

DAVID GRANTHAM
DR. YANG, JWING-MING

Tai Chi Push Hands

THE MARTIAL FOUNDATION OF TAI CHI CHUAN



Master Yang is one of the people who have “made the greatest impact on martial arts in the last 100 years.”

—*Inside Kung-Fu* magazine

PUSH HANDS IS WHAT MAKES YOUR TAI CHI PRACTICE A TRUE LIVING ART

Tai chi (taiji) push hands practice is necessary for tai chi practitioners who wish to make their art come alive. Push hands practice requires two people engaging in a variety of “light touch” stationary and moving routines. Practicing these movements allows practitioners to develop tai chi’s sensing, listening, and yielding skills. Combined, these skills are the first step for developing tai chi as a martial art.

“Tai chi chuan (taijiquan) was created based on the martial applications, which were used for self-defense. Every movement of tai chi chuan has its unique martial purpose.” — Dr. Yang

The *Dao De Jing* classic reminds us that in order to know ourselves, we must first know others (our opponents).

By developing tai chi push hands skills, we can begin to cultivate a profound sense of feeling of our body and mind. These skills can help us to better control our body, balance, health, perseverance, compassion, and overall spirit.

In this book, you will learn

- The theory of tai chi push hands
- Tai chi qigong foundation practice
- Tai chi jing (power) practice
- Two-person stationary push hands practice
- Two-person moving push hands practice
- Tai chi rollback-and-press push hands practice
- International standard push hands routine
- Two-person free style push hands
- Martial applications in push hands practice

Tai chi offers us a lifetime of learning and progress toward a deeper understanding of ourselves and our role in nature.



Yang, Jwing-Ming, PhD is a world-renowned author, scholar, and teacher. He has been involved in Chinese martial arts since 1961. Dr. Yang’s writing and teaching include the subjects of kung fu, tai chi chuan, and meditation, and he is a leading authority on qigong. Dr. Yang is the author of over 35 books and 80 videos. Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming resides in Miranda, California.



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DAVID GRANTHAM
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Tai Chi Push Hands

THE MARTIAL FOUNDATION OF TAI CHI CHUAN

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Foreword

Dr. Yang Jwing-Ming has been a person of great consequence in the world of Chinese martial arts for some decades. In order to pass on his considerable knowledge and skills, he established original schools in the U.S. and in other countries, and later he founded a classic mountain retreat center, and those unique institutions have provided platforms for matchless in-person teaching. His extensive writings and videos have reached practitioners world-wide who otherwise would not have any opportunity for study with this masterful instructor. I am one of countless practitioners and teachers whose paths have been well influenced by our interactions with Dr. Yang and by his publications.

Mr. Grantham again brings his training and experiences to this latest publication within the continuing body of YMAA materials. One looks forward to more from him in the future.

Teachers of pushing hands recognize that one of the most challenging tasks in giving directions is to find the right words not only to help students realize what it is that they need to do, but also to explain the reasons why it needs to be part of their studies. When such instruction is conveyed in the form of written words rather than in live interaction, it is even more essential that the information should be perfectly stated, clear, and well-ordered. Dr. Yang and Mr. Grantham have collaborated successfully to meet those requirements.

This book will be a useful resource to taijiquan players at all levels of pushing hands experience. It is a welcome reference for teachers looking for solid material. And it can be an inspiration to practitioners who aspire to excellence in taijiquan and who wish for a kind of manual that has accessible and usable information on what to do and how to do it.

Pat Rice

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August 2020

Foreword

To move continuously without breaking is a characteristic of taijiquan. Even when outwardly visible movement pauses, intention continues and unifies the practice. Over the hundreds of years of taijiquan history, one can see the ebb and flow of the art itself through the literary contributions of masters and enthusiasts. Especially during the era of the internet, an abundance of publications, videos, blogs, and discussion groups provide a flood of information. Some repeat the lessons of earlier generations, others postulate new theories. We truly stand on the shoulders of giants and must respect tradition as we make progress. Following the rule of yin and yang, we absorb existing information, adhere to the principles, and bring forth our ideas. These are also the skills of push hands, the embodiment of the taijiquan theories.

Mr. David Grantham and Dr. Yang Jwing-Ming have written a new book on taiji push hands, which presents a great deal of valuable information for practitioners of all levels. Published in a time of pandemic quarantine when the partner work vital to the study of taijiquan is largely unavailable, this book provides a chance to deeply explore these skills in preparation for partner training. As in their 2010 work *Tai Chi Ball Qigong*, this new offering provides the perspectives of two generations. Both books keep the traditions relevant and fresh while serving as models for the next generations.

It is my honor and pleasure to write this foreword. I wish the authors continued success, and I look forward to their next endeavor!

Nick Gracenin

DC Tai Chi

Washington, DC

August 2020

Preface

For many years, taijiquan has been recognized as an effective method of training the mind and body for a healthy lifestyle. Countless studies demonstrate the various benefits of practicing taijiquan: balance, lowering blood pressure, strengthening of heart and muscle tissue, relieving stress, increasing concentration, and even possibly reversing the signs of aging. It is clear why the popularity of taijiquan has increased.

However, this is only one part of the full benefit of taijiquan. The deeper meaning of taijiquan is in the benefits of the yang side of the training, the fighting art. This book provides the means to begin a quest into seeking this side of the art. We provide theory and exercises to increase the awareness of the mind and body for pushing hands. Keep in mind that there are many styles of taijiquan training and this book can only offer the knowledge and training the authors have experienced through Yang-style taijiquan. Nevertheless, we think that this book along with the many taijiquan DVDs available at YMAA Publication Center, in addition to attending various pushing hands seminars, will assist you in your exploration of many unanswered questions. Our vision is that this information will be used to increase the skill level of the Yang side of taijiquan. With this knowledge, taijiquan will once again prosper and grow further in popularity.

David Grantham

Preface

Taijiquan practice has become very popular since 1960 around the world. Taijiquan not only brings a practitioner a peaceful and relaxed mind and body but can also enhance the body's qi circulation. Qi's circulation has been well known in Chinese medicine as a crucial key to health and longevity. It has been proven that taijiquan practice is able to ease blood pressure, heal some level of arthritis, help elders improve their balance, and treat many forms of spinal illness.

However, due to the emphasis on the health benefits of taijiquan practice, the most important essence of taijiquan, the martial foundation, has been widely ignored. Though taijiquan practice has become popular, it also has become shallow. Taijiquan was created based on the martial applications, which were used for self-defense. Every movement of taijiquan has its unique martial purpose. Without this martial root, taijiquan practice will be just like a form of dancing, without deep meaning and feeling.

