

陈式太极拳实用拳法

Chen Style Taijiquan Practical Method

Volume One: Theory

by
洪均生著
Hong Junsheng

English Translation by
陈中华译
Chen Zhonghua

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Chen Style Taijiquan Practical Method
Volume One: Theory
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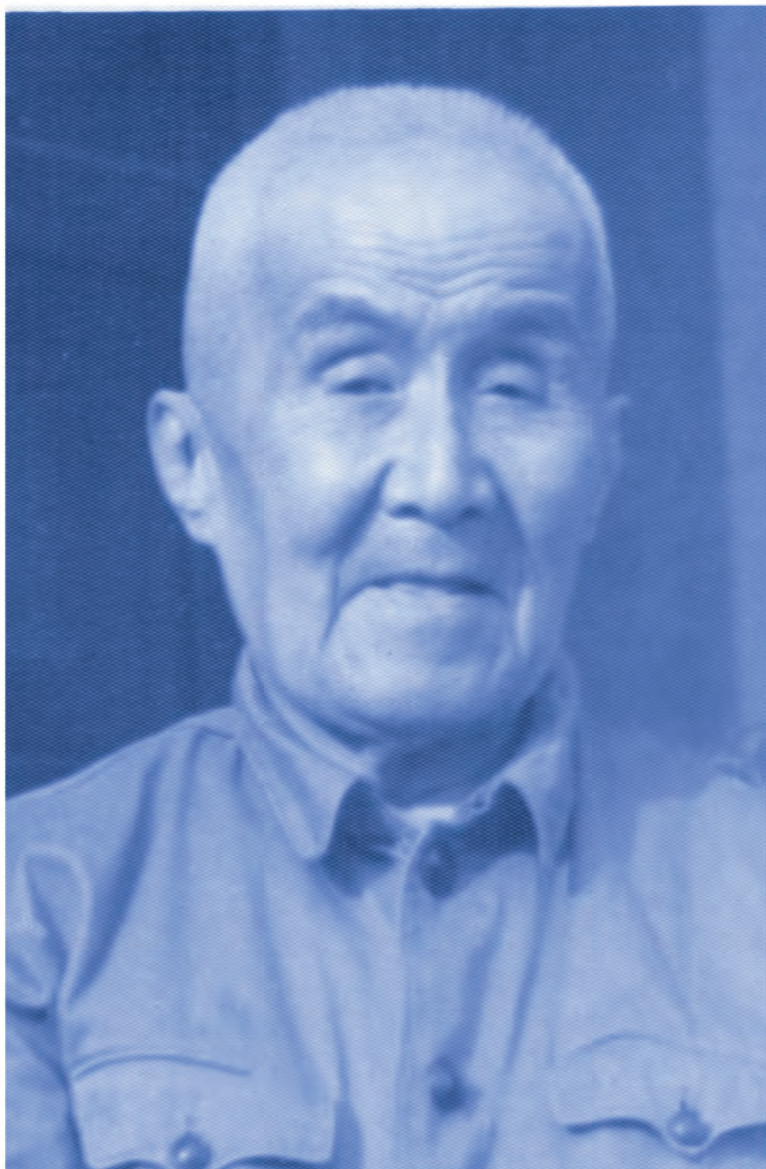
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洪均生著
Hong Junsheng
1907-1996

For the fond memories of Hong Junsheng

Warning:

This book is for information only and is not an instructional book. It is intended as information and reference for practitioners of Chen Style Taijiquan and Taijiquan in general. For instructional materials on the same subject, please refer to other titles by the same author and/or translator.

To the readers:

*My Taijiquan is like a garden. Take what you like. Plant them
in your garden and let them grow.*

Hong Junsheng

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英文版序言

陈式太极拳是中华武林之瑰宝,是陈氏祖代从生活、生产、战斗实践中吸收各家之精华提炼发展而成。先父的《陈式太极拳实用拳法》则是在其恩师传授下,结合自身几十年的实践经验而成。目前已成为陈式太极拳的一个支派。更为广大太极拳爱好者、特别是年轻一代的喜爱。

先父洪均生(1907-1996)自1930年拜於陈式太极拳第十七代宗师陈发科公门下,左右相随十五年,深得发科公真传。与师分别后,师教不敢忘却,更加苦心研练。在严格遵守太极拳基本规律:“缠法”的原则下,博采其他拳种之长,融会贯通於此套路之中,更加突出了太极拳的技击作用。所以先父将他改编的套路命名为“陈式太极拳实用拳法”。

