

THE INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE OF T'AI CHI CH'UAN

T'AI CHI

# T'AI CHI

www.tai-chi.com Vol. 24, No. 3

**Feng Zhiqiang  
On Chen Style  
Internal Work**

**Joseph Chen  
On T'ai Chi  
Circles**

**Howard Choy  
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*2001*



\$3.95 U.S.A. \$5.75 CAN.

Feng Zhiqiang on:

## Integrating Mind and Body

By Yang Yang and Scott A. Grubisich.

### Introduction by Yang Yang:

Feng Zhiqiang is a Grandmaster of the 18th generation of the Chen style Taijiquan. He is well known as a top student of the 17th generation Grandmaster Chen Fake, as well as the Xinyi Grandmaster Hu Yuezhen.

In December 1997, I returned to China for the first time since my arrival in the United States. In accordance with martial tradition, my first priority was to visit my shifu, Grandmaster Feng.

The following is an interview that I had conducted then, and during subsequent visits over the past few years, with Grandmaster Feng. The interviews were conducted at the request of Mr. Marvin Smalheiser, editor of T'AI CHI Magazine.

Taijiquan is a subtle art. Inescapably, words used to describe levels of progression are subtle also. To reproduce Grandmaster Feng's teaching without editing, I have tried to translate his words as directly as possible. In many instances, it was imperative to retain the original Chinese terms.

I believe that accurate translations and explanations of traditional sayings are crucial for non-Chinese speaking persons to study the art. I have observed, on several occasions, instances where poor translations and/or mispronunciations have confused and even distorted the correct teachings.

In this article, we have used the

pinyin system for writing Chinese words, with the intonation noted in parenthesis. In Mandarin Chinese, each word can be spoken with one of four different tones. Different intonations have different meanings, so any romanization must include the tone to convey the intended meaning. For example,



Feng Zhiqiang

xin(1) means xin with the first tone, with the number 1 representing that first tone.

I have assumed that the Western Taiji community is readily familiar with some of the most common Chinese terms, such as xin(1)[heart-mind], yi(4)[mind-intent], peng(2)/lu(3)/ji(3)/an(4)[wardoff/roll-back/press/push], and jing(1)/qi(4)/shen(2) [essence/intrinsic energy/spirit].

Where necessary, I have explained or clarified the original Chinese sayings.

My translations and comments are included in brackets [ ] to distinguish them from Grandmaster Feng's words. It is difficult to translate some of the traditional sayings into English. I wish to express my gratitude to Dr. Kam Ming Wong of the University of Georgia at Athens for his review and comments on some of the translations.

At several points Grandmaster Feng emphasizes xiu(1)lian(4), which refers to a deeper level of practice and understanding. Xiulian demands the integration and practice of mind and body.

When referring to practice of the mind xiu-lian is a form of spiritual exercise, encompassing morality, purity of thoughts and behavior, etc. It can be either a verb or a noun, and Master Feng uses it as both.

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Yang Yang practices in Normal, IL, and teaches Chen style throughout the U.S., while pursuing an advanced degree at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, IL. Scott Grubisich is his student.

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Photos for this article were provided by Zhang Zihong, Feng Xiuqian, Feng Xiufang and Terence Chan

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**Yang Yang (YY):** What is Taiji? How is it expressed in the art of taijiquan?

**Feng Zhiqiang (FZQ):** Taiji is essentially Heaven and Earth. Before the Earth and Heaven originated, it was an abyss or void, called wuji. There was no difference between clear and opaque.

Although wuji is characterized by jing(4) [stillness], it also had movement, a dynamic element. When the movement accumulated to a critical level, then you have ji(2) dong(4) [grand movement].

At this point, the clear energy goes up, and the opaque energy goes down. Going up means Heaven, going down means Earth. Then, it is Taiji. Taiji has yin and yang: stillness and movement, inhale and exhale, soft and hard, close and open, empty and solid, short and long, withdraw and extend.

Yin and yang should be evenly distributed. The balance of Heaven and Earth will bring a good environment. The country and people will be safe and peaceful; the harvest will be plentiful. If Heaven and Earth are not balanced, there will be natural disasters, such as a floods or droughts.

Human beings need the balance of yin and yang to keep healthy. If yin and yang are not balanced in the human body, there will be a disorder of qi and xue(3) [blood], manifested by the disease of limbs and organs.

We have three sources: Heaven, Earth, and human beings. Heaven and Earth (yang and yin) create everything. Everything has yin and yang. Between Heaven and Earth, there are human



Fist of Covering Hand and Arm.



Feng Zhiqiang in a saber posture.

beings.

We say human beings are the ling(2) [soul] of everything. The world is created by the combination of Heaven, Earth, and human beings. Heaven has three best things: sun, moon, and star. Earth has three best things: water, earth, and fire. Human beings have three best things: jing(1), qi(4), and shen(2).

