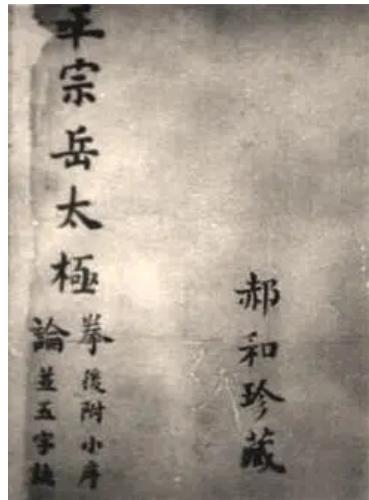


Brennan Translation

THE TAIJI CLASSICS

Posted on May 25, 2013 by Paul Brennan



郝和珍藏

FOR HAO WEIZHEN TO CHERISH:

王宗岳太極拳論

後附小序並五字訣

“WANG ZONGYUE’S TAIJI BOXING TREATISE”

APPENDED WITH MY PREFACE & “FIVE-WORD FORMULA”

**[A manual handwritten by Li Yiyu,
presented to his student, Hao He (Weizhen) – 1881]**

[translation by Paul Brennan, May, 2013]

—

山右王宗岳太極拳論。

太極者。無極而生。陰陽之母也。動之則分。靜之則合。無過不及。隨曲就伸。人剛我柔。謂之粘。動急則急應。動緩則緩隨。雖變化萬端。而理唯一貫。由著不能落。人不知我。我獨知人。英雄所向。無能敵。蓋皆由此而及也。斯技旁門甚多。雖勢有區別。概不外壯欺弱。慢讓快耳。有力打無力。手慢讓手快。是皆先天自然之能。非關學力而有也。察四兩撥千斤之句。顯非力勝。觀耄耋舉鼎之形。快何能為。立如枰沈。井田不偏不倚。忽隱忽現。左重則左虛。

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Zhang's Olympic Impact

Rose Zhang's win at the Cognizant Founders Cup could secure her spot in the 2024 Paris Olympics. Learn more.



右重則右虛。仰之則彌高。俯之則彌深。進之則愈長。退之則愈促。一羽不能加。纏虫不能落。人不知我。我獨知人。英雄所向。無能敵。蓋皆由此而及也。斯技旁門甚多。雖勢有區別。概不外壯欺弱。慢讓快耳。有力打無力。手慢讓手快。是皆先天自然之能。非關學力而有也。察四兩撥千斤之句。顯非力勝。觀耄耋舉鼎之形。快何能為。立如枰沈。井田不偏不倚。忽隱忽現。左重則左虛。

進活似車輪偏沈則隨。雙重則滯。每見數年純功。不能運化者。半皆自為人制。雙重之病未悟耳。欲避此病。須知陰陽。粘即是走。走即是黏。陽不離陰。陰不離陽。陰陽相濟。方為懂勁。懂勁後愈練愈精。熟識揣摩。漸至從心所欲。本是舍己從人。多悞舍近求遠。所謂差之毫厘。謬之千里。學者不可不詳辨焉。是為論。

山右王宗岳太極拳論

THE TAIJI BOXING TREATISE OF WANG ZONGYUE OF SHANXI

太極者。無極而生。陰陽之母也。動之則分。靜之則合。無過不及。隨曲就伸。人剛我柔。謂之走。我順人背。謂之粘。動急則急應。動緩則緩隨。雖變化萬端。而理唯一貫。由著熟而漸悟懂勁。由懂勁而階及神明。然非用力之久。不能豁然貫通焉。虛領頂勁。氣沈丹田。不偏不倚。忽隱忽現。左重則左虛。右重則右杳。仰之則彌高。俯之則彌深。進之則愈長。退之則愈促。一羽不能加。蠅虫不能落。人不知我。我獨知人。英雄所向無敵。蓋皆由此而及也。斯技旁門甚多。雖勢有區別。概不外壯欺弱。慢讓快耳。有力打無力。手慢讓手快。是皆先天自然之能。非關學力而有也。察四兩撥千斤之句。顯非力勝。觀耄耋禦衆之形。快何能為。立如枰凖。活似車輪。偏沈則隨。雙重則滯。每見數年純功。不能運化者。率皆自為人制。雙重之病未悟耳。欲避此病。須知陰陽。粘即是走。走即是粘。陽不離陰。陰不離陽。陰陽相濟。方為懂勁。懂勁後愈練愈精。默識揣摩。漸至從心所欲。本是舍己從人。多悞舍近求遠。所謂差之毫厘。謬之千里。學者不可不詳辨焉。是為論。

Taiji [“grand polarity”] is born of wuji [“nonpolarity”], and is the mother of yin and yang [the passive and active aspects]. When there is movement, they [passive and active] become distinct from each other. When there is stillness, they return to being indistinguishable.

Neither going too far nor not far enough, comply and bend then engage and extend. He is hard while I am soft – this is yielding. My energy is smooth while his energy is coarse – this is sticking. If he moves fast, I quickly respond, and if his movement is slow, I leisurely follow. Although there is an endless variety of possible scenarios, there is only this single principle [of yielding and sticking] throughout.

Once you have ingrained these techniques, you will gradually come to identify energies, and then from there you will work your way toward something miraculous. But unless you practice a lot over a long time, you will never have a breakthrough.

With your headtop pressing up naturally and energy sinking down to your elixir field, there will be no leaning in any direction. Suddenly vanish then suddenly manifest. If he puts pressure on my left side, my left side empties, or if he puts pressure on my right side, my right side disappears. If he tries to find me above, he has to keep reaching higher, or if he tries to find me below, he has to keep reaching lower. When he advances, he cannot get to me, but once he retreats, he cannot get away from me. A feather cannot be added and a fly cannot land. He does not know me, only I know him. A hero is one who encounters no opposition, and it is through this kind of method that such a condition is achieved.

There are many other schools of martial arts besides this one. Although the postures are different between them, they generally do not go beyond the strong bullying the weak and the slow yielding to the fast. The strong beating the weak and the slow submitting to the fast are both a matter of inherent natural ability and bear no relation to skill that is learned. Examine the phrase “four ounces deflects a thousand pounds”, which is clearly not a victory obtained through strength. Or consider the sight of an old man repelling a group, which could not come from an aggressive speed.

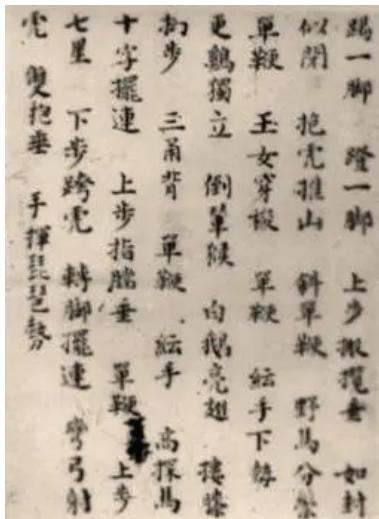
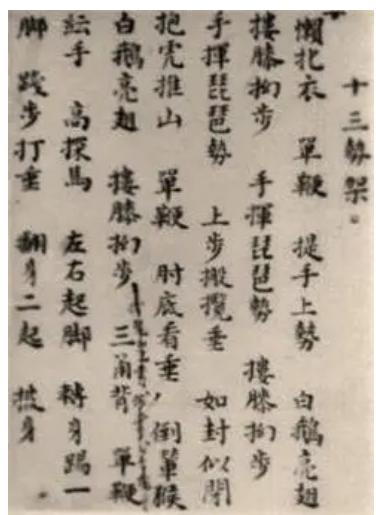
Standing like a scale, move like a wheel. If you drop one side, you can move, but if you have equal pressure on both sides, you will be stuck. We often see one who has practiced hard for many years yet is unable to perform any neutralizations and is generally under the opponent’s control, and the issue here is that this error of double pressure has not yet been understood.