此书是先父毕生精力研究陈式太极拳的结晶。两次出版深受广大太极拳爱好者的好评。先父弟子遍及海内外。为完成先父遗愿,兹委托先父弟子、加拿大陈中华先生将此书译成英文版,以满足全世界广大太极拳爱好者的要求。相信读此书者,将会从中获益。

洪友仁

2002年6月28於中国济南

Preface to the English Edition

英文序言

Hong Youren

Chen Style Taijiquan is a treasure of Chinese Martial Art. It has been developed and distilled from the life and warfare of the Chen family and is rooted in other indigenous martial arts. My father's "*Chen Style Taijiquan Practical Method*" is the result of dozens of years of personal experience and the transmissions he received from his master. It has evolved into a special style of Chen Style Taijiquan that is well-liked by a wide range of Taijiquan enthusiasts and is especially enjoyed by those of the younger generation.

My father, Hong Junsheng (1907-1996), received personal tutelage from Grandmaster Chen Fake beginning in 1930. For fifteen years he remained at the side of the grandmaster. The authentic transmission he received from Chen Fake was profound. After leaving his master, he continued to practice the art that had been passed to him. While strictly adhering to the silk reeling principles of Taijiquan, he blended many advantageous elements of other martial arts into his form. Thus, my father's routine, which he would come to call the "Chen Style Taijiquan Practical Method," developed an extraordinary martial quality.

This book is the quintessence of my father's entire life with Chen Style Taijiquan. The first two editions were well received by Taijiquan practitioners. My father's students are all over China as well as abroad. In order to complete the will of my father, I hereby authorize his disciple, Mr. Chen Zhonghua of Canada, to translate this book into English so that the book will be available to all readers in the world. It is my hope that the readers of this book will benefit from his wisdom.

Hong Youren

Jinan, China

June 28, 2002

Acknowledgement

鸣谢

In the summer of 1991 when Grand Master Hong Junsheng gave me a signed copy of this book, I asked him for permission to translate it into English. The prospect of his book being read by the English speakers of the world was most interesting to him.

The beginning draft was edited by Professor Patrick Douad of the University of Regina as I had only completed the first twenty-one moves of the *Yilu* routine by 1992. It was the encouragement of my senior Taiji brother, Li Enjiu, and members of the Hong family, particularly brother Hong Youyi, which gave me the willpower to continue to work on the translation of this momentous book.

I thank my Taiji Brother Hong Youren for authorizing me to be the sole official translator of Hong Junsheng's work into the English language.

Taijiquan is a specialized field. Language relating to this art is very abstruse, to say the least. As a person of the classic persuasion, a scholar, and true master of the art of Taijiquan, Hong's book is profoundly difficult to translate. Even with my many years of professional experience in the field of translation between Chinese and English, I find many insurmountable barriers in converting language, cultural belief and technical points into the English language. His original language is succinct and profound but not necessarily logical according to the Western way of sentence construction or idea presentation. I am constantly caught in the battle of words, ideas, concepts, and his manipulation of the language, its flow and rhythms.

For this reason, I am indebted to all those who helped in reconstructing the rough translation into the text presented here. In particular, I would like to thank James Tam and Richard Johnson for their leadership and valuable suggestions in editing this book.

I would also like to thank Jean Wong, and Susan Wong for proofread-

ing the first draft; Allan Belsheim, Richard Johnson, Kay Terai, and Todd Elihu for their tireless work of editing the text in their particular field of expertise.

The graphics provided by Jerry Arsenault certainly add elegance to this book. Jerry traveled to China with me to collect and later produce the art and graphics for this book.

Photos and original calligraphy of Hong Junsheng were provided by his sons, Hong Youren and Hong Youyi. Li Enjiu and Sumizu Yoichi of Japan also provided photos.

Translator's Notes

译者说明

Simple translator's notes are in square brackets.

Some original paragraphs that were very long have been re-arranged for easier reading.

Sentences have been broken down as needed to help clarify understanding.

The terms “Chen Family Taijiquan” and “Chen Style Taijiquan” are sometimes used synonymously. To be precise, “Chen Family Taijiquan” refers to the original style that was practiced within the Chen Family. As Hong Junsheng directly learned from Chen Fake, his style is Chen Family Taijiquan. When students learn from him, their style is called Chen Style Taijiquan as there is no more family affiliation with the next generation.

No attempt was made to fix the errors in the original text. For example, we recognized that the sentence “According to this trend, how can this internationally loved Taijiquan steadily move into the international arena?” is not logically sound. We chose to leave it the way Hong wrote it.

