiquan. Rest all of your weight on your left leg with your right heel touching the ground in front. Your right hand should coincide with your right foot, your elbow with your knee, and your shoulder with your thigh. These correspondences are called the three outside coordinations or *waisanhe* (外三合). In addition, coordinate your awareness with your intention, your intention with your qi, and your qi with your active use of energy. These correspondences are called the three inside coordinations or *neisanhe* (内三合). Practice these lift hands in both right and left forms (see Figure 3.3c).

Practicing the posture Holding a Jug or *baogang* (抱缸) develops your sense of stillness within motion. In this posture as in Lift Hands, your



Figure 3.3a



Figure 3.3c



Figure 3.3d

The sitting form of meditation, usually just called meditation, has three different postures: **Loosely sitting with the legs crossed or *sanpan* (散盘)**. Cross the calves of your legs and place your heels under the middle of the thighs. Place either the right calf outside of the left or vice versa. When you meditate, hold your body erect, relax your shoulders, drop your elbows naturally downward, and place your palms lightly on your knees as shown in Figure 3.3e.

Half-lotus or *danpan* (单盘). Cross your right leg over your left with your right toes placed on top of your left knee and your left heel under your right thigh. With practice and increased flexibility you can tuck the right heel into the left thigh. To avoid numbness when sitting a long time, you can alternate the position of the legs. Your hands should be formed into a taiji knot and placed on your leg nearest the abdomen (see Figure 3.3f).

The way to make a taiji knot is as follows:

- Put the tip of your left thumb at the second joint of your left fourth finger; form a hollow fist with the other four fingers.
- Put your right thumb into the hollow fist of your left hand so that the tips of your two thumbs touch together.
- Cup your right hand over your left so that the fingers of your right hand wrap around your hollow left fist, and each finger of the right hand lies on top of and in line with the left fingers in one-to-one correspondence.



Figure 3.3f

Full lotus or *shuangpan* (双盘). Cross both thighs and place your heels on the knees of the opposite

legs so the soles of both feet face upward. Advanced students may be able to tuck their heels into the thighs of the opposite legs. Place the back of your right hand on your left palm, palms upward with both thumbs connected, on your legs near the abdomen. In this posture, the centers of your feet, hands and tongue (which touches the roof of your mouth) total five, and are called five centers face the sky or *wuxinzhao tian* (五心朝天, see Figure 3.3g).

To begin meditation, the start of the meditation and the finish should be slow and steady. Before meditation, give up all thoughts. If you cannot do so, take a walk in some quiet place, such as a park, seashore, or the backyard, until you feel nothing in your mind and you reach the stage of *wuji*. Then come indoors to meditate. Exhale through your mouth gently and continuously a couple of times. Toward the end of each exhalation, bend your body forward and downward slightly to drive out more air. Exhale either when sitting with legs crossed while pressing the lower abdomen with your hands or when standing with your arms hanging down naturally. If standing, shake your arms and hands as fast as possible, relax your shoulders and, with awareness, sink your weight to your feet.



Figure 3.3g

Nearly everyone knows how to best drive a car. It should be accelerated slowly, kept at a constant speed, and finally, brought gradually to a stop. This way of driving is good for the car and makes the passengers feel calm and comfortable. Meditation is similar. It needs the three steadinesses or *sanwen* (三穩).

When you meditate, sit with *sanpan*, *danpan* or *shuangpan*, choosing the sitting position most comfortable for yourself. The posture of the hands needs to match the sitting position. If you sit outdoors, use a blanket to warm the shoulders and knees, which are the places most sensitive to chill. If you do not have a special meditation stool, which is designed to keep your buttocks about three inches higher than the place touched by the calves, sit on a thin cushion to keep the spine straight. Keeping the tip of your nose and your navel on a vertical line will release the tension and pressure on your central nervous system. Close your mouth with your tongue touching the roof of your mouth lightly. Breathe through your nose. Your breathing naturally tends to become slower, deeper and lighter as practice progresses.

During meditation it does not matter whether your eyes are kept open or closed. If you fall asleep easily, keep the eyes open, but keep in mind that visual distractions make it difficult for most people to concentrate.

It is helpful to have a taiji diagram on the wall at eye level. If you open your eyes, you can look at the diagram in order to understand how yin and yang blend harmoniously. If you close your eyes, you can concentrate on an image of the taiji diagram in the dantian. (Women who have pain or sensitivity during menstruation should focus on a point centered between the breasts instead of the dantian.) Burning incense during meditation can help to purify your mind.

It is not advisable to practice meditation when you are tired. The best time for meditation is in the early morning after you have had a good sleep or before you go to bed. If you have spare time, an extra meditation can take place in the afternoon. It does not matter how long you meditate—fifteen minutes, half an hour, or more than one hour.

Reaching the state of mind called *ruding* (入定) is a wonderful experience but very hard to describe. You feel nothing in the mind, like blankness; your whole body seems to be in

a vacuum, and your breathing almost stops (息住). Both the outside and inside of your body feel very comfortable. This state could be described as a small amount of yang within yin. There is no response to sound or other distractions, but you are not asleep and still know a little about yourself. For an approximate comparison, imagine what it is like to concentrate so deeply on reading an interesting book that the outside world is forgotten.

When you reach a meditative state (before ruding) the mouth secretes more and sweeter-tasting saliva. The ancient Daoists felt that the emergence of this saliva or sweet dew (甘露) resulted from the qi produced by the combination of water or energy with fire, or awareness. This phenomenon itself was described as “water and fire already present” or *jiji* (既济). *Jiji*, a hexagram in the *Yijing*, represents fire below and water above, symbolizing what is already present (see Figure 3.3h). The following is the *Yijing's* explanation:

“*Jiji* intimates progress and success in small matters. There is an advantage in being firm and correct. There has been good fortune in the beginning, but there may be disorder in the end.” *Jiji* implies that while you have progressed to a certain level of achievement, you cannot stay there permanently. Like fire changes water into vapor, you continually develop towards ruding, although it comes to you as if a sudden realization. This experience is a big step toward entering the door of meditation, reserving pre-birth qi in the dantian and increasing your inner energy. All of these events are very important in taijiquan. Yet if you confine yourself to this stage there may be disorder in the end, as is explained in the *Yijing*, because the water or energy will dry up and be exhausted. The next step is to channel the pre-birth qi and reserve it in the dantian. The path, termed small heavenly circle or *xiaozhoutian* (小周天), is composed of ten points. Since each point has a Chinese name that is difficult to say in English, we will substitute the numbers shown in Figure 3.3i for the original Chinese words.

It is advisable to learn this method in person from an experienced teacher because it is too complex to explain completely in words. Otherwise, some adverse reactions may occur. In short, you can reach a certain level of achievement with the basic taiji form, but especially to pursue *xujing* (虚静, see Chapter 5.3), you need to meditate. Once you elevate your pure awareness or awareness without thought, during ruding, you can finally come to the threshold of the four-dimensional world. This process depends on diligent and correct practice. It is also important to observe certain points after meditation:

- Stop and stand up slowly, avoiding any vigorous physical or mental activities immediately after meditation.
- Shake your body, chatter the teeth and massage parts of your body which feel stiff or tingling, such as your palms and the arches of your feet.
- Since meditation improves the circulation of the qi and blood, your body temperature may rise higher than usual, and you may even sweat. If this happens, rest awhile until returning to your normal condition.
- After meditating, practice taijiquan as a continuation of the practice of meditation.

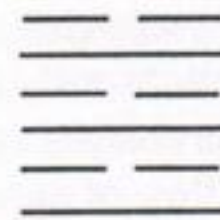


Figure 3.3h

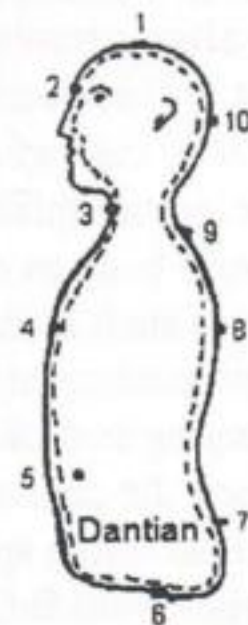


Figure 3.3i

If you neglect the points mentioned above, adverse reactions may occur and affect your next meditation. You may feel anxious and impatient. Perhaps you will not be able to sit as long or to feel as good as the previous time. Remember: when you meditate during the first stage, your legs become numb easily and your thoughts will wander. These phenomena are unavoidable for the beginner. Only practice can make perfect. The Daoists have additional methods to deal with these conditions, but they are beyond the scope of this book. I wrote about them in another book on meditation called *The Dao of Meditation: Way to Enlightenment**.

3.4. Chansijing (缠丝劲). Of the three schools of taijiquan, only the Chen School discusses how to apply the silk cocoon jing or chansijing. Chenxin (陈鑫, 1849-1929 AD) wrote an excellent book, *Theory and Pictures of Chen's Taijiquan*, which describes the chansijing's basic principles. In order to explain the importance of this exercise, we will refer extensively to Chen's work in this chapter.

One of the classical theories on taijiquan (see Chapter 4.3) mentions that the manipulation of the flow of inner energy or jing (劲) is like the movement of a silk thread when pulled from a cocoon. As the thread is pulled, the cocoon turns. Thus the thread's movement can be analyzed from two points of view: its translation by the pulling force and its rotation by the revolving cocoon (see Chapter 3.7). In much the same way, the chansijing seeks to unify the curved and the straight (曲中求直), which are opposites. Like a bullet that revolves on its own axis and simultaneously follows a trajectory, or like the earth that turns both around the sun and on its axis, the chansijing operates by forming a spiral line in space.

The flow of movement characteristic of the chansijing is applied to taijiquan as a whole. People are usually only aware that taijiquan is comprised of circular movement. More than that, however, taiji is figuratively propelled by a big moving screw inside of the body. Zhengmanqing (郑曼青, 1901-1975 AD), perhaps the greatest taijiquan master known by Westerners, always reminded his students to make their hands and head move as part of the body and not independently. Sometimes he said with utmost emphasis, "If you move your hands arbitrarily instead of having them follow the body, you are just doing exercise and are not really practicing taijiquan." Additionally, you are still only doing exercise if you do not match all parts of your body as described by taiji principles. What do I mean by "doing exercise"? Since exercises such as dance, sports and other martial arts do not talk about the principle of chansijing, practicing taijiquan without using this principle is the same as doing other exercises. Chansijing makes it easy for you to avoid and neutralize a force acting from the outside. This is because the chansijing works like a screw, transforming the motion from any force acting on its thread into a spiral pattern.

Early in 500 B.C., Sunzi (孙子) said in his book, *The Art of War*, "To fight and conquer in all battles is not supreme excellence; supreme excellence consists in breaking the enemy's resistance without fighting." Taijiquan uses the same principle, i.e., to break your opponent's resistance with wit and skill, not by comparing your strength. The chansijing teaches you the application of this principle.

Basically, there are two main kinds of chansijing: clockwise chansijing or *shunchan* (顺缠) and counterclockwise chansijing or *nichan* (逆缠). The shunchan is related to the arm in the following way: Starting from the dantian the shunchan ascends to the shoulder, winds around the arm clockwise by going over the right shoulder from the outside of the shoulder to the inside, passes the elbow and is transmitted to the finger with the palm turned out. For the left arm and side of the body, the movement of the shunchan is a complementing counterclockwise.

*You may find this book under its former title, *The Tao of Meditation: Way to Enlightenment*

The shunchan, which is used for attack, is an energy of ward-off or *bingjing* (棚勁). The nichan, opposite of shunchan, starts from the fingers, winds spirally along the right arm, passes over the elbow, ascends to the shoulder and returns to the dantian. The nichan, which is used to neutralize, is an energy of roll-back or *luojing* (掙勁). As far as the legs are concerned, the jing starts out from the dantian and comes to point six (see Chapter 3.3); it then moves along both thighs toward the inside of the leg and circles down across the knee, around the calf, ankle, heel, the center of the foot, sole and ends up at the tip of the big toe. This whole process is called the shunchan of the leg. The reverse process, starting at the big toe and circling back to the dantian is called the nichan. In general, the nichan is associated with retreating and the shunchan with advancing. For example, driving a screw into wood is like the shunchan, and retrieving it is like the nichan. With respect to the rotational aspect of the jing, remember that in order to rotate your palm, you must rotate your whole arm. To rotate your foot, rotate your whole leg. Finally, to rotate your waist, originate your intention from the dantian. When all three rotational processes take place simultaneously, the movement becomes a spiraling curve in space (see Figure 3.4a).

According to *The Theory of Taijiquan* (see Chapter 4.1), “The jing is rooted in the feet, bursts out in the legs, is controlled by the waist and functions through the fingers. From the feet to the legs, legs to the waist; all should be moved as a unit.” If you do not yet know the basics of taijiquan or have a method of practice, then wait to practice the chansijing and only when the chansijing is understood and is practiced correctly can you reach the above-mentioned unity. The next section of the book will get you started.

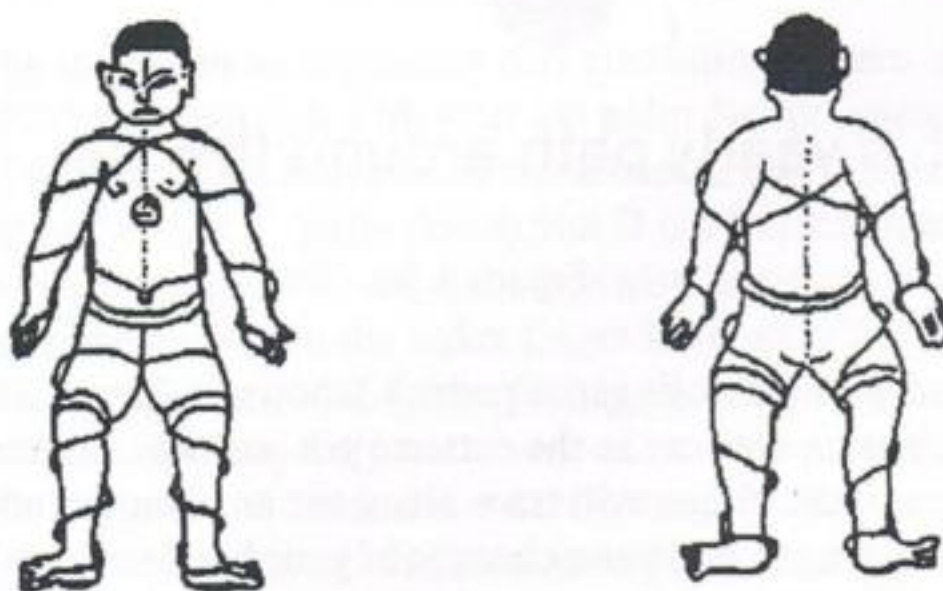


Figure 3.4a

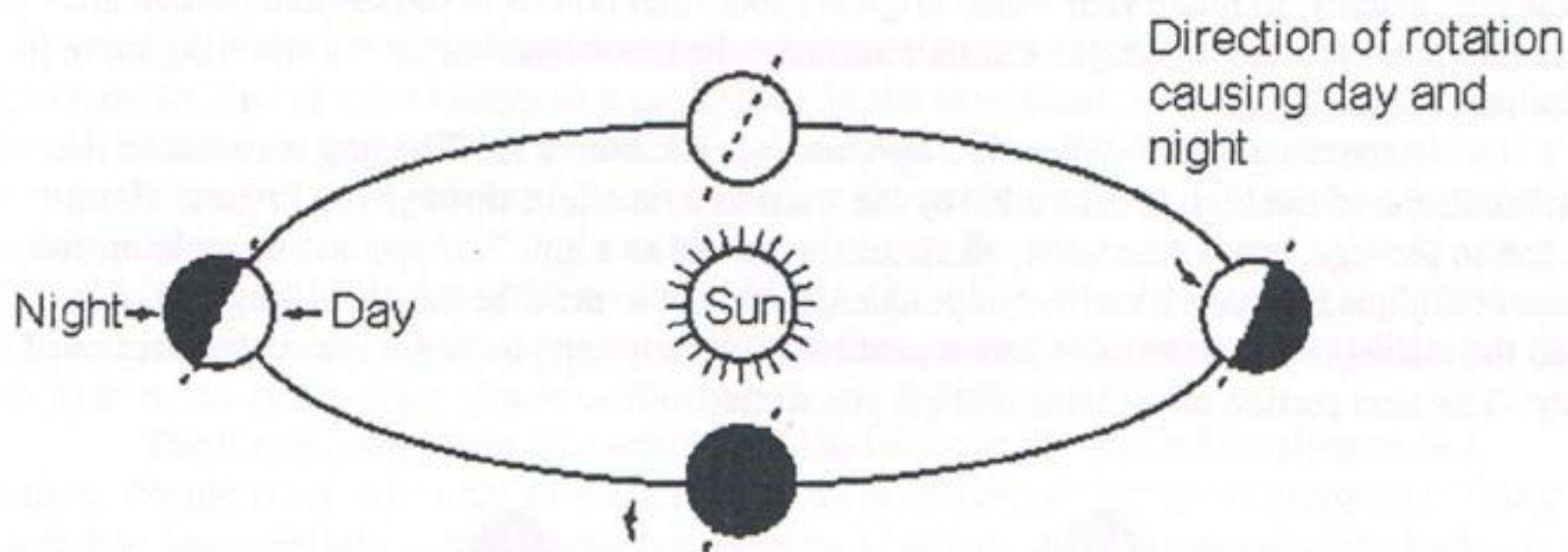
3.5. The Practice of Chansijing. Although Chen's book on taijiquan discusses the general principles behind the chansijing, it does not provide a clear explanation of the relationship between the chansijing and the taiji diagram or of the method of turning the palm according to the yin and yang changes in the taiji diagram. It is necessary to delve into this information in detail so that you can begin to practice and develop the chansijing. The latter part of this chapter will explore several of the philosophical implications of this exercise.

Figure 3.5a shows a series of relationships between the earth and the sun. The earth moves around the sun and that movement causes daily and seasonal changes. In Chinese terms, day is yang and night is yin; hot weather is yang and cold weather is yin. These yin and yang changes occur gradually because of the rotation of the earth on its axis and its movement around the sun. In the practice of the chansijing, it is assumed that the taiji diagram represents the sun; the black part represents yin and the white represents yang. With respect to your hand

which represents the earth, your palm is yin and the back of your hand is yang; just as the earth moves around the sun, the palm of the hand is made to trace the shape of the taiji diagram. In order for the palm to be tangential to the taiji diagram, rotate your hand so that its movement matches the yin and yang in the taiji diagram. The following three-part plan allows you to understand these yin/yang changes and know how to practice them.

Fixed-standing-position practice for the hands

- Face the wall, where a taiji diagram is fixed at about the height of your chest. Stand erect with arms at your sides. Place your feet parallel and shoulder-width apart. Bend your elbows slightly. Turn down your palms and raise your fingertips, keeping them relaxed. You should feel comfortable and relaxed without tension or strain, but with awareness.
- Rotate your right palm and arm counterclockwise until your arm twists and your palm is



Earth's yearly path around the sun

Figure 3.5a

turned upward. Aim your index finger at point A (shown in Figure 3.5b). Both your right hand and the taiji diagram are now in the extreme yin position. Rotate your arm clockwise in the shunchan; your index finger will trace along the arc from points A to B to C. As shown in Figure 3.5b, the yin and yang changes of your hand vary with the proportion of yin to yang in the taiji diagram. When your index finger reaches point C, both your hand and the taiji diagram are in the extreme yang position, palm down.

- Continue to rotate your right arm clockwise still in the shunchan with your index finger tracing along the arc from C to D. Your palm, which has not changed yang into yin, is facing to the left just before reaching point D. Rotate your arm and palm clockwise to maintain the tangency of your palm to the second nichan half of the curve. Trace your index finger down from D to A, moving your palm in a counterclockwise direction. At point A, your palm is again facing upward; point D is an inflection or turning point, as shown in Figure 3.5c.
- Continue to rotate your arm counterclockwise, and trace your index finger from point A through points E, C, and B, traveling the whole circle and returning to point A. Face your palm downward when your hand reaches the extreme yang position at C and face it upward when your hand is at the ending point A—with your arm and palm again twisted counterclockwise. This whole process is the nichan, as shown in Figure 3.5d.

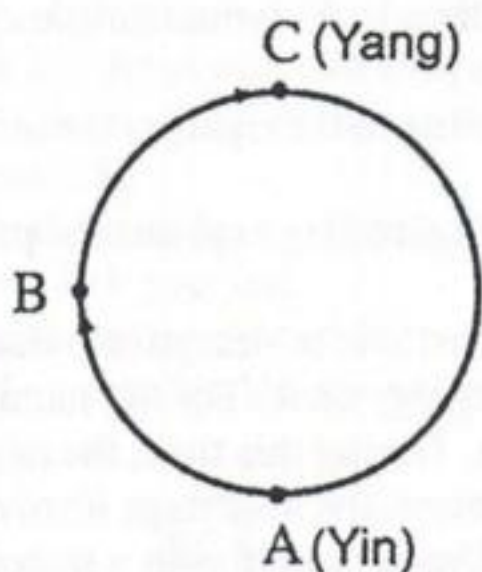


Figure 3.5b

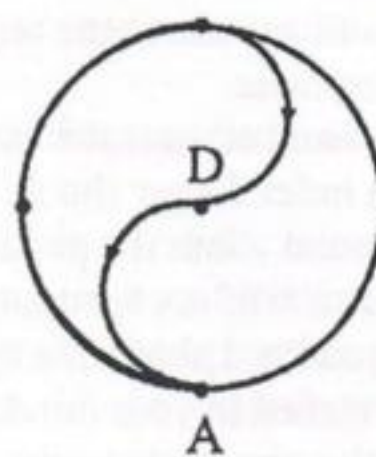


Figure 3.5c

- In summary, start from point A, with your arm twisted counterclockwise and your palm facing upward. Rotate your arm clockwise with the index finger tracing along the curve from points A, B, C to D. Face your palm downward at point C and to the left at point D, moving in the shunchan. Then rotate your arm clockwise 180 degrees, and trace the index finger downward in a slow counterclockwise movement from point D to A, E, C, B, and return to A. Face your palm upward when it reaches A the first time, downward at the point C, and upward again at the ending point A, with the arm twisted counterclockwise. This whole process constitutes one cycle (see Figure 3.5e). Practice this sequence repeatedly.
- The process of using the left hand to practice this chansijing pattern reverses the method described above. Start from point A with your left palm facing upward and your arm in normal position. Trace the arm clockwise in shunchan so that the index finger traces along the curve following points A, B, C (palm down) and D (an inflection point with the palm facing left). Then rotate the arm 180 degrees clockwise in nichan and begin tracing downward in a clockwise movement with the index finger from point D to A (with your arm twisted and palm facing upward), E, C (palm facing downward), B, and A (palm facing upward). Practice this cycle repeatedly.
- The taiji diagram has two forms: clockwise and counterclockwise (see Figure 3.5f).
- If following the counterclockwise taiji diagram, your hand must trace the mirror image, or reverse of the clockwise taiji diagram. There are three major changes from the clockwise form:

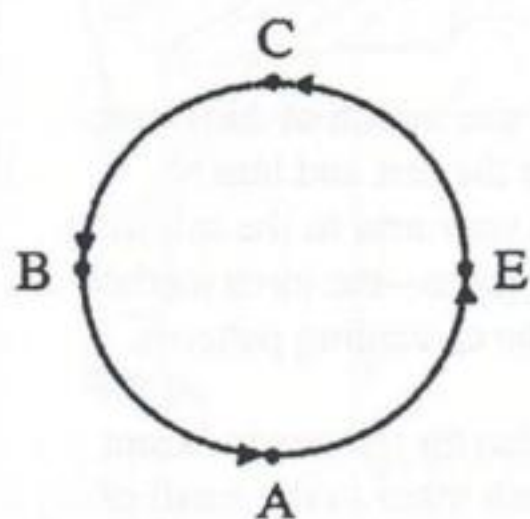


Figure 3.5d

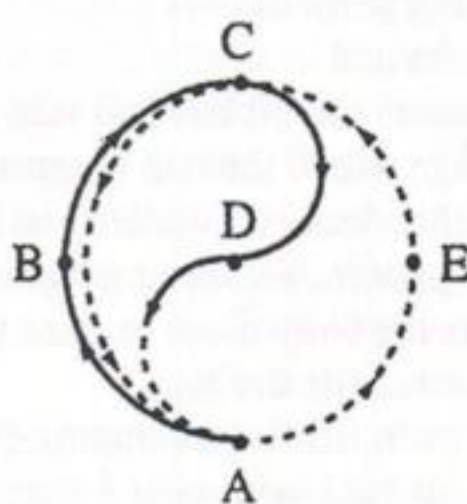


Figure 3.5e

ABCD ———> Shunchan
 DAECBA ———> Nichan
 D: an inflection point

- The right hand begins in the palm-up position and the arm in normal position; the left hand begins with the arm twisted and the palm up.
- The index finger traces the taiji diagram by first moving to the right, as the arm rotates counterclockwise.
- The shunchan becomes the nichan and vice-versa. Figure 3.5g explains the path which the index finger should trace.

A most important point about the practice of this exercise is that it is so deceptively simple, you might make the mistake of not spending sufficient time and energy on it. For the standing-position practice, you need about one month of daily practice. During this time, the taiji diagram will become etched in your mind. As your study progresses, the next stage involves the proper rotation of the arm so that your hand indicates the yin/yang change with a smooth, orderly flow from the shunchan to the nichan and vice versa. At first your index finger should trace as large a taiji diagram as possible. Gradually, as your shoulder joints are loosened and the yin/yang changes are smoothly executed, trace a smaller figure in the air. At

this point, you may understand of how the shunchan is like the rotation of a right-hand threaded screw. When you turn a screw clockwise it is driven in; with the clockwise motion in the chansijing, you are screwing in forward toward the opponent, or attacking. Conversely, the nichan is similar to retrieving a screw; just as counterclockwise turning causes the screw to come out, so the nichan movement describes retreating from the opponent. Notice how this motion is just like the rotation of the propeller of a ship or an airplane which turns in one direction to move the ship forward and in the other to send the ship backward. When properly executed, the tracing of the taiji diagram combines both of these directions in one complete movement. Because of this combination, you must learn the significance of the center or turning point of the taiji diagram where your arm and

hand change from the shunchan to the nichan and vice versa. After one month of daily practice, progress to the second stage where the taiji diagram is traced by the feet and legs.

Please keep in mind that once you understand how to move your arm in the spiraling chansijing patterns of the taiji pattern, you must advance to the next stage—the torso method. You must still the arms and let the *body* move to trace the arms in the chansijing patterns.

Fixed-standing-position practice for the legs.

- Stand in the same posture as in the fixed-standing-position practice for the hands except clasp your hands behind your back with your forearms against each other in the small of your back. Each hand holds the opposite forearm just below the elbow.
- Start with the clockwise taiji diagram. Stand on your left leg, and trace the diagram hori-

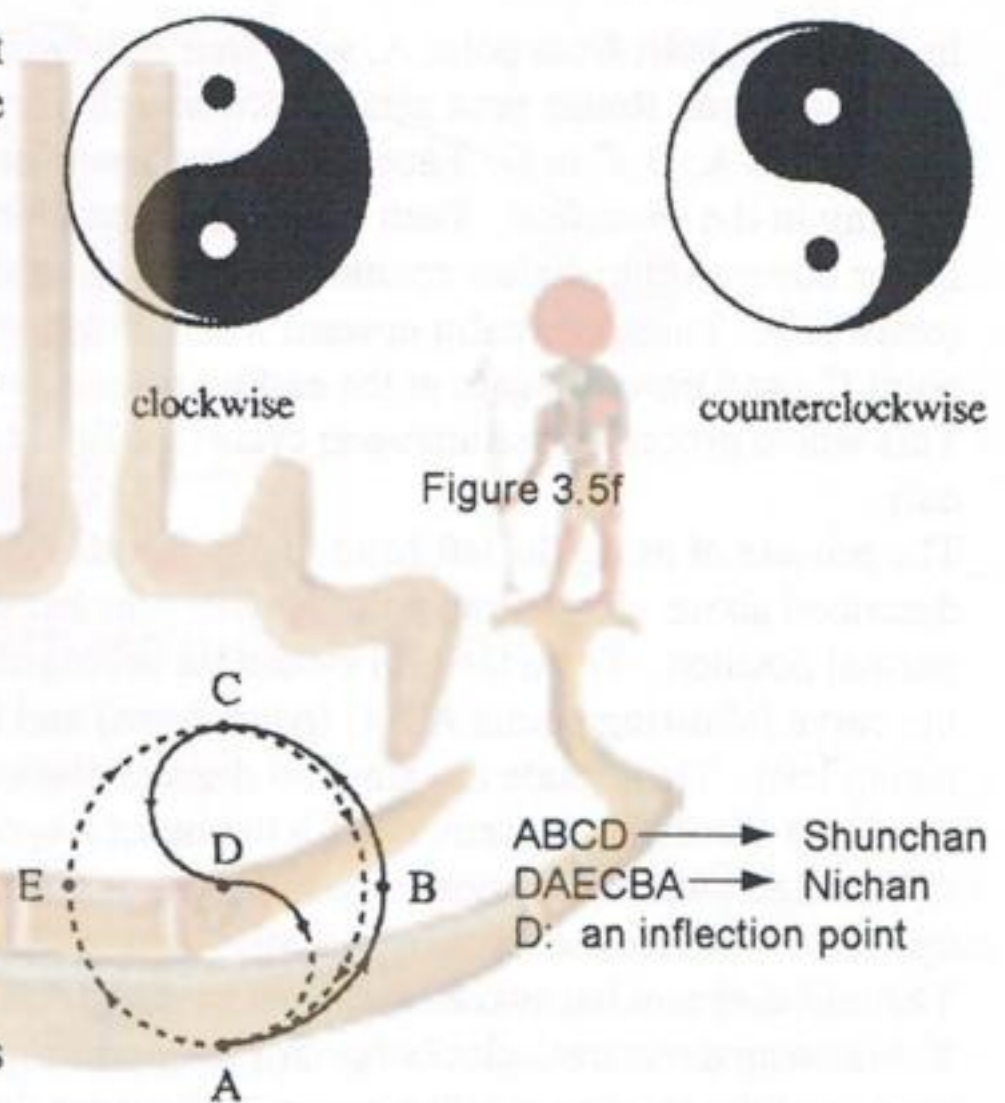


Figure 3.5g

zontally with your right foot and leg a few inches above the floor. The yin/yang changes of the foot are the same as for the palm in the hand practice. Repeat this exercise until your leg feels tired. Then change to the left leg; trace the same clockwise taiji diagram as shown in Figure 3.5h.