If you want to avoid this error, you must understand passive and active. In sticking there is yielding and in yielding there is sticking. The active does not depart from the passive and the passive does not depart from the active, for the passive and active exchange roles. Once you have this understanding, you will be identifying energies. Once you are identifying energies, then the more you practice, the more efficient your skill will be, and by absorbing through experience and by constantly contemplating, gradually you will reach the point that you can

do whatever you want.

The basic of basics is to forget about your plans and simply respond to the opponent. We often make the mistake of ignoring what is right in front of us in favor of something that has nothing to do with our immediate circumstances. For such situations it is said: "Miss by an inch, lose by a mile." You must understand all this clearly. That is why it has been written down for you.

Advertisement



十三勢架

THE THIRTEEN DYNAMICS SOLO SET

懒扎衣

[1] LAZILY PULLING BACK THE ROBE

單鞭

[2] SINGLE WHIP

提手上勢

[3] RAISE THE HAND

白鵝亮翅

[4] WHITE GOOSE SHOWS ITS WINGS

摟膝拗步

[5] BRUSH PAST YOUR KNEE IN A CROSSED STANCE

手揮琵琶勢

[6] PLAY THE LUTE

摟膝拗步

[7] BRUSH PAST YOUR KNEE IN A CROSSED STANCE

手揮琵琶勢

[8] PLAY THE LUTE

上步搬攬垂

[9] STEP FORWARD, PARRY, TAKE IN, PUNCH

如封似閉

[10] SEALING SHUT

抱虎推山

[11] CAPTURE THE TIGER AND PUSH IT BACK TO ITS MOUNTAIN

單鞭

[12] SINGLE WHIP

肘底看垂

[13] GUARDING PUNCH UNDER THE ELBOW

倒葷猴

[14] TURN AROUND TO DRIVE AWAY THE MONKEY

白鵝亮翅

[15] WHITE GOOSE SHOWS ITS WINGS

摟膝拗步

[16] BRUSH PAST YOUR KNEE IN A CROSSED STANCE

三角背

[17] THREE THROUGH THE BACK

單鞭

[18] SINGLE WHIP

纏手

[19] TANGLING HANDS

高探馬

[20] RISING UP AND REACHING OUT TO THE HORSE

左右起腳

[21] LIFTING KICK TO BOTH SIDES

轉身踢一脚

[22] TURN AROUND, SNAPPING KICK

踐步打垂

[23] STEP SUCCESSIVELY, PUNCH

翻身二起

[24] TURN AROUND, DOUBLE KICK

披身

[25] DRAPE THE BODY

踢一脚

[26] SNAPPING KICK

蹬一脚

[27] PRESSING KICK

上步搬攬垂

[28] STEP FORWARD, PARRY, TAKE IN, PUNCH

如封似閉

[29] SEALING SHUT

抱虎推山

[30] CAPTURE THE TIGER AND PUSH IT BACK TO ITS MOUNTAIN

斜單鞭

[31] DIAGONAL SINGLE WHIP

野馬分鬃

[32] WILD HORSE SENDS ITS MANE SIDE TO SIDE

單鞭

[33] SINGLE WHIP

玉女穿梭

[34] MAIDEN SENDS THE SHUTTLE THROUGH

單鞭

[35] SINGLE WHIP

纏手下勢

[36] TANGLING HANDS, LOWERING

更鶴獨立

[37] ROOSTER STANDS ON ONE LEG

倒蠻猴

[38] TURN AROUND TO DRIVE AWAY THE MONKEY

白鵝亮翅

[39] WHITE GOOSE SHOWS ITS WINGS

摟膝拗步

[40] BRUSH PAST YOUR KNEE IN A CROSSED STANCE

三甬背

[41] THREE THROUGH THE BACK

單鞭

[42] SINGLE WHIP

纏手

[43] TANGLING HANDS

高探馬

[44] RISING UP AND REACHING OUT TO THE HORSE

十字擺連

[45] CROSSED-BODY SWINGING LOTUS KICK

上步指襠捶

[46] STEP FORWARD, PUNCH TO THE CROTCH

單鞭

[47] SINGLE WHIP

上步七星

[48] STEP FORWARD, BIG-DIPPER POSTURE

下步跨虎

[49] STEP BACK, SITTING-TIGER POSTURE

轉腳擺連

[50] REVOLVING-BASE SWINGING LOTUS KICK

彎弓射虎

[51] BEND THE BOW TO SHOOT THE TIGER

雙抱垂

[52] DOUBLE PUNCH

手揮琵琶勢

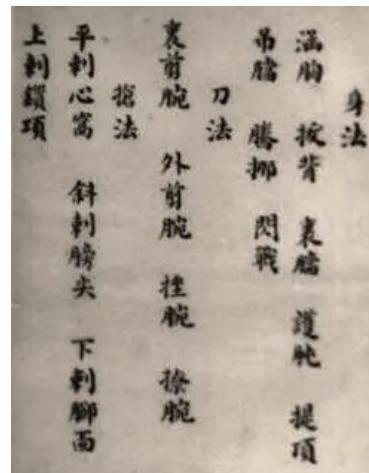
[53] PLAY THE LUTE

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身法

BODY STANDARDS

涵胸 拔背

Hollow your chest and round your back.

裹檔 護肫

Wrap your crotch and shield your belly.

提頂 吊檔

Lift your headtop and tuck in your tailbone.

騰挪 閃戰

Always be ready and then get it over with in a flash.

刀法**SABER STANDARDS****裏剪腕**

- inward cut to the wrist

外剪腕

- outward cut to the wrist

挫腕

- blocking cut to the wrist

撩腕

- raising cut to the wrist

槍法**SPEAR STANDARDS****平刺心窩**

- level stab to the solar plexus

斜刺膀尖

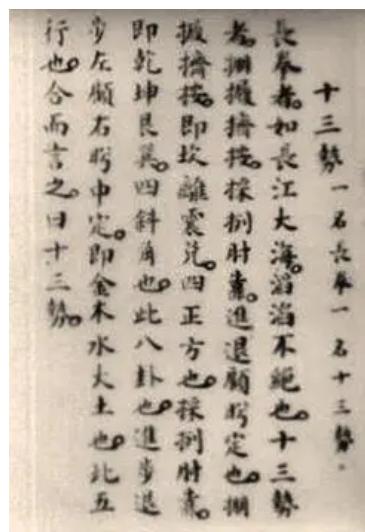
- diagonal stab to the arm

下刺腳面

- downward stab to the foot

上刺鎖項

- upward stab to the throat



十三勢 一名長拳一名十三勢

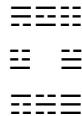
THE THIRTEEN DYNAMICS (ALSO KNOWN AS LONG BOXING)

長拳者。如長江大海。滔滔不絕也。十三勢者。捌捋擠按。採捌肘靠。進退顧盼定也。捌捋擠按。即坎離震兌。四正方也。採捌肘靠。即乾坤艮巽。四斜角也。此八卦也。進步退步左顧右盼中定。即金木水火土也。此五行也。合而言之。曰十三勢。

Long Boxing: it is like a long river flowing into the wide ocean, on and on ceaselessly...