Hong's writing style was that of the older generation. It is not based on modern or Western stylistic requirements. He used quotes but not references. There was no bibliography at the end of his book. The translator decided not to add a bibliography in keeping with the original style.

With the permission of the Hong family we added several photos, a biography of Hong Junsheng and the translator Chen Zhonghua at the end of the book.

Preface

前言

Hong Junsheng

March 1988

The opening of a Chen Style Taijiquan School in Beijing by Grandmaster Chen Fake in 1928 brought the ancient martial art system, Chen Family Taijiquan, to the forefront of the outside world. I was fortunate to become Chen's disciple in 1930 and studied with him on a full time basis for fifteen years, during which time I received his transmission both verbally and physically.

In 1944, I bid farewell to my revered master and moved to the city of Jinan. Though my life in Jinan was without him, his wisdom was with me all the while. It guided my training daily. In a non-aggressive manner I practiced and analyzed what I was taught and made steady progress.

In 1956, I went back to Beijing to seek tutelage from my master for a second time. It was an emotional reunion with the master. Points of Taijiquan were the daily agenda. Master Chen re-examined every single move of my routines and explicated everything in detail. He also tested every technique on me. The trial and error with him furthered my understanding of the principles of Chen Style Taijiquan. Grandmaster Chen would say to me, "Every technique in this system is useful." Pushing hands with him gave credence to what he said. When I returned to Jinan [after the four-month stay in Beijing], I tested every move with my students to further appreciate the true meaning of "The theory is precise and the method is extensive."

Chen Style Taijiquan corresponds to the theory of the meridian network, and thus is a good exercise for the wellbeing of people. It also conforms to the theory of dynamics in physics. It expresses the principle of the law of the unity of the opposites. In martial arts, it is a higher learning of the "soft" supplementing the "hard", and "four ounces overcoming one thousand pounds."

In 1956, I received permission from Grandmaster Chen Fake to integrate his new teachings into the system he previously taught me, in the hope that I might uncover a new path towards the learning and teaching of Chen Family Taijiquan. I have been teaching this revised and improved system since 1956 in Jinan. The outcome is outstanding: practitioners

from Japan, the U.S.A. and countries in South East Asia have started to pour into Jinan to learn from me.

Though some moves are slightly changed from the original routines, my system conforms strictly to the *chanfa* [silk reeling] called for by Chen Xin [16th generation grandmaster of Chen Family Taijiquan]. I have always been of the opinion that Chen Style Taijiquan is a national treasure of the Chinese martial arts, created by the members of the Chen family through their experiences in life, work, and warfare. It belongs to the people. It would be too selfish of me to keep this book, which represents more than thirty years of soul-searching and assiduous work, to myself. If its publication can promote Chen Style Taijiquan, then I have repaid my master for his tutelage.

In order to clarify misunderstandings among Chen Style Taijiquan practitioners regarding the names of certain forms, I have included an article of my study notes on Chen Style Taijiquan form names. Any comments and corrections concerning my book will be greatly appreciated.

Foreword

序言

He Shugan

He Ze Teacher's Institute

Shandong, China

February 26, 1989

Chen Family Taijiquan, one of the many ancient martial art systems, is a legacy of ancient Chinese culture. It is a treasure of the Chen family, inherited from their ancestors who created it through a process of practice, development, extraction, and absorption of other systems. Since its inception, it has been known for its spiral movements and martial arts applications, which are expressed through naturalness, lightness, relaxed roundness, closely-knit wholeness, and hardness well balanced with softness.

Chang Yang village (in Wen County of Henan Province) was re-named Chen Jia Gou when the ancestor of the Chen family, Chen Pu, moved there with his family. Chen Style Taijiquan did not become well known until Yang Luchan, a disciple of the 14th generation Grandmaster Chen Changxing, started teaching in Beijing.

Chen Changxing's great-grandson, Chen Fake, shocked the entire martial arts world in Beijing when he was invited to impart his knowledge and skills there in 1928. Famous martial artists such as Xu Rusheng, Li Jianhua, Liu Musan and Beijing Opera actor Yang Xiaolou all studied under him. He taught numerous students and was named "The Only One in Taijiquan." He was a true grandmaster in the Chen Family Taijiquan tradition.