Taijiquan originated by following the dao of Heaven and Earth movement, the dao of yin and yang, combined with traditional Chinese medical theory. Heaven, Earth, and human beings all have cyclical movement. All have the character of circulation.

In human beings, the energy circulates in the meridians, the network of the whole body. Various health problems will appear if the meridians are blocked. So it is said bu(4) tong(1) ze(2) tong(4) [you will feel pain if the meridians are blocked].

The spiral movement of Taiji is based on the same theory of the heaven and earth rotation. Qi rises through the du meridian, sinks through the ren meridian, and fills the dai meridian.

So Taiji practice is mainly the xiulian of yin and yang; practice both xing(4)[character/spirituality/personality] and ming(4)[body/life/physical health]. Xing determines jing(4) [stillness, peaceful, quiet]; ming determines movement.

Wuji is jing(4); Taiji needs movement. Central equilibrium is required when you move; yin and yang must be evenly distributed. Jing(4) will arise after enough movement.

Conversely, you want to move after you rest for a

while. It is a very natural procedure.

[Master Feng is emphasizing that the correct practice of Taiji is a very natural process. Stillness naturally follows movement, and movement naturally follows stillness. The two depend upon and evolve into each other, just as the yin and yang portions of the Taiji diagram.]

Taiji is an art based on this theory. This mainly is talking about nurturing health. If you talk about self-defense, Taijiquan absorbed the best things from many different internal and external martial arts and combined them with its theory of yin and yang.

It became a unique art with a very valuable, effective health function and practical self-defense ability. This is the character of Taijiquan.

**YY:** You are famous as one of the top students of the Chen style 17th Generation Grandmaster Chen Fake. Besides Chen style, did you study other arts? How are these arts integrated into the essence of your



Fist Under Elbow



Jade Girl Works at Shuttles.

training system?

**FZQ:** As a young man, in my hometown [Sulu, Hebei Province] I studied Shaolin from my uncle, Wang

Yun Kai. Later, in Beijing, I learned Tong Bei Quan from Grandmaster Han Xiao Feng, who is from Cang Zhou, Hebei Province. [Cang Zhou is a famous area for several martial arts.]

I learned the Chen style from Grandmaster Chen Fake. Prior to this, I had studied Xinyi from Grandmaster Hu Yuezhen. Both teachers taught me qin(1) shou(4) mi(4) shou(4) [closely and secretly].

Chen style  
Xin Yi Hun Yuan  
Taijiquan



A qigong posture.

[Grandmaster Feng's training system] is mainly the combination of what I learned from Grandmasters Chen Fake and Hu Yuezhen.

Besides the Chen style first and second routines, we also have many single form repetition practices. The essential single forms are called taiji hun(2)yuan(2) gong(1) [dynamic qigong exercises], taiji chan(2)si(1) gong[silk reeling exercises], taiji ji(4) ji(2) [fighting] gong, etc.

If we put all the gong together, we have almost 10 routines. Those are the gong that will help Taiji practitioners reach a high level. There is an old Chinese saying: "You will get nothing, even if you practice all of your life, if you do not practice gong."

We call it xin yi because we have to use yi to guide the qi, use qi to move our body. So practice qi instead of li [physical/muscular force], and practice yi instead of qi. If you practice li, it will break. If you practice only qi, you will be stiff. It will flow if you practice intention.

Hun yuan is the essential nature of the Taiji symbol. If you can master hun yuan, you will know the direct route to reach the high level of Taijiquan. With dantian hun yuan qi as the base, guided by xin yi, following the principles of yin/yang and practicing/experiencing/applying the 13 postures, one can accomplish the crystal of hun yuan qi, the high level of gongfu.

The most important thing is jing(1)shen(2) yi(4)nian(4) [spirit and intention]. This is the main principle of our practice. So we call it Xin Yi Hun Yuan Taiji. We have the name Chen style because it was first studied and developed by the Chen family. It is not mysterious; it is a very scientific art. It becomes more complete after many generations' contributions.

**YY:** You say that you must practice gong. What is gong?

**FZQ:** Gong practice is the foundation; it is the bigger xiu(1)lian(4). Gong practice strengthens internal qi. It is the process of collecting the qi from nature to replenish our human energy.

After accumulation of gong, then you practice quan. Then [during the quan practice...] you transfer the gong to the internal organs, the meridians, the marrow, and to jing/qi/shen. After transferring, you absorb and digest. If you don't have the raw material, what is there to transfer and absorb?

If I want to cook dumplings and noodles, I need flour [as the main ingredient]. The gong is the flour. Qi is the source of our dong(4)li(4) [power]. Because it is an internal art, you must start with the internal first, and then learn to coordinate the internal with external movement.

There is an old saying: Xing(2) qi(4) ru(2) liu(2) shui(3) [Circulating qi is like water flowing]. If you don't have the feeling of internal qi, that means you are doing only the external form.

[Correct practice of the form is also the process of accumulating gong. Feng Zhiqiang is emphasizing



Attach Waist and Press Elbow.

that gong practice is the beginning point. As you proceed, each subsequent step should use the gong accumulated and is also a further means for the continued accumulation of gong.