The thirteen dynamics are: warding off, rolling back, pressing, pushing, plucking, rending, elbowing, bumping, advancing, retreating, stepping to the left, stepping to the right, and staying in the center.

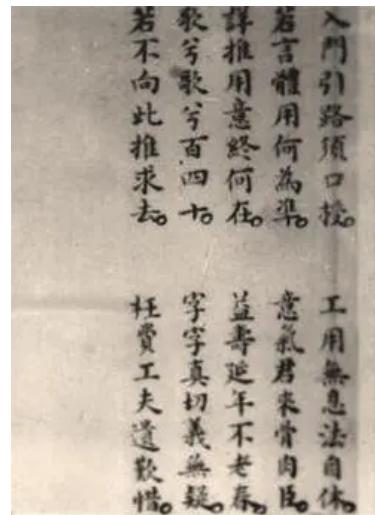
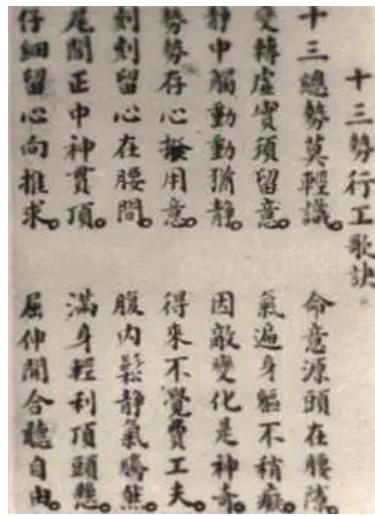
Warding off, rolling back, pressing, pushing, plucking, rending, elbowing, and bumping relate to the eight trigrams:



Warding off, rolling back, pressing, and pushing correspond to ☰, ☱, ☲, and ☳ in the four principle compass directions [meaning simply that these are the primary techniques]. Plucking, rending, elbowing, and bumping correspond to ☴, ☵, ☶, and ☷ in the four corner directions [i.e. are the secondary techniques].

Advancing, retreating, stepping to the left, stepping to the right, and staying in the center relate to metal, wood, water, fire, and earth – the five elements.

These combined [8+5] are called the Thirteen Dynamics.



十三勢行工歌訣

SONG OF PRACTICING THE THIRTEEN DYNAMICS

十三總勢莫輕識。命意源頭在腰隙。
 變轉虛實須留意。氣遍身軀不稍癡。
 靜中觸動動猶靜。因敵變化是神奇。
 勢勢存心揆用意。得來不覺費工夫。
 刻刻留心在腰間。腹內鬆靜氣騰然。
 尾閭正中神貫頂。滿身輕利頂頭懸。
 仔細留心向推求。屈伸開合聽自由。
 入門引路須口授。工用無息法自休。
 若言體用何為準。意氣君來骨肉臣。
 詳推用意終何在。益壽延年不老春。
 歌兮歌兮百四十。字字真切義無疑。
 若不向此推求去。枉費工夫遺歎惜。

*Do not neglect any of the thirteen dynamics,
 their command coming from your lower back.
 You must pay attention to the alternation of empty and full,
 then energy will flow through your whole body without getting stuck anywhere.*

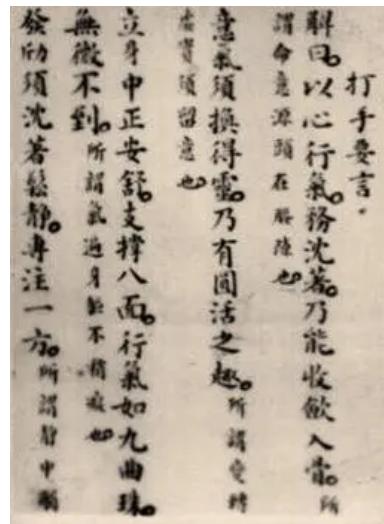
*In stillness, movement stirs, and then once in motion, seem yet to be in stillness,
for the magic lies in making adjustments based on being receptive to the opponent.
In every movement, very deliberately control it by the use of intention,
for once you achieve that, it will all be effortless.*

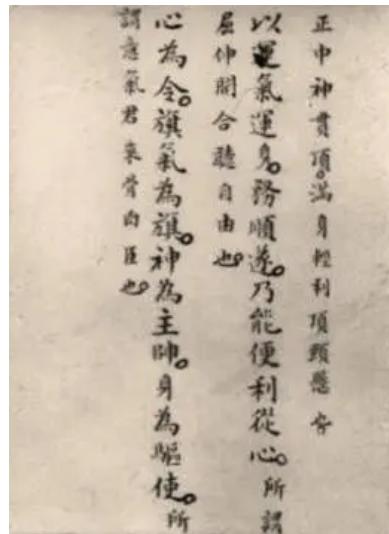
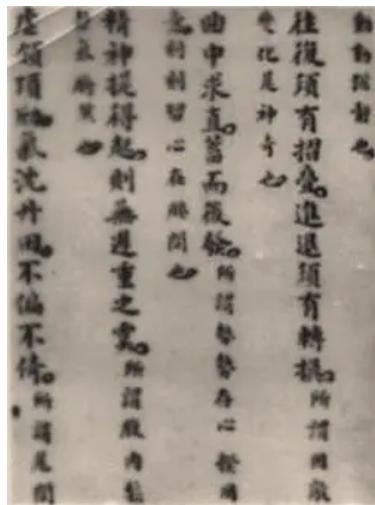
*At every moment, pay attention to your waist,
for if there is relaxation and stillness within your belly, energy is primed.
Your tailbone is centered and spirit penetrates to your headtop,
thus your whole body will be nimble and your headtop will be pulled up as if suspended.*

*Pay careful attention in your practice, striving for
bending and extending, contracting and expanding, to happen as the situation requires.
Beginning the training requires personal instruction,
but mastering the art depends on your own unceasing effort.*

*Whether we are discussing in terms of theory or function, what is the constant?
It is that mind is sovereign and body is subject.
If you think about it, what is emphasizing the use of intention going to lead you to?
To a longer life and a longer youth.*

*Repeatedly recite the words above,
all of which speak clearly and hence their ideas come through without confusion.
If you pay no heed to those ideas, you will go astray in your training,
and you will find you have wasted your time and be left with only sighs of regret.*





打手要言

ESSENTIALS OF PLAYING HANDS [PART 1 (which is a commentary to the Song as well as being the beginning of an early version of what later became the text of Understanding How to Practice)]

解曰。

Commentary to the Song:

以心行氣。務沈著。乃能收斂入骨。所謂命意源頭在腰隙也。

Use your mind to move energy. You must get the energy to sink. It is then able to gather into your spine. The Song says [line 2]: “The command comes from your lower back.”

意氣須換得靈。乃有圓活之趣。所謂變轉虛實須留意也。

Your mind must perform alternations nimbly, and then you will possess the qualities of roundness and liveliness. The Song says [line 3]: “You must pay attention to the alternation of empty and full.”