The author of this book, Mr. Hong Junsheng, was born in You Xian County, Henan Province. He lived in Beijing with his father from the time of his childhood. In 1930, sickness brought him to the feet of Chen Fake, and after fifteen years of uninterrupted full-time study, he eventually developed superb Taijiquan skills. His Taijiquan style is soft and circular but powerful, and is a true copy of Grandmaster Chen Fake's.

In the spring of 1956, Master Hong once again went to Beijing to further his scholarship with Grandmaster Chen Fake. He received personalized tutelage pertaining to every single move and technique, and in the end came to an illumination of the true knowledge and principles of Taijiquan. At the time, I was a student in the Chinese Language Department of Beijing University.

I had the honor to accompany Master Hong during his private sessions with Grandmaster Chen Fake. Even today scenes of his learning sessions still appear vividly in front of my eyes. Whenever Hong asked Chen whether he could use a technique in a certain way, the answer was always “affirmative!” When Hong went back to Jinan, he practiced those special points discussed with Grandmaster Chen Fake and then transmitted the knowledge to his students and fellow martial artists accordingly. The number of his students increased drastically as a result.

Master Hong is unusually intelligent. He is well read and has a remarkable memory. He is an expert on phonology [a study of ancient Chinese language rhymes] and poetry. Overall, he is both a man of letters and a man of martial arts. He has a thorough understanding of Chen Family Taijiquan.

In his teaching, he always adapts to student learning styles. Without deviating from scientific exactitude, he explains philosophical theories with analogies using plain, everyday life examples. He always uses a hands-on approach with his students so that they will physically experience the unseen depths of his knowledge. This wise teacher never fails to lead his students to an endless treasure chest of knowledge. It is an experience in itself to learn from him.

It is not easy to learn Chen Style Taijiquan in detail and in depth. One of the reasons is the lack of books written on the subject. Chen Xin, a 16th generation grandmaster, wrote a book entitled, “*An Illustrated Book of Chen Family Taijiquan*.” Unfortunately, this classic is abstruse and very difficult to comprehend. Later on, Chen Ziming wrote “*Chen Family Taijiquan*”, Chen Jipu (also known as Chen Zhaopei) wrote “*A Compilation of Chen Family Taijiquan*.” In the 1960’s, Shen Jiazhen and Gu Liuxin co-authored “*Chen Style Taijiquan*” and recently Chen Xiaowang published “*Taijiquan of the Chen Family*.” All of these books undoubtedly helped to promote Chen Family Taijiquan.

Chen Xin was both a man of war and a man of letters. His exposition on the theories of Chen Style Taijiquan is a major contribution. He pointed out that Chen Style Taijiquan is “the method of *chan*” which set the correct direction of the study and research for future generations. Because of the social conditions of his time, he was unable to explain his *chan*

theory in scientific terms; nor did he explain why *chan* was divided into positive and negative; how the hand, body and feet should be coordinated in doing so; and what the exact angles for these different types of *chan* are. Chen Ziming and Chen Jipu both touched upon the subject of *chanfa* in their books but both lack details. “*Chen Style Taijiquan*” promoted the idea of shifting the center of gravity to the left or to the right. This is contrary to the principles of “the waist is like the axle of a wheel” and “erect like a balance scale.” They both misunderstood the meaning of “fast interspersed with slow” referred to in Chen Ziming’s book. They thought it meant there were different speeds within one form. This destroys the balance of the movements. Also, the beginning and ending of the Cannon Fist is not in the same location. “*Taijiquan of the Chen Family*” also made errors that cause further confusion among students. “Whip Wrapping the Body” was mistaken as “Inside Change.” “Reversed Planting Flower” was mistaken as “Pounding Split.”

Master Hong followed his master’s [Chen Fake’s] teachings when he wrote “*Chen Style Taijiquan Practical Method*” in order to correct some of the misconceptions circulating among Taijiquan practitioners.

It was no easy task for Master Hong to write this book. Before he finished half of the first draft, the natural calamity of 1961 [from 1958 to 1962 famine and political turmoil caused severe problems] was visited upon China, and Master Hong suffered from paralysis on one side of his body due to starvation. It was the scholar Liu Ziheng [expert on the ancient “*Yijing*”w, or “Book of Changes”] who encouraged him to complete the book. After Master Hong miraculously recovered, he re-wrote it three times on his bed [he did not have a table] in his little hut of a few square meters. The book took its final form in 1988.