- Reverse the exercise by tracing the counterclockwise taiji diagram first with your right leg and then with your left.
- Change the orientation of the taiji diagram so that your foot traces the circle vertically in front of your body. Use the same technique of alternating right and left feet with the



Figure 3.5h

clockwise taiji diagram and then practicing the counterclockwise taiji diagram. These methods are depicted in Figure 3.5i.

- One month practice of the fixed standing-position exercise for the legs will teach you a most important fact. This exercise contains every possible kick (front, side, crescent, etc.) that can be made. By practicing this exercise over a long period of time, you will develop the ability to kick in every direction naturally and without effort.
- Now practice this move with the torso method.

Moving-step practice. To begin the exercise, place a picture of a clockwise taiji diagram on the wall in front of you. Starting with your feet shoulder-width apart, take a step forward with the right foot, bending the knee like a bow. Approximately seventy percent of the weight of the body rests on this leg, and the knee should not extend beyond the toe. The left leg is straight like an arrow.

This kind of step is called the Bow and Arrow Step. Using this stance, the right arm is stretched upfront and twisted counterclockwise. Using the index finger to trace the whole path, start from point A at the bottom of the taiji diagram, pass over the points B, C, D, A, E, C and return to the point A. Rather than moving only the hand and arm as you did when learning the standing-position practice, turn your waist, adjust your legs and shift the weight of your body from one leg to another to follow the motion of the index finger. The entire body must move as one unit. Always keep the body and head straight. Following is an example of how to perform the chansijing of tracing a clockwise taiji diagram with the right arm.



Figure 3.5i

- Begin with your right arm twisted counterclockwise so that your palm faces up.
- Your right leg is forward. Shift your weight onto the back (left) leg. Your arm is at point A of the taiji diagram.

- As your body advances to equal weight on both legs, rotate your body slightly to the left. This will cause your arm to move to point B of the diagram and your arm to twist slightly clockwise so that your palm faces to the right.
- Advance most of your body weight forward onto the right leg, and rotate your entire body to face forward again. This will cause your arm to move to point C of the diagram and your arm to twist slightly clockwise again so that your palm faces down.
- Slightly rotate your body to the right and then, facing forward again, retreat back to equal weight on both legs. Continue to twist your arm clockwise so that the palm faces left. You are now at point D of the taiji diagram.
- Rotate your arm counterclockwise so that your palm faces as far to the right as it can.
- Slightly rotate your body to the left and then face forward again to retreat onto the back leg. Continue to twist your arm counterclockwise so that your palm faces up and your arm is not twisted. You are now at point A of the taiji diagram.
- As your body advances to equal weight on both legs, rotate your body slightly to the right. This will cause your arm to move to point E of the diagram and your arm to twist slightly counterclockwise so that your palm faces left. Advance and turn the body forward. The arm is at point C with palm down.
- Retreat to equal weight on both legs, and slightly rotate your body to the left. This will cause the arms to move to point B of the diagram again, and your arms will be twisted slightly counterclockwise so that your palm faces to the right.
- Finish the cycle by retreating onto your back leg. Rotate your body to face forward again and, as you do so, twist your arm counterclockwise again with your palm up. You are now at point A, the same position at which you first began.

You can also do this exercise by beginning with the weight on your forward leg, rotating your body left when the weight is equal on both legs (to get from A to B), then rotating your body to face forward again, and then finally retreating completely onto the back leg (to get from B to C). Try this exercise in different combinations of these variables:

- Right arm forward
- Right leg forward
- Left arm forward
- Left leg forward
- Advancing to get from A to B to C
- Retreating to get from A to B to C
- Clockwise taiji diagram
- Counterclockwise taiji diagram
- Matching the movement of your body with expansion and contraction of your dantian

Learn to perform these combinations for yourself—to do so will help you develop your mind with taijiquan. First take time to fully understand the one variation that is described in detail above. Once that is completely familiar to you, then all of the other combinations will come easily.

In addition to teaching you how to connect the joints and move the whole body as a single unit, the chansijing exercise trains the internal organs to develop an intense inner strength, which the Chinese term jing. This jing, which is unknown in any Western form of exercise, becomes a reservoir of energy in a pure form and enables you to have seemingly end-

less endurance. Let us look at an example from nature to help us understand the development of this jing or energy source. The tornado is a vortex of energy, which begins forming slowly with small whirling breezes. As the tornado develops, the winds swirl and build momentum. Obviously, as the rotation accelerates, the energy increases and the vortex grows. Finally, the outside of the tornado looks very still as it moves in a unit; however, the whirling edge and the vacuum in the center have tremendous power. The same phenomenon occurs with the practice of the chansijing. The practitioner appears very still but builds an internal rotational momentum.

To develop taijiquan as a martial art, you must become aware of, understand and incorporate the chansijing practice. The incorporation of jing involves two steps: 1. *tingjing* (听劲) which means “to listen” or become aware of jing in your own body and later, for martial arts skill, in your opponent’s body, and 2. *dongjing* (懂劲), which means “to understand.” No literal English translation of *dongjing* exists. To accomplish *dongjing* means that you can realize an experience and can incorporate that understanding at a basic level. You must first know yourself and develop your own *dongjing* and then understand the jing from your opponent. It is therefore necessary to practice the solo exercise diligently and apply the chansijing to every movement of taijiquan. Later, apply the chansijing to the martial arts through the practice of push-hands (see Chapter 6.3).

Through the practice of the chansijing, you may understand and realize some of the most important Chinese philosophic concepts related to taiji, concepts not easily understood through language alone. One such concept is called “seeking stillness within motion” (动中求静). In the standing-position practice, it appears that you trace the taiji diagram by moving only your arm. To perform the moving-step practice correctly, however, your arm must not move independently. Your arm is moved by the adjustments or movements of your entire body and, in fact, your arm remains quite still, only following the body’s movement. It is important that the stillness embodied in the movement incorporates your mind as well as your body. To further elucidate the concept of inaction within action, imagine the experience of slipping on ice. When you begin to slip on the ice, you lose your balance, and your mind takes charge of your body on an almost totally subconscious level. Your mind is cleared of all outside thoughts, and your body intrinsically tries to re-establish balance or stillness. When you practice the chansijing and/or taijiquan, you must always seek this inner stillness or non-action.

Another concept involves “seeking action within non-action” (静中求动). As mentioned above, in the moving-step practice, your arm cannot move independently of your body—an example of seeking non-action within action. Upon further investigation, however, your arm has a very subtle, inner rotating movement which is generated again by the adjustments and movements of your entire body. Thus your arm is seeking action within non-action.

The third concept to understand for progress in the practice of the chansijing is known as “going from nothing to something,” or “wuji’s generating taiji” (无极而太极). The learning process provides an example of this concept. Students of the chansijing know nothing or wuji, before beginning to study. First, students must learn the standing position practice. Then they begin the moving-step practice and gradually work to incorporate all of the principles previously discussed. They have moved from knowing nothing or wuji, to knowing something or taiji, about the chansijing.

A final principle to be realized is “returning from something to nothing,” or “returning from taiji to wuji” (太极而无极). This concept can be clarified by watching the development of the chansijing practice. At first, practitioners trace the path of the taiji diagram with very large, disconnected movements. Gradually, they internalize the chansijing, thereby making the movements smaller and smaller. The final goal is reached when the movement

continues but appears to be inactive or still. This essentially formless stage indicates that you have “returned from something to nothing,” or from taiji to wuji.

Note: In the classes I teach at Tai Chi Farm (Warwick, NY), we are always seeking to improve our chansijing experiences. When I believe a very effective system of chansijing exercise has been developed, I will publish again.

It is also important for you to think about how to merge the chansijing and the qigong practices. In the qigong exercises, where can you pull in and push out the dantian? This is the type of exploration and improvements I work on with my classes. These discoveries I will also share in a future publication. Until then, please always work on these principles yourself. If you find a good way to practice the chansijing and qigong principles together, while still applying torso method and maintaining good body structure, please feel free to discuss it with me.

3.6. Awakening Mental Powers. It is commonly understood that to exert a large force, you need strong muscles or at least great physical strength. Take, for example, the process of pounding a stake into the ground with a heavy hammer. This process has basically two steps: 1. lifting the hammer as high as possible so as to maximize its potential energy, and 2. lowering the hammer as fast as possible so as to increase its speed of falling, or maximize its kinetic energy. Both of these steps require physical strength, and physical strength depends on muscles; so, as it is commonly understood, to develop a great physical force you must exercise and develop strong muscles. Yet, when you play taijiquan, you should use little physical strength, to relax and to be soft. How can this result in the great strength and force apparently shown by the taiji masters? What these masters possessed was jing (勁), the special kind of internal energy developed through practice and accomplishment in taijiquan.

It is known that by relaxing and being soft you train the muscles to act only as a balancing and supporting mechanism, so that the whole body becomes poised and ready to act instantaneously. But what is it that is used to power actions? It cannot be physical force as you understand it, since that would violate all of the principles of taijiquan. In fact, it is a type of energy. Everyday we use many kinds of energy that were only suspected or imagined a hundred years ago. Electricity and magnetism are the most basic types of invisible energy used daily in machines. The liberation of energy by the fission of an atom or by the fusion of hydrogen is becoming more common as more nuclear power stations are built. You can definitely infer that there are many more forms of energy with which you may be much less familiar, or which at this point in time are merely unknown.

For 1,000 years or more the Chinese Daoists have experimented and concluded that the body is a most wonderful machine, which may act as a generator of many types of energy and force. To the Daoists, however, the primary generator is the mind (心). Since the mind generates consciousness (意), with direction and exercise consciousness can develop and create. This power of consciousness, a form of concentration, is the primary goal in the practice of the taijiquan. As an example, when you practice the posture push, you imagine that you are actually pushing an opponent, but without force. Develop the energy or jing from the feet, through the legs, the waist, the arms and finally to the hands. If you persist in such concentration, perhaps after a year or two, you will notice heat or vibration in the palm during the practice of push. When this kind of concentration is developed and practiced throughout the whole taiji solo exercise and combined with daily practice of the taiji qigong, taiji meditation and chansijing, after five or ten years you manifest an energy perceived as great strength and power. This energy is called spiritual or psychic energy—or jing. Whereas muscular energy is definitely limited, both as to your strength and endurance, no such limit is imposed upon jing. In fact, the

power of this form of energy increases with practice and, furthermore, does so without limit.

So the question arises: How do you develop this jing? More than just concentration is required. Observe the difference in behavior between a young kitten and an old mother cat. Even though she has the benefit of experience to carry out her intention more efficiently and effectively, the mother cat has to some extent lost her former drive to respond and react to a stimulus. The young kitten, in contrast, is ever ready to act and does so synchronously with its intention; its nervous energy is available for action, even without a stimulus. Human beings have the same problem; young children have a spirit or shen (神) which tends to diminish with age. Therefore, developing this jing is a matter of shen, or motivation to act immediately according to intention. Furthermore, feed your progress back to the mind which monitors the intended action to completion.

To develop jing, you must practice both its internal and external aspects in such a way that they complement each other and become one harmonious whole, as indicated in the dynamic movement represented by the taiji diagram. This principle applies not only to the performance of taiji, but also to walking, driving a car, or riding a bicycle, as well as waiting for a bus, sitting at the dinner table, or even sleeping and simple activities. A state of relaxed alertness should be maintained at all times, just as is the case with the young kitten. Only when you learn to feel at home with such a state are you ready to develop the jing to reach ever higher levels of awareness and effectiveness.

It is a simple enough matter to understand what is presented here. However, to be useful, relaxed awareness must be practiced. Succeeding is a question of the will. One starts to feel alert, but soon tires and forgets. This response is natural enough. However, it is important to renew the effort every time it occurs to you to do so. With diligent practice, you can make progress toward maintaining a state of relaxed alertness all the time. Such a state is a prerequisite for the further development of your psychic energy, and especially for middle-aged and older persons, for becoming once again like a young kitten.

In the Single Whip posture, the right hand forms a hook with all four fingers touching the thumb. This configuration, which according to the Chinese represents the crane's beak, has a variety of effective applications in the martial arts. You can peck at an eye or other vulnerable spot on an adversary, or grasp open-handed, etc. The following is a translation of an old Chinese song about this posture:

“Putting the five fingertips together,
Create the image of a mountain peak,
The culmination point of the pre-birth qi,
Especially when total awareness is concentrated there.”

Meditating on this image is valuable in developing the jing. Hold the crane's bill about ten inches away from the body with the fingertips pointing toward your face. Relax your elbow joint and the arm. With the fierce look of a soaring falcon, fix both eyes on the crane's beak; concentrate intently on the fingers as long as possible without blinking the eyes. At the same time, use the expansion and contraction movement of the dantian to activate the qi. Imagine the jing, stored in the dantian, rising from the lower torso through the back to the eyes as well as to the shoulder, arm and finally to the hand. Like a magnetic field between two opposite poles, the jing connects the eyes and the crane's bill formed by the fingertips. Perform this method of sitting meditation three times a day, alternating the hands each time. After much practice, you can meditate up to ten or more minutes for each hand. Eventually the fingertips

can be felt as definitely warmer than normal, following some novel or unique feeling.

You can also practice enhancing your spiritual force during the chansijing exercise. Instead of using an open palm in the arm movement, switch to the crane's bill configuration. As the crane's bill moves clockwise to trace the taiji diagram, imagine that energy is sent forth to the fingertips from the dantian, as if advancing a right-hand-threaded screw. With counter-clockwise motion, energy is absorbed in the body to be stored in the dantian, as if driving the screw backward. To understand this movement of energy, however, is only the beginning. The only way to achieve high skill is to practice it regularly. Practice makes perfect!

Although Yangluchan, the greatest known taiji master, did not look at all like a boxer since he was short and of small build, he could lift and easily throw adversaries twice his own weight. How did Yangluchan achieve such power? The answer lies in the long and arduous development of his psychic energy. According to Chenyanlin's (陈炎林) taijiquan book, Yangluchan could use a loud Ha to throw his students without touching them. Yang, moreover, could make a candle flame flicker or go out from a distance of one foot. He could pull the flame towards him, hold it, and then send it back and put it out. Yang's skills are in fact proof that the individual may generate and control energies that can affect both people and objects.

Today, no one is capable of such an achievement. The reason is clear. Just as you can easily learn to ride a bicycle at a very fast speed, you can strengthen your muscles in a relatively short time. However, developing the psychic force, like maintaining balance on a bicycle at a very slow speed, necessitates much patient practice over a long period of time. While such an achievement is definitely possible, very few persons will ever take the time, patience and effort required. To do so is strictly a personal matter.

3.7. The Key to Taijiquan. Consider the following situation: a tumbler toy, such as a small solid sphere connected to a large one, will always right itself regardless of attempts by forces from the side to change the toy's original position of static equilibrium. One wonders why such a response occurs. It seems that the tumbler should fall over so that both spheres would touch the platform on which it originally rested. However, an analysis of the physical principles involved uncovers the mystery. The tumbler has a sufficiently low center of gravity to keep its body upright. The problem of a body's static equilibrium breaks down into three cases. Consider a solid cone supported by a platform. In case A it rests on its base, in case B on its vertex, and in case C on its side, as shown in Figure 3.7a.

Case A represents the condition of stable equilibrium. Note that two factors contribute to the cone's stability: 1. the center of gravity is relatively low, and 2. the line of the center of gravity, or direction of the gravity field connecting the cone with the center of the earth, remains within the area of the supporting base. It would take considerable force from the side to upset this static equilibrium condition.

In case B, the reverse is true. The center of gravity is relatively high, and the line of the center of gravity is too easily moved off the point of support, thus upsetting the condition of equilibrium. This case is therefore called unstable, or precariously balanced.

Case C has an important characteristic. However unevenly the cone may roll on its conical surface, the two critical aspects never change. The distance between the center of gravity and the platform remains constant, and the line of the center of gravity continues to go through the area of contact, although this area itself continues to change if the cone rolls.

To maximize the stability of static equilibrium in case A, therefore, two distances should be considered. The vertical distance between the center of gravity of the body and its platform should be made as short and the base area as large as possible.

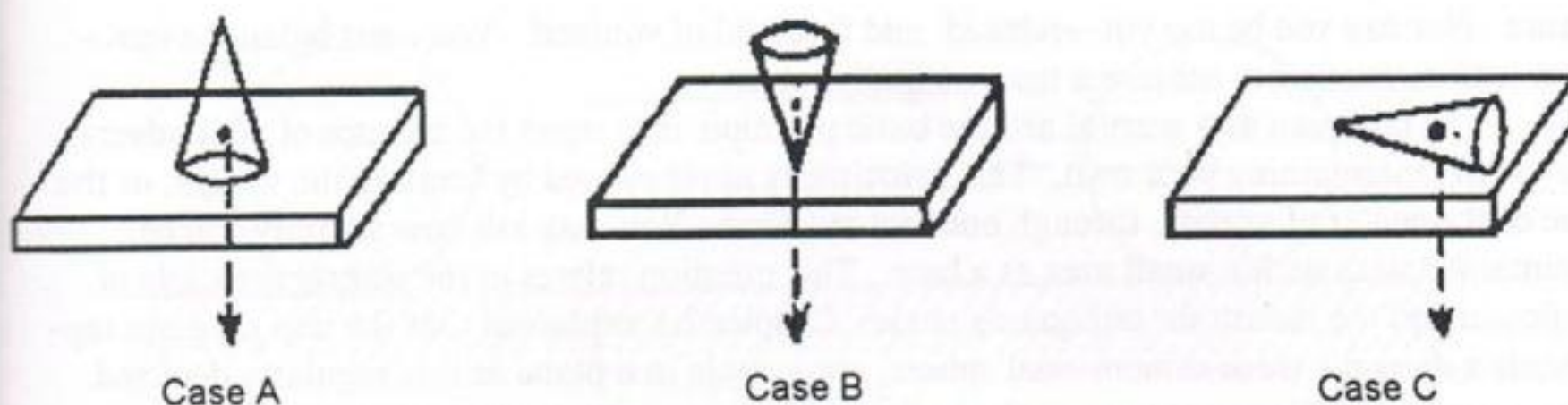


Figure 3.7a

Most of the martial arts strongly emphasize the Riding Horse Step, or *mabu* (马步) as a model stance; the legs are spread far apart with the knees bent and the body's center of gravity is made as low as possible (see Figure 3.7b). Such a posture is very stable for movements to the left or right in the vertical plane; the center of gravity is relatively low, and the line of the center of gravity is always well within the base between the two feet. However, such a posture is relatively unstable in the fore-and-aft vertical plane. The condition of static equilibrium is rather easily disturbed by a push or pull from the front or back. Since the base area is very narrow (the length of the foot at most), it is relatively easy to move beyond the center of gravity.

An alternate model stance is called the Bow and Arrow Stance, or *gongjianbu* (弓箭步). The front foot points forward with the knee bent like the shape of a bow, and the rear foot points slightly outward with the knee naturally straight like an arrow (see Figure 3.7c). This stance contrasts sharply with the *mabu*. The *gongjianbu*, which provides more stability in the fore-and-aft vertical plane is somewhat weaker in the lateral direction. However, it also has a relatively greater base area than the *mabu*.

The art of taijiquan deliberately limits the use of the *mabu* and emphasizes the more stable *gongjianbu*. In addition to having a larger base and better fore-and-aft stability, you can more easily shift your front or rear foot to execute the circular taiji movements when yielding or attacking.

In the original Yang Long Form of taijiquan, the Cross Hands posture, which uses the *mabu* or double-weighted stance, occurs only at the beginning and end of the form. More recent variations have used an explicit Cross Hands at the end of the first and second sections of the Yang



Figure 3.7b



Figure 3.7c

taiji, between the forms of Withdraw and Push (如封似闭) and Embrace the Tiger, Return to Mountain (抱虎归山). Even if the explicit Cross Hands is omitted, you must pass through Cross Hands between sections of the long taiji. This transitional move provides an example of a taiji and meditation philosophy described as action with the intention of non-action, or *wuwei* (无为而为). In meditation, for instance, you cannot be too yang—tense and

aware. Nor can you be too yin—relaxed and forgetful of yourself. You must balance awareness with relaxation to achieve a true meditative state.

In taijiquan as a martial art, the basic principle is to upset the balance of your adversary while maintaining your own. This principle is implemented by keeping the weight, or the line of the center of gravity, through one foot at a time. You may ask how stability can be maintained with such a small area as a base. This question relates to the central principle of taijiquan and the reason for taijiquan's name. Chapter 2.1 explained that the taiji diagram represents a dynamic three-dimensional sphere, not a circle in a plane as it is regularly depicted. The purpose of taijiquan is to train the individual to become like a dynamic taiji or rotating sphere which, for the martial arts, is the most balanced and beautiful of all shapes. Note that the center of gravity and the point of support are always aligned with the line of the center of gravity in every possible orientation of the sphere; that is, the point of contact and center of the sphere are always perpendicular to the supporting platform at the point of contact and, hence, no instability can be induced (see Figure 3.7d).

Trained to become like a sphere, the individual who cannot be caught in a position of unstable equilibrium can also return immediately to a position of improved stability when attacked. The outside of this sphere is static and relatively soft while its inside is moving and hard. Imagine attempting to strike a blow directly at a solid rotating sphere.

The sphere's reaction has two distinct components: the rotational inertia deflects the thrust sideways in the direction of the thrust's motion at the point of contact, and the elastic surface causes the energy of the thrust to be used for its own repulsion. When encountered by a specialist in any other martial art, Yangluchan reacted like a solid rotating sphere. Any attempts to attack him proved ineffective.

How then can you be trained to become like a rotating taiji sphere? A candidate should have natural talent, cleverness, good intuitive understanding, diligence and good physical endurance. You must be highly motivated to submit to the discipline of arduous training. Liyiyu (李亦畬 1833-1892 AD), was a taiji master in the Wu school who said with great emotion that in 100 years only one or two individuals ever achieved total mastery in taijiquan. Today, however, combining what we can learn from not only taiji's experts and classical theories but also the application of modern scientific methods, I am trying to design a direct, efficient training program to attain such mastery. This training program contains the following:

- Know where the center of the taiji sphere or the center of gravity in your body is located. According to the Daoists, this point is the dantian (see Chapter 3.1). The beginner is always instructed to sink the qi to the dantian and to concentrate the mind and will in the dantian. This principle is emphasized so much that you learn to keep this awareness at all times, even in sleep. The purpose of focusing on the dantian is to become centered within your being, not only to promote proficiency in the martial arts, but especially to maintain a serene, peaceful demeanor. So taijiquan attempts to unify the three aspects of taiji: the physical movement, the mental attitude and the philosophical concept.
- Consider a sphere moving as shown in Figure 3.7e. The line PQ, traced by the center of gravity as the sphere moves along the point of contact, or line AB, will always be at a constant radial distance which is directly above and parallel to the point of contact. If the direction of the sphere's motion changes, the curve traced by the center of gravity will still remain in a plane parallel to that traced by the point of contact.

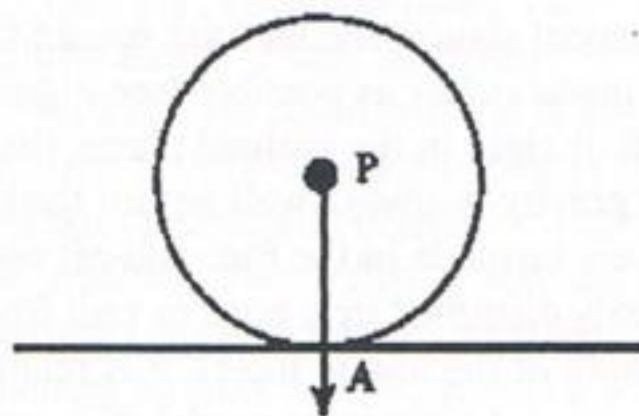


Figure 3.7d

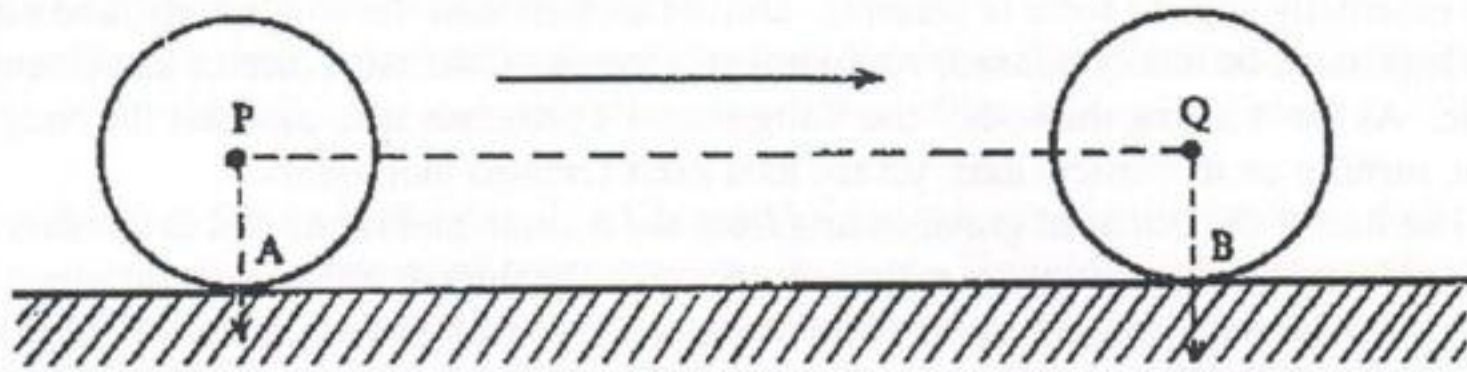


Figure 3.7e

- A basic feature of training in taijiquan is that you learn to think of yourself as a sphere with the dantian as the center. Moving in any direction (without being affected by an external force), advancing or retreating, you must keep the dantian at a constant vertical distance from the floor or ground. You may not, when not reacting to an externally applied force, greatly raise or lower the body.
- The head should be positioned as though suspended by a string from above, and the coccyx, the tail bone of the spine, should also remain in the normal standing unbiased position, that is, not rotated or tilted. These two points are always emphasized in the classical theories of taijiquan. Consider the trunk of the body as a cylinder with a vertical axis. The purpose of paying attention to the head-to-coccyx axis is to keep the body's position straight (see Figure 3.7f).
- There are two types of movement to be analyzed: translation and rotation. Translation of a cylinder from position A to B (see Figure 3.7g) shows that both the cylinder and its axis are moved equally. During the translation, the axis must remain parallel, not wobbling between extreme positions. Rotation is defined as motion about an axis in which the axis itself remains unmoved (see Figure 3.7h), e.g., the rotational movement of a flywheel whose axis is stationary.