立身中正安舒。支撐八面。行氣如九曲珠。無微不到。所謂氣遍身軀不稍癡也。

Your posture must be straight and comfortable, so as to brace in all directions. But move energy as though through a winding-path pearl, penetrating even the smallest nook. The Song says [line 4]: “Energy will flow through your whole body without getting stuck anywhere.”

發効須沈著鬆靜。專注一方。所謂靜中觸動動猶靜也。

When issuing power, you must be calm, relaxed, and still, so as to concentrate it in one direction. The Song says [line 5]: "In stillness, movement stirs, and then once in motion, seem yet to be in stillness."

往復須有摺疊。進退須有轉換。所謂因敵變化是神奇也。

In the back and forth [of the arms], there must be folding. In the advance and retreat [of the feet], there must be variation. The Song says [line 6]: "The magic lies in making adjustments based on being receptive to the opponent." [The Song in this line is quoting from the *Art of War*, chapter 6: 能因敵變化而取勝者謂之神 "A general able to seize victory because of the enemy's changes can deservedly be described a magician."]

曲中求直。蓄而後發。所謂勢勢存心揆用意。刻刻留心在腰間也。

Within curving, seek to be straightening. Store and then issue. The Song says [line 7]: "In every movement, very deliberately control it by the use of intention." And also [line 9]: "At every moment, pay attention to your waist."

精神提得起。則無遲重之虞。所謂腹內鬆靜氣騰然也。

If you raise your spirit, then you will be free from any worry of being slow or weighed down. The Song says [line 10]: "If there is relaxation and stillness within your belly, energy is primed."

虛領頂勁。氣沈丹田。不偏不倚。所謂尾閣正中神貫頂。滿身輕利頂頭懸也。

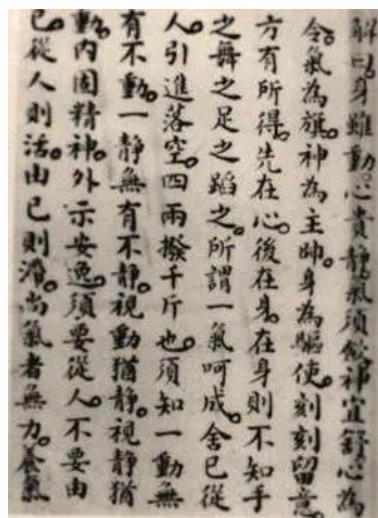
With your headtop pressing up naturally and energy sinking down to your elixir field, there will be no leaning in any direction. The Song says [lines 11 & 12]: "Your tailbone is centered and spirit penetrates to your headtop, thus your whole body will be nimble and your headtop will be pulled up as if suspended."

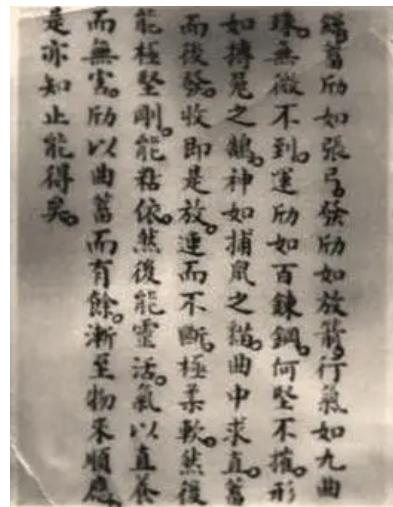
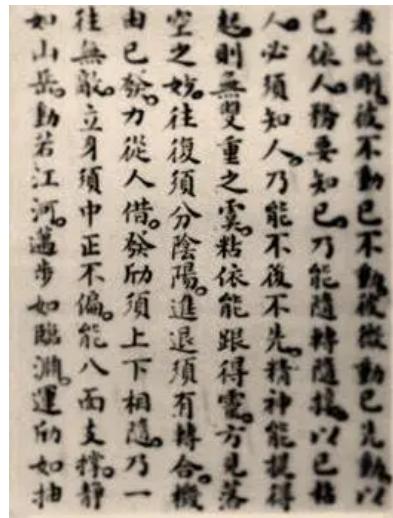
以運氣運身。務順遂。乃能便利從心。所謂屈伸開合聽自由也。

Use energy to move your body. You must get the energy to be smooth. Your body can then easily obey your mind. The Song says [line 14]: "Let bending and extending, contracting and expanding, happen as the situation requires."

心為令。旗氣為旗。神為主帥。身為驅使。所謂意氣君來骨肉臣也。

Your mind makes the command and the energy is its signal flag. Your spirit is the general and your body is the army. The Song says [line 18]: "Mind is sovereign and body is subject."





[ESSENTIALS OF PLAYING HANDS – PART 2 (early version of Understanding How to Practice continued)]

解曰。身雖動。心貴靜。氣須歛。神宜舒。心為令。氣為旗。神為主帥。身為驅使。刻刻留意。方有所得。先在心。後在身。在身則不知手之舞之足之蹈之。所謂一氣呵成。舍己從人。引進落空。四兩撥千斤也。須知一動無有不動。一靜無有不靜。視動猶靜。視靜猶動。內固精神。外示安逸。須要從人。不要由己。從人則活。由己則滯。尚氣者無力。養氣者純剛。彼不動已不動。彼微動已先動。以己依人。務要知己。乃能隨轉隨接。以己粘人。必須知人。乃能不後不先。精神能提得起。則無雙重之虞。粘依能跟得靈。方見落空之妙。往復須分陰陽。進退須有轉合。機由已發。力從人借。發動須上下相隨。乃一往無敵。立身須中正不偏。能八面支撑。靜如山岳。動若江河。邁步如臨淵。運動如抽絲。蓄動如張弓。發動如放箭。行氣如九曲珠。無微不到。運動如百鍊鋼。何堅不摧。形如搏兔之鶻。神如捕鼠之貓。曲中求直。蓄而後發。收即是放。連而不斷。極柔軟。然後能極堅剛。能粘依。然後能靈活。氣以直養而無害。動以曲蓄而有餘。漸至物來順應。是亦知止能得矣。

To further clarify:

Although your body moves, your mind should be still, energy must gather, and spirit should be at ease. Your mind makes the command and the energy is its signal flag. Your spirit is the general and your body is the army.

If you pay attention at every moment, there is always an advantage to be had.

First in your mind, then in your body. Once in your body, you will not be aware of the movements of your hands and feet.

It is said: "In an uninterrupted flow from beginning to end, let go of your plans and just respond to the opponent, draw him in to land on nothing, and with four ounces of force deflect his of a thousand pounds."

You must keep in mind: if one part moves, every part moves, and if one part is still, every part is still. Regard movement as stillness and stillness as movement.

Inwardly bolster spirit. Outwardly show ease.

You must act according to your opponent, not try to do things from yourself, for if you go along with your opponent, you can act spontaneously, but if you act from yourself, you will get bogged down.

If you obsess over the energy, there will be no power, whereas if you ignore the energy and thereby nurture it, there will be pure strength.

If he takes no action, I take no action, but once he takes even the slightest action, I have already acted.

For you to follow him, you have to know yourself, and then you can adapt and connect to him. For you to stick to him, you have to know him, and then you will be neither too late nor too early.

If you can raise your spirit, then you will not have to worry about double pressure. If in sticking to the opponent you can follow him alertly, then you will find the ability to unbalance him.