[The gong he is talking about here is the same Chinese character as in the



A Cannon Fist posture.

term gongfu or qigong, but when used as a single word has the meaning described above. The relationship may be described as follows: qigong (energy work) is an essential practice to achieve a foundation of gong.

[With a strong foundation of gong, one can ultimately achieve a high level of gongfu. Practice of form, applications, fa jin, etc. without the foundation of gong is empty practice that may yield short term benefits but will not allow the practitioner to reach a high level of gongfu.

[I would also add that some people have paid a high price for emphasizing short term gains in fighting skill and ignoring gong.]

If you want to do Taiji well, it is not enough to only practice form. You have to practice gong: hun yuan gong, silk reeling gong, ji(4)ji(2) [fighting] gong, step by step. Hun yuan gong

[qigong exercises] will nurture your energy, help your transition of jing/qi/shen, and improve the electronic/magnetic energy.

Hun yuan gong will allow you to proceed to a higher level, from small to medium to big accomplishment. You will absorb the best things from Heaven and Earth.

There is an old saying: You can skip quan, but you cannot skip gong. After you know gong, then you can know quan. Not many people have a lot of time to practice everyday.

If you are busy, try to find time to practice gong. You can skip quan [form]. This was my teacher's advice. The busier you are, the more you need to practice gong, because it can replenish the jing/qi/shen you consume. This way you can have a healthy, long life.

To practice this kind of art, your qi must be smooth (qi shun(4)). [Traditional Chinese medical theory says that in order to have smooth qi, you must be taiji tai he, or peaceful]. You have to xiulian; don't let the distractions of the material world bother you.

Xiulian primarily refers to your mind and behavior; you have to improve your xin and shen. One who

has xiulian does not desire another's material possessions. Your thoughts should be zheng(4) [proper, i.e., you cannot have bad thoughts].

You have to xiulian your zhong qi. Zhong qi can reach up to Heaven or down to the Earth. Bai hui [the acupuncture point at the crown of the skull] is Heaven, and hui yin [the point between the anus and genitals] is Earth. If you have accomplished the xiulian, your qi will reach Heaven, otherwise it will only reach Earth/Hell. [This a well-known Chinese saying.]

Between Heaven and Earth is the human being. When human beings are in the womb, they absorb nutrients through the umbilical cord. It is not possible to breathe through the nose. After birth, human beings start post-natal breathing [using the nose and mouth]. Our practice is to return to pre-natal breathing. We return our post-natal modality to our pre-natal origin.

**YY:** Xiulian is obviously a very important aspect of Taiji practice. Can you tell us more about how to xiulian? How is this concept related to de [morality]?

**FZQ:** In the martial arts community, people refer to improving de and technique simultaneously. It is called practicing both dao and martial art. There is a reason. Without de, people may use the art to do bad things. To be honest, I think my Taiji practice makes my dao higher than that of the average person.

If your de is not good, your art and technique cannot possibly reach a high level. I learned about de from my two teachers. Sometimes I would make mistakes. But the important thing is that I could check myself and find the problem, correct it, and improve my de.

So we have to improve our de when we pursue the art. You can talk about dao after you improve your de and master the art. This dao is not evil dao. It is the big



Guard the Heart

Dao of yin and yang. It is consistent with Earth and Heaven. It is as big as the sun and moon. It is the goal for our xiulian.

But how to xiulian? We should cultivate our mind before we practice quan. Practice xin(1) shen(2) yi(4)



Subdued Tiger

xing(4). Those four things are actually one thing. Xin is shen, shen is yi, yi is xing. Xiulian improves our mind, body, and courage.

It is not an easy job to xiulian our mind and body. It cannot be done in one day. So we are practicing our mind and body, practicing our courage, practicing our jing/qi/shen.

The whole Taiji process [if done correctly] is xiulian. Dao practice will make the person strong to defend themselves and they will defeat the evil things. So our purpose is very clear; otherwise, why do we practice?

It is also said "Taiji should tai(4)he(2)." He means peaceful harmony of the internal organs and all the cells. Without he, you will fight internally within yourself and feel sick. You must be able to nurture your qi.

[The phrase "Taiji should tai he" means that the harmony described above is a goal of the Taiji practitioner. It is something one works towards, and an indication that one's Taiji practice is proceeding correctly.]

If you can do this, people will recognize and respect your art from their hearts, not by force. If you hurt people's eyes, break their ribs, etc., you are damaging your de. Taiji practitioners shouldn't do that. It requires big gongfu.

When you use Taiji to fight, you need big gongfu to defeat people without hurting them. The big gongfu can also prevent evil things from happening. It will scare people from doing bad things.

I came out into society after I retired from my job [in the early 1980's]. I recalled I never hurt another person. I am very happy with what I have contributed to society and the world within such a short period of time. I am also very happy with the friendships I have built. We have a very good relationship with other martial arts.