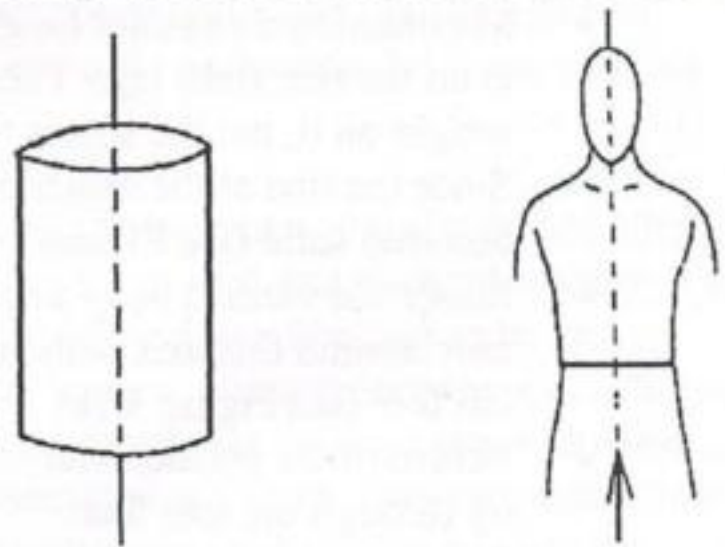
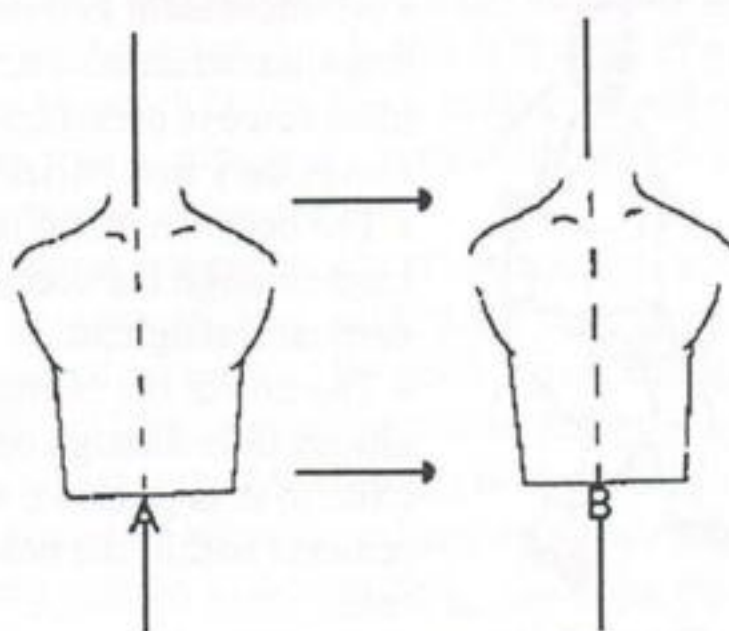


Figure 3.7f

According to Wuyuxiang (武禹襄), "When going back and forth, you should draw into folds. When advancing or retreating, you should turn the body and vary the steps" (see Chapter 4.3). In terms of translation and rotation, folds refer to bending the knees to ensure the proper translation of the body axis and to maintain a constant height of the dantian above the floor



Translation from A to B

Figure 3.7g



Rotation around the axis

Figure 3.7h

(when no externally applied force is present). During such motion the whole body, and especially the legs, must be totally relaxed, yet completely aware. Otherwise correct movement is impossible. As for “turning the body,” the Yang school’s principle is to consider the body as a mill stone, turning on its vertical axis, yet the axis itself remains motionless.

The line of the center of gravity starts from the dantian and is parallel to the axis of the body. As mentioned before, a sphere makes contact with the floor at only one point. Imagine yourself as a sphere with one foot as the point of contact. Now align your center of gravity to pass through that foot. When this posture is not possible during a movement, keep the line of the center of gravity between the two feet and in a position where you can move the weight as easily as possible to one foot.

Ending the theoretical explanation above, we follow with an application of the theory. Four basic postures for the student to practice are provided below:

- Start with the gongjianbu, right foot forward. The body is totally relaxed, the mind fully aware, and the head held as if suspended on a string with the coccyx in the natural standing position. The line of the center of gravity is as close to the heel of the right foot as possible. The calf of the right leg must be vertical, or perpendicular to the floor, as shown in Figure 3.7i.
- Maintaining a constant height, translate the body backward until the entire weight is on the rear (left) leg. The right leg is now totally relaxed or empty, with no weight on it, but the sole is touching the floor and the right knee is slightly bent. Since the line of the center of gravity passes through the left foot, the left leg now becomes solid (see Figure 3.7j).
- Rotate the vertical body axis to the left, up to about fifty degrees. Turn the body only around this axis without moving or changing the center of gravity from the left foot (see Figure 3.7k).
- Return to the position shown in Figure 3.7j, keeping the line of the center of gravity through the rear foot.
- Return to the position shown in Figure 3.7i. This move completes one cycle, which can be repeated a number of times until you feel the strain in your legs. Then the entire sequence is done symmetrically in the Bow and Arrow Step with the left leg forward.

The steps for training to be like a taiji sphere are summarized below:

- You become aware of your body as being like a homogeneous solid sphere with the dantian as the center of gravity.
 - All movement is done in such a way that, when no externally applied force is present, the dantian moves only in a horizontal plane.
 - The body’s axis falling from the head through the coccyx remains vertical throughout.
 - The line of the center of gravity always falls through one foot, or as close to it as possible, and always remains within the base of the two feet.
 - All body movement is a transla-



Figure 3.7i



Figure 3.7j



Figure 3.7k

tion or a rotation of the vertical body axis.

Following these principles is like doing what is said in *The Classics of Taijiquan* (see Chapter 4.2): “Stand like a poised scale and move actively like the wheel of a cart.”

3.8. The Thirteen Torso Methods. The Chen and Yang schools of taijiquan base their methods of practice on the principles of taiji’s classical theories. The Wu school also emphasizes the torso method (身法). This method provides a concrete step-by-step approach to understanding the applications of the classical theories, which alone are too refined and abstract for the beginning student. The torso method gives the student a series of techniques which are easy to apply, allowing for gradual and obtainable achievement. Wuyuxiang (武禹襄), the founder of the Wu school, developed eight of the torso methods; Liyiyu (李亦畬), Wu’s nephew and student, described the other five. The thirteen torso methods are explained below.

Method 1: Hollowing the chest or *hanxiong* (涵胸). The chest above the heart should be relaxed downward, not lifted up as soldiers do when standing at attention. Keep your shoulders very slightly forward. Properly cultivating this posture can let the mind’s awareness lead the qi to every part of the body. The tendency to store excess tension in the chest area explains the sense of deep relaxation after a heavy sigh and the importance of hollowing the chest during meditation as well as taijiquan. By applying the torso method for hollowing the chest, you can release tension, lose inner anxiety and meditate longer.

Method 2: Lifting the back or *babei* (拔背). While practicing taijiquan, you should pay attention to three aspects of the posture for the back: a. showing an upward and outward tendency of the spine between the shoulders, b. letting the shoulders be relaxed, flexible and agile, and c. not allowing the head to droop forward but rather keeping it erect. Since this concept of lifting the back is hard to understand, here is a method to help you practice it. Stand erect with arms stretched forward and the palms extended outward and overlapping. Next, drop your arms with your hands still together. Finally, slowly separate your arms to your sides. You can feel by moving the shoulders alternately forward and back, that your arms are connected through the back, in effect forming one articulated unit. When practicing taijiquan, keep an awareness of this connection between the two arms.

Method 3: Intent to protect the crotch region or *guodang* (裹裆). Always at least slightly bend your knees; that is, do not ever rigidly lock them. The intention is to protect the crotch region with an awareness that keeps this vulnerable area tucked in and unexposed. The Chinese characters for *guodang* imply that it is more of a *mental* intention than a physical action. If you protect the crotch by too much rolling inward of the legs, the physical structure of the correct posture will be distorted. In this method you should be aware of the connection between your legs through the coccyx.

In postures where the line of the body’s center of gravity goes through one leg, that leg is referred to as substantial, or solid, while the other, carrying no weight at that moment, is called insubstantial, or empty. However, when one leg is solid and the other is empty, continue to imagine that both legs are connected as though they were one leg. Imagine that the legs are hollow inside and that the body weight is like a liquid that can flow through the legs as the weight shifts from one leg to the other (see Figure 3.8a). In this way, you realize the interchange between solidity and emptiness. *Guodang* makes this interchange smooth and connected.

Method 4: Intent to shelter the stomach or *huzhun* (护盹). To keep the rib cage protected, imagine that the lower ribs come together and the higher ones fold slightly inward (see Figure 3.8b). As with *guodang*, it is more of a mental intention than a physical action. This posture gives a feeling of relaxed comfort. In contrast, an overly-expanded posture would open the rib cage, leaving the torso vulnerable to a frontal attack so that a blow above the stomach would be felt as much more severe than in *huzhun*.

Method 5: Lifting up the head or *diding* (提顶). The head and neck must be kept erect as if hanging by a string from above; do not let your head nod or hold the *jing* too high. In this natural and relaxed posture, the vertebrae carry the entire weight of the head. The *shen* is felt to be

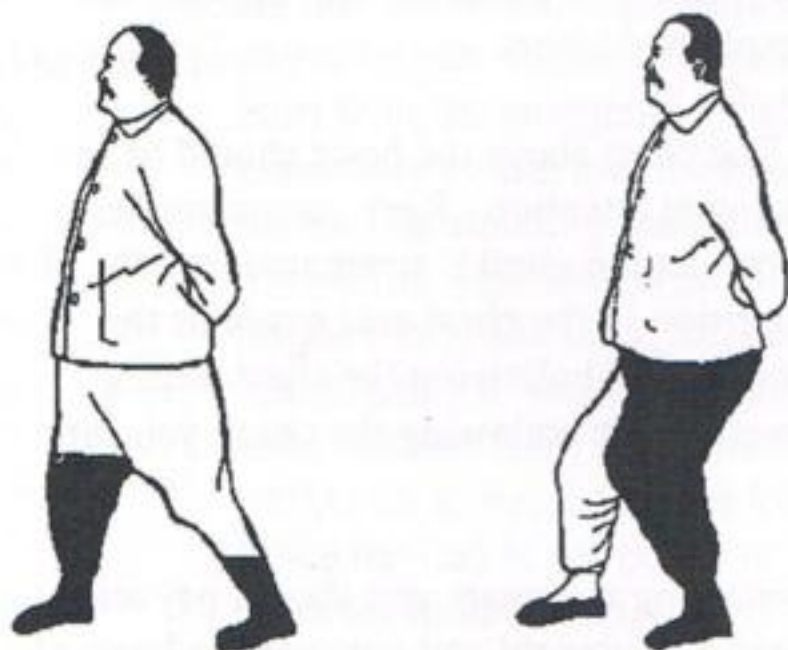


Figure 3.8a

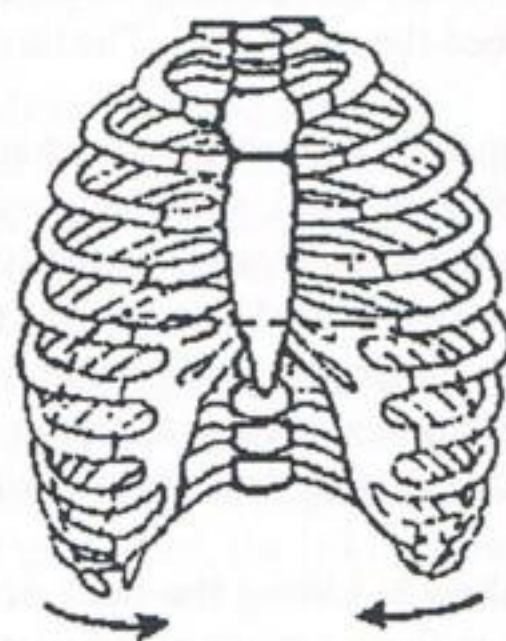


Figure 3.8b

pulled straight upward through the top of your head, as though your body were a fish net being raised from above.

Method 6: Rounding the groin or *diaodang* (吊裆). The lower the area of the body controlling the movement, the more relaxed the upper parts of the body, thereby preserving maximum stability. Thus for shifting the body weight, focus from your feet up your legs and then to your body. Furthermore, have the intention to keep the space between the legs rounded, the pelvis tucked under (so that the buttocks do not protrude outward) and the lower abdomen a little bit forward and upward.

Method 7: Leaping or *tengnuo* (腾挪). Like a cat waiting for a rat, assume a state of relaxed intention, as if preparing for action, yet holding back for the right moment. Then with precise timing, leap to accomplish your goal. This method is characterized by relaxed concentration.

Method 8: Blitzkrieg or *shanzhan* (闪战). Unity in action characterizes the body, limbs and waist. The mind is kept alert and coherent, prepared at any moment to release energy, or *jing*, like an arrow ready to leave the bow. The mind and body are both prepared for action, as swift as a sudden clap of thunder. Just as an eagle swoops down to catch its prey, move with direct intention as if no opponent could block your way.

Method 9: Relaxing the shoulders or *songjian* (鬆肩). When broadening the shoulders but remaining relaxed, allow the *qi* to sink downward. It is important to seek inner stillness and to use your consciousness rather than a stiff posture.

Method 10: Sinking elbows downward or *chenzhou* (沉肘). To allow the elbows to sink naturally, first will the qi to your arms. Keep your shoulders loose and relaxed and your wrists flexible and agile. By adhering to these principles, you will develop a sense of the elbows' naturally downward inclination.

Method 11: Positioning the coccyx (尾闾中正). Normally the coccyx is inclined and pushed outwards but in taijiquan it is tucked inward. To correctly position the coccyx, locate your center of gravity and allow the coccyx to be in a central stable position. This process is almost totally directed by the mind. You must develop a sense that the coccyx cradles the dantian.

Method 12: Sinking qi to the dantian (气沉丹田). When you have mastered Methods 11, 1, 4, 9, 6—in that order—you can direct the qi to the dantian. The practitioner should concentrate on keeping the qi in the dantian area rather than allowing it to float upwards toward the chest.

Method 13: Distinguishing Emptiness and Solidity (分清虚实). Since some yang exists within yin, an empty leg must still have some kind of solidity. The empty leg, therefore, must be connected to the ground through the sole of the foot, which adheres to the ground with full awareness. At the same time, imagine and concentrate on the connection between the upper end of the leg and the rest of the body so that the whole body is flexible. If you lack this sense of the connection at both ends of the leg, you practice a fault called partial sinking, or *pianchen* (偏沉). The solid leg, accordingly, must be loaded with the entire weight of the body. In addition, introduce emptiness into the solid leg by putting your will there and letting the shen ascend freely to the top of the head. Not distinguishing between empty and solid results in the fault of maintaining double-weightedness (双重). At the same time, if in an attempt to avoid double-weighting, you sink all the weight onto one leg without the mental awareness of yin within yang, you still do not distinguish between empty and solid.

CHAPTER FOUR CLASSICS



CHAPTER FOUR

CLASSICS

To most people, the Chinese “classics” are how-to books containing all the mysterious secrets of practicing taijiquan. That thought is only partially true. The classics do explain all of the fundamental principles of taijiquan. The value of these explanations, however, is realized only when you discover and understand that the underlying principles of taijiquan are also principles of an entire culture. The health benefits, the martial applications and the spiritual achievements attainable with the diligent practice of taijiquan are only possible if you integrate the principles into all parts of your life.

For your taijiquan to truly be taijiquan by classical definition, you must research, meditate on, and use your whole mind and body to apply what is said by our wise teachers of yesteryear. In this chapter, quotation marks denote the direct translation of taiji principles from original classics. I have included explanations or paraphrases to help you understand them better. Study them carefully, and commit these principles to memory. Do not be complacent in only memorizing the words, but rather, be able to be a living example of what is said. For example, the principle of the torso method is covered in Wuyuxiang’s statement: “Remember that when one part of the body moves, all other parts should move; when one part of the body is still, the rest of the body should be still.” Everyone can memorize these simple words. The real question is, “Can you really SHOW this principle?” Do not be misled by the simple phrases that make up the classics—it may take you years of diligent practice before you can master these principles. You must understand them with your whole mind, body and spirit. They are simple, yet they are complex; remember the Daoist philosophy: “The simplest is the highest.”

4.1. *The Theory of Taijiquan or Taijiquan Lun* (太極拳論) by Zhangsanfeng. Zhangsanfeng identified a number of practices and principles of taijiquan while he lived on Wudang Mountain. *The Theory of Taijiquan* relays his knowledge to those interested in enjoying a long, healthy and happy life, not simply to those studying taijiquan as a martial art. This section is devoted to his key principles.

“In any action, the whole body should be light and agile or *qing* and *ling*. You should feel that all of the body’s joints are connected with full linkage.”

(一举动，周身俱要轻灵，尤須贯串。)

Every movement of taijiquan is expressed from pre-consciousness to consciousness or from wuji to taiji. Movement is never initiated merely by your hands, arms or legs; instead, your mind directs your body to function as a single unit with every joint linked. Keep your body agile and natural; your movements, continuous and constant like the mountain spring flowing unceasingly into the stream.

“Qi should be stirred. The spirit of vitality or *shen*, should be concentrated inwards.”

(气宜鼓荡，神宜内斂。)

Understand how the qi is stirred by practicing the taiji qigong (see Chapter 3.2). This will eventually lead to the circulation of the pre-birth qi throughout the entire body.

The practice of meditation helps you realize how to concentrate and internally cultivate shen. The Daoist theory of meditation describes several one-to-one correspondences: the energy

and the kidneys; the spirit and the heart; the soul (魂) and the liver; the “unconscious soul” or *po* (魄) and the lungs; and awareness and the spleen. You must cultivate a connectedness between them. The energies must build and flow among each other. If all of these vital energies and organs were free to relate as was naturally intended, you would experience a wonderful kind of communion with the natural way of Dao. However, five thieves (五賊) can disrupt the natural interaction of your organs and energies, thereby disturbing your meditation and/or daily life: the eyes, ears, nose, mouth and mind. If too active, these thieves will steal the inner energy from your body. Therefore, certain precautions have been suggested in order to keep them controlled. You should hold the ears beyond hearing so that the energy will be concentrated in the kidneys. The eyes should be closed beyond seeing so that the conscious or waking soul will be concentrated in the liver. You should shut your mouth beyond talking so that the spirit will be concentrated in the heart. The nose should be held beyond smelling so that the *po* will be directed to the lungs. You should hold the mind still beyond disturbing so that the awareness will be concentrated in the spleen.

“Do not show any deficiency, neither concavity nor convexity in movement. Do not show disconnected movement.” (毋使有缺陷处，毋使有凸凹处，毋使有断续处。)

Understand the meaning of this concept through the practice of the *chansijing*, in which the body guides the hand to perfectly trace the curve of the taiji diagram. A “deficiency” means placing the hand sometimes inside and sometimes outside of the curve (see Figure 4.1a). Having a deficiency can be compared to trying to fit a square object into a round hole or trying



Normal

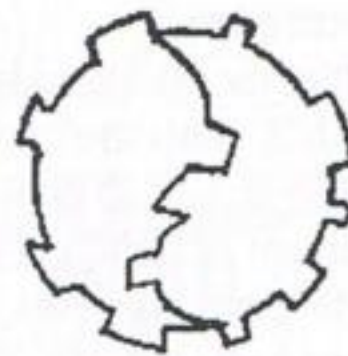


Deficiency (wavy, not smooth)

Figure 4.1a



Normal



Deficiency (choppy, interrupted)

Figure 4.1b

to thread a screw improperly; the application of force will be of no use. A deficiency in the *chansijing* will weaken the *bingjing* (see Chapter 6.1) causing you to lose your chance to entangle your opponent.

Concavity and convexity will also disrupt the proper movement, as illustrated in Figure 4.1b.

The path of the chansijing should be like nature, soft and smooth, but elastic like a lasso. Your body should be like a soft tire being filled with air. If you are not soft, elastic and smooth, you will resist your opponent's force and be unable to rotate like a screw. The chansijing should be smoothly connected from one movement to the next. When movements are disconnected and gaps show, your opponent has an opportunity to strike.

"The jing is rooted in the feet, bursts out in the legs, is controlled by the waist and functions through the fingers. From the feet to the legs, legs to the waist, all should be moved as a unit. By moving as a unit, you can advance or retreat with precise timing and the most advantageous position."

(其根在脚，发于腿，形於手指，由脚而腿而腰；总须完整一气，向前退后，乃能得机得势。)

The concept of body unity is delicately intertwined with the very important principle of moving the body continuously. The question is, "How do you move your body continuously?" The answer can be found in the practice of the chansijing. Look at the movement of the jing through the lower body. Whereas the qi moves directly from joint to joint, the jing spirals through the leg like a turning screw. Starting at the heel of the foot, the jing passes through the ankle, winds around the leg to the knee and then continues winding up through the thigh to the buttocks. The jing can spiral only if the leg moves as a unit; if the leg does not move as a unit, the jing lacks continuity, jumping from joint to joint.

"If precise timing and good position are not achieved and the body does not move as a unit, then the waist and legs need more development. They may not be strong or flexible enough. This often shows when moving up or down, backwards or forwards, left or right."

(有不得机不得势处，身使散乱，其病必于腰腿求之，上下左右前后皆然。)

If you are unfamiliar with the practice of the chansijing, you are probably inclined to move your waist without moving your legs, your legs without moving your waist or even your hands without moving your waist or legs. The ancient taiji experts were able to remedy this situation by learning to sink or *chen* (沉) their bodies as though the full weight of the body could flow through to the feet. In order to strengthen their waist and legs, they trained in Horse Stance or *mabu* (马步), and Bow and Arrow Stance or *gongjianbu* (弓箭步). When studying the taiji form, they also practiced the chansijing and ward-off, roll-back, press and push until their minds could totally control their forward and backward steps. Today, because many taiji players take shortcuts and do not diligently follow the principle of waist-leg coordination, they could conceivably practice taijiquan for twenty or thirty years without being able to keep the waist and legs moving in continuity.

"Use internal consciousness, not external forms." (凡此皆是意，不在外边。)

Taijiquan stresses internal elements such as mental awareness and concentration. Outer movements merely express your internal consciousness. Be conscious of your movements to control those movements. For example, you must concentrate on the movement of your hand when pouring water from a glass into a small hole. If you do not concentrate, the water will spill.

"Where there is something up, there must be something down. Where there is something forward, there must be something backward. Where there is something left, there must be something right. If you intend to move up, you must simultaneously show a contrary tendency (downwards), just as someone who wishes to pull a tree up pushes downwards first to loosen the roots, so that it can be easily uprooted."

(有上即有下，有左即有右，有前即有后，如意欲向上，即寓下意，若将物掀起，而加以挫之之力，斯根自断，乃坏之速而无疑。)

According to Laozi in the *Daodejing*:

“What is to be shrunken is first stretched out.
What is to be weakened is first made strong.
What is to be thrown over is first raised up.
What is to be withdrawn is first bestowed.”

Yang represents up, forward, right, etc., and yin represents down, backwards, left, etc. These opposites coexist and are inseparable in character, as illustrated by the taiji diagram. Taijiquan is based on the yin/yang principle; when practicing taiji if you show an upward tendency, simultaneously show a downward tendency. Remember, to drive a nail into the wall, you must first withdraw a hammer before swinging it forward.

“You must distinguish substantiality from insubstantiality. Where there is substantiality, there must be insubstantiality. In all ways, you have to distinguish one from the other.”
(虚实宜分清楚，一处有一处虚实，处处总此一虚实。)

Think of substantiality as solidity and insubstantiality as emptiness, and compare them to right and wrong for just a moment. Consider two men discussing the weather. If man A states, “Tomorrow will be sunny,” but man B asserts, “There will be a rainstorm,” it may seem that only one of these men can be correct; however, tomorrow may be a sunny day with nearby clouds bearing rain. In this discussion, both men are correct in their statements; however, they are also both wrong. If you think of the body in terms of this discussion, then you can clearly see that the body can be both “right” and “wrong” or solid and empty at the same time. Theoretically, you can imagine your body as the taiji diagram, in which half is yang and half is yin. Yang represents solidity and yin, emptiness. The body must remain equally balanced in terms of yin and yang. When one part of your body is solid, another part must be relatively (but conversely) empty. If you put 70% of your weight on your right leg, then your right leg is considered 70% solid and 30% empty. Your left leg, therefore, becomes 30% solid and 70% empty as demonstrated in Figure 4.1c.

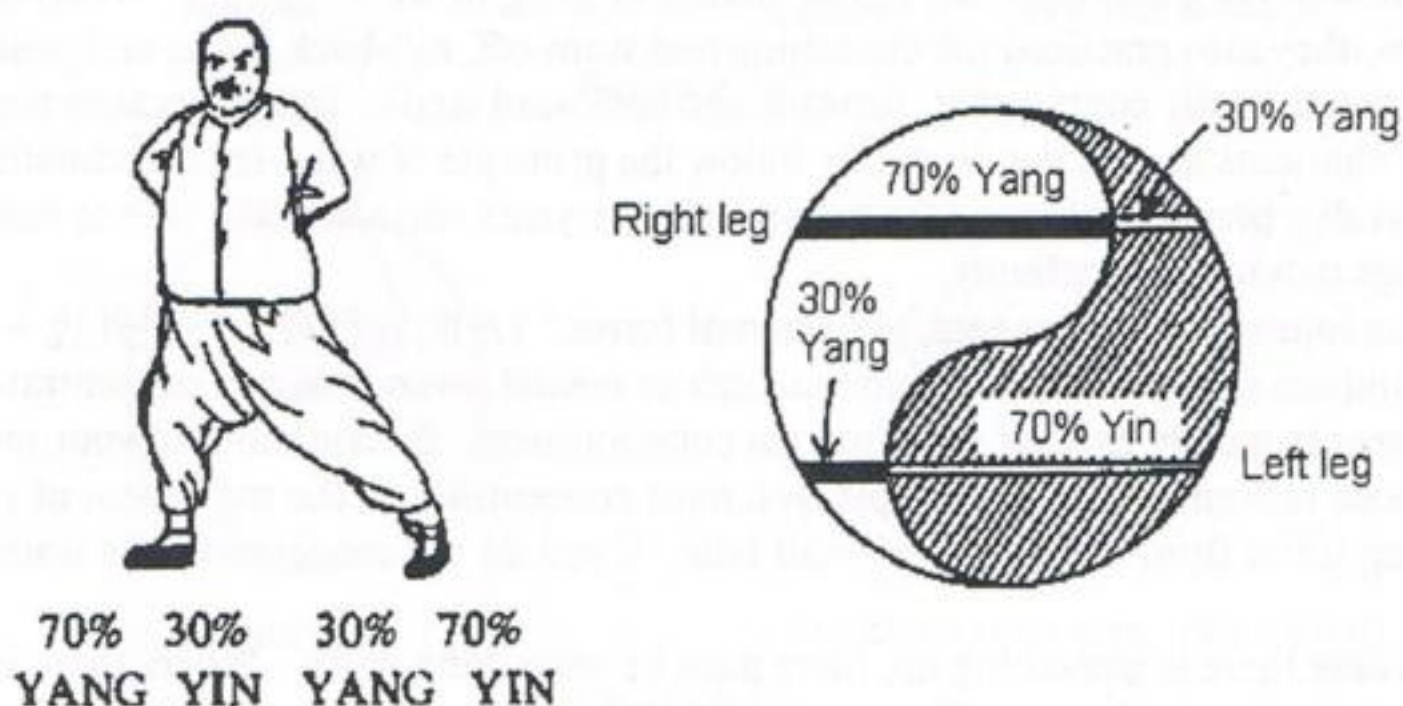


Figure 4.1c

In every movement of taijiquan, concentrate on differentiating between the solidity and emptiness twixt your arms, hands, legs and feet. Similarly, you must differentiate solidity and emptiness between the left hand and the left leg, the right hand and the right leg, etc. When the left hand is solid, the left leg is empty, and so on. To distinguish between solidity and empti-

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ness, start with large steps, then gradually make your movements smaller and tighter. In this way, learn to internally distinguish the difference between solidity and emptiness, and thus allow your external movements to become unidentifiable to your opponent. One of the taijiquan practitioner's ultimate goals is to make movements that cannot be outwardly differentiated as solid or empty.

“The whole body should be linked together through every joint; do not show any interruptions.” (週身节节贯串，毋令丝毫间断耳。)

It is important to exercise nine groups of bone joints in the body: the neck, spine, waist, buttocks, knees, ankles, shoulders, elbows and wrists. To link them all together, combine the waist and spine into the center for unifying the body. The waist-spine combination is essential because the waist controls the axis for twisting to the right and left and the spine is the basis for bending forward and backward. Think of the spine as a row of small beads and the qi as the string that holds them together. Because the qi has the natural inclination and awareness to stay straight, balance can be maintained throughout the body at all times. The waist-spine combination, which is the most important linkage of the nine joints, thereby frees the qi to circulate throughout the entire body.

The concept of body unity must also be applied to the practice of the chansijing. The reverse is also true; by practicing the chansijing, you can find body unity.

“Long Quan, like a great river, flows unceasingly.” (长拳者，如长江大海，滔滔不绝也。)

Actually, taijiquan has only eight postures. Why then is it called Long Quan? Remember that according to the theory of the *Yijing*, the taiji produced the two forms (yin and yang), which in turn created the four symbols, leading to the eight trigrams (see Chapter 2.3). Taijiquan can thus be performed infinitely by combining different movements based on the eight gates and the five elements (described below). The subtlety of taijiquan is founded on the continuation of one posture into another rather than many separate postures. The movement cannot be stopped nor interrupted. Like the taiji diagram, the movement should have no beginning and no end. Even if you practiced a form of a thousand postures without this continuity, the form would not and could not be considered Long Quan.

“The eight gates or *bamen* of taijiquan are: ward-off, roll-back, press, push, pull-down, split, elbow and shoulder-strike. The first four gates represent the four directions: south, north, west and east. The last four gates reflect the four corners: southwest, northeast, southeast and northwest (as shown in Figure 4.1d).