Traditionally, after taijiquan practitioners completed learning the taijiquan sequence, they would step into pushing hands practice. From pushing hands practice, a practitioner will be able to sense and exchange qi and feeling with a partner. This is a crucial key and bridge to lead a taijiquan beginner into the path of application and defense training.

In this book, with co-author Mr. David Grantham, we introduce this pushing hands art to those who are interested in pursuing a deeper understanding of and feeling for taijiquan practice. I hope this book and related DVDs will encourage taijiquan practitioners to search for deeper aspects of taijiquan practice.

Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming 楊俊敏博士
YMAA CA Retreat Center

How to Use This Book

There are so many people practicing taijiquan in the world today; however, very few of them really comprehend the meaning of taijiquan. Taijiquan is a martial art style developed in a Chinese Daoist monastery located in Wudang Mountain (武当山), Hubei Province (湖北省) during the Song Dynasty (AD 960–1279) (宋朝). The monks developed this martial system for the following important purposes:

1. To develop a high level of self-discipline through martial arts training. It requires much self-discipline to reach a high level of martial skills. Monks needed this self-discipline to develop and cultivate their spirit to a higher level to understand the meaning of life. It has been understood that spiritual evolution can be achieved only by conquering the self. Without this conquest, spiritual development will be shallow.

2. To reach spiritual enlightenment. One of the main goals for Daoist spiritual cultivation is to reopen the third eye to reach enlightenment. Martial arts training provided the tools required to reach this goal. This is because in order to reach a high level of martial arts skills, you need a high level of mental focus and qi cultivation. These two elements are the crucial keys to reopen the third eye.

3. To attain health and longevity. The side benefit of the mental and physical training of martial arts is a healthy and long life. When monks lived in remote mountain areas, the emotional disturbances were fewer, the air and the water were fresh, and the lifestyle was simpler. Under this healthy environment, the monks were able to train and to develop a peaceful, calm, and relaxed mind and body.

4. To develop self-defense capabilities. The capability of self-defense was important when monks traveled from one place to another because there were so many bandits around the country.

Today, the main purposes of most taijiquan practitioners are:

1. For relaxation and peaceful mind. This is especially important in today's chaotic society. In the modern world, very few people have a peaceful and relaxed mind. Taijiquan provides a way to reach this goal.

2. For health and longevity. Many people practice taijiquan today simply because it is able to heal many diseases such as high blood pressure, asthma, spinal problems, arthritis, and breathing difficulties. Many others practice taijiquan because they are able to prevent sickness and it offers them a chance for a longer, happier life.

Unfortunately, taijiquan as a means to spiritual enlightenment and martial defensive capability has been widely ignored in today's practice. This implies that the level of taijiquan training has also become shallow. Worst of all, the art has lost its original root and essence.

In order to reach to a high level of feeling and spiritual cultivation, we need to trace back taijiquan's root and essence, its martial training, discipline, and meaning. Without these, the forms practiced are just like a routine of relaxed dancing. If that is all it is allowed to be, then those interested in relaxation may just create a relaxed dancing pattern for themselves. There is no need for a teacher.

However, if you wish to feel and understand the meaning of each traditional movement, then you need a qualified and experienced teacher. After all, to reach a high level of martial defense capability, a teacher must know the theory and have good skills of taijiquan fighting capability. Furthermore, they will also need many years of experience through teaching and practice. A qualified teacher is a crucial key for entering the profound depth of this art.

The information in this book is for those who wish to deepen their taijiquan skills. It is a guide for you to train pushing hands and enhance your knowledge of pushing hands theory. Most of the exercises in this book are also found on the various taijiquan DVDs available at YMAA Publication Center (www.ymaa.com). DVD references are noted in the text as appropriate. Keep in mind that not all exercises are found in the DVDs, and some exercises have changed, or evolved, from the time the DVDs were made. As such, it is important to find an instructor or participate in seminars to help you understand how and why these exercises have evolved.

You will also find various references to the theories behind many of the exercises throughout the book. We cannot emphasize enough the importance of studying the theories of taiji pushing hands. Many of the exercises were created by masters who spent countless hours pondering their taijiquan training. This knowledge will help you understand the reasons behind the exercises and provide you with a deeper sense of taijiquan itself. Once you are ready to practice the exercises, begin with the foundational movements of training. As with all martial training, you must develop these fundamental skills before moving on to the two-person skill set. These basic exercises will help develop the mind and body in preparation for encountering your opponent. Do not take these exercises lightly and do not skip them. Proper fundamental training protects against injury and provides the foundation for deeper training. Too many people attempt to rush training and as a result find they were not properly prepared for the next step.

Once you have trained the basics, you will need to have various partners to further train the two-person exercises. It is always a good idea to train with as many people as possible. Training with people of different heights, length of limbs, and varied reactions will enhance your skills. Once again, do not rush the exercises; this is your time to train and enhance your skills. Throughout this phase, you will see the difference in body movements, breathing, mental intent, and qi flow. Your spirit will be lifted. Strength will be less of a factor as sense of awareness increases.

As you pass through the various exercises you may find it necessary to go back to previous exercises and theories to further your knowledge, and we recommend you do so. Finally, realize the information in this book is only one tool for you to train your skills. It is solely based upon the knowledge and experience the authors have gained through their years of training. There are endless amounts of other training tools out there to explore. It is up to you how far and deep you wish to train, and only you can decide which information is important to your life and how hard you will train to achieve your goals.

Chapter 1: Theory of Taiji Pushing Hands

1.1 Introduction

Taiji pushing hands theory is deep and wide and covers many related subjects. With this in mind, it is assumed that you already have a full understanding of certain concepts such as the differences in the definition of taiji and taijiquan. You should also have full understanding of the Thirteen Postures of taijiquan as well as the training theories of qigong. The basic concept of taiji pushing hands is to master the skills of eight basic jing patterns and the Five Steppings (ba men wu bu, 八門五步). Once you have learned and mastered these skills, you will be able to perform pushing hands actions effectively and eventually you will be able to develop your skills of freestyle sparring. Taijiquan practitioners without the knowledge or training in these basic concepts will have lost the taijiquan training essence and their training will remain shallow. It is similar to building a house without first creating a strong foundation. Without a proper base anything built on top of it will eventually crumble. With this in mind, we highly recommend you refer to the various books related to taijiquan at YMAA Publication Center before beginning your pushing hands training.

In the following sections we will first discuss the basic theories of taijiquan pushing hands training. We will then briefly highlight a few basics of rooting and centering. These simple concepts are necessary for becoming proficient in taijiquan pushing hands but are often overlooked. Next we will explore the relationships between yin-yang and taijiquan pushing hands. One should also be aware of substantial and insubstantial actions in taijiquan pushing hands training. Finally, a practitioner must also understand the six turning secrets. These six key training secrets will provide the practitioner with the knowledge of how to transfer their energy back and forth between yin and yang. It is important to know these methods of exchanging so you can comfortably change the movements involved in your interaction and gain control of your opponent.