**YY:** What does it mean to practice jing/qi/shen?

**FZQ:** We are practicing jing/qi/shen when we walk, when we sit, when we lie down. We are all the time practicing jing/qi/shen. It has movement and stillness. One is nurturing ming(4), another is nurturing xing(4).

Qi is energy. It doesn't matter if people starve for two days, but it does matter if people do not breathe for two days. Qi is power. Qi guides the blood to circulate. Without qi, blood cannot circulate because there is no power to push it. So our practice is to cultivate our qi. We absorb qi from Heaven, from Earth, from food, etc.

Lian(4) jing(1) hua(4) qi(4) means to transfer jing (dynamic matter) to qi. This qi is called jingling qi or jinghua qi; it is also dynamic. Then, lian(4) qi(4) hua(4) shen(2) [transfer qi to shen]. The shen is also dynamic. We often say "shen qi." From this we can understand shen and qi are closely related.

Next, lian(4) shen(2) huan(2) xu(1) [return the spirit to the void]. Xu means void/empty/mysterious. You cannot see it; it seems there and not there. Xu(1) zhi(4) shen(2) ling(2) [if you can return your spirit to the void, you will naturally arrive at the divine level].

You will feel mysterious; you just cannot reach it. Ling(2) tong(1) san(1)xing(4) [ling, or empty/agile energy, will animate the three faculties]. San xing [three faculties] refers to the eye, ear, and mind. If you unite the three, it is ling(2)xing(4).

**YY:** Can you tell us more about Grandmasters Chen Fake and Hu Yuezhen?

**FZQ:** Master Hu was the person who introduced me to Taiji. Before then, I didn't know Taiji. He had the ability to throw people away easily.

My two teachers had reached a very high level. They reached this level because of the high level and purity of their de. I know this from personal experience.

The two of them never said



A Chen style saber posture.

bad things about other people. If they felt others' art was good, they would say "not bad." If they were average, they would say that it was "OK." If their art was very poor, they would say "I just cannot understand." They always exhibited moderation, never excess.

[Master Feng then showed a maga-



Elbow Through the Heart.

zine, printed in Japan, describing Grandmaster Chen Fake as quan(2)sheng(4) (godfather of martial arts), and Grandmaster Hu YueZhen as quan shen(2) (spirit of martial arts). The article also described Master Feng as the top disciple of these two grandmasters.]

**YY:** There are many stories of Master Chen Fake's expertise. Could you share one with us?

**FZQ:** Master Chen Fake reached the pinnacle of Chen Taiji. He fought with all kinds of martial artists after he moved to Beijing [around 1928], but he never hurt anyone and never said bad things about other people.

One time there was a tournament. People were randomly picked to fight, regardless of the martial style that they practiced.

Grandmaster Chen Fake was picked to compete with the best wrestling master in Beijing, Sheng(3) San. [Sheng San was called "Sheng(2) Jiao(1)," meaning that he was the best wrestling master.] People were anxious to see what would happen between these two masters from different arts.

When the match began the two masters touched each other, they both laughed, and then it was over.

People were curious and wanted to know what happened. A student from our school asked Master Chen Fake why he didn't throw him away. We didn't know all of the story, and Master Chen Fake didn't talk about it until several days later.

Then, Master Sheng San came to visit Master Chen Fake with a very expensive gift. After he left, the teacher explained. He said Master Sheng had such a high reputation that he had to save his face. "We already knew who was better. When we touched each other, he could not move. My qi cut his root from his feet. He felt rootless, and that was enough. Why embarrass him in front of so many people?"

YY: What is the criteria to find a good teacher?

FZQ: First, you have to check that what he does and what he says are consistent. Also, how he combines lian(4) gong(1) [foundation practice] and xiulian. It is possible for someone just to show you how to practice the form, without talking about xiulian.

People should start with xiulian first, and then begin the form and push hands training.

[It is a very competitive society, with seemingly no end for work or the struggle for money. Whether for health or martial arts, people should start with the internal aspects and spiritual training and - relax. This is the only way for people to receive the maximum benefits of Taiji practice.]

This presupposes de(2) [morality].

Second, see whether the teacher understands the theory. The teacher should understand li(3)fa(3) [theory], lian(4)fa(3) [how to practice correctly], and yong(4)fa(3) [application].

De [morality], yong(4) [application], lian(4)[practice] and yan(2) [research and discussion] must be combined. If you only do research, but not practice and application, it is empty or useless theory. You will never understand or be able to combine theory and practice.

If you only practice application, without the study of theory and doing research, it is feng(1)zi(3) [crazy]. If

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Why did my teachers teach me? It is an issue of fate, time, and environment. It made a difference between the people who went to the teacher once a month, and those who went everyday. It made a difference between the people who went there once a day, and those who went three times a day.

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From left: Yang Yang, Feng Zhiqiang and Scott Grubisich.

people practice without purpose, they may end up hurting themselves. Theory, research, and application should work together. They all are guided by xiulian.