The five steps or *wubu* of taijiquan are advance, retreat, look to the left, gaze to the right, and central equilibrium. These steps equate to the five elements: metal, wood, water, fire and earth. The eight gates plus the five steps are termed the taijiquan thirteen postures (棚、掤、挤、按、采、捌、肘、靠，此八卦也。进步、退步、左顾、右盼、中定；此五行也。棚掤挤按，即乾坤坎离；四正方也。采捌肘靠，即巽震兑艮，四斜角也。进退顾盼定；即金木水火土也。合之则为十三势。)

、挤、按；采、捌、肘、靠，此八卦也。进步、退步、左顾、右盼、中定；此五行也。棚掤挤按，即乾坤坎离；四正方也。采捌肘靠，即巽震兑艮，四斜角也。进退顾盼定；即金木水火土也。合之则为十三势。)

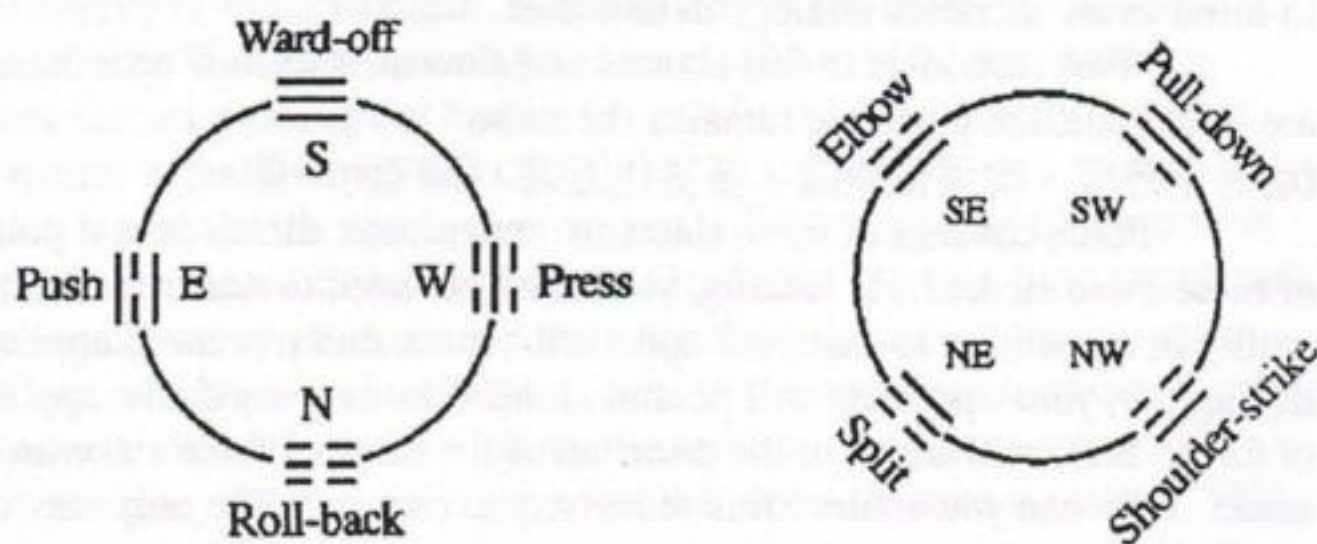


Figure 4.1d

4.2. The Classics of Taijiquan or Taijiquanjing (太極拳經) by Wangzongyue. “Taiji is born of wuji. It is the origin of dynamic and static states and the mother of yin and yang. If they move, they separate. If they remain static, they combine.”

(太極者，无極而生，動靜之機，陰陽之母也。動之則分，靜之則合。)

Review Chapter 2.1.

“Neither overextend nor underextend. The crooked should be made straight.”

(无過不及，隨屈就伸。)

Overextension of movement, meaning “strong yang, weak yin,” is as incorrect as underextension or “strong yin, weak yang.” The only natural and desirable condition is balance between yin and yang as indicated in the taiji diagram. Therefore, when practicing taijiquan or push-hands, maintain central equilibrium. Whenever you over or underextend, you are off balance. In order to restore equilibrium, use either withdrawal or extension. The same principle holds true for many aspects of daily life.

“To overcome the strong and the hard by the gentle and the soft way is described as “leading by walking away” or *zou* (走). To remain in the most advantageous position and let your opponent be at a disadvantage is called “sticking” or *nian* (粘).” (人剛我柔謂之走，我順人背謂之粘。)

One of the main principles of taijiquan is that the small can overcome the large, the weak conquer the strong and the soft defeat the hard. How can these apparent contradictions be reconciled? The answer is to apply the methods of *zou* and *nian*.

If two persons fight using only techniques of strength and force, the stronger one will undoubtedly win. By withdrawing or applying *zou* in such a situation, you respond like the taiji sphere, diverting and changing the direction of the applied force. By staying close or *nian*, your opponents will be prevented from moving wherever or whenever they please. In this way, you keep your balance and good position but cause others to lose theirs.

A striking example of this method was provided by the Vietcong during the Vietnam War. Compared to the U.S. Armed Forces, the Vietcong were outnumbered and under-equipped. However, the Vietcong used the principles of *zou* and *nian* in accordance with Maozedong’s strategies of guerrilla warfare to separate U.S. soldiers and then attack with only a handful of men. When U.S. soldiers attacked, the guerillas left their camps, led them to the mountains (*zou*) and then countered with small and numerous attacks. The U.S. soldiers were defeated by overextending themselves in response to the Vietcong strategy in much the same way as a taiji player who is overextended is easily toppled. When the U.S. soldiers retreated, the guerillas stayed with them along the way, applying *nian*. The Americans used a similar strategy during the revolutionary war with the British. Keep this combination of *zou* and *nian* in mind as an excellent strategy in taijiquan.

“Fast responses to fast actions and slow ones to slow actions. Although the changes are numerous, the principle remains the same.”

(動急則急應，動緩則緩隨。雖變化萬端，而理為一貫。)

Force consists of three elements: magnitude, direction and point of application. If one of these three elements is lacking, you no longer need to deal with force. Taijiquan promotes agility in movement so that your opponent cannot find a point of application. Once you attain this agility, your opponent will be thrown off balance even if s/he applies one thousand pounds of force. S/He will travel in the direction of the original force since no point of contact was made. How can you achieve this sensitivity to change? The only way is to follow your opponents closely; no matter what their speed, you respond at the same rate. Implementing this un-

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changing principle takes a long time unless you practice the chansijing as a shortcut.

“Understanding the jing or *dongjing* (懂劲) is attained through keeping in practice. Only continuous practice will eventually lead to this sudden illumination or a godlike stage.” (由着熟而渐悟懂劲，由懂劲而阶及神明；然非用力之久，不能豁然贯通焉！)

How is it possible to learn to move exactly in sync with your opponent? *Only by diligently practicing the solo exercise of taijiquan.* Years of experience will teach you how to prevent an opponent from finding any point of application on your body. Once this is mastered, even the strongest opponent will be thrown off balance for lack of an application point. This skill called *dongjing* is achieved by:

1. Practicing the chansijing and the taiji qigong with “breathing without breathing”
2. Understanding the application of each posture of the solo exercise
3. Knowing the technique of push-hands (which is particularly valuable in teaching you to understand your own jing as well as the opponent’s).

Only continuous and diligent practice allows you to perceive all three aspects of your opponent’s force.

“The spirit or shen reaches the top of the head, and the qi sinks to the dantian.” (虚领顶劲，气沉丹田。)

Review Chapter 3.7.

“Keep the central position; do not show anything substantial or insubstantial to your opponent. When s/he brings pressure on your left side, that side should be empty; this principle holds for the right side also. When s/he pushes upward or downward against you, s/he should feel as if encountering nothingness. In advancing, let him/her experience the distance as increasing drastically. When s/he retreats, let the distance seem exasperatingly short. The entire body is so light that a feather can be felt and so pliable that a fly cannot rest without setting it in motion.” (不偏不倚，勿隐勿现，左重则左虚，右重则右杳，仰之则弥高，俯之则弥深，进之则愈长，退之则愈促，一羽不能加，蝇虫不能落。)

This directive shows that you attain the taiji sphere when you become acutely sensitive. You neutralize and render harmless the applied action, regardless of its speed. Think about this. Since a fly cannot find a point of contact when you are so sensitive, how can somebody else attack you?

“Your opponent cannot detect your intentions, but you can anticipate his/hers. If you can master all these principles, you will become a peerless boxer.” (人不知我，我独知人，英雄所向无敌，盖皆由此而及也。)

Taijiquan is a superior way of boxing. Yangluchan was called “Peerless Yang” because he could detect everyone’s moves, yet no one could detect his. In order to implement this technique, acquire “adherent tenacious energy” or *zhannianjing* (沾粘劲). This kind of jing, sometimes called spiritual energy or inner strength, is manifested in the ability to stay close to the opponent without using force. The expression “stick like glue” would be relevant here, since *zhannianjing* involves neither pushing nor employing any force. This energy can be acquired through diligent practice of push-hands and chansijing.

When first practicing push-hands with a partner, you will have little or no awareness of the *zhannianjing*; the hands and arms may feel wooden. Gradually, starting from your hands and proceeding through your elbows, chest, back and the entire body including the skin, your sensitivity will develop. Once you acquire *zhannianjing*, nian to the opponent is possible, and you will conquer your opponent. With time, the *zhannianjing* will accumulate on your skin. The more advanced your technique, the thicker the jing and the larger the area it covers. This condition enables you to detect whether or not your opponent has the same *zhannianjing*. If

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not, the meaning of “your opponent cannot detect your moves, but you can anticipate his/hers” becomes clear.

“In boxing there are many teachings about combat. Although they differ with respect to postures, they can never go beyond reliance on the stronger defeating those who are weaker, or the swifter conquering those who are slower. These, however, are the result of physical endowments in many cases and not necessarily of practical application and experience.”

(斯技旁门甚多，虽势有区别，概不外乎壯欺弱，慢让快耳；有力打无力，手慢让手快，是皆先天自然之能，非关学力而有为也。)

Although other types of boxing each teach different postures, they are similar to each other because they depend on physical strength and swift motion; they aim at overcoming those who are less powerful. Since strength and speed are related to your physical condition, your efficiency will probably decrease with old age. The refinement of taijiquan techniques, on the other hand, leads to development of the qi, jing and shen, which are enhanced with practice and age. Practitioners of other forms of boxing usually lose their youthful force and speed as they grow older. Because taiji emphasizes the mind’s control over the body and stresses internal mental training, it allows you to maintain a strong body, a clear mind and the ability to withstand attacks by many opponents—even when you are well into your seventies or eighties.

“The strong and the quick, however, cannot explain nor implement the deflection of a thousand pounds’ momentum with a force of four ounces, or an old man’s defeating a great number of men.” (察四兩拔千斤之句，显非力胜，观耄耋能御众之形，快何能为。)

Most types of boxing stress strength and speed, not technique. The reverse is true in taijiquan. The technique is to train your body into a taiji sphere, so that anyone who applies force to this sphere will have that force deviated by a slight turn of your body. Just like a bull-fighter who deflects a charging bull through moving his/her body and cape slightly, the taiji practitioner does not compare forces with the opponent.

“Stand like a poised scale and move actively like the wheel of a cart.”

(立如平准，活似车轮。)

The person who becomes a taiji sphere is very active (see Chapter 3.7). To illustrate what is meant here, I would like to give you an example from personal experience. In 1966, shortly after I had begun to study taijiquan, I visited the taiji expert, Zhengmanqing. I watched him pushing hands with his advanced disciple Chichangdao. Zheng told Chi that he would not attack him, but would deviate the “tenacious energy” or *huajing* (化劲). Zheng was short and non-athletic looking, while Chi was tall and thin, with long arms and legs. The latter attacked Zheng vigorously but was unable to even touch his clothes. This then is an example of perfect balance where a taiji player becomes like a taiji sphere easily set in motion but not necessarily in the expected way, at least as far as the opponent is concerned.

“With your center of gravity displaced to one side, you can be fluid. If you are double-weighted, you become stagnant.” (偏沉則隨，双重則滯。)

If you are substantial on one side, rotate your body along the axis. To avoid being toppled easily, keep your axis in line with one foot and lower your center of gravity. On the other hand, if you have a habit of always spreading your weight evenly on both feet, you may feel balanced, but actually you are double-weighted, and you will find it hard to move.

Taiji is based on the *Yijing*, so the unchanging must be seen as controlling the changing. Anything contrary to the taiji sphere is incorrect.

“Many persons who have studied taiji for a number of years have not developed properly and continue to be subdued by others because they have not realized the error in double-weightedness.” (每見數年純功，不能運化者，率自人制，双重之病未悟耳。)

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Double-weighting is a term with two distinct definitions in taiji literature. Unfortunately, this term has been misunderstood by thousands of taiji players, even Chinese players.

The first definition of double-weighting deals with a physical situation. Here, double-weighting means that the weight of the body is equally distributed on both legs. This stance occurs naturally as a transitional mid-stage when you shift your body weight from left to right or from forward to backward. There is nothing wrong with this stance when you are consciously applying the yin/yang distribution of your body weight in an appropriate situation.

The second definition of double-weighting has a negative connotation and implies a lack of understanding of yin and yang principles. For example, if you are in a stance in which the forward leg carries 70% of your body weight and the back carries 30%, you may still be double-weighted if you do not properly understand the structure of the posture. Your *awareness* of the yin/yang is double-weighted.

Another example of how the second definition of “double-weighted” is used is easily seen in situations of war. If a general plans a poor strategy of attack and loses a battle because s/he did not fully understand the enemy, then his/her strategy was double-weighted. S/He did not understand the yin/yang patterns of the enemy and therefore the attack failed.

Both definitions of “double-weighting” are so vague that they may seem to overlap. For example, if you play taijiquan and have much movement from the waist up, but your legs remain quite still, you have no torso method. Without torso method, you are not really playing taiji. In this situation, there is no awareness of yin and yang in the movement, and therefore double-weightedness occurs. Avoid this type of double-weighting when studying and practicing taijiquan.

The concept of double-weightedness is so confusing that many people misunderstand it and think that is bad to *ever* have their weight equally distributed on both legs. This is far from the truth. To think this way is double-weighted, because it means that the relationship between yin and yang is still not fully understood enough to apply to your practice of taijiquan.

Although many people study taijiquan, they do not necessarily understand its theories. Instead of following the basic principles, they try to compete in force and speed. If they would train themselves into a taiji sphere, they would not continue the practice of double-weightedness which invariably leads to defeat.

“To avoid the fault of being double-weighted, the relationship between yin and yang must be understood. Nian is zou, and zou is nian. Yin cannot be separated from yang and vice versa. When yin and yang complement each other, you will interpret the tenacious energy or dongjing correctly.”

(欲避此病，須知陰陽，粘即是走，走即是粘，陰不離陽，陽不離陰，陰陽相濟，方為懂勁。)

The relationship between taiji and the yin/yang principle was demonstrated in Chapter 2.1. Like yin and yang, zou complements nian, and each contains some of the other. “Zou” describes an ability to retreat with a soft movement when a stiff force is applied. This response prevents your opponent from finding any point of contact on your body. Then, since zou without nian would be losing your advantage, the person who was originally attacked will nian to the now off-balance attacker and, if necessary, attack. Conversely, if you only do nian without zou, a mutual attack will occur. The two opposites must combine and occur simultaneously as in the taiji diagram. With repeated and prolonged practice, you will eventually be capable of zou and nian at the same moment, resulting in an even smaller circle that will eventually disappear. At this point, you can throw anyone touching you while you appear to be still. The opposites will be in harmony.

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“Comprehend the dongjing; the more you practice, the more wonderful will be your development. You understand in silence and experience in feeling until you may act at will.”
(懂劲后愈练愈精，默识揣摩，渐至从心所欲。)

By using the techniques of zou and nian and by practicing push-hands and chansijing, you will gradually understand the zhannianjing. Then you will be at the main entrance of taijiquan. Train with your mind. When meditating, imagine someone kicking at you with the right foot. In response, imagine using your entire body to make the movements of brushing the opponent's knee, twist-stepping and using your right palm to push your opponent's chest. Meditate this way, and you will improve.

“Forget yourself and yield to others. Learn these techniques correctly, for the slightest divergence will take you far off the path.”

(本是舍己从人，多误舍近求远，所谓差之毫厘，谬以千里，学者不可不详察焉！)

Practice preventing your opponent from contacting any point on your body. To do so without resistance, you need to lead your opponent away from the direction of his/her movement. The basic principle is to keep a low center of gravity and so confuse your opponent.

“Every sentence is extremely important and every word in it necessary. Understanding comes easily to those who devote themselves to these lessons.”

(此论句句切要，並無一字敷衍陪襯，非有夙慧，不易悟也，先师不肯妄传，非独择人，亦恐枉費功夫耳。)

4.3. An Internal Explanation of the Practice of the Thirteen Postures (十三势行功心解) by Wuyuxiang. “The mind directs the movement of the qi, which must sink deeply. Then it (the qi) can be gathered into the bones. When the qi circulates the body freely, without any obstacle, it can easily follow the mind.” (以心行气，务令沉着，乃能收斂入骨，以气运身，务令顺遂，乃能便利从心。)

If both taijiquan and meditation are combined with the taiji qigong on a daily basis, the mind will gradually become capable of directing the qi. Controlling the qi will result in a process of circulation called the “Small Heavenly Circle” (小周天, See Chapter 3.3). This circulation of qi should be gentle and harmonious. Concentration is required so that the mind and the movement of qi will match each other.

“If the qi is cultivated, the spirit of vitality or shen will be raised. You can feel as if your head is suspended from above; thus you can avoid any slowness and clumsiness.”
(精神能提得起，则无迟重之虞，所谓顶头悬也。)

The suspension of your head can be explained with two different examples:

- By imagining a thread connected to the top of your head whereby you could be lifted like a puppet controlled by a string
- By visualizing yourself carrying an object on top of the head without dropping it.

Both methods serve the same purpose of focusing the attention on keeping the vertical body axis in a perfectly straight position while rotation or translation occurs. Raising the shen to your head can then be viewed as a series of smooth and harmonious movements resulting from focused awareness on a perfectly straight spine.

“The mind and the qi must coordinate and blend with the interchange between the substantial and the insubstantial, so as to develop an active tendency.”
(意气须换得灵，乃有灵活之妙，所谓变转虚实也。)

Substantiality implies yang, representing solidity without stiffness. Insubstantiality, on the other hand, implies yin, representing softness or emptiness, but not nothingness. Changing

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from solidity to emptiness can promote balanced movement and stabilize the lower part of the body. Solidity prepares for emptiness and vice versa. They seem to be each other's opposites, yet they depend on each other. An example of how substantiality and insubstantiality of movement are controlled by the mind can be seen in Single Whip. Since you concentrate on the left hand, it is substantial, while the right hand is considered insubstantial. In short, substantiality and insubstantiality come into existence through changes in body posture. Force yourself to concentrate your mind on the understanding and control of every such change of movement.

“In attacking, the energy should be sunk deeply, completely released, and aimed in one direction.” (发劲须沉着鬆淨，专注一方。)

Releasing chansijing is like throwing an object. Do not hesitate in your aim; if you do, your mind and the flow of energy are interrupted. Be sure of yourself in order to sense the opponent's qi; concentrate, sink and watch the opponent, not the ground.

“In standing, the body should be erect and relaxed, able to respond immediately to an attack from any direction.” (立身須中正安舒，支撑八面。)

Learn to apply the taiji sphere to stand up and remain balanced. Practice even more diligently, however, to respond to an attack from any direction. You must put the foot solidly against the ground, as if you were going to step into it. Day after day, like a sphere's axis, your foot must be rooted to the ground so that you can rotate in any direction.

“The qi is to be directed throughout the body as if passing a thread easily, without hindrance, through a pearl having nine zig-zagging paths. The energy is mobilized like steel refined a hundred times over, enabling it to destroy any object.” (行气如九曲珠，无微不到，运劲如百炼钢，无坚不摧。)

A pearl with nine zig-zagging paths is hard to pass through unless the thread is like blown air. Therefore, the qi should be directed by the mind, as if blowing air throughout the body. Physical force needs guidance; the chansijing of taijiquan needs spirited concentration.

“Your appearance should be like a hawk swooping down upon its prey; the spirit should be like a cat mousing.” (形如搏兔之鹞，神似捕鼠之猫。)

When you practice taijiquan, it is helpful to imagine being a hawk or a cat. Both these animals appear completely relaxed on the outside but act with total concentration. In the same way, you should seek stillness when in motion, movement when motionless and thus be totally concentrated at all times while using no physical force.

“It rests as a mountain; it flows like the current of a river.” (靜如山岳，动若江河。)

The movement should be sunken and quiet, the foot rooted as quiet and strong as a mountain, as flowing as a river.

“Reserving the potential energy or jing is like drawing a bow; releasing it is like shooting an arrow. Seek the straightness in a curve; reserve jing before releasing it.” (蓄劲如张弓，发劲如放箭，曲中求直，蓄而后发。)

The taijiquan schools of Chen and Wu mention that a taiji player should have five bows. The torso represents one bow, each of your arms and legs form the four additional bows. All five bows should be united as a whole, then the stored energy can move actively throughout the body.

The tips of the torso bow are the coccyx and the four prominent cervical vertebrae. The dantian is the midpoint of the bow. The *mingmenxue* (命門穴), which is on the back directly opposite the navel, represents the “notching” point or the point of maximum tension where the back of the arrow and the bow string meet.

It is possible to pull the bow by means of the taiji qigong. During the pulling in of the dantian, the bow is pulled, and the bow and the arrow tip (which approach each other) are each

connected to a kidney. The kidneys will then act like pistons. During the pushing out of the dantian, the bow is released allowing the bow and the arrow tip to move away from each other. In the next cycle, the bow and the arrow tip are again connected to the kidneys, but on the opposite sides.

The two bow and arrow tips of the arm are formed by the wrist and shoulder's connection with the collarbone; the elbow is the midpoint of the bow. How do you draw the arm bow? Maintain a curved line between the wrist and shoulder, imagining the arm as a bow complete with string. Keep your awareness on the elbow, which is sunk and relaxed but always controlled. The motion of the elbow must always follow the motion of the body. Once the arm bows develop, the two arms will move as a unit and your sensitivity in perceiving the opponent's energy increases. You will then be able to control, avoid, or attack as the situation requires.

The knee is the midpoint of the leg bow; the tips are located in the thigh joint and the Achilles' tendon. When the leg bows are developed and properly connected to the waist energy that is rooted in the feet, the qi can expand through the legs, and under control of the waist, function through the fingers.

Of the five bows, the torso bow is of primary importance; the arm and leg bows are of secondary importance. However, they are all interdependent. That is to say, unless the arm and leg bows are developed, the torso bow cannot store up its energy. The torso bow, whose tips are the coccyx and the cervical vertebrae, must be supported in such a way that the torso remains vertical at all times. Maintaining a vertical torso becomes possible when both arm and leg bows are developed and kept slightly bent in the shape of a bow. Then the five bows can operate as one, and the energy is transmitted without interruption.

“Strength comes from the spine. The steps must be changed following along with changes in the position of the body.” (力由脊发，步随身换。)

Do not use your hands to release your strength; instead use your spine and waist to release the shen that is developed from the pre-birth qi and the chansijing. As if resting and relaxed but remaining concentrated, move your leg and foot as well as your body.

“To withdraw is also to attack and vice versa. The jing is sometimes broken off but must be immediately rejoined.” (收即是放，放即是收，断而复连。)

Withdrawal is a kind of neutralization or yin. Attack is a way of advancing or yang. Withdraw in preparation for attack, and—by attacking—prepare for withdrawal. Just as yin and yang in the taiji diagram are inseparable and form a unit, so must withdrawal and attack always be close to each other. Withdrawal without attack is too weak, too yin. Attack without withdrawal is awkward in action or too yang. Either extreme is not recommended in taijiquan.

A story about Yangjian provides an example of the balance between withdrawal and attack. One day a student approached Yang, who was sitting in an arbor smoking a pipe, with a question on how to release the jing. Master Yang instructed his student to punch him in the abdomen as hard as possible. Being struck, Yang smiled and said “Ha,” whereupon the student, attracted and repelled by the matched speed and force of Yang's energy, was thrown far away. Yang, meanwhile, continued smoking his pipe leisurely.

“When going back and forth, you should draw into folds. When advancing or retreating, you should turn the body and vary the steps.” (往返须有折叠，进退须有转换。)

When exiting from a highway, you use a gradual bend or curve because a ninety-degree turn might cause injuries to the passengers. If there is a large space between the highway and the side road, a slow curve will suffice. If not, you make several small S-shaped curves as if you were winding up a mountain.

Like the highway and the side road, any two movements in taijiquan must be linked by a transition. The Chinese call the connection of two movements by one large curve or several small S-shaped curves the “drawing into folds” or “plait” technique. To move from ward-off right into roll-back, for example, fold up to the right, then to the left, and connect smoothly and continuously to the subsequent downward and backward movement. In other words, apply a folding up of the body between forward and backward action. In addition, employ a curved transition rather than a straightforward advance or retreat, between one step and the next.

“Extreme softness leads to extreme hardness.” (極柔軟，然後極堅剛。)

Westerners often question how hardness can come out of softness. However, study the taiji diagram and see that, at the point of maximum yin or softness, yang or hardness is born. To apply this principle in the practice of taijiquan, first avoid all stiff and rigid movements. This method of practice is especially difficult for those who have trained in hard martial arts, such as Shaolin, karate or Western-style wrestling. People with such backgrounds must remember to free themselves from habits acquired in their previous training.

At first—generally for one to two years—perform the postures without rigid exertion. You should appear to be completely relaxed below the surface. The softer and gentler your movements, the easier it is to observe their defects, such as rigidity, force or incorrect postures. With softness goes slowness. In slowly executed movements, incorrect postures can be detected much more easily. Movements done quickly always look good because erroneous technique is easily hidden in speedily executed forms. Break yourself of the habit of using rigid force and execute the movements slowly and continuously; calmness and lightness are the inevitable results.

When you have learned to perform the movements without force, it is time to go on to the next stage for which the softness is a foundation. Begin to mobilize your internal movement to extend and prolong postures. To do so, have the intention to stretch and extend all parts of your body, such as your legs, arms, and trunk, etc. For example, sinking the qi to the dantian while your head is suspended from above implies that the spine is stretched. This first example concerns internal movement, but an even clearer example of extension is the posture Separate Right Foot. Here you extend your arms and right leg in a stretch that incorporates the arm and leg bow. Of course, the principle of extending postures must be applied to every movement. The extension of the body will eventually result in “elastic hardness,” a natural resiliency that is only felt, not seen.

Another relevant analogy is the tip of a whip. It is soft while it is swung, but hard at the instant it is cracked, then soft again. Execute the movements of taijiquan in the same manner, keeping yin and yang in mind. When you withdraw, you are soft; when you push, you are like the whip. A whip is soft until the last moment of the movement, at which time it becomes completely yang or hard; afterwards it becomes immediately yin or soft again. It follows then that to be perfectly yin all the time is only the beginning stage. Once you are capable of being perfectly soft, then build a structure of hardness. However, like the tip of the whip, make your movement hard for only an instant. With the application of this principle, you will develop an inner elastic energy. Continuing to practice soft movement, however, will fail to produce this elastic energy. The technical term for the soft part of the movement is “circle”; for the instant of hardness, it is “square.” Thus, it is said that the circle generates the square and the square generates the circle. This alternation of hard or square and soft or circle is diagrammed in Figure 4.3a.

Simply put, taijiquan is the art of developing the hard out of the soft. Taiji is like a house: the better the foundation, the larger the structure which may be built on it; thus, the

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softer you can be, the more power you can develop. This principle is the secret of such great masters as Yangluchan who was able to defeat all other fighters. This hard energy, however, must be shown only at the last instant, or else yin/yang balance would be destroyed.

“Alacrity comes about when your internalized respiration is exact.” (能呼吸然后能灵活。)

Practice taiji qigong and meditation. The pre-birth qi will become imperceptible and will match up with action. All movements, although active, will be undetected by your opponent.

“Qi should be cultivated naturally so no injury will occur.” (气以直养而无害。)

The act of sinking the qi into the dantian is directed by the mind. If the qi is not sunk slowly, cultivating the qi will be very difficult. You must allow your breath to become “slender”—long, quiet, and slow—keeping your mind and qi calmly with the dantian at all times.

“Jing is stored by moving in curves.” (劲以曲蓄而有餘。)

The movements in taijiquan should be neither too straight nor too bent. If too straight, the jing will be broken; if overly bent, postures will be unsupported. A natural curve can store jing in the bone joints for later use.

“The mind is the commander, the qi the flag, and the waist the pole.” (心为令，气为旗，腰为纛。)

Your waist, an important hinge, should be relaxed and loose, so it can turn easily. When your waist turns easily, the spine is flexible and the qi circulates through your entire body. The mind, however, is in charge.

“Movements should be stretched at first and become tight later. In this way, the movements will be perfect.” (先求开展，后求紧凑，乃可进於慎密矣！)

While practicing, relax your entire body. Initially make big stretching movements and then small compact ones. Compare your moves to decreasing the size of the circle. Wait until the internal mind can match the external movement and eventually reduce the movement to no circle at all.