1.2 About Pushing Hands

When discussing the concept of pushing hands we often envision two individuals engaging in an exercise where one is attempting to find the other's center of gravity (i.e., physical center) and push them off balance. In some cases, the tendencies of aggressive behavior evolve into a competitive interaction between the two individuals, and unfortunately the essence of taiji pushing hands becomes lost, with one person winning the match through use of force. Pushing hands practice involves the application of taijiquan theory and basic movements into matching actions with a partner. To further understand the nature of taiji pushing hands we will explore a few theories written by taijiquan masters.

Taijiquan uses pushing hands training to practice the applications. Learning pushing hands means learning feeling jing. When there is feeling jing, then understanding jing is not difficult. Therefore, *The Total Thesis (of Taijiquan)* said: "from understanding jing then gradually reach the spiritual enlightenment." There is no doubt that this sentence is rooted in (built upon) pushing hands. Peng (i.e., wardoff), lü (i.e., rollback), ji (i.e., press), and an (i.e., push), four (jing) patterns are the stationary pushing hands of adhering, connecting, attaching, and following which give up self and follow the opponent.¹

太極拳以練習推手為致用，學推手則即是學覺勁，有覺勁則懂勁便不難矣。故總論所謂由懂勁而階及神明，此言即根於推手無疑矣。棚、掇、擠、按四式即黏、連、貼、隨舍己從人之定步推手。

Master Yang, Cheng-Fu (楊澄甫) illustrates here that the progression of understanding taijiquan applications is through pushing hands training. Through it you are able to build your skills of feeling. You will also note the emphasis on giving up oneself and following the opponent. By doing so, you will learn to understand your opponent's intention and lead them into emptiness. These four basic jing (勁) patterns of stationary pushing hands are the main essence of learning this.

To give up myself and follow the opponent is to abandon my idea and follow the opponent's movements. This is the most difficult thing (i.e., training) in taijiquan. Because when two persons are exchanging hands (i.e., combating), the conception of winning and losing is serious. (In this case) the opponent and I will not endure each other, not even mentioning that when mutually (we) are attacking each other or mutually stalemating with each other and (you) are asked to give up your right (of trying to win in a resisting competition). What is called to give up yourself and follow the opponent is not only explained from the words. In our Dao (i.e., the Dao of taijiquan), its hidden meaning is extremely

profound. (In order to understand them and apply them in action) the practitioner must put a gongfu in the four words: solely focus on cultivating the human nature.²

捨己從人，是捨棄自己的主張，而依從他人動作。在太極拳中，為最難能之事。因兩人在交手之時，勝負之觀念重，彼我決不相容，何況互相攻擊，或在相持之中，而棄其權利。所謂捨己從人，不僅作字面解釋而矣。在吾道中，其寓意至深。學者當於惟務養性，四字下功夫。

“Four words” means wardoff, rollback, press, and push. From this Wu-style taijiquan secret, we can see that the most profound and difficult part of taiji pushing hands is to release the ego and learn to be aware of incoming forces. We tend to be competitive in nature and at times we allow the emotional bond of the ego and the need to win to control our actions, leading to mutual resistance in a pushing hands engagement. When you are able to let go of your emotion and be patient, you can then allow yourself to follow and adhere to your opponent’s will. By learning to cultivate your emotional mind you will learn to manipulate your opponent’s intent and lead them to emptiness.

[Leading]: “(When) lead (the coming force) to enter the emptiness, unite and then immediately emit,” “(Use) four ounces to repel one thousand pounds.” Unification means repelling. If (one) can comprehend this word, (then) he is the one born to wisdom.³

《引》：“引進落空合即出”，“四兩撥千斤”，合即撥也，此字能悟，真夙慧者也。

Master Wǔ, Cheng-Qing (武澄清) further expands upon the concept of leading your opponent into emptiness. Four ounces to repel one thousand pounds is a term common to taijiquan practices and pushing hands training. This basic concept relates to the necessity of using the skills of listening, adhering, and following rather than resisting when engaging your opponent. This process of leading involves the development of unification between you and your opponent’s mental intent. Once you understand this you will further understand the depths of taiji pushing hands.

The classic says: “Although in techniques, there are many side doors (i.e., other martial arts styles), after all, it is nothing more than the strong beating the weak.” Also says: “Investigate (consider) the saying of four ounces repel one thousand pounds. It is apparent that this cannot be accomplished by strength.” That the

strong beating the weak is due to the pre-birth natural capability that is born with it. It (the capability) is not obtained through learning. What is called “using the four ounces to repel one thousand pounds” is actually matching the theory of using the balance (i.e., leverage). It does not matter the lightness or the heaviness of the body, the large or the small of the force, can shift the opponent’s weighting center, and (finally) move his entire body. Therefore, the reason that the movements of taijiquan are different from other (martial) techniques is because they do not defeat the opponent with force. Furthermore, (it) can not only strengthen the tendons, keep the bones healthy, and harmonize the qi and blood, but also be used to cultivate (i.e., harmonize) the body and (mental) mind, keep away from sickness and extend the life. (It) is a marvelous Dao of post-heaven body cultivation.⁴

經云：“斯技旁門甚多，概不外有力打無力。”又曰：“查四兩撥千斤之句，顯非力勝。”夫有力打無力，斯乃先天自然之能，生而知之。非學而後能之。所謂四兩撥千斤者，實則合乎權衡之理。無論體之輕重，力之大小，能在動之間，移其重心，使之全身牽動。故太極拳之動作，所以異於他技者，非務以力勝人也。推而進之，不惟強筋健骨，調和氣血，而自能修養身心，卻病延年，為後天養身之妙道焉。

Once again the author reminds us that taijiquan is an art that emphasizes softness in actions. It is different in that it doesn’t rely on the stiffness of blocking but instead focuses on matching your opponent through the use of listening and following. The whole body and mind are relaxed and centered. Using this leverage, the individual can move the opponent completely without force.

Ancient people said: “If (one is) able to lead (the coming force) into emptiness, (one) can (use) the four ounces to repel one thousand pounds; if (one is) unable to lead (the coming force) into the emptiness, (one) is unable to (use) the four ounces to repel one thousand pounds.” This saying is quite correct and conclusive. The beginners are unable to comprehend (this saying). I would like to add a few sentences to explain this. (This will) allow those practitioners who have strong will to learn these techniques (i.e., taijiquan) and be able to follow the opponent and have progress daily.⁵

昔人云，能引進落空，能四兩撥千斤；不能引進落空，不能四兩撥千斤。語甚賅括。初學末由領悟，予加數語以解之；俾有志斯技者，得以從人，庶日進有功矣。

Master Li, Yi-She (李亦畬) also says that one should understand the concept of using four ounces to repel one thousand pounds of force. Once again, the foundation of taijiquan pushing hands is to lead an incoming force into emptiness. This is done through the skills of listening and following. He goes on to say that the skills of listening and following are necessary for knowing your opponent, which means discerning his intentions and capabilities. Listening and following are also needed to know yourself, which means knowing how to harmoniously coordinate your mind, body, and spirit. You will find the above selection in the book, *Tai Chi Secrets of the Wú and Li Styles*, by Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming available at YMAA Publication Center.