In the back and forth [of the arms], there must be distinguishing between passive and active. In the advance and retreat [of the feet], there must be both variation and coherence.

If an opportunity comes from yourself, go ahead and shoot, but when force comes from your opponent, borrow it.

When you issue power, there must be coordination between above and below, and then directed at an undefended area. Your posture must be straight and not leaning in any direction, so as to be able to brace in all directions.

In stillness, be like a mountain. In movement, be like a river.

Step as if near a cliff edge. Move energy as if drawing silk.

Store power like drawing a bow. Issue power like loosing an arrow.

Move energy as though through a winding-path pearl, penetrating even the smallest nook. Wield power like tempered steel, so strong there is nothing tough enough to stand up against it.

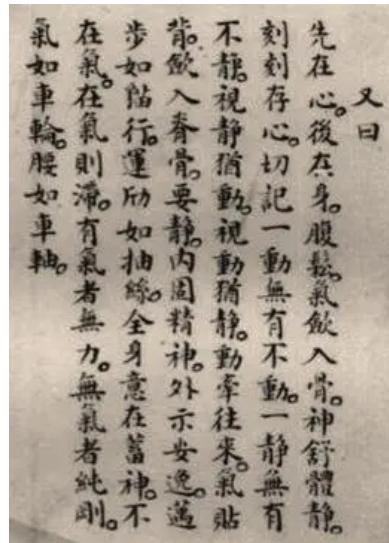
The shape is like a falcon capturing a rabbit. The spirit is like a cat pouncing on a mouse.

Within curving, seek to be straightening. Store and then issue. To gather is to release, for there is no discontinuity between the two moments.

If you can be extremely soft, then you can be extremely hard. If you can stick and follow, then you can be nimble.

By nurturing energy with integrity, it will not be corrupted. By storing power in crooked parts, it will be in abundant supply.

Gradually you will reach a point in which everything you do is a response [rather than an initiation of attempt], and thus you will achieve the condition of dispensing with greed and thereby getting what you want.



[ESSENTIALS OF PLAYING HANDS – PART 3]

又曰

先在心。後在身。腹鬆。氣飲入骨。神舒體靜。刻刻存心。切記一動無有不動。一靜無有不龍。視靜猶動。視動猶靜。動牽往來。氣貼背。飲入脊骨。要靜。內固精神。外示安逸。邁步如貓行。運動如抽絲。全身意在蓄神。不在氣。在氣則滯。有氣者無力。無氣者純剛。氣如車輪。腰如車軸。

In addition:

First in your mind, then in your body. With your abdomen relaxed, energy collects into your bones. Spirit comfortable, body calm – at every moment be mindful of this.

Always remember: if one part moves, every part moves, and if one part is still, every part is still. Regard stillness as movement and movement as stillness.

As the movement leads back and forth, energy sticks to your back, gathers in your spine, and there should be stillness.

Inwardly bolster spirit. Outwardly show ease.

Step like a cat. Move energy as if drawing silk.

Throughout your body, your mind should be on the spirit rather than on the energy, for if you are fixated on the energy, your movement will become sluggish. Whenever your mind is on the energy, there will be no power, whereas if you ignore the energy and let it take care of itself, there will be pure strength.

The energy is like a wheel. The waist is like an axle.

又曰
彼不動。已不動。彼微動。已先動。似鬆非鬆。
將展未展。動斷意不斷。

又曰
每一動惟手先著力。隨即鬆開。猶須貫串。
不外起承轉合。始而意動。既而動。轉接。
要一線串成。氣宣鼓盪。神宜內斂。無使有
缺陷處。無使有凹凸處。無使有斷續處。其

根在脚。發於腿。主宰於腰。形於手指。由腳
而腿而腰。總須完整一氣。向前退後。乃得
機得勢。有不得機勢處。身便散亂。必至偏
倚。其病必於腰腿求之。上下前後左右皆
然。凡此皆是意。不是外面。有上即有下。有
前即有後。有左即有右。如意要向上。即寓
下意。若物將掀。而加以挫之之力。斯真
根自斷。乃壞之速而無疑。虛實宜分清楚。

一處自有一處虛實。處處總此一虛實周
身。即節貫串。勿令縫毫間斷。

禹襄武氏並議

[ESSENTIALS OF PLAYING HANDS – PART 4]

又曰

彼不動。已不動。彼微動。已先動。似鬆非鬆。將展未展。動斷意不斷。

In addition:

If he takes no action, I take no action, but once he takes even the slightest action, I have already acted. It seems

relaxed but not relaxed, about to express but not yet expressing. Although the power finishes, the intent of it continues.

[ESSENTIALS OF PLAYING HANDS – PART 5]

又曰

每一動惟手先著力。隨即鬆開。猶須貫串。不外起承轉合。始而意動。既而効動。轉接要一線串成。氣宜鼓盪。神宜內斂。無使有缺陷處。無使有凹凸處。無使有斷續處。其根在脚。發於腿。主宰於腰。形於手指。由脚而腿而腰。總須完整一氣。向前退後。乃得機得勢。有不得機勢處。身便散亂。必至偏倚。其病必於腰腿求之。上下前後左右皆然。凡此皆是意。不是外面。有上即有下。有前即有後。有左即有右。如意要向上。即寓下意。若物將掀起。而加以挫之力。斯其根自斷。乃壞之速而無疑。虛實宜分清楚。一處自有一處虛實。處處總此一虛實。周身節節貫串。勿令絲毫間斷。

In addition:

Every movement is a technique of first putting forth strength and then immediately relaxing, yet always there must be continuity from one to other, and there is never to be a departure from the four stages of “begin, develop, transmit, and finish”. First the intention moves, then the power is moved, and the transition from one to the other should connect them together into a single action. Energy should be roused and spirit should be collected within. Do not allow there to be cracks or gaps anywhere, pits or protrusions anywhere, breaks in the flow anywhere.

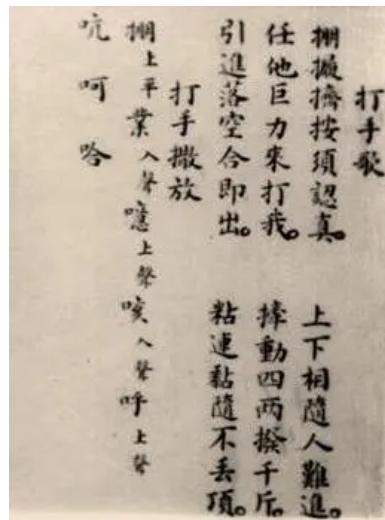
Starting from your foot, issue through your leg, directing it at your waist, and expressing it at your fingers. From foot through leg through waist, it must be a fully continuous process, and whether advancing or retreating, you will then gain the opportunity and the position. If you do not gain the opportunity and the position, your body will be in disorder, inevitably causing you to lean all over the place. The problem must be in your waist and legs, so look for it there, for whatever the direction of the movement – up, down, front, back, left, right – that is where the problem lies.

All of these things are matters of intention, and are not external. With an upward comes a downward, with a forward comes a backward, and with a left comes a right. If your intention wants to go upward, then harbor a downward intention, like when you reach down to lift up an object. You thereby add a setback to the opponent’s own intention, thus he cuts his own root and is defeated quickly and certainly.