“The following is also said, ‘Concentrate your mind, then your body. Keep the belly completely relaxed; let the qi adhere to the bones. Always bear these facts in mind.’” (又曰：先在心，后在身，腹鬆淨，气歛入骨，神舒体靜，刻刻在心。)

To repeat once more, the mind comes first, then the body and next the arm and leg postures. The mind and qi should linger around the dantian. Relax and be at ease.

“Remember that when one part of the body moves, all other parts should move; when one part of the body is still, the rest of the body should be still.”

(切記一动无有不动，一靜无有不靜。)

This concept is the epitome of the torso method. The movement in taijiquan can be compared to the gears in an engine. When one gear moves, all connecting gears also move, but not randomly. Standing still is meant as an aware stillness. Still movement does exist but may not be perceivable.

“In all movements to and fro, the qi adheres to the back of the body and gathers into

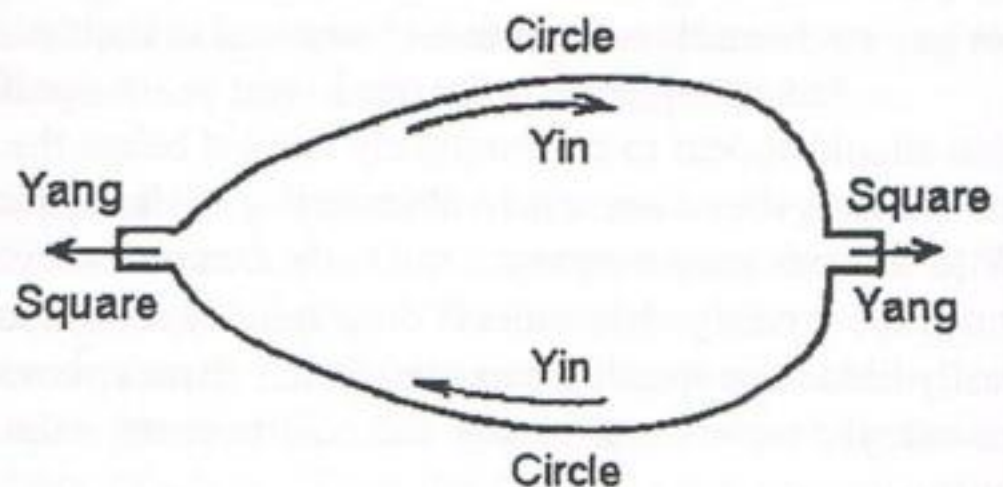


Figure 4.3a

the spine. Inwardly you concentrate the shen, and outwardly you appear peaceful.”

(牵动往来，气贴背，斂入脊骨，内固精神，外示安逸。)

According to traditional Chinese medical theory, daily practice of taijiquan with diligence and real awareness causes the qi to accumulate. Concentration and awareness will allow you to direct this accumulation to the spine. Such activity is comparable to saving money by regular deposits in a bank. The more you practice, the more qi accumulates in the spine.

Think about a rich person that does not have an ostentatious appearance. S/He does not want to attract attention because others may take advantage of his/her wealth. In the same way, when you have gathered the qi and concentrated the shen, you becomes “rich,” but you should not show this accumulation of power through belligerent attitudes and behavior. You should have an outwardly calm and smiling face, and not always be ready to show off and fight. To show qi and shen to others indiscriminately is like wearing price tags all over your clothes. The proper use of this level of achievement is merely as a foundation for the development of the next level, or at the very least, to provide good health and well being.

“Walk like a cat; mobilize your energy as if pulling silk threads from a cocoon.”

(迈步如猫行，运劲如抽丝。)

Walking like a cat means to be simultaneously light, agile, quiet and alive. To pull silk threads from a cocoon, do not overdo the movement or you will break the thread. To under-do would mean to produce no thread at all. Having lightness enables you to draw out the energy from the internal to the external without interruption.

“Attention should be on the spirit or shen not on the breath or qi. Special care of the breath makes you clumsy. Once you can forge the qi, your energy will be strong as steel.”

(全身意在精神，不在气；在气则滞，有气者无力，无气者纯刚。)

Practice “breathing without breathing” so that the respiration will naturally take care of itself. Your attention can be shifted to the attainment of higher levels of development. The strongest power comes from non-breathing and the greatest achievement from non-action.

“The qi is like a cartwheel, and the waist an axle.” (气如车轮，腰如车轴。)

Your waist is the master part of your body. Like the axle rotating the wheel of the cart, the waist controls the movements that will turn your whole body.

“It is also said that if your opponent does not move, you should remain still. But at his/her slightest move, you should be ahead of him/her.” (又曰：彼不动，己不动；彼微动，己先动。)

Think of a cat stalking a bird. The cat is motionless, but totally alert so that when the bird intends to fly, the cat anticipates its action and pounces. In the same manner, when you practice push-hands, focus your attention on the point of contact with your opponent. In this way, you anticipate his/her intentions and react. You are the cat, and s/he is the bird.

“The jing seems loose, but it is not; it seems stretched, but it is not. If the jing is broken off, the attention of the mind still remains.” (似鬆未鬆，将展未展，劲断意不断。)

Before its release, your energy is not shown outwardly. After its release, your energy cannot be detected. However, at the very instant of attack, quickly discharge the energy like lightning and concentrate your mind against your opponent.

4.4. The Five Words' Secrets (五字诀) by Liyiyu. Following is an explanation of five key principles according to Liyiyu.

1. **Tranquility or *xinjing* (心静).** A tranquil mind is the true secret in the practice of taijiquan. Without a still mind, concentration is impossible and so movements are aimless. When learning push-hands, be alert and attentive to your opponent's movement. Do not resist

or lose contact with him/her. If s/he exerts strength, answer with strength but without force. In this way you can anticipate force. Focusing on the point of contact with your opponent is of the utmost importance. Bear in mind that your sole aim is to employ the *zou* and *nian* techniques.

2. Agility or *shenling* (身灵). Agility of the body is essential for smooth, fluid motions in advance and retreat. Your body should be pliable. When your opponent's strength lightly touches your skin, your awareness should seem to penetrate into his/her bones. Each arm should support the other, continuously linked by *qi*. If the left side of your body feels the weight of your opponent's hand, an attack will come from the left. In this situation, make the left side light or *qing* as if giving in, and advance the right side in a seesaw movement. Apply the same theory to the right side. Always, yield the side attacked while advancing the other. The *qi* is like a wheel activating your entire body, which then moves in unison. Should this not occur because of deficiencies in coordination and strength, find the solution in your waist and the legs.

3. Gathering the *qi* or *qilian* (气敛). If the *qi* is not stored, your movements will be unnatural and abrupt. *Qi* must penetrate your bones for it to pass through your entire body. To this end, coordinate all movements with pulling in and pushing out your *dantian*. When pulling in, it is easy to raise yourself and your opponent. Pushing out enables you to lower yourself and throw your opponent. Again, all movements are done with your mind rather than by force.

4. Concentration of *jing* or *jingzheng* (劲整). The *jing* of the body should be practiced as a whole. Empty and full should be distinguished clearly. *Jing* must be exerted from your heels, directed by your waist, propelled by your spine, and allowed to flow through your fingers. Most importantly, your mind must be focused. The best time to use *jing* is just as your opponent is *about* to employ it, neither earlier nor later. Advance and retreat as a unit in response to your opponent. Seek straightness in the curve. Store the *jing* before releasing it. Success will be achieved by using your opponent's strength to hit back. Use four ounces of force to move ten thousand pounds.

5. Development of *shen* or *shenju* (神聚). When the previous four requirements have been met, the spirit or *shen* can begin to be developed. If you concentrate on the *shen*, the *qi* can be transferred to the *shen*. This transfer or *lianqihuashen* (练气化神) results in light opening or closing movements and the clear distinction of empty and solid. To empty the left is to fill the right and vice versa. Do not equate emptiness with weakness, however. The inside is

firm, stable, controlled and strong. Similarly, fullness does not mean force. Instead, it is the robust movement and demonstration of great spirit. Manipulation is generated from the chest and waist. *Qi* is exerted from the spine and combined with your opponent's force.

How then is the *qi* activated from your spine? It is pushed downward from your shoulders to your spine; this process is called "closing." When the *qi* is made to move from the spine to the shoulders and fingers, the process is known as "opening" (See Figure 4.4a).

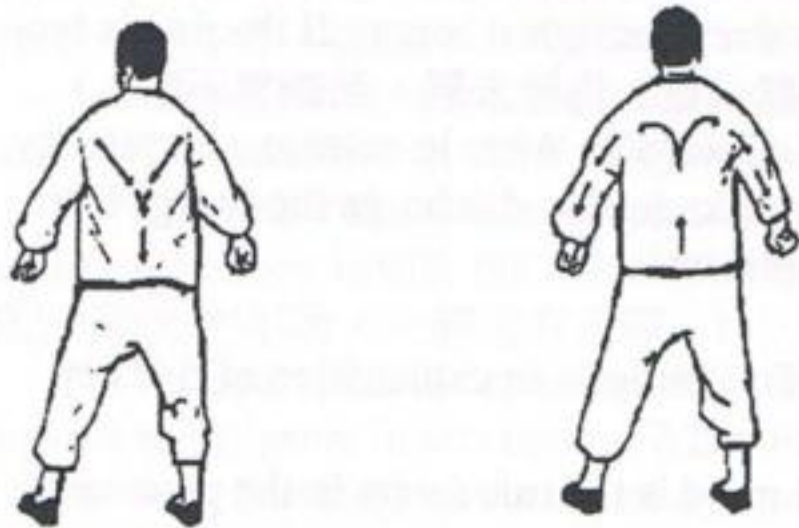


Figure 4.4a

The process called “closing” stores energy, while “opening” uses energy. Understanding of yin and yang is similar to comprehending “closing” and “opening.” When this stage is reached, your skill will improve quickly.

4.5. *Summary of the Practice of Taijiquan and Push-Hands* (走架打手行功要言) by Liyiyu.

An ancient taiji expert said, “If you can allow the opponent to lose his/her balance, then you can use four ounces of force to move ten thousand pounds; otherwise, you cannot handle ten thousand pounds.” Let me explain this further:

- If you wish to cause your opponent to lose his/her balance and hope to use four ounces of strength to move ten thousand pounds, you must first know yourself as well as your opponent.
- If you want to know your opponent as well as yourself, you should forget yourself and instead try to follow your opponent.
- In order to do this, use precise timing and be in an alert position.
- To achieve this, move your body as a unit.
- This means that your body cannot show any abruptness.
- To this end, the qi should be activated and the spirit must be raised.
- To do this, gather the qi in your spine.
- Gather the qi in your spine with the development of strong calves and perfectly relaxed shoulders, so that the qi can sink downwards to your dantian.

The jing originates in your heels and flows through your legs to the lower part of your body. Above your waist, the jing that is temporarily stored in your chest proceeds to your shoulders and arms; the jing is controlled by the waist. Remember the taiji diagram and the shifting patterns of yin and yang. When one part of your body is still, all parts of your body should be still; if one part of your body moves, all parts should join in.

Daily practice of taijiquan is necessary to properly understand yourself. With each posture, ask yourself whether it is perfect in every detail. Obviously, practice must move at a very slow pace in order to be effective. After thorough practice and understanding of the solo form, practice push-hands to learn to anticipate your opponent’s intentions. The understanding of the opponent’s moves is based on self-understanding. Precise timing and the most advantageous position are helpful. Being touched by your opponent, you can follow his/her awareness. Timing is crucial since you must match your opponent precisely. Only under these circumstances, can you throw your opponent off balance. A double-weighted position ensues when you do not understand your opponent. Study more about the yin/yang and closing/opening concepts. Your opponent can be understood perfectly if you understand yourself. This is the way to master all adversaries.

4.6. *Two Famous Songs about Taijiquan by Unknown Authors.* Each of the songs on the following pages is a collection of guidelines that are instrumental to effectively practice the Thirteen Postures and push-hands. These “songs” are not lyrics as is sometimes denoted by the word “song” and should be given serious consideration.

The Song of the Thirteen Postures (十三势歌诀)

Never neglect any of the thirteen postures.
 Remember that the source of the will is in your waist.
 Pay attention to the slightest change, from full to empty.
 Let your qi continuously flow through your body.
 Know that stillness embodies motion and motion stillness....
 Seek stillness in motion.

Surprising things will happen when you meet your opponent.
 Give awareness and purpose to each and every movement,
 For when done correctly, all will appear effortless.
 Always, always pay attention to your waist.
 Only with your abdomen loose and light can your qi be activated.
 Your shen rises to the top of the head when your coccyx is erect.
 So keep your body pliable,
 And hold your head as if suspended from a string.
 Be alert and seek meaning in the purpose of taijiquan.
 Bent and stretched, open and closed....

Let nature take its course.

Beginners are guided by verbal teaching.
 Gradually apply yourself more and more,
 And skill will take care of itself.
 What then is the main principle of taijiquan?
 Your mind is the primary actor and your body the secondary one.
 And the purpose and philosophy behind taijiquan—what are they?
 The purpose is simply rejuvenation and prolonging of life beyond the normal span.
 So an eternal spring.
 Every word of this song has enormous value and importance.

Failing to follow this song attentively, you will sigh away your time.

The Song of Push-Hands (打手歌)

In ward-off, roll-back, press and push,
 Use purpose with every action.
 Support every part of the body in motion with another part;
 This way there will be no “opening” to let your opponent attack you.
 If your opponent uses force against you,
 Use four ounces to deflect a thousand pounds.
 Lead your opponent in and allow him to lose his balance.
 Yield and assert at the same time.
 Do not forget to use the techniques of zou and nian.

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CHAPTER FIVE EXPERIENCES



CHAPTER FIVE

EXPERIENCES

Just as in other sports where one attains various degrees or belts, taijiquan has specific levels of achievement. Zhengmanqing defined the level of a taiji student's skill in terms of the three powers: humanity, earth and sky. He then subdivided each power into three categories, for a total of nine levels. It is not my intention to use this concept as a method of grading, but rather as a way of defining what you should be concerned with as you begin and the how to naturally progress to being a more experienced student. Thus, the following chapter uses the concept of the three powers to delineate the three main stages of taiji practice.

5.1. Rules for the Human Stage. Mastering the human stage builds the necessary foundation for mastering taiji. It is therefore essential to establish that foundation by following the rules of the human stage outlined below. Keep in mind, however, you must be well-grounded in one principle before proceeding to the next. Practice only one or two of the following principles at a time rather than trying too many different ones all at once.

Lightness or qing (轻). *The Theory of Taijiquan* expresses the first principle as follows: "In any action, the whole body should be light or qing and agile or ling (灵)." Ling is simply the ability to nimbly maneuver, react and act. Qing helps you to be ling and is demonstrated in the following examples:

- Imagine a mother cat swinging playfully at her kittens; she will control her movement in order not to hurt them. (When sparring, control your movements and temper them with lightness.)
- An old floor may creak when you step on it, but if you step lightly, no sound will be heard. (Step with qing when practicing taijiquan to increase your ability to maneuver.)

These examples show the application of being outwardly light. Qing, however, refers not only to your outer movements but also to the control of your consciousness or mind. If a cat has a serious intent in mind, its bite is designed to hurt, but if it is playful with qing in mind, there will be no pain. Mental qing is used to control the qing revealed in your outer movements.

The main purpose of taijiquan is to cultivate inner sensitivity rather than to develop outer strength. Sensitivity is enhanced by reducing force and unnecessary muscular tension, called heaviness. Practitioners of other martial arts often fall prey to heaviness; they may be qing in terms of speed, but they use too much muscular tension and outer force. Using a great deal of outer force numbs sensitivity just as fighting with clenched fists dulls the pain. Therefore, be careful when learning to practice taijiquan not to use awkward force; instead concentrate on relaxing. Let your movements be light and natural like clouds passing across the sky or branches blown by a gentle breeze.

As described in *The Classics of Taijiquan*, practicing qing opens the door to an extraordinary depth of sensitivity; eventually even "a feather can be felt." By applying qing to every movement, you pave the way for more advanced techniques. The use of force or heaviness, however, will prevent you from reaching higher stages of development in taijiquan.

Slowness or *man* (慢). The movements of taijiquan should be executed with *man* or slowness. To understand how, compare the practice of slowness in taijiquan to riding a bicycle. You would not consider pedaling a bicycle quickly and then stopping to be “slow.” Likewise, do not simply make quick transitions in taijiquan and then stand in postures for a long time.

To practice *man* regularly, walk as slowly as possible at a constant rate while paying attention to every part of your body. Step “in the air” and be able to stop anytime. It will soon be obvious that the application of *man*—even to the simple task of walking—is very difficult. To apply *man* to your form requires great perseverance. You must alternate between slowness and quickness. In other words, first practice your forms with *man* uppermost in your mind until there is no possible way to do the solo exercise any more slowly without violating its fundamental principles. For example, if you take twenty-five minutes to perform Yang’s long form at a constant rate, but going more slowly leads to technical errors, then speed up the form. But if you feel that you are going so fast as to violate the principles, return again to *man*. This process should become a regular cycle of learning. Go slowly until you can learn no more from going slowly, then go quickly until you can learn no more from going quickly, finally returning to *man*. You will eventually find that for the sake of *man*, the optimum time for performing Yang’s taijiquan is almost one hour.

Man gives you three advantages: practice, calmness and awareness.

Practice. The first is evident as the use of *man* in athletic programs: Videotaping a tennis player or golf student and then showing them instant replays—in slow motion—helps to perfect their form and stance. Whereas videotaping requires money and special technology, the implementation of *man* in taijiquan requires only understanding and perseverance.

Calmness. The second advantage is that practicing slowly and peacefully on the outside benefits your inner thoughts and emotions as well. Eventually, slow and soft practice of the forms results in a state described as “active outside, empty inside” or “non-action in action.” In other words, by reflecting outer calm, you become quiet inside, still like the water in an old well.

Awareness. The final benefit is that slow and calm motion of the body directs your awareness to the flow of *qi* throughout the body. By focusing attention on the dantian and then following the *qi* as it radiates outward during the movements, you in fact increase that flow. Practicing in this way illustrates the main principle of the *daoyin*.

Remember: the flying bird projects its shadow from moment to moment but without interruption (see Chapter 2.5). Your movements in the beginning stage must be slow and continuous to lay the foundations of slowness and lightness. In the advanced practice of *man*, you no longer need to keep your outer movements slow since your movements flow out of the stillness (slowness) within you.

Circular movement or *yuan* (圓). All movements in taijiquan are composed of circles as opposed to straight lines. The effects of *yuan* for defense and attack in a martial art are comparable to the effect of pitching curves in baseball. Pitchers easily strike out inexperienced batters with their fast balls. Yet, pitch the ball hard, fast, and straight to an experienced batter, and s/he will easily hit it. Consequently, pitchers throw curve balls, drops, and sliders most often since those pitches are the hardest to hit with accuracy or at all. The taiji specialist then is constantly “throwing curves” at their opponents; most other martial artists throw “fast balls.”

The execution of movements in circles and arcs also generates considerably more force than does linear motion. For example, a straight and steady wind—no matter how strong—

does little damage, but tornadoes, cyclones and hurricanes destroy without mercy. Likewise, a straight and steady current of water—no matter how fast—can still be navigated, but a whirlpool or undertow is perilous.

When you start to practice taijiquan, move in the pattern of an arc or a circle. With man and qing in mind, stretch each movement and enlarge each arc as much as you can while still maintaining proper postures. After you practice sufficiently to develop skill in yuan, reduce the size of your arcs. Remember to maintain the arcs, no matter how small they may be. Such circular movements may appear easy to do, but you must continuously practice and concentrate to develop natural and unstrained postures. *Intend* to make all of your movements circular, starting with the hands and arms. Gradually, these circular movements “seep” into the rest of the body so that the body eventually leads the hands and arms.

Incorporate yuan into your posture most effectively by daily practice of the chansijing. Otherwise, when you begin to move the hands and arms in circles, you may forget to have your hands follow the body. Practicing the chansijing will not only prevent such errors but will considerably facilitate your progress.

Constant rate or yun (匀). Yun, literally meaning “homogenous,” describes the smooth pace of taijiquan. In your daily life, where movements are usually done automatically, you have no desire to learn to control them. But when practicing taiji, especially when first learning the forms, learn to execute every movement slowly and deliberately. Although you may have an intellectual understanding of yun, your movements will inevitably be performed at an uneven rate. Therefore, one must first learn how to develop the discipline of total consciousness while doing the forms. The proper technique involves concentrating on the movements as if they incorporate a series of still photos each taken a fraction of a second apart. Anyone who has ever observed movements under strobe lighting will know exactly what to try. Through persistent practice, visualizing a series of stills within each movement will become so internalized and semi-automatic that conscious effort will no longer be needed.

Every day the sun rises in the east and sets in the west, apparently moving across the sky at a constant rate. Yet who can actually see the sun in action? Only the keen observer who has a quiet and peaceful mind and who uses a technique such as observing shadows’ movements can perceive this constant rate. Learn from the sun and apply special techniques of perception to yourself when doing taijiquan.

Finally, when you acquire qing, man, yuan and yun, you will achieve the appropriate lightness, slowness, circularity of motion and constant rate of performance needed to complete the human stage. How can you verify this accomplishment? You will have followed the rules in the human stage when the practice of taijiquan outdoors does not disturb flocks of birds or other animals. Then you are ready for the second or earth stage. Remember that although it may take only ten minutes to read this description, the actual completion of the human stage can easily take three or five years.

5.2. Rules for the Earth Stage. The attainment of the human stage is the foundation for all subsequent achievement. Once you build this firm foundation, however, your concern will naturally turn to building the rest of the structure; forget your former achievement so laboriously gained so that your effort will be directed to the earth stage. To achieve earth stage, understand the principles described in this section to guide your practice. Remember at first to pay careful attention to incorporating one principle at a time into the taiji form. Finally, you will learn to perform the form effortlessly, automatically taking all of the principles below into account.

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Agility or *ling* (靈). *Ling* applies the taiji principle that yin is yang and yang is yin. In physical terms the application of this principle means that if you try to grasp my arm, I disappear and simultaneously grasp you, thus converting my yin to yang. Or, if you push me I elude your push and simultaneously push you, again reversing the entire interaction. Study *ling* constantly and continuously, for without it such exercises as push-hands and dalou become meaningless. *Ling* is described best in *The Classics of Taijiquan*: “Stand like a poised scale and move actively like the wheel of a cart.”

In standing like a poised scale, you are ready to react instantaneously. Move like a well-greased wheel, offer no resistance and be able to spin swiftly. Consider the following two examples of *ling*:

- Fish in a pond with sufficient room to move will swim away swiftly if you disturb the water. This example illustrates the usual conception of agility. Fish confined in a fish tank, however, will wait poised and ready if you stick your hand in the water and will move only if you attempt to grasp them. Even then the movement will be only what is minimally necessary to elude your grasp. This is the agility of *ling*.
- A bullfighter stands poised waiting, baiting the bull with his cape and taunting it with his shouts. Finally the bull charges, and with graceful, fluid and minimal movement the matador eludes the bull. This is another example of *ling*.

As a result of emphasis on *man* and *yun* in the human stage, you are probably stiff. This is allowable for a time since at least you are now moving your body as a unit. However, this stiffness must be re-balanced by introducing the application of *ling* to your form. Develop primarily by practicing the *chansijing*, as follows:

- Firmly root your weight in your feet,
- Control all movements by rotating your waist and whole body without independent activity of your limbs, and
- Maintain a fluid spatial curve to your arms, hands and shoulders allowing the energy to come to your fingers. When your whole body is mobilized with such controlled movement, you will have entered the gate of *ling* and gained the freedom of action that this implies.

To Relax or *Song* (鬆). Relaxation is crucial to developing your taijiquan and to attaining earth stage. Do not be deceived though; do not misconstrue the word “relax.” Perhaps “relax” is the word taiji students hear most often ... and the concept most often misunderstood. This is partly because *song* conveys certain ideas not found in the English word “relax.”

This problem is compounded by the fact that the average student really does need to relax the excess tension in certain muscle groups. Moreover, most Western people are conditioned to regard “relaxation” as an ultimate goal. The result of these factors is that when the teacher says, “You must relax,” you then try to exhibit a relaxed body and mind. The teacher then will thoroughly confuse you by saying, “No! No! You must relax!” The reason for this perplexity is simple; you probably conceive relaxation as that which is experienced by a person who flops down into a comfortable couch and peacefully drifts off into a reverie, totally passive, uncaring, and unguarded. The relaxation called *song* is very different. *Song* in taijiquan balances yin and yang, integrating the hard and the soft. Although easy to say, the integration of these opposites is hard to accomplish. For example, a stiff, tense “spear hand” exemplifies the maximum of yang, and a limp, unconscious “dead hand,” the maximum of yin. Neither extreme is correct. The proper taiji hand is *song*, balanced so that it can be mobilized immediately to either extreme. The hand may briefly become extremely yang to attack or extremely yin

to escape, but only when necessary. The next instant the condition of song is re-established. Think of playing the piano and typing as examples of the need for conscious relaxation or song in the hands. The same principle is needed in taijiquan, applied to every part of the body as well as the mind.

By practicing song, energy (qi and jing) will be conserved like money in a bank. Do not strain your posture and mood as if worrying about money hidden in a mattress, but act composed and serene as if keeping substantial savings in the bank. As you conserve energy and your body and mind become serene, energy will flow through every part of your body. Do not make the mistake of sending this energy through your body if it is stiff. Clear your mind and still your emotions, and your muscles will automatically relax. This is song.

Such relaxed awareness is seen in nature. The snake hibernating all winter does not relax totally or else it would die. It withdraws consciously, conserving its energy so that it may strike again in the spring. Another example: The tree losing leaves in the winter is not withering and dying, but withdrawing into a purposeful state of rest or song, not yielding completely but preparing for what is forthcoming.

The ultimate goals in the study of taijiquan are to master the martial art and to attain physical rejuvenation, or more properly, to integrate and combine both. An awareness of these goals must be integrated with your concept of song. Achieving song leads one into the next step, sinking or *chen* (沉). *Chen* is absolutely necessary for the attainment of martial arts skill, since you fight more effectively if you relax and sink. With respect to attaining physical rejuvenation, you normally lose more and more of the ability to *chen* as you age, but song can enable you to regain what is lost and then add more to the original store.

Finally, only by understanding and reaching the state of song can one pass to the third aspect of the earth stage, the attainment of the three powers.

The Three Powers. To achieve proper balance at this stage of practicing taijiquan, internalize the concept of the three powers: sink your weight down through the feet, which corresponds to the earth; send the shen up to the top of head, which corresponds to the sky; and place your concentration on the dantian, which represents humanity (see Chapter 2.5). If this concept is correctly expressed, the body will be poised properly in each taiji posture, neither sunk too low or stretched too high. In this posture, you represent the universe where, according to the traditional Chinese view, the lighter substances ascend to become the atmosphere, and heavier ones descend to become the earth. Versions of the posture Golden Pheasant Stands on One Leg (see Figure 5.2a) illustrated correctly by Yangchengfu and incorrectly in the other two illustrations.

The need to simultaneously implement the principles of song, ling and chen seems to be a paradox. How can you relax, be agile and sink at the same time? Resolve the paradox by applying the concept of the three powers. First sink your weight to the earth. Then concentrate on the dantian. Finally, send the shen up to the top of your head, becoming balanced, poised and agile.

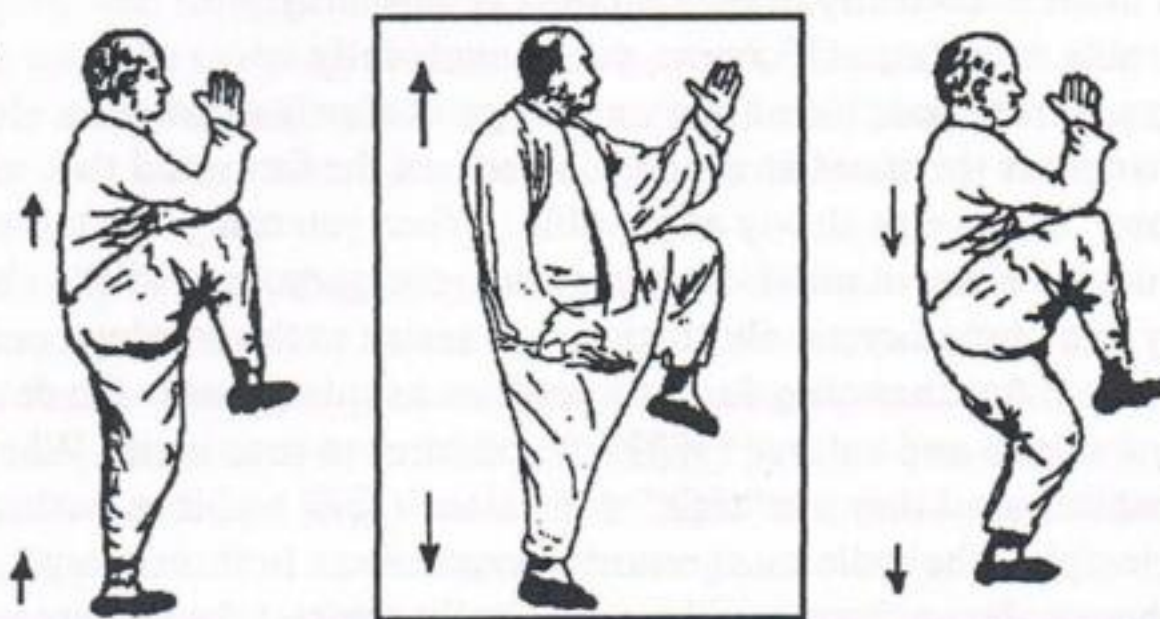


Figure 5.2a

Changes. The concept of change as expressed in the *Yijing* plays a very important role in taijiquan's system. The *Yijing* states that everything changes or develops through certain cycles. Nothing is constant but change itself. However, if nothing is constant but change, then the ways that these changes or cycles occur are in fact constant. Thus, the *Yijing* advises you to seek the unchanging in that which changes.