1.3 Taiji Pushing Hands Training Contents

Taiji pushing hands is commonly called “communication” or “question and answer” (wenda, 問答) in taijiquan practice. When you begin taiji pushing hands practice, you are exchanging your mental intent, skills, and qi with your opponent. You are applying your yin and yang sides of taijiquan training into actions with a partner. As such, the feeling (or “listening” in taijiquan) is extremely important. First you must have listening, and then you are able to understand. From understanding, you are able to attach, stick, follow, and connect. These are the crucial keys of taijiquan techniques. In fact, it is from these basic keys that the taijiquan martial skills can be applied.

From these basic practices, you learn how to master the fundamental structure of taijiquan: Thirteen Postures (十三勢). If you are not familiar with these postures and cannot apply them in action, your taijiquan will have lost its essence and should not be called taijiquan.

The contents of taiji pushing hands can be listed as:

1. **Taiji Qigong:** learn how to use the mind to lead the qi for action.
2. **Balance and Rooting:** learn how to keep yourself at the centered, balanced, and rooted position both when stationary and when stepping.
3. **Stationary Single Pushing Hands:** the first step to teach a beginner how to listen, yield, follow, lead, and neutralize. From single pushing hands, you build a firm foundation of double pushing hands.
4. **Stationary Double Pushing Hands:** also called “peng, lü, ji, an” (棚、掇、擠、按). A drill teaches you how to use both hands to apply the first four basic structures of taijiquan. The four basic structures are wardoff (peng, 棚), rollback (lü, 掇), press (ji, 擠), and push (an, 按).
5. **Moving Single Pushing Hands:** learn how to step while applying the basic four postures.

6. Moving Double Pushing Hands: learn how to step while using both hands to apply the basic four postures.

7. Rollback and Press: also commonly called “cai, lie, zhou, kao” (採、捩、肘、靠) and means pluck, split, elbow, and bump. Rollback includes small rollback (xiao lü, 小攏) and large rollback (da lü, 大攏). This practice focuses on mastering the second four of the taijiquan Thirteen Postures.

8. Freestyle Pushing Hands. Once you are able to apply the eight basic jing patterns with smooth and skillful coordination with stepping, then you progress to freestyle pushing hands. Freestyle practice provides a firm foundation for sparring and setups for kicking, striking, wrestling, and qin na.

From the fundamental practice of single pushing hands, advancing into double pushing hands, (you learn) to listen, understand, advance forward, retreat backward, beware of the left, and look to the right. When (you) have reached a natural reactive stage of using the yi without the yi, then (you) may enter the practice of moving pushing hands. (However, you should know that) in moving pushing hands training, the practice of advance forward, retreat backward, beware of the left, look to the right, and central equilibrium also start from single pushing hands. Its main goal is to train central equilibrium so it can harmonize the criteria of advance forward, retreat backward, beware of the left, look to the right. After the hands, the eyes, the body movements, the techniques, and the stepping can be coordinated and harmonized with each other, then (you can) enter the practice of double pushing hands, large rollback, and small rollback of stepping moving pushing hands. Afterward, (you can) enter the practice of taijiquan sparring. From the practice of sparring, (you) should continue to search deeper for profound understanding, experience, and applications. After a long period of practice, the moving of the Five Steppings can be carried out as you wish.

由定步單推手晉為雙推手之基本練習中，而聽、而懂，而進、而退、而顧、而盼。在達乎意不為意之自然反應後，即能步入動步推手練習。動步之進、退、顧、盼、與中定亦由單推手始。其主要目的在訓練行步中之中定與步伐之進、退、顧、盼也。在手、眼、身、法、步能合諧調配得宜後，即步入雙推手與大、小攏之動步練習。之後，即可步入太極散手之練習。在由散手對練中去尋求更深之瞭解、經驗、與應用。久而久之，五步之行隨心所欲也。

After you have mastered all of the basic skills for your body's strategic actions and are familiar with the techniques of applying the eight basic jing patterns in stationary pushing hands, start your pushing hands training while moving. Without mastering these

Chapter 4: Single/Double Pushing Hands Training

4.1 Introduction

In the following section we introduce both the single and double pushing hands exercises. There are solo exercises and two-person exercises, and these actions are done while in the stationary position, rocking, and stepping.

4.2 Stationary Single Pushing Hands

The first exercises are the single stationary pushing hands exercises. Practice in the ma bu position followed by the rocking position. Initially practice solo then practice with a partner. Each time you are performing the neutralizations solo, imagine an individual is attempting to find your center by attaching to your wrist and applying a force in toward you. When practicing the neutralizations with a partner, the individual who is pushing will initially apply their force in toward the center of the partner's body. This allows the opposing person the chance to choose which neutralization to apply. As each individual advances in skill, the incoming force may be applied in different directions. The practice of leading the neutralization in the direction of the incoming force develops listening jing (ting jing, 聽勁) skills. In order to properly apply each technique it is important to first train your body movements correctly before applying them to a partner.

We will introduce four possible neutralizations. For each of these neutralizations, the first movement necessary for neutralizing the incoming force is to create the wardoff (peng, 棚) posture throughout your body. This structure has been emphasized throughout numerous taiji classics. To create the posture, you must round out the back while closing the chest and arcing the arms. The tailbone is slightly tucked under while the head is in the upright position. For the push hands movement, the arm your opponent is attacking will be initially in a horizontal position approximately chest height. When performed correctly, your pectoral muscle should remain fairly loose. This posture is often the most neglected initial movement and necessary for you to evade your partner's attempt to find your center and thus control you.

1. Horizontal Neutralization (Shui Ping Hua, 水平化)

The first neutralization in single push hands training is the horizontal neutralization.



To begin this exercise, stand in the ma bu position with your right arm approximately chest height and parallel to the ground. The right wrist is vertically aligned with your sternum.



To initiate the neutralization, create the wardoff (peng, 棚) posture as described earlier. Inhale and twist your body to the right until the right wrist is vertically aligned with your right shoulder. Now the incoming force is considered to be neutralized.



Lower the right elbow. Your palm will be facing you. Turn over your palm so it faces away from you. Begin to exhale as you twist your body back to the forward facing position.