Empty and full must be distinguished clearly. In each part there is a part that is empty and a part that is full. Everywhere it is always like this, an emptiness and a fullness. Throughout your body, as the movement goes from one section to another there has to be connection. Do not allow the slightest break in the connection.

禹襄武氏並識

(This [the Essentials] was all written by Wu Yuxiang.)



打手歌

PLAYING HANDS SONG

棚捋擠按須認真。上下相隨人難進。

任他巨力來打我。擰動四兩撥千斤。

引進落空合即出。粘連黏隨不丟頂。

Ward-off, rollback, press, and push must be taken seriously.

With coordination between above and below, the opponent will hardly find a way in.

I will let him attack me with as much power as he likes,

for I will tug with four ounces of force to deflect his of a thousand pounds.

Guiding him in to land on nothing, I then close on him and send him away.

I stick to him and go along with his movement instead of coming away or crashing in.

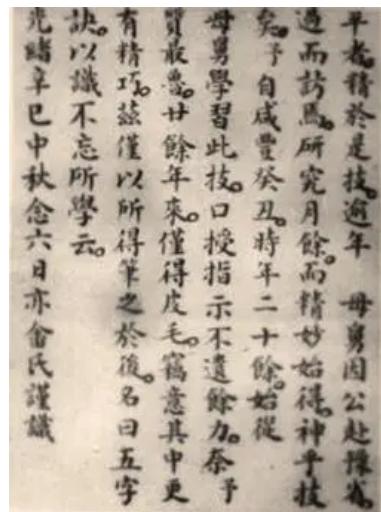
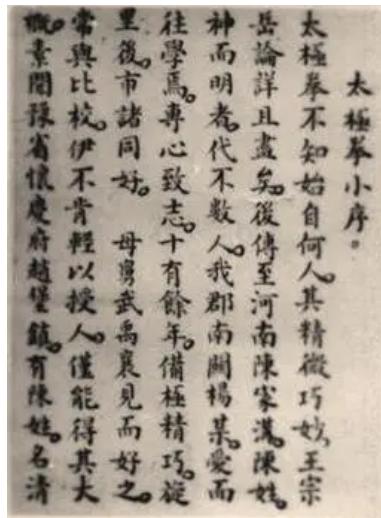
打手撒放

PLAYING HANDS RELEASES

棚上平 業入聲 嘔上聲 咳入聲 呼上聲 吭 呵 哈

“Peng!” “Ye!” “Yi!” “Hai!” “Hu!” “Keng!” “He!” “Ha!”

[There is no indication that these eight shouts, grunts, or growls have specific functions or are aligned with particular techniques. It is possibly nothing more than a general catalogue of the sounds people make when issuing power, perhaps intended as a simple reminder not to hold your breath when doing so.]



太極拳小序

TAIJI BOXING PREFACE

太極拳不知始自何人。其精微巧妙。王宗岳論詳且盡矣。後傳至河南陳家溝。陳姓，神而明者，代不數人。我郡南關楊某，愛而往學焉。專心致志，十有餘年。備極精巧。旋里後，市諸同好。母舅武禹襄見而好之，常與比較。伊不肯輕以授人。僅能得其大概。素聞豫省懷慶府趙堡鎮有陳姓，名清平者，精於是技。逾年母舅因公赴豫省，過而訪焉。研究月餘，而精妙始得。神乎技矣。予自咸豐癸丑時年二十餘，始從母舅學習此技。口授指示，不遺餘力。奈予質最魯，廿餘年來，僅得皮毛。竊意其中更有精巧，茲僅以所得筆之於後，名曰五字訣。以識不忘所學云。

光緒辛巳中秋念六日亦畲氏謹識

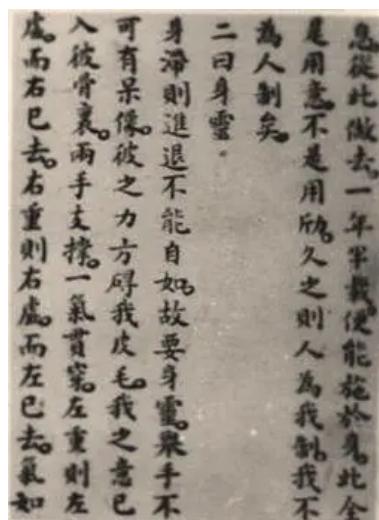
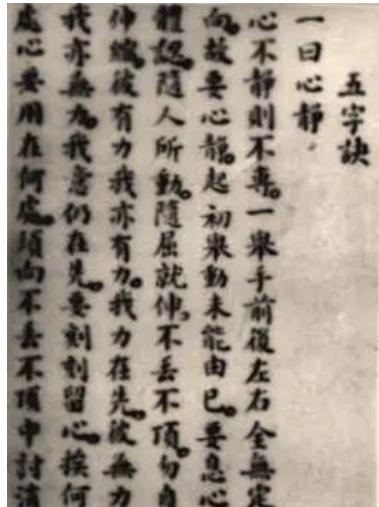
It is not known who Taiji Boxing came from. Its profound skill Wang Zongyue explains clearly and completely. Later its transmission reached the Chen family village in Henan. The Chens were very clever and understood it, but it was not passed down to many other people. A certain Yang, from our township of Nanguan, admired it and went to study it with a single-minded devotion for more than ten years, becoming extremely skillful. After returning home, he showed it to all those who would appreciate it.

My uncle on my mother's side, Wu Yuxiang, saw it and adored it, and constantly tried his luck against it, but Yang was not willing to teach just anyone, and so uncle could only get its general idea. It was often heard that in the town of Zhaobao in the Huaiqing prefecture of Henan, there was one of the Chen family, named Qingping, who was proficient in the skill. For more than a year, uncle was away on business in Henan. Passing Zhaobao on

his way, he paid a visit and studied with Qingping for over a month. He started to obtain its marvels and became excellent in the skill.

In the fiftieth year of the cycle during the reign of Emperor Xianfeng [i.e. 1853], when I was just over twenty years old, I started to learn this skill from uncle, who spared no effort in instructing me. Alas, I am really stupid, and after more than twenty years I have only obtained a superficial level. Yet I can see what is exquisite in it, and so I have written a piece which follows, called the “Five-Word Formula”, to remind myself what I have learned.

— sincerely written by Li Yiyu, 18th year of the cycle, 2nd autumn month, 26th day, during the reign of Emperor Guangxu [i.e. Oct 18, 1881]



車輪周身俱要相隨。有不相隨處，身便散亂。便不得加其病於腰腿求之。先以心使身。從人不從己。後身能從心。由己仍是從人。由己則滯。從人則活。能從人手上便有尺寸。抨彼勁之大小。分厘不錯。權彼來之長短。毫髮無差。前進後退。處處恰合。工彌久而技彌精矣。

三曰氣餌。

氣勢散漫。便無含蓄。身易散亂。務使氣散入脊骨。呼吸通靈。周身圓潤。吸為合為蓄。呼為開為發。蓋吸則自然提得起。亦擎得人起。呼則自然沈得下。亦放得人出。此是以意運氣。非以力使氣也。