The practical applications of this principle in taijiquan are endless. Three specific points about change follow.

1. Changing method to achieve excellence and individual development. Taijiquan emphasizes cyclic individual development as opposed to imitation and uniformity. In most physical activities, teachers strive for uniformity in students' postures, and students work hard to achieve exact imitation of their teachers. There are good reasons for teaching this way, but unless the concept of change is introduced, the method of learning actually becomes the goal itself. Ballet, gongfu and many other physical activities require the endless repetition of postures to achieve perfect uniformity. This approach is excellent, but it neglects the possibility that the student may grow to a greater level of excellence than the teacher. Moreover, this method ignores individual physical differences, intents and desires. In other words, it changes something living and dynamic into something static and dead. In the practice of taijiquan, the concept of change is integrated as the system of study. Therefore, you learn what is unchanging and then incorporate change by varying your postures based on your own goals and physical capabilities. For instance, in the posture Snake Creeps Down you know the principles which must not be violated: feet flat on the floor, body upright, constant height, etc. (See figure 5.2b, Yangchengfu's Posture). The execution of this posture is up to you as long as you maintain the unchanging points, and this fact allows the posture to change and develop. Instead of attempting to imitate your teacher's posture, develop the posture individually to best actualize the basic principles of taijiquan. This approach also takes into account differences in individual goals since the person whose orientation is to improve health may actualize the posture differently from another person whose intent is martial arts skill. Both individuals will be correct no matter how different they look if they do not violate the basic principles of taijiquan.



Figure 5.2b

2. Changing speed to achieve man. In order to correctly develop man, you must also be able to go fast. Of course, you cannot really go as fast as possible unless you can go as slowly as possible. In this instance, that which changes is the speed at which you perform the form, and that which does not change is the purpose: to move as slowly as possible. When you can go no more slowly, execute the posture quickly. Keep in mind, however, that your purpose is still to change back to performing slowly. By this kind of cyclic alternation, you return to the development of man each time.

3. Changing form to achieve formlessness. To develop formlessness, you must first stretch and enlarge (开展) the postures to your limit. When you achieve this, reduce the postures until they are "tight" and "close" (紧凑). Since further contraction would violate basic principles, the cycle must return to expansion. In this example, the size of the posture changes; whereas the unchanging idea is to finally contract the posture into a point or to achieve, in effect, no posture.

The application of these three principles of change depend totally upon your own goals and ability. So it is with all of taijiquan. Only you can really develop your own course of study; only you can in fact teach yourself taijiquan. No one taught Zhangsanfeng but himself; he learned through discovering taiji's basic principles. This should be the goal of all students of taijiquan. Seek the unchanging in change and hold firm to it. Change is the most important tool and technique in your repertoire.

These ideas may all seem too abstract, so a final suggestion will bring them into practical application. Once you have mastered the right side of the form through long study, arduous practice and the help of an excellent teacher, you must then reach an equal level of achievement on the left side, but without a teacher. Only in this way can you determine what you have learned and developed on your own as opposed to what was only superficial imitation.

5.3. Rules for the Sky Stage. The human and earth stages emphasize the development of the taijiquan postures. In the sky stage, however, the methods focus more on mental training. The following advanced principles are explained in this section: sensing emptiness and solidity, controlling your breathing, disciplining your consciousness, and finally seeking void and stillness.

Emptiness and solidity. In the human and earth stages, your movement is restrained by the demands of slowness and a constant rate of man and yun. The first step of the sky stage helps calm you down through another method; you learn to simplify your focus of attention, rather than following a large number of rules. Now you must forget all the other points mentioned before. Give up complexity. During practice, concentrate only on distinguishing the insubstantial or empty from the substantial or solid (分清虛實). You are promptly aware of this principle only as applied to shifting your weight; you know that placing the whole weight of your body on one leg makes that leg substantial or solid and the other leg insubstantial or empty.

Actually, the principle of distinguishing emptiness and solidity contains subtleties beyond weight-shifting. For instance, when you push, your hands are empty at the beginning of the movement, but solid at the end. As your palms gradually stretch out until the ending point, the center of the palm rises a little to display the chansijing which is "rooted in the feet, bursts out in the legs, is controlled by the waist and functions through the fingers." This stretching results in the maximum point of solidity or the extreme yang. When you withdraw your hands and mind from solid to empty, the extreme yang generates yin. In this process, the tensed palm relaxes or becomes the extreme yin. Throwing a punch follows the same principle. At first your fist must be loose or empty; only at the end does it become tight or solid. When you withdraw your fist, it becomes loose again, and solidity returns to emptiness. So your fist is either tightened or relaxed in accordance with the yin/yang changes which exist in every action. Most importantly, remember to match the empty or solid condition of your hand with your waist, legs and every part of your body. When your palm rises a little to indicate extreme solidity, tense every part of your body.

Change the inside of your body from closing to opening. (The postures where your body is expanded and enlarged like an open door are called "opening." When your palm is withdrawn and relaxed to indicate the extreme yang generating yin and your body is contracted and condensed like a closed door, the postures are described as "closing.") When you step forward, your heel touches the ground first and then you place the sole of the foot down gradually, be sure to match this movement with your hand's movements and change your body from closing to opening. In the same manner, when you withdraw your step, the inside of your body changes from opening to closing, matching the hand's change from solid to empty. All these

internal and external combinations of opening and closing movements are based on the chansijing.

If you master the ability to sense emptiness and solidity, an adversary can offer you no opposition or interference when you open to attack. When you close, no dodging, bobbing or weaving is needed to avoid any attack. You simply change the direction of your opponent's force as if it were being applied against a screw thread.

To practice, remember the following principle: starting with strong willpower, open or close inside the body first, then expand to display the movement on the outside of your body. As one part of your body moves into action, mobilize all the other parts of your body to support this action. The physical body and the mind must be totally harmonized.

In short, the manifestations of emptiness and solidity in taijiquan are complicated. Sometimes the right side of the body is empty, while the left side is solid or vice versa; sometimes the right arm and the left leg are solid, but the left arm and right leg are empty or vice versa. At other times, the empty appears among the solid, and the solid appears among the empty, just as the yin/yang changes metamorphose in unpredictable ways.

The *Yijing* tells us to cope with shifting events by sticking to a fundamental principle. Thus, in keeping with the principle of change discussed earlier, there is an unchangeable rule that dominates all combinations of opening and closing changes. Since taijiquan eventually intends to train you to be like a taiji sphere, these countless changes between opening and closing finally focus on two essential objectives:

1. Always keep the line of your body's center of gravity passing through one foot, which is solid, and keep your other foot empty.
2. When your body moves forward, backward, left, or right, your center of gravity (the dantian) should trace a path parallel to the ground just as the center of a ball does when it rolls.
3. If you grasp these two essential objectives, you can master the changes of empty and solid.

Breathing. Taijiquan is based on Laozi's philosophy that softness will conquer hardness. The series of movements in taijiquan are designed to cultivate your physical and mental capabilities and develop your qi rather than strengthen your muscles. The human and earth stages did not specifically discuss breathing, but emphasized soft, slow movement and a gentle tempo. Following these principles prevents short, rushed breathing. In the sky stage, however, taijiquan lets the breathing itself be totally controlled by the movement of the dantian. To the beginner, letting go of your breathing and allowing it to be regulated by the movement of the dantian seems very complicated and difficult. However, if you practice the skill of "breathing without breathing" as presented in Chapter 3.1, you can allow your breathing to regulate itself by the movement of your dantian, and let the movement of your dantian match the postures relatively easily. Attempting to grasp this kind of technique by merely practicing taijiquan can take far more than ten years.

Consciousness. When you begin to learn taijiquan, you concentrate on remembering the movements and thinking about the correct postures—just as performers of other martial arts, sports and dance. But taijiquan requires a higher consciousness (意) or greater awareness to develop spiritual rather than bodily strength. Spiritual control gives you total control of your physical movements. When an exercise involves speed and strength, you can have conscious control only at the beginning and end of your movements. The movement of taijiquan is different. It is very soft and gentle. When you move from non-action to action or action to non-

action, you can stop, advance or retreat wherever and whenever you want—and always be in total control. Practicing this kind of control is intended to use consciousness to strengthen body movement and to achieve the transfer of physical force into spiritual power. This is called *lian-qihuashen* (练气化神).

In order to develop consciousness when you practice taijiquan, your movements should be imagined more than merely physically executed; that is, use your awareness instead of your strength. For example, if you want an action to be lighter or more qing, imagine the whole process in slow motion. This will enable you to reach a higher level of qing. If you want to improve your chen (become more stable by emptying the strength and tension from the upper body into the legs), it is important to sink your will and your mind through the line of your center of gravity down to the center of the earth. Imagine that every action develops from there.

Using your imagination intentionally to exaggerate your thoughts can promote the effects of taijiquan. Once these principles of awareness and imagination are mastered with qing and chen, apply the principles to all activities, such as the changes between empty and solid, opening and closing, etc. Practicing this kind of control also helps to achieve sky stage and also develops the good habit of performing any action, even those in your daily life, with awareness.

Void and stillness or *xujing* (虚静). To seek the empty in the solid is to find the “void” or xu (虚). To seek non-action in action is to find stillness or jing (静). The pursuit of *xujing* is the highest level and final goal of taijiquan. The movement in taijiquan, as mentioned before, emphasizes using awareness rather than strength. In the final stage, you must progress to the point where your movement itself (as opposed to your strength) has an intrinsic and instantaneous effect, such as turning opponents’ actions against them.

- First, simplify consciousness into only one idea; gather all your movements, whether active or non-active, to embody stillness.
- Next, constantly alternate action and non-action, represented by yang and yin respectively. After much practice, your concentration will direct the transition from action to non-action—from yang to yin—and vice versa.
- Finally, aim to be peaceful inside in order to affect the outside. Gradually, the outer movements will reflect inner direction and total awareness.

The sky stage of taijiquan uses this law of *xujing*. Although external changes may occur, internally you remain calm and empty without ever being affected by the changes. With such practice, you will understand the way to attain the heaven stage and enter the four-dimensional world. As Zhangsanfeng said, “If one emphasizes only the martial arts, s/he will miss the most important aspect of the philosophy of taijiquan.”

One way to develop an enduring state of *xujing* is to select a quiet place where there is little external interference, such as a park, seashore or mountain. Give up all thoughts and become tranquil. Forget all the rules mentioned before. Return to the primal and change the complex to the simple. Pay attention only to the yin and yang changes within and without, from action to non-action and non-action to action. Finally, find how each movement returns to its roots. As a result, your spirit will blossom and become peaceful. Taiji’s ultimate purpose then is, to reach a higher spiritual level via greater understanding of its martial applications and of its health benefits. Realizing this higher spiritual level leads to the realization of the Dao.

According to Laozi, “to touch ultimate emptiness, hold steady and still.” If you know how to pursue *xujing*, you gradually learn to foretell the course of everything under the sun, no matter how complicated. Void and stillness are the essence of the Dao and are applicable to everyone and everything. If people proceed according to the Dao, then the origin of existence

becomes clear, since everything returns to its roots. This principle applies to taijiquan as well. The movement flows like the Yangtze River, fluently and endlessly, with action and non-action, opening and closing, solidity and emptiness and numerous other pairs of apparent opposites. It seems very complicated, but it is really very simple: all will return to the primal state or taiji, the yang and yin. Laozi said it well:

“All things work together.
I have watched them reverting,
And have seen how they flourish
And then return again, each to its roots.
This, I say, is the stillness.
Retreat to your roots,
Or better yet, return to the will of Dao.”

All things are of the universe, so all things go back to the universe. This is a natural law. For example, although people may be rich or poor, they have nothing when they are born and take nothing when they die. Understanding this law leads you to an easy coexistence with the world, but *not* understanding it is dangerous. Since this law permeates all things, if you abide by it, you approach the essence of Dao. The Dao infiltrates time and space; humanity must follow the Dao in order to live satisfactorily. Thus, mastering xujing has effects even greater than martial excellence and healthful living; mastering xujing brings you closer to Dao, closer to the primal state of taiji, closer to the essence of life, of living...of yourself.

5.4. Practicing Taijiquan — Experiences. As stated in Chapter 1.4, Chenyanlin (陳炎林 See Figure 5.4a) was the tutor of Yangchengfu’s children (although he carries the surname “Chen,” he was not related to the taijiquan Chen family). He received training in taijiquan under the direction of the Yang family, and until his death in 1985, he had been teaching taijiquan in Shanghai. In the 1920’s, Chen wrote a book titled, *Taijiquan*, which describes his personal experiences. This popular work provides valuable information and suggestions for the practice of taijiquan. **The following section is directly excerpted from his book:**

Excerpts from *Taijiquan*. “Currently, students begin with the taijiquan thirteen postures and proceed to learn them relatively quickly. Often after three or four months of practice students may finish the form and then think that they have learned all there is to know about taijiquan. They do not bother to consider that taijiquan was developed by our ancestors with great difficulty over a long period of time; so how could beginners possibly learn everything in three or four months? The fallacy of this attitude is more evident when we examine the methods originally used to teach taijiquan as a martial art. The course of study would begin with mabu (马步) or the Horse Stance, which teaches solidity and



Figure 5.4a

rooting in the legs. This instruction would extend for at least one month and often as long as one year. After students had learned to stand firm, they would progress to the posture, Lift-hand (提手上勢), which was practiced for at least one month to learn how to empty one leg and root the other. After demonstrating they could use both of these postures effectively, students examined each of the thirteen postures individually. All of the applications for each posture were explored, and each posture, again, would be studied for a minimum of one month. Only then would students proceed to learn the complete form. After completing the form, which would take several years, students would begin to study the advanced operations such as push-hands, dalou and taiji sparring, and finally the weapons forms.

“Three positions form the frame of Yang’s original taijiquan: high, middle and low. Students begin with the high posture, where the knees are bent only slightly. They then follow the middle posture, sometimes called the Four-Level Posture (四平架) by flattening the eyes, hands, feet and thighs. Finally, the low posture is practiced. Each of these three positions is a subdivision of the large, medium and small styles. The large form, which was taught by Yangchengfu, requires nianjing (粘勁) postures and has a tonic effect. It is a good exercise for health. The medium form, taught by Yangyu, requires the application of taiji philosophy and results in moderation. In this form, concentration on the dantian prevents the flow of too much energy to the top of the head. The small form, taught by Yangjian, requires compact postures and swift movements. Particular emphasis is placed on moving the waist, arms and legs as a unit. Of these three forms, the small one is hardest to learn, because the movement and speed of execution are condensed so that a great intensity of inner force or jing, is developed.

“Learning all three forms takes a long time. At the beginning, daily lessons on the use of one or two postures are sufficient. Learning too much at a time leads to incorrect execution of the forms and superfluous steps. In addition, exercising quickly and the use of too much force are not permissible at this time. Acquiring speed at this time is harmful to the development of the qi, and the effort needed to do so damages the blood. If you follow the correct procedure, one can benefit from one or two postures as much as someone practicing the entire form of taijiquan several times.

“While practicing, one should pay attention to the following details. Set the tongue against the roof of the mouth, close the teeth and place the lips together, breathe through the nose, straighten the body, lift the chest and back, loosen the shoulders and elbows, and keep the neck and head erect. Begin the exercise with the whole body as a unit, experiencing fullness and qing. Stare in front of the hands, distinguish solid and empty (yin and yang), purify the mind, concentrate to increase your awareness, and give up all thoughts. Intend to develop perseverance of the spirit and physical endurance, and relax any tension. With continuous and hard practice, the breathing can be controlled. Relaxing one’s tension gets rid of awkward force. For each movement of the posture, let the atmosphere of relaxation and softness penetrate from outside forms to the inside of the body. By practicing in this way, vital capacity is enlarged, and the qi and blood are harmonized. Both body and mind are beneficially affected. Otherwise, shen and mind are disturbed, frivolous and restless; adverse reactions occur.

“Hence, learning the set of taijiquan postures, regardless of one’s knowledge and talent, requires at least half a year. Proficiency is related closely to the frequency of practice. The more one practices, the better one executes the postures. If someone really wants to achieve martial arts skill, every time one practices, one needs to repeat the set of forms at least three times. The first time acts merely to stretch one’s body; practicing more than two times develops energy and improves skill. If someone needs an exercise for health even half a set of practice is sufficient.

“Beginners need fresh air and ample room when they practice. In an area which is too small for taijiquan to be performed continuously, one cannot concentrate well and sometimes goes in the wrong direction. However, no special size for the practice area is needed when one achieves a high degree of skill. Even when one sits or lies down, taijiquan can be practiced. At this time, one focuses on mental practice instead of appearances.

“Recommended practice times are twice daily: the first, a half hour after awakening and the second, one hour before going to sleep. Each period is to last 20 to 25 minutes.

“While practicing the form, the rhythm should be constant from beginning to end. The transition between postures should be smooth. The postures must be done correctly. Do not show any deficiency, such as concavity or convexity in movement. Do not show disconnected movement but perform with awareness.

“It is necessary to know the application of each posture, to know the involvement of yin and yang in the movements. The beginner should not worry too much about the breathing. The most important thing is to practice the form smoothly. Let the body become full of qi; keep the mind and body in harmony. Next, practice the whole set of forms from the left side using the opposite hands and feet for every one of the original postures. For example, the left hand and left leg would be used for the right hand and right leg. Familiarity with the mirror image enables one to reach a higher level of skill. Then one can learn the fixed push-hands, unfixed push-hands, dalou, taiji sparring and the weapons forms. In any case, one should proceed slowly so the taijiquan can have its expected effect.

“Beginners may experience bodily weakness and sore leg muscles as physiological reactions. Sometimes, this condition may persist for several months or more. One does not need to worry about such reactions because they result from the rebuilding of the body; the original physical structure is destroyed and replaced with fresh construction. Another reason for the aches is that everyone has so much tension inside the body. Since taijiquan teaches the total relaxation of the body, the legs tire easily. With another two or three hours of rest, such phenomena will disappear quickly and be succeeded by an abundance of spirit and energy. In addition, other phenomena like a better appetite, will also appear. A tired spirit is related to oversleeping by beginners. Still at the same time, because of the increase in blood circulation, 8 to 9 hours of sleep a night is necessary. A normal condition eventually returns within a short period of time, and senior practitioners need only 4 to 5 hours of sleep.

“Is sexual intercourse permitted to people who practice taijiquan? The answer to this question is yes. We are not superhuman. However, in order to get a greater reserve of energy, intercourse should be less than usual for people in normal health and stopped altogether for the old or infirm during the transition stage from weakness to strength. Smoking and drinking are permitted, but not for thirty minutes before and after the practice of taijiquan. Otherwise, because of the breathing, the inner organs are harmed.

“Beginners may experience numbness in the fingers, arms, or legs after practice from using too much force. To recover, just shake them for a couple of minutes. Because of lack of practice, beginners often forget the next posture when too much attention is given to correctness. About respiration, it is better for beginners to breathe naturally through the nose and to ignore, temporarily, the use of long and deep breathing in coordination with body and limb movements. If one concentrates on interior breathing at this stage, the outer posture is easily forgotten. In addition, when one reaches a certain level in using the movement of the body to guide the breathing, and the breathing is smooth and continuous, the outer posture then becomes free and flowing. It is hoped that beginners will not hurry to sink the qi to dantian, because to do so at the wrong time may cause an adverse reaction. Ask if a posture does not feel

comfortable. Question the teacher, and he will make the necessary corrections. Do not continue to do a posture that does not fit.”

“I entertained several wrong ideas before I started practicing taijiquan:

1. The movement of taijiquan is so soft and slow, how could it benefit one’s health? How could strength be developed?
2. The action of taijiquan is so gentle, how could one utilize it as a martial art?
3. I believed the operation of the lungs would be damaged by hollowing the chest or hanxiong (涵胸).
4. What is meant by the dantian (丹田)? I assumed the dantian was merely the large intestine.

“After practicing taijiquan, I corrected these previous misunderstandings as follows:

1. As the use of one’s force becomes more effortless, one can move more swiftly. The comfortable posture and natural breathing, which accompany a reduction in the use of unnecessary force or tension, facilitate the free flow of blood and qi inside the body. In this way one’s health is improved, and one’s inner force is developed.
2. How can one fight with slow movement? Slow movement is for the purpose of seeking stillness, but one eventually can speed up when necessary. In addition, through taijiquan, one can develop the skills of “listening to the opponent’s energy” or *tingjing* and “understanding the opponent’s energy” or *dongjing* (懂勁). Strength is developed through gentleness. Potential speed is hidden in slow movement, because taijiquan movements originate from the center of the body and are controlled by the waist, not just by the movement of the arms or legs. The main axis of a machine turns slowly, then gears allow the smaller flywheels to spin faster. The same principle applies to the body and the limbs.
3. Does hollowing the chest or hanxiong restrict the operation of the lungs? Straightening the chest and back without relaxing the shoulders and sinking the elbows has bad effects. For natural breathing, one might try to hollow the chest and relax the whole body at the same time.
4. Are the dantian and the large intestine essentially the same? At the beginning, I sensed the abdominal area was empty. I lacked any knowledge of the dantian until three years later when I realized that the dantian, which is the headquarters of one’s body, could be trained to reserve, supply and nourish the qi. If the qi is reserved, the dantian is filled. Then one can tap the dantian like beating on a drum. The respiration of a taiji specialist who uses the dantian to breathe instead of the lungs is different from that of other people. It is observed that newborn babies breathe through the abdomen. However, as one grows, one breathes increasingly farther away from the dantian. People dying of old age breathe only through the nose and throat. Hence, there is an important relationship between life and breathing through the dantian.

“The presence of random thoughts results from a restless mood. To eliminate these thoughts, one ought to stare in front as if enemies were present there. Beware of any worries arising. When one becomes familiar with the set of taiji postures, one will achieve perfect peace of mind. Students also may experience an increased flow of saliva under the tongue after practicing four or five postures. The body benefits greatly and feels comfortable from the swallowing of this saliva, which also will relieve one’s thirst. The saliva, which is tonic and nourishing, is called “honey-dew.” Anyone who practices taijiquan with the correct postures, taking things easy and using pre-birth breathing, will find that the phenomena described above will be within reach. These experiences indicate that one is beginning to develop an inner force by strengthening the mind and will. This process is called the transformation of yin to yang or

“lead to mercury.” (己身採戰，或謂汞鉛，亦即採陰補陽之道，非如邪道，以后天男女色身為採補也。)

“Students then start to learn the fixed-step (not moving the feet) push-hands. It is difficult at first to distinguish between the four directions: ward-off, roll-back, press and push, and to connect them together smoothly. The student must practice push-hands with someone more advanced than he, like an advanced student teacher, so as to be able to learn by imitation. During this time, the teacher will demonstrate each of four directions one by one, making all necessary distinctions so that there will be no questions in the student’s mind as to their differences. After these distinctions are clearly understood, the student must practice them in continuous sequence so that they become smoothly connected. At the same time, the waist and legs must be loose and active when the four directions are practiced. It is through the mobility, looseness and fluidity of the legs and waist that the neutralizing and sticking energies are manifested. Neutralizing or *hua* (化) is the ability to retreat from or accept the opponent’s attack. Sticking or *nian* (粘) is the ability to follow so closely when the opponent retreats that one is attached like a shadow to him. When one reaches this stage, the techniques of neutralizing and sticking or *hua* and *nian*, are achieved, and it is time to learn *na* (拿) and *fa* (發).

“*Na* is the technique of locating and sticking to a part of the opponent’s body which is called a point of application. *Na* is a “holding;” that is, once the point of application is definitely found it is then adhered to, but no technique is applied. After *na* is learned, *fa* can be executed. *Fa* is the application of a technique such as a push or punch through the point held in *na*. Therefore, one locates and sticks to the point of application with *na* and then attacks through that point with *fa*. These principles will never be learned by the student if he tries to apply them indiscriminately during his push-hands practice. Before the student can apply the principles of *na* and *fa* himself, he must observe how *na* and *fa* are used against him by his teacher. The student must approach push-hands practice as if it were an experimental laboratory where he is both the experimenter and the subject. He must watch how his teacher sticks to him and throws him off balance. He must observe when and where the teacher applies *na* and in what direction he applies *fa*. He must distinguish the timing of *na* and *fa*. To master the principles of *na* and *fa*, he must choose one particular technique and practice it over and over again with a partner who can help with the study of these principles. When the principles are properly learned, the student will then be able to apply any technique with any part of the body. To do all of this takes time, so the student must not be in a hurry to learn these principles. If he tries to rush the acquiring of this skill, he will not achieve anything.

“In my opinion, the basis of all achievement in taijiquan is the fixed-step push-hands so my advice to the reader is to spend as much time as possible practicing, observing and studying this method. To this end, one must practice push-hands with as many different people as possible. One must practice with those whose skills are less than, equal to, and greater than his skills. One must practice with persons harder or softer, taller or shorter, etc. One must also change partners often. Once one is familiar with a particular person’s skills, one will always use the same techniques, which at this point will cause one’s development to stagnate.

“In moving push-hands (non-fixed step), the whole body—legs, waist and arms—must move as a unit; the sticking energy or *nianjing* must be maintained continuously, as must be done when one is using a weapon. At least one point of the weapon must always stick to the opponent’s. If one interrupts the *nianjing*, one breaks the connection that allows the opponent to sense one’s intention or *ting* (听) whether it is to attack or retreat.

“If one is really fighting with hand or weapon, the technique mentioned in the Chinese proverb, ‘When one’s hand moves, one must see red (出手見紅)’ must be used; that is, every

single move injures the opponent; one draws blood each time one attacks. One's mind must also follow the point of this proverb. One must be serious and not indulge as if practicing and must not be afraid since either of those moods will prevent one from attacking at the instant there is an opening in the opponent's defense.

“Taiji sparring is first learned as a set of movements or form. To learn the real application of these movements, however, each posture must be practiced separately. While practicing the application of a specific posture, one must place special emphasis on examining the operation of three main areas of the body: the hands and arms, the torso, and the feet or step. One must differentiate between the high and low hand, the advancing and retreating step, and the side and front of the body. The basic principle to observe in each instance is that one takes whatever action is necessary to put oneself in superior position, and keep the opponent in a disadvantageous position. To this end, the hands must keep a circular motion, and the step and body motion must be such that one's torso is always vertical and erect. This position is maintained like a closed door guarding the interior, so as not to give the opponent any chance to attack. Each posture must be correct, but the whole set of movements must be smooth and flowing. The empty and solid (yin and yang) must be clearly distinguished. Internal activity must be energetic and flowing.

“Should one concentrate only on practicing the external postures in push-hands, bad health still remains after ten years of practice. In addition, one will never achieve “understanding skill” or dongjing because dongjing needs more internal and mental training. Learning outer techniques is easy, but learning the inner ones is difficult.

“Some principles for health during the practice of taijiquan are described below:

1. Meals may not be taken for at least thirty minutes after and thirty minutes before exercise.
2. Activities prohibited after practice include the following: a) deeply drinking cold beverages and eating cold food or fruit, b) drafts of cold air or cold showers, and c) using too much mental activity.
3. Before the pulse returns to normal, walking replaces sitting or lying down. Otherwise, the rising of blood pressure may have bad effects.
4. A sufficient amount of sleep is needed to compensate for the energy consumed during taijiquan. Late sleepers usually give up easily because of a corrupted spirit.
5. Do not practice taijiquan when exhausted.

“The way to success in taijiquan practice includes the following elements:

1. **Perseverance:** Perseverance is an essential tool for practicing taijiquan. Without perseverance, involvement in taijiquan is a waste of time and energy. The initial period of practice is indescribably boring and dull. If the student continues with strong determination, attraction will replace boredom after one year, excellence will be attained after five years and great success will be achieved after twenty years for those who really practice daily. The three most difficult types of situations are the following: a. the first one or two months of beginning taijiquan, b. the occurrence of other urgent events, and c. the honeymoon or other traveling which completely disturbs the daily schedule making it impossible to practice regularly.

2. **Concentration:** This quality increases the success of one's practice two-fold.
3. **Weather:** Continue to practice during both hot and cold seasons.
4. **Studying:** Study intensively. Exclude all other concerns from your mind; greed or anxiety will result in distractions. The ultimate aims are simplicity and expertness.
5. **One step at a time:** No skipping. To follow the proper sequence and make gradual progress, do not try to obtain goals within too short a time. Hoping to learn the next postures when the previous one is still immature or intending to do the taiji sparring when the whole set of postures is still not finished ought to be avoided. It is known that climbing starts from a low position, and walking far starts with the first step. A hasty approach goes nowhere. It is a very important principle not to try to do everything at once. In this way, one can become a good taiji player.