The right arm will begin to extend while your right hand begins to apply the push (an, 按) action.

Your chest opens as this movement is occurring. Once your hand returns to the original position, raise the right elbow and repeat the neutralization as before. Continue to practice this movement back and forth until you are able to perform the exercise continuously with the proper body movements. Once you are able to do so, practice this exercise using the left hand.

Now that you are comfortable with the movement, practice the movement with your training partner. Stand facing each other in the ma bu stance.



Bring your right arm up to the initial position. Your partner places their hand on your wrist and elbow.



Your partner applies push to your body. You neutralize the force by applying peng, by twisting your body to your right and horizontally neutralizing the action. Next, you lower your elbow.



Rotate your palm so that it is placed on your partner's wrist and apply push back toward their body.

Your partner in turn uses the same actions of peng, horizontally neutralizing and pushing back toward you. Repeat this continuous action back and forth until you both are able to perform it smoothly and continuously, then repeat the exercise for the left arm.

The next step is to practice this neutralization using the rocking motion. Although it will be described with a partner here, you may practice this without a partner first if you wish.



Begin this exercise by standing in the mountain climbing stance (deng shan bu, 登山步) with your right leg forward. Place your right arm in front of your body parallel to the ground just as you did in the stationary exercise. Your partner places their hand on your wrist.



To return to the original position, lower the right elbow while rotating the right palm over to face away from you. Begin to exhale while simultaneously shifting your weight forward into the mountain climbing stance (deng shan bu, 登山步) and twisting the waist back to the facing forward position. The right arm will extend, with the hand once again applying the push (an, 按) or pushing action and your chest will begin to open up.

Your opponent applies push to your wrist. In this situation you apply two actions, yielding and neutralizing. First create the wardoff (peng, 棚) structure. Inhale and begin to twist the waist to the right while shifting your weight back into the four-six stance (si liu bu, 四六步). You can now see the yielding motion is the shifting of the weight while the neutralization is the twisting of your body. The end of this neutralization occurs when the right hand is vertically aligned with your right shoulder and you are in the four-six stance (si liu bu, 四六步).

Once the hand reaches the original position, return to the original posture and repeat the exercise. Continue to practice this exercise until you are able to perform the actions continuously with the proper body movements. This exercise should also be practiced using the left leg forward.

2. Downward Neutralization (Xia Hua, 下化)

The next exercises are known as downward neutralization. This neutralization occurs on the same side as the horizontal neutralization.



To begin this exercise, stand in ma bu with your right hand approximately chest height, arm parallel to the ground.



Inhale while creating the wardoff (peng, 棚) posture. Twist your body to the right and rotate your right forearm, turning the right hand palm up to create a coiling action to roll over an incoming force. This action will cause your elbow to lower itself toward your body. The end of the neutralization occurs with the right hand now approximately waist height and vertically aligned with the right shoulder. The right elbow will be approximately one fist's distance from your body and the right arm will be parallel to the ground.



Rotate the hand, palm facing away from your body, and begin to twist back to the forward facing position while exhaling. The chest will now open while you apply an with the right hand.

Once your hand has reached the original position, raise the right elbow till the right arm is parallel to the ground. Rotate the palm to face back toward you and repeat the downward neutralization. Continue this exercise until you are able to do the exercise continuously with the proper body movements. Once you have completed this exercise, repeat the action using the left hand.

Next, practice downward neutralization, in the ma bu position, with your partner.



Downward neutralization with a partner.

The actions are the same as solo except that now you are able to feel your partner's incoming force; neutralize it, and return the pushing action into your partner so they may also neutralize the incoming force.

The next step is to practice downward neutralization while rocking. You may want to practice this exercise solo to familiarize yourself with the synchronization of the neutralization and rocking. Here we will describe the exercise with a partner.



To begin, stand in the mountain climbing stance (deng shan bu, 登山步) with the right leg forward. Your right arm should be parallel to the ground with the right hand approximately chest height.

As your partner applies push, inhale while first creating your wardoff (peng, 棚) posture. Twist the waist to the right while shifting the weight back into the four-six stance (si liu bu, 四六步). The right elbow drops down toward your body while the right hand coils over, palm facing up.

Appendix: Translation and Glossary of Chinese Terms

àn (按). Settle the wrist.

bá gēn (拔根). Pull the root upward.

bā mén (八門) Eight Doors. The eight basic jìng patterns of tàijíquán that handle eight corners of defense and offense.

bā mén wǔ bù (八門五步). Eight Doors and Five Steppings. Eight Doors mean the eight jìngs that are used for defense and offense. Five Steppings means five basic stepping movements in fighting.

bái hè (白鶴). White Crane. A southern style of Chinese martial arts.

bǎihuì (Gv-20) (百會). Hundred meetings. An acupuncture cavity located on the crown. It belongs to the governing vessel.

biàn jiǎo dù (變角度). Biàn means change. Jiǎo dù means angle. Change angle.

cǎi (採). Pluck. One of eight jìng patterns in the tàijíquán Thirteen Postures.

cǎi jìng (採勁). Pluck jìng. The power manifestation of cǎi.

cè huà (側化). Sideways neutralization.

chán jìng (纏勁). Coiling jìng.

chán shǒu liàn xí (纏手練習). Chán shǒu means coiling and sticking hands. Liàn xí means training or practice.

chán sī jìng (纏絲勁). Silk reeling jìng (Chén style). Similar to Yáng style's yīn-yáng symbol sticking hands.

cháng (長). Long.

chōng mài (衝脈). The thrusting vessel. One of the eight qì vessel in the body.

chuāng (窗). Window.

chuí zhí (垂直). Vertical.

dà (大). Large or big.

dǎ (打). Strike.

dǎ hǔ shì (打虎勢). Strike tiger posture.

dǎ huí jìng (打回勁). Striking returning jìng. The jìng is manifested in between the end of the opponent's attack and the retreat of the attack.

dà lǔ (大擺). Large rollback.

dǎ mèn jìng (打悶勁). Striking the oppressive jìng. The other name of borrowing jìng (jiè jìng, 借勁).

dà quān (大圈). Large circle.

dà zhōu tiān (大周天). Grand qì circulation.

dān liàn (單練). Solo training.

dān shǒu (單手). Single hand.

dān tuī shǒu (單推手). Single pushing hand.

dàzhūi (Gv-14) (大椎). Big vertebra. One of the acupuncture cavities. It belongs to governing vessel.

dēng shān bù (登山步). Mountain climbing stance. One of the basic stances of the Chinese martial arts.

dì chuāng (地窗). Ground window.

dì hù (地戶). Ground wicket.

diǎn xué (點穴). Cavity strike. Diǎn means to point and xué means cavity.

dìng bù (定步). Stationary.

dìng gēn (定根). To firm the root.

dòng bù (動步). Stepping.

duǎn (短). Short.

duì dǎ/sǎn dǎ (對打 / 散打). Sparring.

duó qiú (奪球). Capture the ball.

fā jìng (發勁). Emitting jìng.

fàn lì (範例). Example.

fáng shāng (防傷). Injury prevention.

fū suǐ xī (膚髓息). Skin-marrow breathing. A qìgōng grand circulation practice.