YY: How does a teacher select a disciple?



A qigong posture.

FZQ: There is a famous saying: I will teach you quan, but not gong. Many students do not learn the gong. It is not because the teachers kept the secret. It is just that the students did not reach the level to understand it.

Why did my teachers teach me? It is an issue of fate, time, and environment. It made a difference between the people who went to the teacher once a month, and those who went everyday. It made a difference between the people who went there once a day, and those who went three times a day.

A good relationship is very important. Otherwise, you may not learn as much as you want. Sometimes, when my teacher was out of town traveling, I would stay at his house to help with chores. After meals, I might help the teacher to clean and do washing. We were helping each other.

Some people say the son will learn the real thing from the father. It is not always true. Father and son relationships do not guarantee that the son really gets the gong from his father. The son of Mike Tyson or Muhammad Ali may not be the king of boxing in the future. The father likes boxing, but the son may like music or basketball.

There is fate in de(2). [This meaning of the word "de," although pronounced the same as the word meaning "morality," is different. It refers to what you can acquire—both whether the teacher wants to transmit the knowledge to you and whether you can understand and apply it.]

It is possible the teacher wants to give it to you, but you don't want it. So fate is very critical. If you have the fate, you cannot avoid it. It is the same for who will be who's disciple. It is fate; it is pre-arranged. Each temple has its own spirit. Different shens will not enter the same temple door. People from different families will not use the same door. I believe this very much.

Of course, the student should be sincere and honest. It will work if you are sincere. You have to practice consistently. There is an old Chinese saying: You cannot fish for three days and dry the net for two days [i.e., you are



Of course, the student should be sincere and honest. It will work if you are sincere. You have to practice consistently. There is an old Chinese saying: You cannot fish for three days and dry the net for two days [i.e., you are taking too long of a break . . .].

taking too long of a break . . .]. I just mentioned I will prefer teaching you quan but not gong. It will depend on the fate between us. If we have the fate, I will teach you gong and quan both.

**YY:** What is the meaning of four ounces neutralizing 1,000 pounds?

**FZQ:** Initially, it does not sound like a scientific statement. But you can definitely get that result if you really practice and reach that level. There are two explanations for "four ounces": 1) the four ounces jinghua [internal] qi and 2) the technique of neutralizing incoming energy by spiraling movement.

The technique of neutralizing a force can be learned through the chan-si(2) gong(1) [spiral movement exercises]. The 18 Taiji balls [joints] rotate simultaneously, forming a big Taiji ball.

When we move, our intent should be as big as Heaven and Earth, moving simultaneously with the sun and moon. Taiji is so big there can be nothing external, and so small there is nothing to be considered internal. When it moves, it will relate to Heaven and Earth. When it is still, it comes into the dantian.

Actually, the spiral movement of Taiji is scientific. The movement of nature is spiral movement, not square movement. The sun and moon are rotating. Human beings employ spiral movement in the design of machines.

For example, airplanes and ships use the rotation of the propeller as an efficient means of locomotion. Spiral movement is consistent with the oper-

## T'AI CHI AND QIGONG MUSIC

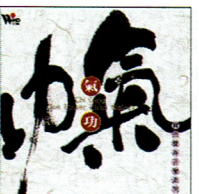
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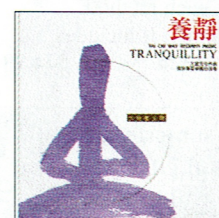
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By Jiang Jian-ye.  
This is a beginning level Xing-yi form incorporating the five elements and applications. Xing-yi is a vigorous internal martial art. There is a demonstration of the forms, then each of the five element forms is taught with a demonstration and slow and normal speed repetitions. Movements are broken down to show actions of arms and feet. There are many repetitions and different camera angles. There is a demonstration at the end. 120 Min. **1322** **\$44.99**

## XING-YI CHUAN: 5 ELEMENT CASCADE FORM



By Jiang Jian-ye.  
This video teaches an intermediate level Xing-yi form and shows self-defense applications. The 17 methods are taught at slow and fast speeds with each method repeated three to many times, depending on the difficulty of the techniques.

There are multiple demonstrations during the teaching and at the end of the tape. 120 Min. **1323** **\$44.99**

## XING-YI CHUAN: 12 ANIMALS FORM PART 1



By Jiang Jian-ye.  
This video teaches the first half of advanced level Xing-yi forms. There is a demonstration followed by teaching that breaks down movements into fist and leg movements and then combines them in slow motion and regular speed. There are multiple repetitions of each method, depending on the difficulty. It includes applications. 120 Min. **1324** **\$44.99**

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## XING-YI CHUAN: 12 ANIMALS FORM PART 2



By Jiang Jian-ye.  
This video teaches the remaining forms of the first part of the 12 animals form. The teaching method is the same as Part 1, with multiple repetitions and numerous demonstrations. 120 Min. **1325** **\$44.99**