“Not mentioned in the above points is the importance of finding a good teacher. Before one starts learning, it is necessary to examine the teacher's talents. Is he really well-experienced, well-educated and superbly skilled? Can he reveal the secrets transmitted from generation to generation? If one finds an excellent teacher, follow him instead of looking for someone else. Otherwise, one will get nothing—it will only tire the body—and waste time and money. Also, good teaching is useless without humility on the part of the student.

“After the student reaches a certain level, s/he ought to turn to cultivating and disciplining his/her capacity for greatness. The main purpose of taijiquan is mental and psychological training, which does not teach someone to be foolhardy. Literally speaking, one ought to open the mind like a valley, look dumb and never show off. Never try to impress people since pride goes before a fall. Every practitioner of taijiquan ought to have a profound and complete understanding of this principle. *(This ends the passage from Taijiquan.)*

The following physical signs were not noted previously in the excerpt from *Taijiquan*, but I have observed them to be results of learning taiji. After one or two months of practicing thirty minutes daily, you may hear a crackling noise between the limbs and joints, which gradually spreads all over the body. This sound signals an improvement in the circulation of the pre-birth qi. The rumbling glu-glu sound in the belly provides a clue that the mysterious dantian is starting to work. Practicing qing results in feelings of buoyancy when you walk. Do not discontinue simply because of sore and painful feelings in legs or on the back. They will subside after one or two weeks. Signs like these do not necessarily occur in everyone, and their duration also differs according to the individual. Beginners should not look intentionally for such phenomena.

In addition, you may want to know how your health and weight change with the practice of taijiquan. After one year of practicing, thin people gain weight and their fragility turns to strength; yin is changed to yang. Fat people lose weight and become stronger; empty is changed to solid. The effect of taijiquan is to rebuild the body both internally and externally. Once the body has been broken down from its former state of imbalanced functioning, the body will then correct both external malfunctions such as excessive thinness or fatness and also any internal malfunctions.

Aspiring for greatness. After you master the fundamental principles, turn your attention to cultivating and disciplining your capacity for greatness. The main purpose of taijiquan is mental and psychological training; learn all that you can and continue to challenge that which you have learned. Apply all of the taiji principles, and work your way through the human, earth and eventually heaven stages. Regardless of what you know or how well your skill has developed, stay humble; it will keep you focused and deceive your opponents. Never try to impress people since pride goes before a fall. Bottom line: open your mind like a valley, look dumb and never show off.

CHAPTER SIX PUSH-HANDS



CHAPTER SIX

PUSH-HANDS

6.1. The Eight Gates or *Bamen* (八門). *The Theory of Taijiquan* contains the original explanation of the eight gates or bamen. The eight gates of taijiquan are ward-off, roll-back, press, push, pull-down, split, elbow and shoulder-strike. The first four gates represent the four directions: south, north, west and east. The last four gates, in turn, reflect the four corners: southeast, northwest, southwest and northeast.

First examine the concept of the four directions. The first four gates with their corresponding trigrams and directions are summarized below:

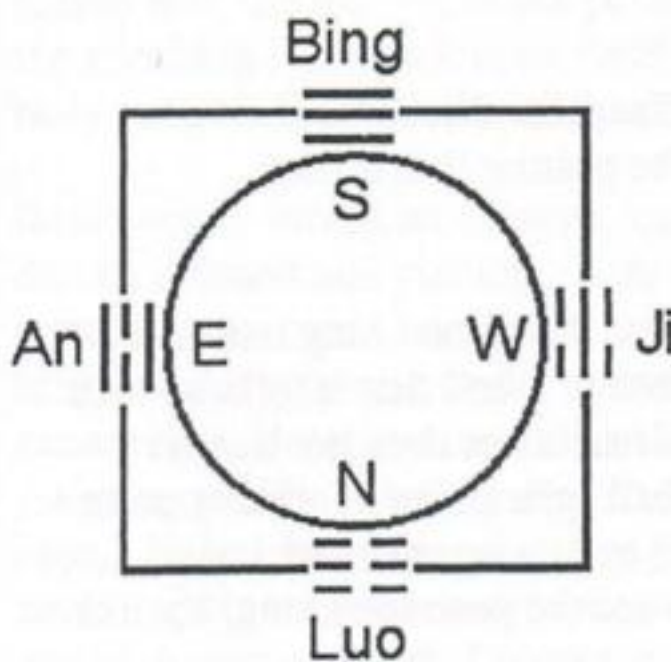


Figure 6.1a

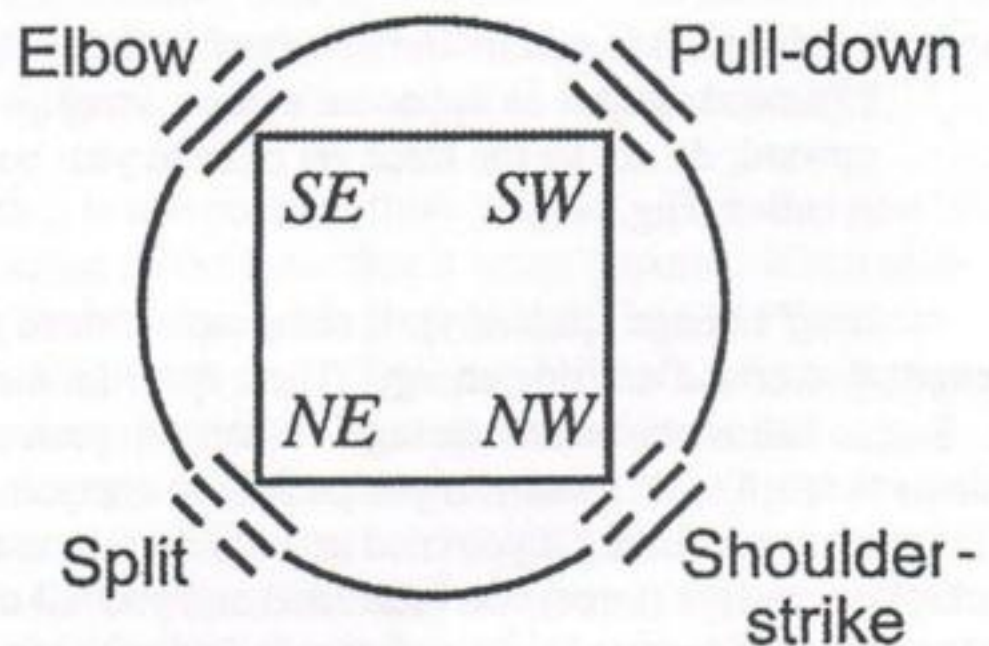


Figure 6.1b

Ward-off or *bing* (棚), represented by sky or *qian* (乾), lies south.

Roll-back or *luo* (捋), represented by earth or *kun* (坤), lies north.

Press or *ji* (挤), represented by water or *kan* (坎), lies west.

Push or *an* (按), represented by fire or *li* (离), lies east.

The four directions and their relationships are shown in Figure 6.1a. While most people understand that every movement in taijiquan is circular, they do not usually know that the movements are square as well. For example, the diagram of the four directions has a square on the outside, but a circle on the inside. The square and circle are tangent to each other. They represent the outside appearance of the movements *bing*, *luo*, *ji* and *an*, which form a square at first but later generate an inner circular movement. In the square, every movement should be open and stretched to the extreme; in the circle, however, the movements are closed and compact.

Clearly understanding the four directions is extremely important since they form the basis for all techniques in taijiquan. The only way to know the meaning of the four directions is through practicing push-hands (推手, See Chapter 6.3). After one has constantly studied and practiced push-hands, the next step is to learn *dalou* (大捋), which contains the four corners (See Chapter 6.4). The four corners with their corresponding trigrams and directions are

described below:

Pull-down or *cai* (採), represented by wind or *sun* (巽), southwest.

Split or *lie* (掇), represented by thunder or *zhen* (震), lies northeast.

Elbow or *zhou* (肘), represented by lake or *dui* (兌), lies southeast.

Shoulder-strike or *kao* (靠), represented by mountain or *gen* (艮), lies northwest.

The outside shape of the four corners is a circle, and their inside shape is a square. Their directions and relationships are shown in Figure 6.1b.

By practicing push-hands and dalou, one can gradually understand how a circle generates a square and how a square forms a circle. These transformations exemplify yin's changing to yang and yang's changing to yin in the taiji diagram. Practicing push-hands and dalou is also the way to understand the more profound concepts of the *Yijing*.

The following section will explain the meanings and postures of the eight gates individually.

Ward-off or bing. It is said in *The Secret of Push-hands*:

“To ward against an opponent's force, accept it and change its direction upward; do not let the force get close to your body. The posture that is used is called bing.”

Bing's image, qian (sky), is composed of three yang yao. Therefore, bing indicates strength, power and untiring energy. These qualities may be seen in a ball that is inflated with air. Such a ball is elastic and springy. When you push on it, it reacts and does not let your force go through to its center. If you push in at one point, the ball springs out at another point and redirects your force. If you tried as a child to sit on a beach ball, you remember how quickly your weight (force) was redirected and you fell off. To use the posture of bing, act like the beach ball and never let your opponent find your center.

Using the right arm to perform ward-off is called right bing (右棚). Using the left arm is called left bing (左棚). Figure 6.1c shows the posture of left bing by Yangchenfu. There is a famous song explaining bing:

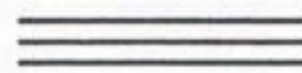
“Bing is somehow like the water buoying a moving boat.

First you must sink qi to the dantian,
Then set the head upright as if suspended from above.

The whole body should be full of elastic energy,

“Opening and closing” in just one moment.

Even if there is a thousand pounds force,
It is easy to float without difficulty.”



棚

Bing



Figure 6.1c

Once you gain an understanding of bing's posture, take the next step and examine bingjing, or the energy of bing. The posture of bing alone is not sufficient for practical application of its jing. The posture is only the stable balance

point from which either defensive or offensive energy is generated. To learn how to use bingjing, apply the understanding gained from the practice of the chansijing exercises as follows.

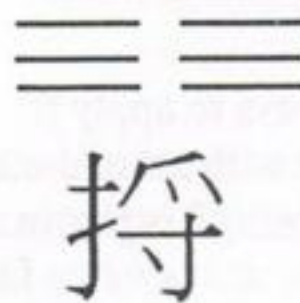
In bingjing, the hand that wards off must rotate from the inside to the outside. With your palm first facing the body, twist your forearm so that your palm faces out. Stretch your torso by sinking the qi to your dantian and pull the shen to your head. Loosen your shoulders, lower your elbows and stretch your arms. The crotch between your legs must be rounded so that the chansijing can develop in your legs. When all these conditions are simultaneously achieved, bingjing may be exerted.

When attacked, simultaneously maintain the above conditions; you will automatically manifest the defensive bingjing. This reaction occurs since your entire body is in a delicate state of balance. Once disturbed and set in motion, your body immediately re-balances. In the process of adjusting, the disturbing force is redirected.

Generate offensive bingjing from defensive bingjing by lowering your body in coordination with the rotation of the palm so that a vertical circle is developed. This movement turns the attacking force back upon itself and uproots the attacker. In this case, re-balancing your body controls the direction of the disturbing force, which is returned to its point of origin.

Roll-back or luo. Luo's image, kun (earth), is composed of three yin yao. Therefore, luo indicates softness and yielding. Luo is obedience in the sense that it never opposes. When mastered, luo can control a force of a thousand pounds with only four ounces. Luo has the same effect on the opponent as the matador's techniques do on the bull in a bullfight. A bullfighter cannot hope to oppose the bull with his own small strength because the bull is too strong and runs too quickly. The matador's solution is to yield, sidestep and confuse the bull with his red cape. In luo, however, when you yield, do not step away but maintain contact with your opponent. In this way, you control the attacker completely while holding a superior position from which to counterattack if necessary. Figure 6.1d shows the posture of luo. The song of luo explains:

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



LUO



Figure 6.1d

Without understanding luo, you will always have deficiencies in push-hands. First, your opponent will always be able to find a point of application against which to push. Secondly, you will always resist any attack with force. To correct these problems, you must follow several steps to use the posture luo.

Before you can apply luo, use bing for an instant. This move causes your opponent to exert force. Once s/he is committed to the attack, rise a little, then sink and turn your body with the legs and waist. It is important to turn your body as little as possible and to avoid excessive use of the arms. Otherwise, you lose your balance or expose the sides of your body to attack. Also follow your opponent with your eyes from the first instant of the attack and continue to watch, even during the follow-through period when, for instance, s/he has fallen down. By watching, you keep your attention on your opponent.

The energy of luo, luojing (捋勁), complements bingjing. Whereas the ward-off energy expands, the roll-back energy contracts. Bingjing is yang or hard, and luojing is yin or soft. In the chansijing, the forward generates bingjing and nichan generates luojing. In luojing, your forward palm faces out; then as you execute the roll-back posture, your forearm rotates so that your palm faces in. Just as yin develops out of yang, luojing develops out of bingjing. First you exert ward-off energy; then you turn your palm inward to develop roll-back energy.

Press or Ji. To press is to use your hand, arm, shoulder, or back to first stick to your opponent and then press before s/he has a chance to move. Ji's image, kan (water), is composed of one yang yao between two yin yao. Laozi (老子) describes water as follows:

“Nothing is weaker than water but when it attacks something hard, or resistant, then nothing withstands it and nothing will alter its way.”

Water is deceptive because, although it looks soft and yielding, its inner essence is dangerous. In the *Yijing*, kan is called “the destructive” and is listed as the hexagram indicating the greatest danger. The familiar example of dripping water's wearing away the hardest substances well describes water's deceptive and dangerous nature. The attributes of water characterize taijiquan in general, and the posture of ji in particular. Taijiquan's outer appearance of gentle, yielding movement conceals its inner nature, a most effective and dangerous form of fighting. However, of the eight gates of taijiquan, ji is the one that most completely expresses the nature of water. Therefore, execute the posture of ji like water entering a crack in a rock. The water first sticks to the rock's outer surface and then sinks into the rock to destroy it. In the posture of press, stand as in bing, then place the open palm of one hand against the wrist to the inside of your other forearm. If you stand in a right bing position, the left hand is placed against the right arm. The left elbow should sink downward. Figure 6.1e shows the posture of ji. The song of ji explains:

“There are two ways to apply ji.
The direct way is with an intention,
“Opening and closing” is just in a moment.
The indirect way is to use the reaction force
Like a rubber ball hitting the wall and rebounding
Or a coin thrown on a drumhead.
Let the opponent be like the coin
Bouncing off with a tinkling sound.”

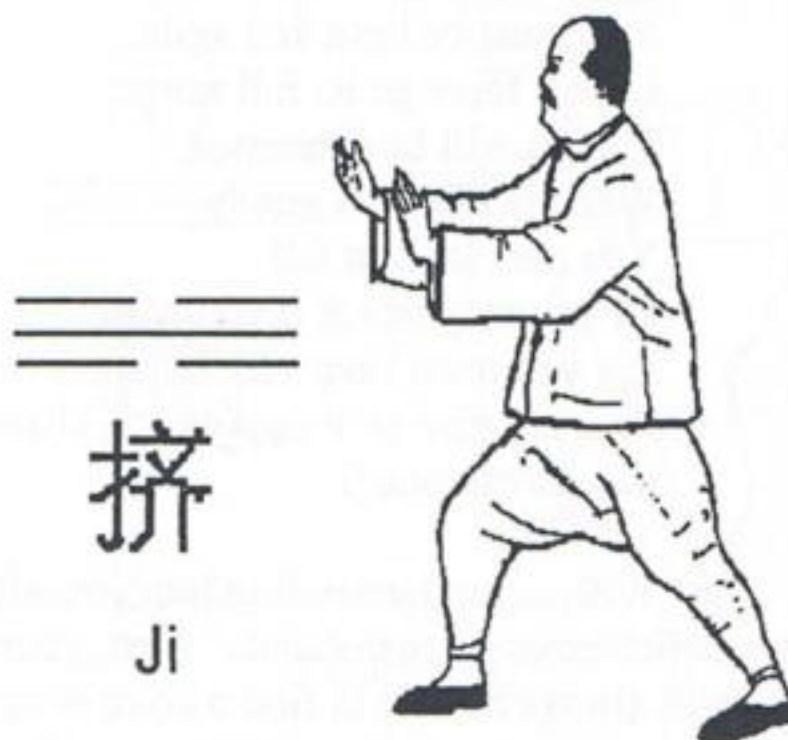


Figure 6.1e

Press is the main action in fixed-step push-hands, which contains the four postures ward-off, roll-back, push and press. Without correctly applying press, you do not develop the proper circular motion for push-hands. If your opponent does not press you properly, you do not learn how to generate the circle from the square. Conversely, if you do not press your opponent properly, you do not learn how to generate the square from the circle.

Jijing consists of bingjing in both hands and arms. The hands, which are close together, rotate slightly as in bing. However, with jijing the force is directed to one central point. Bingjing forms the basis for qijing; therefore, you easily learn qijing after you develop bingjing.

Push or an. The posture of an looks as if one is simply preparing to push; one or two hands are held in front of the body with the elbows lowered. An's image, li (fire), contains one yin yao between two yang yao. Fire is very aggressive; its heat extends outwards and its flames reach upward. In the image of an, the two yang yao suggest two forces impacting upon each other, but the inner yin yao represents yielding. Common sense suggests that a person with greater force can always "push" a person with less force by using no special techniques. However, when your opponent has a greater force, you have to employ the an technique. In other words, if at first you apply force (yang yao) and then you find that your opponent's force is greater than your own, yield or relax (yin yao) for just a fraction of a moment. During this split second, your opponent is off balance or overextended and will try to regain equilibrium. Take advantage of this time to apply the final force (yang yao), which will enable you to overcome your opponent's force. Timing is the key to mastering an. Figure 6.1f illustrates the proper posture for an. The following song explains an:

“An is like the force of the river water.
Gently the water flows,
Yet how great is the strength concealed
within?
The furious current is difficult to stop.
It envelops the high rocks with a wave;
And downwards it drives to fill the hollow
caverns.
Water overcomes all!”



Figure 6.1f

An is obviously a very significant aspect of push-hands. It is important, however, to be conservative in your push. Your arms should move in complete union with your whole body and should not extend beyond your knees. Always avoid awkward or abrupt force.

When practicing the moving-step push-hands, develop a vertical circle that consists first of withdrawing the arms counterclockwise to form a neutral semicircle, and secondly, of completing the circle by stepping forward and pushing. As you become more adept at this, change the pattern from circular to that of the taiji diagram. An will be even more powerful. An must be applied with direct intention. Therefore, good posture consists of holding your head erect, as if suspended from above, and focusing your eyes in the direction of the push. Other important points to remember include the following:

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- Uproot using the rotation present in the chansijing with awareness; do not use a straight push.
- Avoid sudden or abrupt movements because your opponent will see your intention and take advantage of it.
- Leaning forward beyond your center of gravity disturbs your balance.
- Follow the movement of your legs and waist with your hands, and follow your opponent with your entire body.
- Seek the moment that s/he is vulnerable.
- In a form of bingjing, turn your palm from downward to outward contact and push your opponent without outer movement.

Pull-down or cai. Cai can be practiced in two ways. The first technique, essentially the same as the posture known in the Yang school of taijiquan as Needle at Sea Bottom, is used to bring the opponent's force downwards. The second pull-down technique, which is used in response to an attack to the crotch area, involves grasping the opponent's wrist and arm and pulling his/her body force downwards to your side. The purpose of both techniques is the same. The sudden pull-down movement has the power to shock your opponent, disrupting concentration and balance.

Cai's image, sun, represents the wind. The wind does not blow only in one direction, but instead changes direction easily. It moves the flexible leaves of the tree but goes around the solid tree trunk. The yin yao which forms the foundation of sun is topped by two yang yao. This image indicates that the foundation of sun is free-floating; the posture cannot be fixed into a category of yin or yang. Therefore, when your opponent approaches with force, you respond by pulling down in a yang fashion. If your opponent only follows your movement, however, you simply yield by guiding the opposing force away from your own body, and abandoning the use of cai. In this way, you avoid the possibility of a counterattack. Figure 6.1g illustrates the proper cai posture. A famous song explains cai:

“Pull-down is like a balance scale.
Heavy or light balance can be found.
Your partner's force may be one thousand pounds;
Yet your force of four ounces can overcome.
How can this be?
The answer is found in the law of the lever;
Increase the distance from the fulcrum
Then balance will be found.”



Figure 6.1g

Cai is the main action involved in the four corners method or dalou. A number of significant factors are stressed in the proper cai posture.

- Assume a very balanced, central stance, sitting down on the legs with the elbows

- sinking slightly downwards.
- Relax your waist and shoulders to let the qi travel easily from the dantian.
- Use your body as a total unit, relying on the weight of your body and the power of your legs and waist. The posture will not be effective if you depend only upon the strength in your arms, especially when you encounter a force greater than your own.
- Remember that cai is used to pull only one of the opponent's arms. Otherwise, you will unintentionally put the opponent in an ideal position to attack.
- Remember to watch the opponent to the last moment even after you throw him/her off balance.
- Finally, this posture, in particular, should be attempted only with full intention; i.e., do not apply cai at all unless you are firmly resolved to pull down your opponent. The posture will be ineffective if employed only halfway.

You know that cai has been implemented correctly if the opponent is stunned or dumbfounded and can be uprooted or lifted off balance by an attack. As always, it is necessary to take advantage of this moment and follow cai with a push or press attack, e.g., the Fan through the Back posture that follows Needle at Sea Bottom in the Yang taijiquan.

Split or lie. Three distinguishable steps combine to form the posture known as lie. First, grasp and twist your opponent's wrist. Then step behind your opponent, preventing an opportunity for him/her to withdraw and thus foiling any attempt to retreat. Finally, with your opponent trapped, use your arm to strike or push your opponent's chest. This move causes him/her to fall backward over the leg which previously had been placed behind. When executed correctly, lie is designed to make your opponent fall backwards.

Zhen, the image of lie, represents thunder and suggests a roaring, tumbling and strap-ping strength. Two yin yao press down on one yang yao. The yang yao becomes angry because of the pressure and reacts with a violent determination to break through and shatter the yin yao. The yin yao takes its own initiative and, like thunder, unexpectedly rumbles with rage. Figure 6.1h illustrates lie. The following song helps to explain lie:

“Lie is like the flywheel,
Round and round it spins.
Yet far it will send you,
If you venture too close.

Lie is like the whirlpool,
With waves that roll.
Beware the spiraling current
Will sink you without hesitation.”



Figure 6.1h

Lie should be used in dalou practice in response to an attack of roll-back or pull-down. Lie is also very effective in changing the offensive/defensive situation. For example, if you are caught in an unfavorable position by your opponent's use of the posture Mustang Ruffling Its Mane, withdraw the step and proceed with lie.

By employing lie, you move from the defensive position of being pushed back to the offensive position of pushing your opponent back. As the sayings go, "What goes around, comes around" and "Whatever you do will come back to you."

Several important points should be noted with regards to lie. For lie to be effective:

- Incorporate the use of your legs, waist and arms as one unit.
- Gauge your distance from the opponent carefully. Clearly, if you are not close enough to your opponent, lie will be of no use whatsoever.
- Be aware of the fact you are in a vulnerable position when you attempt lie, because your chest is left unprotected.

Imagine liejing rolled up in a tight coil, thus forming a reservoir of bingjing. To apply liejing, allow this reserve of bingjing to suddenly release and spring forward.

Elbow or zhou. Zhou is somewhat self-explanatory because it means using your elbow to attack or jostle your opponent. When you practice zhou, however, the posture should never be obvious to an observer. Zhou should be concealed so as to disguise your intention from your opponent. Keep the idea of the elbow attack present in your consciousness rather than in your form.

Dui, the image of zhou, represents a lake. One yin yao tops two yang yao. The soft yin yao rests on top and conceals the great force of the two hard yang yao beneath. The correct zhou posture is illustrated in Figure 6.1i.

The following song helps explain the concept of zhou:

"The circle within the square generates the five elements.

Yet it is important only to differentiate yin and yang, above and below,

And to distinguish solid and empty.

When elbow and fist are linked like a chain,

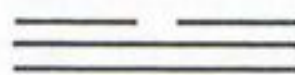
They cannot be resisted.

The fist can blossom like a flower,

And its punch can be especially fearsome.

When roll-back, press, push, pull-down, split and ward-off are understood,

The functional use of zhou becomes unlimited."



肘

Zhou



Figure 6.1i

Because of their diversity, hands are always considered the first method of attack in the martial arts. The fingers can be used to poke a particular point, the palm can grasp and the fist can punch. Even the back and side of the hands have specific applications. In many instances, however, the use of your hands is significantly limited, e.g., when your opponent crowds you into a very tight position. At these times, use the elbow as a second line of defense. The elbow has extraordinary power, especially when used for a blow to the solar plexus. This attack is considered particularly atrocious because it can kill. In view of its potential for extreme brutality, the elbow posture remains concealed and is practiced only with inner consciousness.

The basic taiji concept of utilizing your body as a total unit must be emphasized in this

posture. Your legs, waist and awareness must be coordinated with the elbow movement. Keep your body straight and your head erect. Remember to watch your opponent, concentrating in the direction of the elbow strike. In particular, for proper posture in zhou, check that your elbow and knee coincide; i.e., your elbow should not extend beyond your knee.

When your opponent is close and holds your hand during the practice of push-hands, respond by using the elbow straight to your opponent's chest. The elbow is also used in the practice of dalou in response to a roll-back attempt by the opponent.

Zhoujing is the cultivation of bingjing through the elbow. When the first line of defense (the hands) is blocked, bingjing is sent from the second line of defense (the elbow), and this becomes zhoujing.

Shoulder-strike or kao. The use of the shoulder is the most obvious aspect of kao; however, the side of your pelvis and hip should work in unison with the shoulder-strike. This technique is especially effective when your opponent has moved very close to you. Your step is the key to a successful shoulder-strike. If possible, place your leg between your opponent's legs so that your body forms a perpendicular line like the capital letter T in relation to your opponent's body. This position will allow you to use the full force of your shoulder.

Gen, the image of kao, represents a mountain. In ancient times, mountains posed as great obstacles to travelers, therefore, the image of a mountain suggests staying or stopping power. Kao prevents your opponent from continuing and poses an obstacle for any attack. Figure 6.1j illustrates kao.

As previously discussed, the hands are the first defense, and the elbows are the second. Now the shoulder and hips are introduced as the third and last line of defense. The elbow was explained earlier as a particularly atrocious assault, but the shoulder-strike to the chest is an even fiercer one.

The following song helps to explain the full meaning of kao:

“The method of kao divides shoulder and back technique.

Within shoulder technique there is some back;

So, use the shoulder technique in the Diagonal Flying posture,

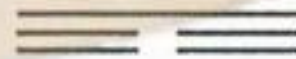
But remember the back.

And, only by timing just the right moment,

Will the technique explode.

Like rock pounding against rock.

Beware, all is lost without balance.”



靠

Kao



Figure 6.1j

When your hands and elbows are blocked by your opponent's closeness, rely on the power of your shoulder. Use the legs, waist and total body awareness when attempting the shoulder-strike. It is crucial to keep the body erect, being careful not to lean your shoulder into the opponent. Keep the image of gen foremost in your mind, and the attack will be like a mountain, impossible to move.

Two areas are left vulnerable when applying kao technique: your face and your arm. Your face can be easily attacked if your opponent's hands are free. Additionally, your opponent could break your arm. To prevent this break, support the elbow with your opposite hand. The tremendous power of the kao technique, when perfected, can be used to overcome an opponent whose force is much greater.

Kaojing, as you might suppose, is the cultivation of bingjing through the shoulder. When the first and second lines of defense—the hands and elbows—are blocked, bingjing is sent through the shoulder. This jing is manifested as kaojing.

6.2. The Principles of Push-hands. As you have read, the two forces that govern the universe are known as yin and yang. Although opposed, they cannot be divided for yin and yang cooperate harmoniously. They interact as naturally as cause and effect, even though yin and yang have a circular relationship and cause and effect represent a linear one. Yang is the origin of yin; yin is the root of yang. Yin and yang represent complementary opposites, e.g., inaction and action, soft and hard, empty and solid, light and heavy, or closed and open. They are intricately connected, relying on and restraining each other's function. They relate in total unity; each helps the other to create perfect balance. For example, day is yang, night is yin. Day and night, although opposite to each other, are constantly in transition. This continuous movement finally unites them and, thus, creates a whole.

The concept of yin and yang forms the theoretical foundation for taijiquan. Yin and yang must coexist. Where there is yang, there is yin; where there is yin, there is yang. You must continually seek harmony and balance between these two forces. The process of properly combining yang and yin, known as dongjing (懂劲), is considered a significant accomplishment in taijiquan. In the stage of supernatural accomplishment that follows dongjing, yin and yang are like the appearance and disappearance of a distant star before your eyes. The star's apparent changes suggest that yin and yang do not coexist like day and night but rather exist simultaneously. The form of the star appears to be there and yet, because it is gaseous in the outer layers, it is not there. This highest stage embodies total oneness; yin is no longer seen as following yang because even this sequence would imply a minute separation.