Húběi Sheng (湖北省). A province in China.

gōng jiàn bù (弓箭步). Bow and arrow stance. One of the basic stances in the Chinese martial arts. It is also called **dēng shān bù** (登上步).

gǒng shǒu (拱手). Arcing the arms. Also commonly used for greeting.

hā (哈). The sound of manifesting power.

hǎi dǐ (海底). Sea bottom. Implies perineum.

hēng (哼). The sound of storing power.

hǔ zhǎo (虎爪). Tiger claw. A style of Chinese martial arts.

huà (化). Neutralize.

huā quán xiù tuǐ (花拳繡腿). Flower fist and brocade leg. Implies that the martial arts performed are not powerful and cannot be used in a real fight.

huàn biān (換邊). Change directions or change side.

huái zhōng bào yuè (懷中抱月). Embracing the moon on the chest. Name of a form of qìgōng practice.

huìyīn (Co-1) (會陰). Meet yīn. Perineum. Name of an acupuncture cavity. It belongs to the conceptional vessel.

hùn hé (混合). Mix together.

huǒ (火). Fire.

huó bù (活步). Alive stepping.

- jǐ** (擠). Squeeze or press.
- jī běn** (基本). Basic or fundamental.
- jī běn jìng** (基本勁). Basic jìngs.
- jǐ huà** (擠化). Press and neutralize.
- jǐ jìng** (擠勁). Squeeze or press jìng.
- jiǎo dù gǎn** (角度感). Sense of angling.
- jiè jìng** (借勁). Borrowing jìng. Borrowing jìng is known as the ability to sense an opponent's attacking jìng and borrow the energy before it was manifested.
- jiè shào** (介紹). Introduction.
- jīn** (金). Metal.
- jìng** (勁). Power manifestation.
- jìng gōng** (勁功). Gōngfū of jìng's manifestation.
- jīng shén** (精神). The spirit of vitality.
- jiūwěi** (Co-15) (鳩尾). Wild pigeon's tail. Name of an acupuncture cavity. It belongs to the conception vessel.
- jù gǎn** (距感). Sense of distance.
- kaò** (靠). Bump.
- Kaō, Taó** (高濤). Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming's tàijíquán master.
- kōng mén** (空門). Empty door. The door that allows you to attack.
- kuà** (胯). Hip joint area.
- lán què wěi** (攔雀尾). Grasp Sparrows Tail. Name of a tàijíquán posture.
- laógōng** (P-8) (勞宮). Labor's palace. Name of an acupuncture cavity, located at the center of the palms and belonging to the pericardium primary qì channel (xīn bāo luò jīng, 心包絡經).
- lǐ lùn** (理論). Theory.
- Lǐ, Yì-Shē** (AD 1832–1892) (李亦畬). A famous tàijíquán master during the Qīng Dynasty (AD 1644–1911) (清朝).
- lián huán jìng** (連環勁). Linking jìng. Jìng is manifested continuously.
- liàn xí** (練習). Practice or train.
- liè** (捌). Split.
- liè jìng** (捌勁). Split jìng.
- liù gōng** (六弓). Six bows, meaning four limbs (four bows), spine, and chest that can be used to store power for manifestation.
- liù hé bā fǎ** (六合八法). A style of internal Chinese martial arts, also called water style. This style is a combination of tàijíquán, xíngyìquán, and bāguàzhǎng.
- liù zhuǎn jué** (六轉訣). Six turning secrets.
- láogōng xī** (勞宮息). Laogong breathing. A gland qì circulation qìgōng practice.
- lóng xíng** (龍形). Dragon shape. A style of Chinese martial arts.
- lǔ** (捭). Rollback.

lǔ/jī (擷 / 擠). Rollback/press.

lùn tuī shǒu (論推手). Discuss pushing hands.

luò (絡). Secondary channels that branch out from the main channels to the skin and every part of the body.

luó xuán jìng (螺旋勁). Spiraling jìng.

mǎ bù (馬步). Horse stance. One of the basic stances in the Chinese martial arts.

mìngmén (Gv-4) (命門). Life door. The name of an acupuncture cavity that belongs to the governing vessel.

mù (木). Wood.

ná (拿). This means qín ná (擒拿), which means to seize and control.

ná jìng (拿勁). Controlling jìng.

nèi hán (內含). Contents.

nèi kuà (內胯). Internal kuà. Kuà means the waist and hip joints area.

niǔ zhuǎn (扭轉). Twisting.

niǔ zhuǎn jìng (扭轉勁). Twisting jìng.

péng (棚). Wardoff.

péng jìng (棚勁). Wardoff jìng.

qián hòu dòng (前後動). Forward and backward movement. Means rocking.

qiǎng kōngmén (搶空門). Occupy empty door.

qiǎng zhōng mén (搶中門). Occupy central door.

qìgōng (氣功). Qì means energy and gōng means gōngfū. Qìgōng means the study or practice of energy.

qīmén (Li-14) (期門). Expectation's door. Name of an acupuncture cavity that belongs to the liver channel.

qín ná (擒拿). Seize and control.

ràng (讓). Yield.

sān cái shì (三才勢). Three power posture. A standing meditation posture of tài-jíquán qìgōng.

sān pán (三盤). Three sections of the body. The entire body can be divided into three sections: from the knees down, from the knees to xīnkǎn (心坎) (jūwěi, Co-15) (鳩尾), and from xinkan to the crown.

sàn shǒu duì liàn (散手對練). Tàijí fighting set.

shā dài (沙袋). Sand bag.

shàng huà (上化). Upward neutralization.

shàohǎi (H-3) (少海). Lesser sea. Name of an acupuncture cavity that belongs to the heart channel.

shè jiǎo (設角). Set up an angle.

shé xíng (蛇形). Snake shape. A style of Chinese martial arts.

shén (神). Spirit.