四曰勁整

一身之勁。練成一家。分清虛實。發勁要有根源。勁起於腳根。主於腰間。形於手指。發

於脊背。又要提起全付精神。於彼勁將出未發之際。我勁已接入破曉。恰好不復不先。如皮燃火。如泉湧出。前進後退。無絲毫散亂。曲中求直。蓄而後發。方能隨手奏效。

此謂借力打人。四兩撥千斤也。

五曰神聚

上四者俱備。總歸神聚。神聚則一氣鼓鑄。鍊氣歸神。氣勢騰挪。精神貫注。開合有致。

虛實清楚。左虛則右實。右虛則左實。虛非全然無力。氣勢要有勝挫。實非全然占然。精神要貴貫注。繫要全在胸中腰間運化。不在外面。力從人借。氣由脊發。胡能氣由脊發。氣向下沈。由兩肩收於脊骨。注於腰間。此氣之由上而下也。謂之合。由腰形於脊。當布於兩膝。於施於手指。此氣之由下而上也。謂之開。合便是收。開即是放。能懂得開合，便知陰陽。到此地位。工用一日。精一日。漸至從心所欲。罔不如意矣。

得開合，便知陰陽。到此地位。工用一日。精一日。漸至從心所欲。罔不如意矣。
技
擊 引 鬆 放
擊起彼身借彼力。中有靈空。
引到身前動始蓄。中有殺害。
鬆開我動勿使屈。中有靜害。
放時慢腳認端的。中有盤害。

五字訣

THE FIVE-WORD FORMULA

一曰心靜

1. The mind is CALM.

心不靜則不專。一舉手前後左右全無定向。故要心靜。起初舉動未能由已。要息心體認。隨人所動。隨屈就伸。不丟不頂。勿自伸縮。彼有力我亦有力。我力在先。彼無力我亦無力。我意仍在先。要刻刻留心。挨何處心要用在何處。須向不丟不頂中討消息。從此做去。一年半載。便能施於身。此全是用意。不是用動。久之則人為我制。我不為人制矣。

If your mind is not calm, it will not be focused, and each movement of your hands, be it forward or back, left or right, will not be in any definite direction. Therefore your mind should be calm. At first your movement will not yet be able to come from yourself, and so you should clear your mind and let your body intuit, going along with the opponent's movements. Bend and then extend, neither coming away nor crashing in, and do not expand and contract on your own. When the opponent has power, I also have power, but my power beats him to the punch. When he has no power, I also have no power, for it is my intention that beats him to the decision. You should constantly pay attention. Wherever the opponent nears you, your mind should go there. You must neither come away nor crash in, and then you will be able to analyze what is going on. After doing this for about a year or so, it

will become a natural part of you. This is entirely a matter of using intention and is not a matter of using strength. Over time, you will reach the point in which you can say “he is under my control and I am not under his”.

二日身靈

2. The body is LIVELY.

身滯則進退不能自如。故要身靈。舉手不可有呆像。彼之力方碍我皮毛。我之意已入彼骨裏。兩手支撐。一氣貫穿。左重則左虛。而右已去。右重則右虛。而左已去。氣如車輪。周身俱要相隨。有不相隨處。身便散亂。便不得力。其病於腰腿求之。先以心使身。從人不從己。後身能從心。由己仍是從人。由己則滯。從人則活。能從人手上便有分寸。枰彼効之大小。分厘不錯。權彼來之長短。毫髮無差。前進後退。處處恰合。工彌久而技彌精矣。

When your body is sluggish, advancing and retreating cannot be done smoothly. Therefore your body should be lively. When moving your hands, there must be nothing resembling hesitation. When the opponent's force hinders even the hairs on my skin, my intention instantly enters his bones and my hands are bracing him, all as one event. If he puts pressure on my left side, I empty my left side and my right side goes forth, or if he puts pressure on my right side, I empty my right side and my left side goes forth, the energy like a wheel. Your whole body should be coordinated. If there is a lack of coordination anywhere, your body will then be disorganized, and you will then have no power. Seek for the problem in your hips. First use your mind to command your body, and follow the opponent rather than yourself. Later your body will be able to follow your mind, yet this moving from yourself will still depend on following the opponent. If you act from yourself, you will be sluggish. If you follow the opponent, you will be lively. If you can follow the opponent, your hands on him will detect in finer detail, weighing the size of his power and being accurate to the smallest measure, assessing the length of his attack and not being off by the slightest bit, and you will advance and retreat always at the right moment. The more you work at it, the more perfected your skill will be.

三日氣歛

3. The energy is COLLECTED.

氣勢散漫。便無含蓄。身易散亂。務使氣歛入脊骨。呼吸通靈。周身罔間。吸為合為蓄。呼為開為發。蓋吸則自然提得起。亦擎得人起。呼則自然沈得下。亦放得人出。此是以意運氣。非以力使氣也。

If your energy is scattered, then it will not be stored, and your body will easily fall into disorder. You must cause the energy to collect into your spine. Inhaling and exhaling penetrates and enlivens, influencing every part of your body. Inhaling is contracting and storing. Exhaling is expanding and releasing. Since with inhaling there is a natural rising, take the opponent up. Since with exhaling there is a natural sinking, send the opponent away. This is the use of intention to move energy, not the use of exertion to force energy.

四日効整

4. The power is COMPLETE.

一身之効。練成一家。分清虛實。發効要有根源。効起於脚根。主於腰間。形於手指。發於脊背。又要提起全付精神。於彼効將出未發之際。我効已接入彼効。恰好不後不先。如皮燃火。如泉湧出。前進後退。無絲毫散亂。曲中求直。蓄而後發。方能隨手奏效。此謂借力打人。四兩撥千斤也。

The power of your whole body is trained to become a single unit, distinguishing clearly between empty and full. To issue power, there should be a source of it. Power starts from your heel, it is directed at your waist, and expresses at your fingers, issuing from your spine. With it there should also be a rousing of all your spirit. When the opponent's power is about to come out but has not yet issued, my power connects with and invades his instantly,

neither late nor early, as if my skin is a burning fire or as if a spring is gushing forth. I advance and retreat without the slightest disorder, and seeking the straight within the curved, I store and then issue. Thus I am able to be effortlessly successful. This is called “borrowing his force to hit him with” or “using four ounces to deflect a thousand pounds”.

五曰神聚

5. The spirit is GATHERED.

上四者俱備。總歸神聚。神聚則一氣鼓鑄。鍊氣歸神。氣勢騰挪。精神貫注。開合有致。虛實清楚。左虛則右實。右虛則左實。虛非全然無力。氣勢要有騰挪。實非全然占煞。精神要貴貫注。緊要全在胸中腰間運化。不在外面。力從人借。氣由脊發。胡能氣由脊發。氣向下沈。由兩肩收於脊骨。注於腰間。此氣之由上而下也。謂之合。由腰形於脊骨。布於兩膊。於施於手指。此氣之由下而上也。謂之開。合便是收。開即是放。能懂得開合。便知陰陽。到此地位。工用一日。技精一日。漸至從心所欲。罔不如意矣。

With the four above prepared, finally spirit gathers. Once spirit is gathered, then energy is tempered, and this smelted energy then reinforces spirit. Energy is ready to move and spirit is concentrated. Expanding and contracting are decisive. Emptiness and fullness are distinct. When left is empty, right is full. When right is empty, left is full. Empty does not mean you are in that area completely weak, but that energy should there be ready to move. Full does not mean you are in that area completely stuck, but that spirit should there be concentrated. It is crucial that changes are within your chest and waist and are not external. Force is borrowed from the opponent. Energy is issued from your spine. How can energy issue from your spine? It sinks downward, going from your shoulders, gathering in your spine, and concentrates in your waist. This energy going from above to below is called “contracting”. Then it goes from your waist to your spine, spreading to your arms to be applied at your fingers. This energy going from below to above is called “expanding”. Contracting is gathering. Expanding is releasing. When you can understand expanding and contracting, then you will understand passive and active. When you reach this state, then daily work will yield daily refinement, and gradually you will reach the point that you can do whatever you want and everything will happen as you imagine.