When practicing taijiquan, balance yin and yang; your movements cannot be too soft or too hard. If you use only a single aspect of taiji, the form is incomplete and really should not be called taijiquan. Taijiquan is realized only when the hard and the soft are developed into a taiji. The method for achieving the proper balance involves first developing the soft or yin to the extreme. Then develop the yang—from the root of the soft—to an extreme. This method is somewhat similar to the way a blacksmith makes horseshoes. First, he heats the impure pig iron in the fire, thereby making it amorphous. He then pounds the soft iron on an anvil to knock out the impurities. Thus, the iron becomes hard, while retaining much of the amorphous, rather than the brittle, structure. The blacksmith repeats this process repeatedly until he forges strong steel with the temper and strength to withstand the weight of a horse.

It is important to note that although the steel is hard and strong, it can also bend. Likewise, when practicing taijiquan, remain totally flexible but maintain an inner awareness. A cat sitting very still but totally alert as it prepares to pounce on its prey is a good illustration of inner awareness. To fully realize the meaning of taijiquan, put together the lessons learned from the blacksmith and the cat and incorporate the soft and the hard in your taijiquan. This realization is crucial to building a solid foundation of taijiquan.

The practice of push-hands is vital to the full development of any serious taiji student. To practice push-hands, stand opposite your opponent in the Bow and Arrow Stance. Join

hands and alternately use two or more of the four directions. The purposes of push-hands are described below:

- Like the chansijing, the practice of push-hands teaches you to fully realize what sensitivity of the entire body means. Externally, you develop an acute sense of touch transmitted through the skin. Sensitivity and awareness is also developed internally.
- You learn how to empty the body of all force. When you rid the body of force, you can experience what it is like to be the twinkling distant star; the body is there and yet it is not there.
- Through understanding the principles of push-hands, you learn to balance yin and yang in daily experience. Thus, the quality of life as a whole is enhanced.

There are two main views on the proper time to introduce push-hands to a taiji student:

- Students should be proficient in the practice of the solo exercise before attempting push-hands. Adherents of this approach believe that you should first develop a solid background through a long period of practice in taijiquan and the use of proper body posture.
- Push-hands should be taught along with taijiquan because they complement each other. This approach holds that push-hands enables you to better understand the solo exercise and vice versa.

I used to believe in the second viewpoint that push-hands should be taught along with the solo form practice. After 20 years of practice, I realized that this is actually not a good idea at all. If you practice push-hands immediately with the solo form, then the push-hands practice becomes corrupted because you have no basic foundation. The push-hands will be full of hand movement and external force—these are the very things that taijiquan seeks to avoid! It is first necessary to build a solid foundation in the solo form. You must be able to demonstrate this foundation within form by using your whole body as a unit. You must show absolutely no independent hand movement. Furthermore, it is necessary for you to master the chansijing and “breathing without breathing” in order to cultivate the internal energy. Only when these essential requirements are met can you even begin to think about practicing push-hands.

The practice of push-hands encompasses all of the taiji principles previously discussed, e.g., the thirteen torso methods, taiji qigong, chansijing, etc. In addition, practicing push-hands helps you develop important aspects of taiji not emphasized in the solo exercise. The following pages describe these additional principles in the order of their development.

Listening or *ting* (听). To succeed in combat, it is important to objectively assess yourself and to know your own strengths and weaknesses. It is equally important to know both the power of your opponent and where s/he is vulnerable to attack. In *The Art of War*, Sunzi (孙子) wrote:

“If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself, but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle.”

To listen or *ting* one acts like the spy who tries to gain access to valuable information by being constantly alert and investigating every clue. The push-hands practitioner, however, does not *ting* solely through the ears. S/He also listens through the eyes by steadily watching

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the opponent's movement, through the skin by developing a total body sensitivity to touch, and through the mind by awakening the intellect to foresee the opponent's moves. Clearly, the art of ting involves mental as well as physical training.

To understand the significance of ting, consider the following example. Of two people reading the same book, one really grasps and remembers the ideas and information from the book. The other reader totally misses the point. The difference between the two readers is a matter of ting: one person has developed the ability to listen to the book, but the other has not.

The push-hands practitioner frees unnecessary tension from the body by relaxing the legs and waist and giving up all awkward movements. In this state of relaxed awareness, you concentrate and truly ting in order to understand yourself and your enemy. When you make progress, your entire nervous system becomes more alert and sensitive. When you realize high achievement in ting, you become as swift and agile as a fish or fly.

Leading by walking away or zou (走). In the classics of taijiquan, zou is explained as the act of overcoming the strong and hard by the gentle and soft way. When your opponent offers force, zou suggests that you give up resistance by becoming soft, thereby evading a direct conflict. Obviously, if you give no resistance, the oncoming force—no matter how hard—loses its effectiveness. Zou follows the development of ting simply because you cannot hope to avoid a force if you do not know its direction or magnitude. So, when practicing push-hands, first ting your opponent's force and then avoid the force by yielding and giving no resistance—zou.

Zou is used by the bullfighter who cannot hope to overcome the bull by comparing force. The fighter's only chance is to step aside and avoid the bull's attack. When practicing push-hands, be conscious of the lesson learned from the bullfighter and never compare force with the opponent. Because your normal reaction is to resist when attacked, consciously apply zou repeatedly during your practices. Only by practicing zou will you progress in push-hands.

Applying zou must incorporate the whole body. Relaxing the arms but maintaining force in the body will serve no purpose because your opponent will then simply push the body. If the bullfighter were to move his red blanket but keep his body in the path of the bull, his end would be inevitable. Learn to turn your waist, bend your knees and coordinate the relaxation of your whole body by diligently practicing the chansijing.

Sticking or nian (粘). According to the classics of taijiquan, "To remain in the most advantageous position and leave your opponent at a disadvantage is called nian." Nian complements zou. Zou is used to retreat from your opponent's advance and to become soft when the attacking force is hard. Nian is used to advance when your opponent retreats and to follow your opponent as s/he tries to escape. Zou is considered yin because it involves passivity and following a force; nian is considered yang because it suggests initiative and advancing on your own accord. Although zou and nian contrast in direction and action, they reciprocate and complete each other's cycle.

Just as yin is the root of yang, zou is the root of nian. Therefore, in order to use nian effectively, you must have a good foundation in zou. When your opponent pushes, it is correct to lead by walking away or zou with the intention of keeping the most advantageous position and putting your opponent off balance. Yet, giving up too quickly creates too much distance from your opponent, and you then lose the opportunity to adhere or nian.

Nian, like zou, uses the technique of ting to sense the direction and speed of your opponent's retreat. Timing is the primary factor with nian because you will meet resistance if you initiate movement too quickly. It is crucial to attack only at the exact moment your opponent is

at a disadvantage. Nian can be compared to a spider catching its prey. The spider waits with alert intention until an insect happens to approach the web. If the insect is trapped and does not resist, the spider will attack immediately. However, if the insect tries to break away, the spider will simply give more thread to the web and the insect will finally entrap itself with no hope for escape. In this analogy, the web, like nian, sticks to whatever comes its way. The spider represents the mind or awareness, which controls nian. Do not forget — the spider is always in an advantageous position!

Neutralizing or hua (化). The following is said in the classics of taijiquan:

“The relationship between yin and yang must be understood. Nian is zou and zou is nian. Yin cannot be separated from yang and vice versa. When yin and yang complement each other, one will interpret tenacious energy, or dongjing, correctly.”

To neutralize or hua is to combine nian and zou. When your opponent pushes you, yield but keep the intention of maintaining contact. Thus, zou is nian. As your opponent retreats during your thrust, adhere to him/her, while maintaining a readiness to yield. Thus, nian is zou.

Hua—and thus zou and nian—is vital to the development of dongjing. Dongjing is well illustrated in the way a mature cat responds to gentle patting or stroking. If you touch the cat gently enough, it reacts by maintaining the contact ever so lightly. As soon as the cat perceives your initial contact, the cat knows zou; it gently yields to your touch. At the same time, the cat knows nian, because it maintains contact with you.

Both the human being and the cat know hua instinctively from birth. However, unlike the cat, the human being forgets or loses this instinct. In order to remember the long-lost dongjing, keep in mind the reaction of the cat when practicing push-hands. Once hua is mastered, you will render useless overpowering forces and quick movements from your opponent.

In order to master hua, you must begin thinking of hua as circular. Beginners often interpret zou and nian linearly, as an escape followed by a separate attack. However, hua is actually a circular movement as represented by the s-shaped curve in the center of the taiji diagram. By uniting zou and nian, you can yield while holding your ground. As you gain proficiency in hua, your external movements become progressively smaller. The awareness of hua develops in the mind until there is total inner awareness and practically no external motion.

Also remember the use of the essential bingjing when applying hua. Bingjing comes from the chansijing, the movement of your body as a single unit rather than as independent movement of your hands, arms and/or shoulders.

Hua is characteristic of taijiquan. Neutralizing your opponent's force requires correct movement and timing. Yield too early, and you lose contact; respond too slowly, and you succumb to your opponent's thrust. In each case, hua is not realized. The secret involves being ready to apply full force, yet restraining the total release of that force as a defensive posture against your opponent's attack. This principle is known as the soft aspect of taijiquan.

Practicing push-hands enables you to acquire a good foundation in hua and thereby maintain a credible defense. During practice, keep in mind the possibility of defeat so that you eventually learn to avoid it and thus will be free to defeat the opponent. Zhengmang constantly advised his students to accept defeat from their opponents. This aspect of Chinese philosophy has much to offer you. Cultivating an appreciation of defeat and loss lets you develop a

wider perspective on the meaning of life. Realize the usefulness and beauty of cooperation that leads to peace, harmony and relationships, and everyone wins.

Attacking or fa (发). In military strategy, it is axiomatic that the best defense is a good offense. After practicing and understanding hua (the defense), learn the role of fa (the offense). Hua without fa implies yin without yang. Hua and fa must be synthesized to produce a complete, effective whole as symbolized by the taiji diagram. With practice of hua and fa, the initially large circular movement is gradually reduced, and jing increases until you reach a point of such high achievement that almost no movement is required to defeat an opponent. That is, if your jing is solid enough, you are able to uproot an opponent entirely and throw him/her far away.

Fa consists of three basic factors: circumstance, direction and timing. Successful fa requires mastering all three.

Circumstance. Watch for moment when your opponent is temporarily off balance or has become stiff in a defensive posture, and capitalize on the deficiencies in your opponent's posture.

Direction. The realization of your opponent's vulnerability reveals to you the direction in which to apply a minimum of force to push him/her off balance. In other words, push when s/he is too far back or pull when s/he is too far forward. Follow the direction of movement to uproot your opponent.

Timing. Seize the opportunity. An early thrust—even one in the correct direction—leads to matching your force against your opponent's force, and this wastes your energy. A late thrust allows your opponent the time and opportunity to correct a disadvantageous position and to take advantage of your now ineffective push.

Combined, all three insure an effective attack or fa that appears as effortless as the gentle toss of a small object. The ability of the three factors to produce a desired attack is well illustrated by a swinging door standing between you and your opponent. As you yield, stick and neutralize a door pushed open toward you, you may successfully avoid being hit by the door. Closing the door too early, however, is ineffective as both a defense and an attack, while closing it too late results in a matching of force against force. Instead, control the circumstance, the direction and the timing of your response. At the precise moment that your opponent approaches the door, with posture a bit forward and foot lifted to step, close the door and provide the return thrust or fa that will throw him/her back in surprise.

Another factor to consider in fa is the relative height of the opponents. A short opponent is attacked naturally in the upper body, while a relatively tall opponent is attacked in the middle or lower torso. Also, your opponent may have more, less, or equal strength in the chest, shoulders and arms relative to that in the legs. For an opponent strong in the chest, it is best to attack the upper body in order to uproot the relatively weak legs. For a body strong in the legs, the attack must be low for maximum effect. For the balanced opponent, it is best to attack the middle part.

In addition, and most importantly, apply the principle of mobilizing and releasing jing from within as if shooting an arrow from a taut bow. When attacking your opponent, any fa must carry with it the total energy or jing mobilized from within your body, not just a superficial attack from your arm.

Finally, for fa to be effective, it must be done with total intention to succeed. There is no room here for any considerations regarding your opponent's strength or resistance. You must be convinced that, if it were a mountain before you, you would have the strength and will to accomplish your goal of fa.

6.3. How to Practice Push-hands. Push-hands teaches the application of the movements associated with the four directions: ward-off, roll-back, press and push. It also develops the qualities of ting (听), zou (走), nian (粘), hua (化) and fa (发). Implementing these principles is essential to the mastery of taijiquan.

Try to practice push-hands with as many different opponents as possible because one of the major goals of push-hands practice is to develop sensitivity and the ability to respond appropriately to any force. Willingness to practice anytime with anyone widens your range of experience. If you practice with only one person, you may become complacent and adapt the practice of push-hands to only that person's jing. If, however, you seek out a variety of partners, tall and short, men and women, light and heavy, etc., you will eventually be able to sense different types of jing more quickly and adapt with facility to new situations. You will also become more peaceful.

Push-hands is more than an exercise that helps to increase the effectiveness of taijiquan as a martial art. Through push-hands you see how the principles of taijiquan might transform the world. When you are pushed against in a train, on the street, or more figuratively, in your job or your life, your natural reaction is to probably to push back. When you want something, you may get angry or upset with anyone or anything that thwarts you. You probably expend a great deal of energy throwing yourself at immovable barriers and at unforeseen or chaotic situations that frustrate you, but over which you have no control. Push-hands confers a peacefulness, a collectedness, a calmness to your efforts. It allows you to sense when it is best to withdraw and when to advance. Best of all, in the martial arts, which seem to imply opposition and self-interest, push-hands surprisingly imparts a spirit of cooperation.

There are two major forms of push-hands: single-handed push-hands where each opponent uses one hand; and double-handed push-hands where each opponent uses both hands. These forms have many variations, including fixed-stance and moving-step variations. A few variations are described below.

Single-handed ward-off/push or bing/an practice.

1. A and B stand in the Bow and Arrow Stance facing each other with their right feet forward, side by side, and shoulder-width apart. Their right arms are held out in front, with the backs of the wrists touching, and their left hands are held slightly behind their bodies, with palms open, as shown in Figure 6.3a.
2. Maintaining contact or nian, A turns the right hand counterclockwise so that the palm faces B's chest and touches B's wrist. B assumes the bing posture. As A shifts weight to the right (forward) leg, the hand moves toward B's chest. The push is from the body not the arm, and thus the arm is not extended but follows the body forward, as shown in Figure 6.3b.
3. As A pushes, B yields or zou and shifts the weight to the left leg, maintaining the same distance between the arm and the body. Once the weight is completely on the left leg, the body turns to the right from the hips and keeps a straight axis through the center of the body. As the body turns, the palm also turns to face A's chest. B then shifts weight forward to the front leg, pushing against A's wrist. A must now bing and yield or zou and shift the weight to the back leg. The cycle is then repeated so that each person alternates between pushing and yielding.

The purpose of this push-hands exercise is to teach the application of an and bing by developing the ability to listen to an opponent or ting. Also this exercise provides practice in yielding to an opponent or zou; maintaining contact or nian; and neutralizing an opponent's



Figure 6.3a



Figure 6.3b

force or hua. The goal for beginners is to develop zou, nian, and hua, and eventually learn fa. Push-hands helps advanced practitioners attain balance between hua and fa.

This single-handed push-hands exercise has four forms. The version using the right hand and right foot is described above. The other combinations, which should also be practiced, use the following parts of the body: left hand and right foot, right hand and left foot, left hand and left foot. Practicing all of these combinations develops jing and sensitivity.

Variations of single-handed push-hands.

1. The backs of the hands adhere to each other at all times. Shifting weight forward, A executes the push palm up, aiming with the fingers to pierce B's throat or chest. At the same time B yields using the ward-off stance, but with the palm down, as described in bing-an.
2. The backs of the hands again adhere, but A attacks B's abdomen, and B attacks A's head. A vertical ellipse is thus described by the hands, from the head of one partner to the abdomen of the other. As A shifts the weight forward to push B, the palm is vertical, as it would be if you were shaking hands with someone, with the fingers aiming towards B's abdomen. B performs ward-off by bringing the arm up to the right in a semicircle, piercing with a vertically held palm to A's head. A's posture in avoiding the strike to the head is like Step Back to Drive Away Monkey; B's posture in avoiding the strike to the abdomen is like Snake Creeps Down. This push-hands variation teaches folding at the hips and relaxation in a sitting-back position.
3. This variation is called Elbow/Single Whip/Push, or zhou/danbian/an. Since this exercise is complicated, involving six steps, the individual postures are described below.
 - a. Stand in the Bow and Arrow posture with your right arm forward, wrist at chin level and elbow angled down. Your weight should be on your back leg.
 - b. Turn your body on its axis to the right about 45°, your right arm following your body's movement, warding off to the right with the right hand.
 - c. With your weight still on your back leg, turn your torso to the left. Follow the movement with your right arm, sweeping it across the front of your body with your right palm facing left and pushing to the left.

- d. Sink your weight downward, as if sitting in a chair, and bring your right elbow out in front of your body, stabbing forward with it. Keep your right hand near your chest. Shift your weight to your front leg, elbowing your opponent's chest.
- e. Extend your right arm with the palm up and pierce toward your opponent's neck with your fingers.
- f. With your weight still forward and your arm still extended, change from the piercing-hand position to the Crane's Beak or Single Whip hand position. Aim at the chest of your opponent with the second knuckles of your right fingers.

The postures described above are practiced by two persons in sequence: as A performs a, b and c, B performs d, e and f. The movements entwine so that as A attacks, B defends, and vice versa.

Double-handed roll-back or luo practice.

1. Assume the same stance as described for single-handed practice. Connect left wrists so that the backs of the left hands face one another. With the left hand, A grasps B's left wrist and executes cai, or pull-down, drawing B's hand down and to the left. A's right forearm rests just above the back of B's left elbow, controlling it with the implied intention of breaking B's arm. In order to avoid the intended break, B supports the inner left elbow with the right hand, fingers up.
2. To reverse the disadvantageous situation, B must change directions by pushing up to the left against B's left elbow. B must also turn his/her body to the left and simultaneously—using the left hand—grasp A's left wrist and turn A's hand counterclockwise. B then pulls A's left hand downward or cai to B's left side. This move puts B in position to break A's left arm with B's right forearm. A prevents this break by supporting A's left elbow with the right hand, etc.

This double-handed luo practice can progress in the same manner as the single-handed practice, with A and B continuously changing the direction of movement. The exercise should also be begun with crossed right wrists, and you should practice the right and left forms to reach equal skill in both. The purpose of the double-handed luo is to learn to utilize luo and to respond to its application. The practice also develops cai, since both roll-back and pull-down are performed. Be aware of and apply the principles of ting, zou, nian and hua throughout the double-handed luo practice.

Variations of double-handed push-hands.

1. One variation is called roll-back and push or luo-an. To practice follow the directions described in step 1 of the double-handed luo practice: A performs roll-back and the intended break; B supports the elbow. In step 2, B begins to turn the waist to the left. When B has turned the waist just enough to squarely face A, B assumes bing with the left arm. In response, A uses the opportunity to an with both hands. B responds to an by continuing with the double-handed luo movement, turning the waist to the left while grasping and twisting A's left wrist counterclockwise. This variation can be reversed and interchanged in the same manner as the double-handed luo practice.
2. Another variation is known as roll-back and press or luo-ji. When A is in the most advantageous position (that is, when A's right forearm is controlling B's left elbow), A opts to release the left hand from B's wrist and places the back of the left hand against B's shoulder. A completes the posture of press by bringing the right hand up and placing the palms together. A then presses against B's left shoulder. B must respond by making a full turn to

the left with the waist, down and to the rear, along the line of pressure defined by A's right arm and by the force of the press. B then continues the double-handed luo movement by executing roll-back and cai, bringing A's left arm to B's left side, and so on. Practice many variations on this theme, e.g., A uses luo first, and B uses ji, then A responds with ji and B uses luo, continuing in a repeated cycle.

3. Four-directions practice is described below.

- a Assume the same stance as described in the single-handed practice. To begin, A must assume left bing (ward-off left with the right foot forward) with most of the weight resting on the right foot. B assumes the an posture, resting one hand on A's left wrist and one hand near A's left elbow. B pushes forward. See Figure 6.3c.
- b A responds to B's an by first relaxing at the waist as if to sit down. Then lifting the right arm, A connects the right elbow with B's left elbow and turns the waist to guide B's movement to the left with luo. (See Figure 6.3d.)
- c B maneuvers to change the direction of the movement by rotating the left palm counterclockwise until the back of the hand is facing A's chest. B then places the right palm on the left, and executes ji as shown in Figure 6.3e.
- d A reacts to B's ji by dropping the right hand so that its palm covers both of B's hands and turning the body right to squarely face B. A then lowers the waist, as if about to sit in a chair, and turns the right hand clockwise, being certain to maintain contact with B's right hand.
- e B's reaction is to withdraw and assume bing. The cycle of movement is completed when A's hands are placed in an on B's wrist and elbow. Then the sequence is repeated from step a with A and B switching moves.



A: Left bing
B: An

Figure 6.3c

6.4. The Method of Four Corners or Dalou. You should begin the practice of dalou after a certain level of proficiency has been attained in push-hands; i.e., knowing and being able to apply each push-hand posture in a smooth manner. The practice of the push-hands postures bing, luo, ji and an, which indicate the four directions, can form a square illustrating their original nature. To understand the subtler attributes of the push-hand square, you must realize the circle inscribed within it. The circle is suggested in movement by the way the four postures become a smoothly flowing exercise.

By indicating the four corners, the dalou postures form the outline of a circle. Again, to find the vital subtle meaning of dalou you must find the square indicated within it (See Figure 6.4a).

The principle of mutual changes or cyclic transitions between the circle and the square is geometric. It is possible to visualize this transition by viewing the square as a polygon. You will find that by increasing the sides of any polygon it ultimately becomes a circle. For the reverse process, imagine the enlargement of a circle. As the circumference expands, you see a circle is at each point a straight line, and the circle is, in fact, a many-sided polygon. By decreasing the sides of the polygon, you find the square inscribed within.

Through the changes from square to circle and from circle to square, there is absolute



A: Luo

Figure 6.3d



B: Ji

Figure 6.3e

harmony of yin and yang; they become each other. Upon first observation, the method of dalou appears very complex, and you may feel that its practice is too difficult to attempt. A competent teacher, however, will simplify what seems to be an over-abundance of movement. If no teacher is available, do not become discouraged. Make progress by persistently studying this book and trying to really comprehend the principles presented. Most importantly, focus your concentration. When you make progress with the thirteen torso methods, arm and leg methods, etc., you will grasp the essential concept of whole body unity. Moving the body as a unit will clear the pathway for progress in dalou and allow you to develop in certain significant ways beyond the practice of push-hands. Dalou can become more fun than push-hands in that it incorporates the four directions of push-hands as well as the four corners specifically associated with dalou. In addition, the practice of the “lightning attack” or shan (闪) and “stick up and break off” or jue (掇) can be studied in dalou. Shan and jue are used especially in response to your opponent’s shoulder-strike attempt. Perform shan, the use of the palm to hit your opponent’s face, when your hand is free to move upward. Remember that your arm must follow your body and that the movement must be agile and quick like lightning.

The correct application of jue will break the arm of your opponent. To use jue, place one hand on your opponent’s wrist and maneuver against it. Place your other forearm on the elbow area of your opponent and move against the joint. Your opponent’s arm, which is trapped in this position, will certainly break if sufficient force is applied.

It is important to remember the principles of ting, zou, nian and hua discussed in Chapter 6.2. Thus, your hands must always maintain contact with your opponent; however, it is paramount that your touch be light without force.



It is also necessary to use your inner consciousness to guard your own body. Each part of your body has a defensive function; e.g., during shoulder-strike or kao, place a hand on the inner elbow to prevent the jue attack by your opponent.

There is no way to discuss all of the combinations or possibilities that exist in the practice of dalou. A teacher is helpful in pointing out all of the different applications for attack and defense. If you do not have a teacher, however, constantly review the principles and innovate your own applications.

One basic method of dalou practice is discussed below. In an attempt to find a simplified system for the study of dalou, the direction of movement and appropriate postures are described for each partner, A and B. Through practice, try to eliminate this stiff structure and synthesize the postures into a flowing pattern of movement.

Solo practice of dalou. Reminder: In the following dalou exercises, as with all taiji movements, the body follows the movement of the feet and the arms follow the body's movement.

In the Beginning Stance, stand facing north with feet parallel to each other. Extend your right arm up and out in front of your body at head level, keeping your elbow slightly bent and the wrist straight but loose. Your palm is facing west. Knees are slightly bent.

1. With your body's weight on your right leg, pivot on the ball of your left foot, turning the heel out to the left at an angle so that your foot is pointing northeast. Shift your weight to your left leg.
2. Step back with right leg so that the Bow and Arrow Stance is assumed and your body is facing northeast. As your weight is shifted to your right leg and your body turns clockwise, your extended right arm follows your body's movement describing a counterclockwise downward arc that stops about waist height (left arm simply follows the movement).
3. Shift your weight to your left leg. Keeping your left foot stationary, step forward with your right leg, bringing it next to the left foot, while also bringing your right arm upward in a counterclockwise arc until the Beginning Stance is again assumed. You are now facing east.
4. Step forward with your left leg.
5. Step up with your right foot next to the left foot, and close so that your feet are again in the Beginning Stance. Shift your weight to your right leg as your left palm presses against the inside of your right elbow. Shoulder-strike by stepping the right foot out to the side. Remember to keep your back straight.
6. Shift your weight to your left leg. Withdraw your right leg, bringing it back to your left leg, as your right arm moves upward in a counterclockwise arc (applying ward-off, bing) until the Beginning Stance is again assumed.

Performance with a partner. This exercise is performed by two persons so that as A does Step 1, B responds with 4; as A does 2, B does 5; as A does 3, B responds with 6; as A does 4, B does 1, etc. It is important to follow the movement of your partner so that the performance is smooth and fluid.

In Beginning Stance, A and B assume this stance facing each other with the outside of the right wrists touching.

1. A performs Step 1. B performs Step 4, stepping forward with the left leg.
2. A grasps B's right wrist and steps back into the Bow and Arrow Stance, pulling B's arm down (cai). B brings right foot besides the left and then performs Step 5, or shoulder-strike. A places the back of the left forearm against B's arm above the elbow, hooking the

right hand around the inside of B's right wrist, with the intention to break B's arm, or jue. B's defense against jue is to push against the inside of the right elbow with the left palm.

3. A releases B's wrist and continues the counterclockwise arc up and aims to strike B's face with an open palm (the lightning attack, shan). B simultaneously performs Step 6, blocking A's strike with bing. At this point, B should be facing A. If not facing A, B may need to adjust the left heel before withdrawing from the shoulder-strike.

6.5. Taijijing. The taiji qigong develops the qi which includes post-birth qi and pre-birth qi. Meditation helps to strengthen these two forms of qi and spread them to every part of the body. When you practice the chansijing, energy is developed and the whole body works as a unit. Practicing the taiji solo exercise blends harmoniously your qi and your awareness into jing. Jing itself is divided into two polar opposites:

- The hard within the soft is called elastic jing or danjing (弹劲). It is illustrated by a whip in action displaying soft, smooth energy but containing a hard sting at the end.
- The soft within the hard is called malleable jing or renjing (韧劲). It is exemplified by a pliable bar of steel.

When push-hands is done without taijijing, it is done entirely passively, letting the opponent take control without energy input from you. The situation is somewhat like that of the foot soldier in the army who carries only light arms as opposed to the control exercised by the wielder of heavy armaments.

The yin aspect of taijiquan is fluid and mobile, like clouds moved by a gentle breeze; it is revealed in zou and hua. The yang aspect is weighted, but not solid in the sense of being firm and aggressive. It is expressed in nian and hua; like a thunderstorm with overpowering strength, it is indicated in fa. The taiji diagram shows how yin and yang complement each other within a circle showing some yin in the yang aspect and vice versa. This same balance must eventually be attained when practicing push-hands. It is easy to find. If you use yang extensively, all that your opponent has to do is neutralize this yang strength with a small amount of hua to throw you off balance, just as the bullfighter does. If you emphasize the yin aspect in push-hands, it is possible only to protect yourself, but never to have the chance to attack or fa your opponent. When yin and yang are used alternately, it eventually becomes possible to control the opponent, catch him/her off-balance, open the line of defense and close in. When yin-yang balance is established and the taijijing is developed, a state is reached whereby you cannot be touched by your opponent, yet you can attack anytime.

Remember: jing is stored in the dantian as water is held in a reservoir. The practice of push-hands and dalou can be likened to the generation of hydraulic power. Continued practice leads to higher levels of achievement with the goal of total efficiency and the development of a kind of pure quality, wherein the taijijing is soft, but weighted and easy to wield. Taijijing is similar to an ocean wave in forward motion, which looks graceful but carries much momentum. The Chinese use the image of an iron bar wrapped in cotton. This achievement when used for health leads to rejuvenation and when employed in the martial arts will not encounter significant opposition. It takes ten years to grow a tree; this high achievement may require more than twice that long before it takes root. Expertise is the result of long and hard practice. There are no secrets.

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