- shén xī** (神息). Spiritual breathing.
- shí sān shì** (十三勢). Thirteen Postures, foundation of tàijíquán.
- shuāi** (摔). Wrestling.
- shuāng liàn** (雙練). Two-person practice together.
- shuāng shǒu** (雙手). Two hands.
- shuāng tuī jìng** (雙推勁). Double push jìng.
- shuāng tuī shǒu** (雙推手). Double pushing hands.
- shuǐ** (水). Water.
- shuǐ píng** (水平). Horizontal.
- shuǐ píng huà** (水平化). Horizontal neutralization.
- sì liù bù** (四六步). Four-six stance. One of the basic stances in Chinese martial arts.
- sì xīn xī** (四心息). Four gates breathing. A martial arts grand circulation practice.
- Sòng** (AD 960–1279) (宋朝). A Chinese dynasty.
- sōng kuà** (鬆胯). Loosen up the hip area.
- sōng yāo** (鬆腰). Loosen up the waist area.
- suí jìng** (隨勁). Following jìng.
- suí qì** (髓氣). Marrow qì.
- tàijí jìng** (太極勁). Tàijí power manifestation.
- tàijí qiú qìgōng** (太極球氣功). Tàijí ball qìgōng.
- tàijí quān** (太極圈). Tàijí yīn-yáng symbol circle.
- tàijí tuī shǒu** (太極推手). Tàijí pushing hands.
- tàijí yīn-yáng quān** (太極陰陽圈). Tàijí yīn-yáng symbol circle.
- tàijíquán** (太極拳). Grand ultimate fist. One of the internal Chinese martial arts.
- tī** (踢). Kicking.
- tǐ xī** (體息). Body breathing. One of qìgōng's grand circulation practices.
- tiān chuāng** (天窗). Sky window.
- tiānjǐng** (TB-10) (天井). Heaven's well. One of the acupuncture cavities. It belongs to the triple burner channel (sān jiāo, 三焦).
- tiāntú** (Co-22) (天突). Heaven's prominence. One of the acupuncture cavities. It belongs to the conception vessel.
- tīng jìng** (聽勁). Listening jìng.
- tóng biān** (同邊). Same side.
- tǔ** (土). Earth.
- tuī lā** (推拉). Push and pull.
- wài kuà** (外胯). The external hip joint area.
- Wáng, Zōng-Yuè** (王宗岳). A famous tàijíquán master during the Qīng Dynasty (AD 1644–1911) (清朝).
- wèi qì** (衛氣). Guardian qì.
- wèn dá** (問答). Questions and answers.

- wǔ bù** (五步). Five strategic steppings in tàijíquán.
- wǔ xīn xī** (五心息). Five gates breathing. One of the grand circulation qìgōng practices of Chinese martial arts.
- wǔ xué** (武學). Martial scholarship.
- wǔ xué yìng yòng** (武學應用). Applications of martial scholarship.
- Wú, Gōng-Zǎo** (AD 1902–1983) (吳公藻). A well-known tàijíquán master at the beginning of the last century.
- Wūdāng** (武當). Name of a mountain located in China's Húběi Province (湖北省).
- wú jí** (無極). No extremity. This means no polarity, nothingness, or a tiny single point in space.
- Wǔ, Chéng-Qīng** (AD 1800–1884) (武澄清). A famous tàijíquán master during the Qīng Dynasty (AD 1644–1911) (清朝).
- Wǔ, Yǔ-Xiāng** (AD 1812–1880) (武禹襄). A famous tàijíquán master during the Qīng Dynasty (AD 1644–1911) (清朝).
- wǔ xíng** (五行). Five phases or five elements (i.e., metal, wood, water, fire, and earth).
- xǐ suǐ jīng** (洗髓經). Marrow/brain washing qìgōng.
- xià huà** (下化). Downward neutralization.
- xià pán** (下盤). Lower section of the body from hips or knees down to the feet.
- xià pán gōng** (下盤功). Training the lower section of the body.
- xiǎo** (小). Small.
- xiǎo lǚ** (小擺). Small rollback.
- xiǎo quān** (小圈). Small circle.
- xié fēi shì** (斜飛勢). Diagonal flying. A form of tàijíquán posture.
- xīn bāo luò jīng** (心包絡經). Pericardium primary qì channel.
- xīnkǎn** (心坎). Heart pit. A cavity for martial arts striking. It is called jiūwěi (Co-15) (鳩尾) in acupuncture.
- xū bù** (虛步). False stance or insubstantial stance.
- xū shí** (虛實). Insubstantial and substantial.
- xuán jī bù** (玄機步). Tricky stance. It means false stance (xū bù, 虛步).
- xùn liàn** (訓練). Train.
- yáng quān** (陽圈). Yáng symbol circle.
- yáng shén** (陽神). Yáng spirit. Spirit that is raised up by emotional stimulation.
- Yáng, Bān-Hóu** (AD 1837–1890) (楊班侯). A famous tàijíquán master during the Qīng Dynasty (AD 1644–1911) (清朝). He is also called Yáng, Yù (楊鈺).
- Yáng, Chéng-Fǔ** (AD 1883–1936) (楊澄甫). A famous tàijíquán master during the period at the end of the Qīng Dynasty (AD 1644–1911) (清朝) and the beginning of The Republic of China (中華民國).
- Yáng, Jwèng-Mǐng** (楊俊敏). One of the authors of this book.

- Yáng, Yù** (AD 1837–1890) (楊鈺). A famous tàijíquán master during the Qīng Dynasty (AD 1644–1911) (清朝). He is also called Yáng, Bān-Hóu (楊班侯).
- yì** (意). Wisdom mind or logical thinking.
- yì bān cuò wù** (一般錯誤). Common errors.
- yì jīn jīng** (易筋經). Muscle/tendon changing qìgōng.
- yǐn** (引). Lead.
- yīn quān** (陰圈). Yin symbol circle.
- yīn yáng** (陰陽). Two opposite positions of conditions or matters. Usually, yīn is translated as deficient and yang is translated as excess in Chinese medicine.
- yīn yáng quān** (陰陽圈). Yīn-yáng circle.
- yīn yáng zhǎn zhuǎn** (陰陽輾轉). Yīn-yáng circling.
- yīn-yáng huà** (陰 / 陽化). Yīn-yáng neutralization.
- yīnjiāo** (Co-7) (陰交). Yīn's junction. An acupuncture cavity that belongs to the conception vessel.
- yìntáng** (M-HN-3) (印堂). Seal hall. A miscellaneous cavity in Chinese acupuncture.
- yǒngquán** (K-1) (湧泉). Gushing spring. An acupuncture cavity that belongs to the kidney qì channel.
- yǒngquán xī** (湧泉息). Yǒngquán qì breathing.
- yǔ bàn tóng liàn** (與伴同練). Train with partners.
- yù nǚ chuān suō** (玉女穿梭). Fair Lady Weaves with Shuttle. A posture of tàijíquán.
- zhā gēn** (紮根). Build a firm root.
- zhān** (沾). Intercept or attach.
- zhān qiú** (沾球). Adhering to the ball.
- zhàn zhuāng** (站樁). Trained on posts. It means standing meditation qìgōng practice.
- Zhāng, Sān-Fēng** (AD 1247–?) (張三豐). Credited as the creator of tàijíquán during the Southern Sòng Dynasty (AD 1127–1279) (南宋).
- zhēn dān tián** (真丹田). Real dān tián. Located at the center of gravity (i.e., physical center).
- zhōng** (中). Medium.
- zhōng dìng** (中定). Central equilibrium. One of tàijíquán's five strategic steppings.
- zhōng mén** (中門). Central door. The shoulder-width space between two individuals facing each other.
- zhōng quān** (中圈). Medium circle.
- zhóu** (肘). Elbow.
- zhóu mǒ huà** (肘抹化). Elbow smearing neutralization.
- zhóu huà** (肘化). Elbow neutralization.
- zhóu shùn huà** (肘順化). Elbow following neutralization.
- zhōu tiān mài yùn gōng** (周天邁運功). Martial arts grand circulation.