## PRAYING MANTIS BOXING



By Jiang Jian-ye.  
Praying Mantis Boxing, named after the insect it imitates, is an exciting martial art using fast and slow and hard and soft movements. After a demonstration of the form, each of the movements is repeated several times with front and back views. The movements are shown slow and fast. Segments are repeated. At the end, there is a demonstration of the entire form. 120 Min. **1326** **\$44.99**

## BA GUA



By John Bracy & Liu Xing-Han. This is an interesting presentation about the theory, principles and metaphysics of Bagua. It includes discussions of internal power and internal martial arts, as well as the information about Bagua as Taoist Yogic practice. Bagua qigong is also discussed and methods are presented. The book also includes two-man application drills and self-defense applications. Liu, 89, is famous in China. Bracy has studied martial arts for many years. Paperback. 139 pp. 8 1/2 X 11. **2194** **\$14.95**

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Spiral movement promotes the smooth circulation of qi through the meridians, improving human beings' health. People in good health have qi flowing through the meridians, but silk reeling exercise can increase the volume of qi circulation.

ating mechanism of Heaven and Earth. Spiral movement does not fight against a force. It is consistent with physics theory, so it can have the effect of four ounces.

Spiral movement promotes the smooth circulation of qi through the meridians, improving human beings' health. People in good health have qi flowing through the meridians, but silk reeling exercise can increase the volume of qi circulation.

With the 18 rotating balls, any part of the body can neutralize an incoming force. It [the contacting part] will disappear by rotating. But the other part will hit you. Upper body neutralize; lower body fight back.

Left side neutralize; right side fight back. This example explains it. The energy created by spiral movement is very powerful.

So, never move ahead of your opponent, but when the opponent attacks one part of your body, neutralize the energy with the touching part, and fight back with the other part. In the meantime, if you can really nurture four ounces jinghua qi in your dantian, it can definitely have 1,000 pounds of power.

The four ounces qi is jinghua qi. It is also jing(1)ling(2) qi. For example, when you have a flat tire on your car, you use a jack to lift the car to replace the tire.

The jack is using qi to hold up the car. This is mechanical or static qi. It can hold a great deal of weight, but it is not four ounces jinghua qi. Four ounces jinghua qi should be even more powerful. It is endless. It is dynamic.

So, we have to practice big dao,

which means *lian(4) jing(1) hua(4) qi(4)* [transfer *jing* to *qi*], *lian qi hua shen(2)* [transfer *qi* to *shen*], *lian shen huan(2) xu(1)* [return *shen* to void/emptiness], *xu zhi(4) shen ling(2)* [after you have accomplished *xu*, your *shen* will be agile], *ling(2) tong(1) san(1) xing(4)* [the empty/agile energy will animate the three faculties: the mind, the eyes, and the ears], *san xing lian xing(2)* [use the three things to practice movement, or form], *xing(2) man(3) he(2) dao(4)* [when your movement is complete, you become one with the *dao*]. Then you reach the Taiji big *Dao*.



Feng Zhiqiang with Sword.

**YY:** What is the relationship between the new style (*xin(1) jia(4)*) and the old style (*lao(3) jia(4)*)?

**FZQ:** Today it is the issue of big and small styles, not old or new styles. There is no old style anymore. Old style refers to the practices before Chen Changxing (1771-1853). Chen Changxing created the first and second [paochui] Chen style routines from the old style.

The old frame was *shu(1) zhan(3) da(4) fang(1)* [big and graceful], and included different martial art flavors, such as Da Hong Quan and Qi Ji Guang's art. Old style was more complicated, with more jumping and falling.

For example, during the transition between the form "hitting ground" and "double hit the feet," the people would jump very high. Now, nobody practices that way. Or, in the form "shake foot and stretch down," in the old style the people would jump one meter high and fall down into the stretched posture on the ground. That is the old style.

The reason they practiced that way was for practical application in wartime combat. In Chen Changxing's time, as well as today, it was no longer necessary. People practice Taiji for health and self-defense, and not for battlefield combat.

So, Chen Changxing distilled the old style into two routines—*yilu* and *erlu*. It is called from many to a few, from complicated to easy. After this point, a distinction can be made

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between big and small styles.

Small style refers to the Zhaobao style, created by Chen Qingping (1795-1868). [Zhaobao is a town in Wen County, close to Chen Village.] It has only one routine. Small style is small but tight, and very refined: (*xiao(3)qiao(3)ling(2)long(2)*).

Chen Village also has a small frame style, but it was mainly developed and practiced in Zhaobao. Big style is what we practice. Big style is *yilu* and *erlu*, characterized with spiralling energy, *shu(1) zhan(3) da(4) fang(1)* [extended, smooth, and beautiful], central equilibrium, and soft and hard complimenting each other.

Some people refer to the form taught by Master Chen Zhaokui as a new style, but that is not correct. It is still the big style, characterized with more obvious *fa(1)jin(4)* [release of energy]. This is what Grandmaster Chen Fake taught. After the 14th generation Master Chen Changxing, there is only the issue of big and small.