撤放密訣

THE TRICK TO RELEASING

擎引鬆放

Raise, draw in, relax, and release.

擎起彼身借彼力。中有靈字。

引到身前勦始蓄。中有歛字。

鬆開我勦勿使屈。中有靜字。

放時腰脚認端的。中有整字。

I get the opponent's body to rise up and I borrow his force. (This has to do with “lively”.)

Once I have drawn him in front of me, my power begins to store. (This has to do with “collected”.)

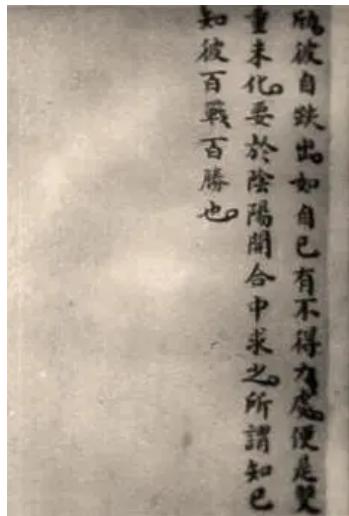
I relax my power, but I do not allow it to collapse. (This has to do with “calm”.)

When I release, it comes from my waist and legs. (This has to do with “complete”).

走架打手行工要言。
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。語甚謬。初
學未由領悟。予加數語以解之。有志
斯技者得所從入。庶日進有功效。欲要引
進落空。四兩撥千斤。語甚謬。初
學未由領悟。予加數語以解之。有志
斯技者得所從入。庶日進有功效。欲要引

一家。欲要周身一家。先要周身無有缺陷。
要欲要周身無有缺陷。先要神氣鼓盪。欲
要神氣鼓盪。先要提起精神。神不外散。欲
要神不外散。先要神氣收斂入覺。欲要神
氣收斂入覺。先要兩股前節有力。兩肩鬆
開。氣向下沉。動起於腳根。變換在腿。全蓄
在胸。運動在兩肩。主掌在腰。上於兩臂相
繫。下於兩腿相隨。動由內機。收便是合。放

即是開。靜則俱龍靜是念。合中寓開。動則
俱動。動是開。開中寓合。觸之則旋轉自如。
無不得力。纔能引進落空。四兩撥千斤。平
日走架。是知己工夫。一動勢先問自己周
身合上數項不合。少有不合。即速改機。走
架所以要慢不要快。打手是知人工夫。動
靜固是知人。仍是問己。自己安排得好。人
知己知彼。先要舍己從人。欲要舍己從人。
先要得機得勢。欲要得機得勢。先要周身



走架打手行工要言

ESSENTIALS IN PRACTICING THE SOLO SET & PLAYING HANDS

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。語甚該括。初學末由領悟。予加數語以解之。俾有志斯技者。得所從入。庶日進有功矣。欲要引進落空。四兩撥千斤。先要知已知彼。欲要知已知彼。先要舍己從人。欲要舍己從人。先要得機得勢。欲要得機得勢。先要周身一家。欲。要周身一家。先要周身無有缺陷。要欲要周身無有缺陷。先要神氣鼓盪。欲要神氣鼓盪。先要提起精神。神不外散。欲要神不外散。先要神氣收斂入骨。欲要神氣收斂入骨。先要兩股前節有力。兩肩鬆開。氣向下沈。勁起於腳根。變換在腿。含蓄在胸。運動在兩肩。主宰在腰。上於兩膊相繫。下於兩腿相隨。勁由內換。收便是合。放即是開。靜則俱靜。靜是合。合中寓開。動則俱動。動是開。開中寓合。觸之則旋轉自如。無不得力。纔能引進落空。四兩撥千斤。平日走架。是知已工夫。一動勢先問自己周身合上數項不合。少有不合。即速改換。走架所以要慢不要快。打手是知人工夫。動靜固是知人。仍是問已。自己安排得好。人一挨我。我不動彼絲毫。趁勢而入。接定彼勁。彼自跌出。如自己有不得力處。便是雙重未化。要於陰陽開合中求之。所謂知已知彼百戰百勝也。

Someone long ago said: "If you can draw the opponent in to land on nothing, you can then use four ounces of force to deflect his of a thousand pounds. If you cannot draw the opponent in to land on nothing, you cannot use four ounces to deflect a thousand pounds." These words are probably too vague for a beginner to understand. I will explain further so that those who want this skill are in a position to begin and then after much regular training get to possess it:

- If you want to [10] draw the opponent into emptiness and use four ounces to deflect a thousand pounds, you must first [9] know both yourself and the opponent.
- If you want to know both yourself and the opponent, you must first [8] let go of your plans and just respond to the opponent.
- If you want to let go of your plans and just respond to the opponent, you must first [7] be in the right place at the right time.
- If you want to be in the right place at the right time, you must first [6] get your whole body to behave as one unit.
- If you want to get your whole body to behave as one unit, you must first [5] get your whole body to be without cracks or gaps.
- If you want to get your whole body to be without cracks or gaps, you must first [4] get your spirit and energy to be ready.
- If you want your spirit and energy to be ready, you must first [3] rouse your spirit rather than letting it be distracted.

- If you want to keep your spirit from being distracted, you must first [2] get your spirit and energy to gather and collect in your spine.
- If you want to get your spirit and energy to gather and collect in your spine, you must first [1] get the front of your thighs to have strength, get your shoulders to loosen, and get your energy to sink downward.

Power starts from your heel, is transferred through your leg, stored in your chest, moved at your shoulders, and controlled at your waist. In your upper body, your arms are connected with each other. In your lower body, your legs are coordinated with each other. Power is transferred from within. Gathering is contracting. Releasing is expanding. When becoming still, everything becomes still. Stillness refers to contracting. When contraction finishes, there will be expansion. When there is movement, everything moves. Movement refers to expanding. When expansion finishes, there will be contraction. Then when there is contact, you can turn smoothly and will be strong everywhere. You will then be able to draw the opponent in to land on nothing and use four ounces of force to deflect his of a thousand pounds.

Whenever you practice the solo set, it is the practice of knowing yourself. Before moving through the postures, make sure your whole body is in accord with the principles as stated above. When the slightest part is off, immediately adjust it. To facilitate this, the set should be done slowly rather than quickly.

Playing hands is then the practice of knowing the opponent. His movement and stillness must be firmly comprehended. Still examine yourself as well. If I am in good order myself, then when the opponent comes near me, I do not need to act upon him at all, but take advantage of his momentum to find a way in. Connecting firmly to his power, I let him cause himself to fall out. If you do not have a strong position, this is simply a case of double pressure rather than neutralization, and you should seek within passive and active, or contracting and expanding, to fix it. It is said: “Knowing both yourself and your opponent, in a hundred battles you will have a hundred victories.”

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Brennan Translation

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