zhuǎn quān (轉圈). Circling.

zhuō shàng zhǎn zhuǎn (桌上輾轉). Wrap coiling on the table.

zì wǒ liàn xí (自我練習). Self-practice.

zì yóu (自由). Free. It means freestyle in this book.

zhōng tǔ (中土). Refers to central earth, or central equilibrium.

zǒu bù (走步). Walking.

zuǒ lán què wěi (左攔雀尾). Grasp Sparrow's Tail—left. One of the tàijíquán forms.

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About the Authors

David Grantham

David Grantham was born on September 22, 1965, in Dorchester, Massachusetts, and raised in Weymouth, Massachusetts, from the age of three. At the age of eighteen, he attended Bridgewater State College to pursue his dream of aviation and currently is employed by United Airlines as a pilot based in New Jersey.

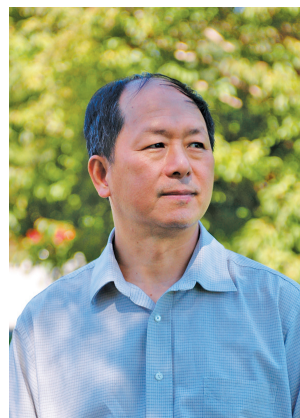
Mr. Grantham began his martial arts training at the age of twenty-four, studying hua yue tai chi (liuhebafaquan) as well as a two-person fighting form under the tutelage of instructor David Zucker. Mr. Zucker studied under the late Master John Chung Li. After training for one year with Mr. Zucker, Mr. Grantham was encouraged to further his knowledge of Chinese martial arts and it was recommended that he attend Yang's Martial Arts Association headquartered in Boston. He joined YMAA and started training the Shaolin curriculum. During his years of training at the school and attending seminars abroad, Mr. Grantham expanded his studies to include taijiquan and qigong. On January 28, 2000, he earned assistant instructor of chin na followed by the rank of chin na instructor on January 30, 2007. In 2008, Mr. Grantham earned his coach instructor position from YMAA president Nicholas Yang.

David Grantham has been training in martial arts, taijiquan, and qigong for over thirty years. He is the coauthor of the book *Tai Chi Ball Qigong* published in November of 2010. He continues to train the YMAA curriculum and currently teaches at the Hunterdon Health and Wellness Center in Clinton, New Jersey. David Grantham resides in Hunterdon County, New Jersey, with his wife, Jenifer, and two children, Jillian and Alexander.



Yang, Jwing-Ming, PhD (楊俊敏博士)

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



In thirteen years of study (1961–1974) under Master Cheng, Dr. Yang became an expert in the White Crane style of Chinese martial arts, which includes both the use of bare hands and various weapons, such as saber, staff, spear, trident, two short rods, and many others. With the same master he also studied White Crane qigong (氣功), qin na or chin na (擒拿), tui na (推拿), and dian xue massage (點穴按摩) and herbal treatment.

At sixteen, Dr. Yang began the study of Yang-style taijiquan (楊氏太極拳) under Master Kao Tao (高濤). He later continued his study of taijiquan under Master Li, Mao-Ching (李茂清). Master Li learned his taijiquan from the well-known Master Han, Ching-Tang (韓慶堂). From this further practice, Dr. Yang was able to master the taiji bare-hand sequence, pushing hands, the two-man fighting sequence, taiji sword, taiji saber, and taiji qigong.

When Dr. Yang was eighteen years old, he entered Tamkang College (淡江學院) in Taipei Xian to study physics. In college, he began the study of traditional Shaolin Long Fist (Changquan or Chang Chuan, 少林長拳) with Master Li, Mao-Ching at the Tamkang College Guoshu Club (淡江國術社), 1964–1968, and eventually became an assistant instructor under Master Li. In 1971, he completed his MS degree in physics at the National Taiwan University (台灣大學) and then served in the Chinese Air Force from 1971 to 1972. In the service, Dr. Yang taught physics at the Junior Academy of the Chinese Air Force (空軍幼校) while also teaching wushu. After being honorably discharged in 1972, he returned to Tamkang College to teach physics and resumed study under Master Li, Mao-Ching. From Master Li, Dr. Yang learned Northern Style Wushu, which includes both bare hand and kicking techniques, and numerous weapons.

In 1974, Dr. Yang came to the United States to study mechanical engineering at Purdue University. At the request of a few students, Dr. Yang began to teach gongfu, which resulted in the establishment of the Purdue University Chinese Kung Fu Research Club in the spring of 1975. While at Purdue, Dr. Yang also taught college-credit courses in taijiquan. In May of 1978, he was awarded a PhD in mechanical engineering by Purdue.

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

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

In 2008, Dr. Yang began the nonprofit YMAA California Retreat Center. This training facility in rural California is where selected students enroll in a five-year residency to learn Chinese martial arts.

Dr. Yang has been involved in traditional Chinese wushu since 1961, studying Shaolin White Crane (Bai He), Shaolin Long Fist (Changquan), and taijiquan under several different masters. He has taught for more than forty-six years: seven years in Taiwan, five years at Purdue University, two years in Houston, twenty-six years in Boston, and more than eight years at the YMAA California Retreat Center. He has taught seminars all around the world, sharing his knowledge of Chinese martial arts and qigong in Argentina, Austria, Barbados, Botswana, Belgium, Bermuda, Brazil, Canada, China, Chile, England, Egypt, France, Germany, Holland, Hungary, Iceland, Iran, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Mexico, New Zealand, Poland, Portugal, Saudi Arabia, Spain, South Africa, Switzerland, and Venezuela.

Since 1986, YMAA has become an international organization, which currently includes more than fifty schools located in Argentina, Belgium, Canada, Chile, France, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, New Zealand, Poland, Portugal, South Africa, Sweden, the United Kingdom, Venezuela, and the United States.

Many of Dr. Yang's books and videos have been translated into many languages, including French, Italian, Spanish, Polish, Czech, Bulgarian, Russian, German, and Hungarian.

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