Chen Changxing taught Yang Luchan. Wu Yuxiang went to see Chen Changxing but he was too old, so Wu Yuxiang went to Chen Qingping to learn the small style. After he learned from Chen Qingping, he created Wu(3) style. Li Yiyu learned from Wu Yuxiang and taught Hao Weizheng. Hao taught Sun Lutang, and that was



First row, fourth from left, is Chen Fa-Ke. Feng Zhiqiang is behind him.

People should practice both peng/lu/ji/an and cai/lie/zhou/kao to develop their skill. The procedure to follow should be: ming(2)jin(4) [obvious energy], an(4)jin(4) [hidden energy], and hua(4)jin(4) [neutralizing energy].

So, you practice mingjin peng/lu/ji/an/ cai/lie/zhou/kao first. After you understand mingjin, then you try to learn anjin and huajin. Then, xu(1)ling(2)jin(4) [the energy can come and go so quickly the opponent cannot catch or find it.] The force zhi(4) xu(1) zhi(4) rou(2) [reaches extreme emptiness and extreme softness].

**YY:** What is your advice for people in America to practice taiji? What should they pay attention to for push hands practice?

**FZQ:** Practicing quan and gong is solo work. Push hands is two person training. Quan and gong are xiulian; push hands is also xiulian. Quan and gong are practicing yi and qi movement; push hands is also practicing yi and qi movement.

Because push hands is practice of yi and qi movement, the following are required:

- 1) zhong ding [central equilibrium],
- 2) luo(2)xiuan(2)chan(2)rao(3) [spiral-ling energy], and
- 3) zhan(1) lian(2) nian(2) shui(2).

[Zhan lian nian shui is most often translated as adhere/connect/stick/follow. An understanding of the application of spiral energy and adhere/connect/stick/follow can only be gained through experience [i.e., by the teacher demonstrating, one on one, to the student.]

You must avoid ding(3) pian(1) diu(1) kang(4). [Ding means meeting and responding to an incoming force "head on." Pian means "oblique," referring to the loss of central equilibrium.

[Diu means yielding without response, yin but no yang. Diu also means disconnected, without listening. Kang means resist/fight/struggle while you already lose your balance without doing any neutralization].

You must be able to bian(1) hua(4) bian(1) fa(1) [release energy at the

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Practicing quan and gong is solo work. Push hands is two person training. Quan and gong are xiulian; push hands is also xiulian. Quan and gong are practicing yi and qi movement; push hands is also practicing yi and qi movement.

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same time you neutralize]. It is called hua(4) zhong(1) you(3) fa(1) [having release within neutralization].

Practice and cultivate qi instead of li; practice and cultivate yi instead of qi. After you have practiced enough and in the proper way, you will naturally accumulate the gong(1) dao(4) zi(4) ran(2) cheng(2).

[This is a very well-known saying. The meaning is similar to the term gongfu. It refers to an accomplishment, which is the fruit of constant and dedicated effort and correct practice. This saying can refer to any accomplishment - not just wushu.]

After you have practiced push hands, then you practice jian(4) shou(3) fen(1) li(2) [to throw the opponent away immediately upon touching during sparring].

It is like you are raising wheat. You cannot pull the wheat up [force it to grow]. Or, to use another example, you cannot expect a baby to run before it can even stand. You must proceed step by step. It sounds slow, but actually it is the most efficient way. You cannot proceed too quickly.

If you do, you will break the moderation principle, wu(2) guo(4) wu(2) bu(4) ji(2). Push hands requires moderation and the avoidance of ding pian diu kang [defined above]. Never have the idea of hurting people; this is also xiulian.

In the classics it is said "rou(2) hua(4) gang(1) fa(1)," which means yield/neutralize with softness, release with hardness. You must practice rou(2) [softness] and hua(4) [yielding/neutralizing].

The same principle applies to quan [form] practice; practice song(1) [relaxation] first. It is easy to practice

quan, but difficult to practice song. In push hands, it is easy to practice fa [quick release], but difficult to practice hua(4). If you can hua with 1,000 pounds, it is such an easy job to fa.

[Another issue is how to fa. The correct, or most efficient, way is to remain relaxed until the point of contact. All energy is then focused on that point.]

You should think of push hands as a gong practice. After you have practiced enough, concise instruction from the teacher will be sufficient to explain the deeper meaning.

[The actual words used by Master Feng here were "yi(1)dian(3) jiu(4) tou(4)," which means one touch can penetrate. "One touch" refers to brief instruction from the teacher.] If you haven't practiced enough, you will never understand, no matter how hard the teacher tries to explain. If you haven't practiced enough, your instinctual reaction to a push will be to ding [apply force against incoming force].

Push hands is gong practice, and it is qigong practice. Lastly, it is practice of technique. [Note: Feng Zhiqiang has defined the step-by-step order of practice: gong-Chuan-push hands-free fighting.]

**YY:** What does ling(2) refer to?

**FZQ:** Ling is xu(1) [empty] energy. It applies without physically touching at all. Ling means two things. One is agile, flexible. Another is empty, immediate, instinctual reaction.

[Master Feng then demonstrated application of ling. As I grabbed to push him, he immediately disappeared before my force could reach him and, in the same instant, he touched me very fast and expressed force back to my body and threw me away. My force was neutralized and I was unbalanced before I had touched him. Physically with ling, you can move lightly/instantaneously; mentally, you can anticipate. After this demonstration, the meaning of the classical saying "the opponent moves, I move first" was quite obvious.]

You can call it physically flexible, mentally agile/empty; whatever you want to call it.●

the origin of Sun style.

Yang Luchan taught Wu Quan Yu, who then created the Wu(2) style. They all developed from Chen style. Every style has its character. You cannot say which is bad or which is good. You can only say what character it has. The overall principle is the same, but practiced in different ways.

For example, Yang style is big and graceful. Wu(2) style is small, refined, and well-connected. Wu(3) is between Yang and Wu(2). Sun style has the Xingyi flavor, agile steps, and more open and close. Chen style is flowing, with more silk reeling energy and the presence of hun(2) yuan(2) everywhere.

Today, some people practice Chen style the wrong way. The eyes stare, the head shakes, heng and ha sounds and the feet shake, all with no purpose. I hope these people come back to the authentic way of practicing because Taiji is exercise of yi and qi; it is not exercise of li(4)qi(4) [brute force].

**YY:** People get confused about peng. How do you define it?

**FZQ:** Peng(2) lu(3) ji(3) an(4) xu(1) ren(4) zhen(1) [you must clearly differentiate and pay attention to peng/lu/ji/an]. Shang(4) xia(4) xiang(1) shui(2) ren(2) nan(2) jin(4) [a good coordination between the upper and lower body will prevent the opponent from entering].

Ren(4) ping(2) dui(4) fang(1) lai(2) da(3) wo(3). Si(4) liang(3) hua(4) dong(4) bo(1) qian(1) jin(1) [no matter how hard the opponent attacks, I can use four ounces to neutralize]. These sayings are used to express the purpose.

Peng means energy goes up; lu, back (left or right side); ji, forward; an, down. But peng is also expressed in lu, ji, and an. Lu is back peng. Ji is forward peng. An is down peng. If you don't have the peng energy, you are too soft. Peng/lu/ji/ an are just the variation of peng: up/down, forward/backward, and left/right.

**YY:** Does this mean there are two



**Bend Back and Strike Shoulder.** definitions of peng? One is the upward direction of the four side energy, while the other is a broader concept, the expanding energy concept?

**FZQ:** It is OK to differentiate; to give two definitions. One is the upward direction of the four-sided energy (peng/lu/ji/an), the other is yi(4) qi(4) gu(3)dang(4). [Gudang has a very subtle meaning. Here it is used to describe the outward expansion/movement/vibration of yi and qi.]

Every movement is guided by yi and qi movement. If you don't have yi qi gudang, you collapse. Even if your limbs do not move, you need to have yi and qi. When your intention arrives, your qi will arrive. Movement will follow naturally and your force will

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arrive.

**YY:** We know there are solo and two person practices of peng/lu/ji/an in your curriculum. How do people practice cai/lie/zhou/kao?

**FZQ:** Peng/lu/ji/an are the four sides. Cai/lie/zhou/kao are the four corners. Together, they are called the "eight forces." Cai means pluck. Cai is very close to lu.

Lie is a quick joint locking technique. It also means "surprise". Lie is a quick release which startles your opponent [both physically and mentally]. Sometimes, without joint locking, it can also be called lie energy if you startle the opponent.

Zhou means elbow. The elbow doesn't have to touch the opponent when you apply this energy [for example, zhou energy can be expressed through the forearm], as long as your zhou energy arrives there. Zhou energy can be expressed in any direction.

Kao basically means touch. It is the core energy expressed in cai/lie/zhou/kao, just as peng is the core energy in peng/lu/ji/an. Whenever and wherever you touch, you are kao-ing.

**YY:** Can you say kao basically means shoulder strike?

**FZQ:** Most of the time people talk about the shoulder kao. It can also mean elbow kao, fist kao, knee kao, hip kao, or head kao.

**YY:** Can we say cai/lie/zhou/kao is overall quicker than peng/lu/ji/an?

**FZQ:** We cannot only talk about speed, which specifically refers to lie [split]. Peng/lu/ji/an are relatively longer forces. Cai/lie/zhou/kao are relatively shorter forces [inch force]. Cai/lie/jou/kao are explosive.

It is said: Yuan(3) quan(2) zhong(1) zhou(3) tie(1) shen(1) kao(4) [Use fist when the opponent is far away, use elbow at a medium distance, and use kao when touching]. So we call it short force.