This book contains the characteristics listed below:

- (1) All points of theoretical concern strictly followed Grand-master Chen Fake’s teachings and hands-on demonstrations. Chen Xin’s theory was used as a theoretical guideline.
- (2) There are strict rules for each move. Master Hong believes that “a deviation of one millimeter at the source will cause an error of a thousand kilometers at the destination.” In order to eliminate confusion, he adheres to the principle of

“no extension” [This word is also translated as “excess” in this book. It refers to the state of having too much of something or action] and “without deficiency” [Which refers to the state of not having enough of something or action]. He explains every single detail of his system, such as the positive and negative circles of the revolution of the hand and the positive and negative circles of the rotation of the hand; the positions for feet and hands; and the directions of fingers and palms.

- (3) This book stresses practical self-defense skills and avoids bogus talk of “mind-intent” and “*qi*.” The self-defense and attack techniques of every move are explained, as well as the possible response of the opponent. Learning according to Master Hong’s teachings, will enable one to practice “as though there is an opponent present.”
- (4) There are a few moves in Master Hong’s form that are different from Grandmaster Chen Fake’s form. Grandmaster Chen himself permitted the changes. There are also a few places where Master Hong has incorporated other styles into his system.
- (5) This book contains a special research chapter that scrutinizes the origins of the names of the forms [such as “Block Touching Coat”] and corrects the errors in the names incorrectly used by some practitioners.

The author has made unique contributions to the theory of Chen Style Taijiquan since Chen Xin. He has furthered the research regarding Chen Style Taijiquan based on Chen Xin’s theoretical framework and Grandmaster Chen Fake’s teachings. He has combined the theory of union of the opposites and dynamics in formulating new theories. The following are some examples.

- (6) Based on the principle that the “waist is the axle of a wheel” and “erect like a balance scale,” he proposed that Chen Style Taijiquan requires the principle of “balance in move-

ments.” As long as the stance is the same, the weight cannot be shifted sideways, forward or backward. The torso can only turn sideways to the left or to the right. Weight can only be changed when the stance is changed. This corrected the former application of shifting the weight to the left or the right, a common practice among Taijiquan practitioners.

- (7) He is the first to propose that the hand motion is composed of two circles: the first being a revolution along the circle which means to draw a circle with the hand; and the second which is the self-turning [rotation] of the hand that coincides with the beginning and end of the revolution. He further states that revolution is composed of both positive and negative circles; that rotation is also composed of positive and negative circles; and that the legs and knees also perform the same circles. He further spells out exactly what angles these revolutions and turns require. This has solved many problems that the “*Illustrated Book of Chen Style Taijiquan*” did not address.
- (8) He scientifically explains the problem of “double heavy” by pointing out that it refers to the application of weight on both the front hand and the front leg at the same time, and thus corrects the misconception that it refers to the application of weight on both legs, as in a Horse Stance.
- (9) He is the first to propose that the eyes also have positive and negative movements. He proposes that the eyes should be focused on a fixed target, correcting the mistake of “the eyes following the hand.”

These are all constructive theories, which offer insights into future learning and research on Chen Style Taijiquan.

This book is the crystallization of Master Hong’s life as a Chen Style Taijiquan adept. He revised the draft seven times. He is open-minded and is always willing to accept new ideas. He stands for open discussions concerning the theory of Chen Style Taijiquan, insisting that the superior

theory prevail. It is in this light that Master Hong has candidly offered his views on the other Chen Style Taijiquan books mentioned. This attitude is of great value in the field of Taijiquan.

Master Hong had a very difficult life. But he is more determined to disseminate his master's art as he ages. In the past [referring to the pre 1949 era], he was determined to make Taijiquan his life's profession, while writing and composing poems became hobbies. Today, he has decided to research Chen Style Taijiquan to present it to the next generation. He is still a simple man, but a useful one to society.

This unknown old man in a thatched hut is now called the "Superstar of Taijiquan" in Japan. His students are all over China, in places such as Jinan, Tai An, Xu Zhou, He Ze, Zhang Dian, De Zhou, Shi Jiazhuang, Guangzhou, and Da Lian. Japanese and American friends flock to Jinan to learn from him, such as Nakano Hiroshi, Takatani Hiroshi, Ishijima Kiyomitsu, Soga Tadahiro, Sakamoto Takanori, Koga Eiko and American martial artist Chen Po. There is even a "Master Hong Junsheng Taijiquan Studies Association" in Japan, specializing in research on the system he has taught.

Master Hong is a member of the Shandong Provincial Martial Arts Association, chairman of the Jinan Martial Arts Association, adviser to the Beijing Chen Style Taijiquan Association, adviser to the Shandong University Martial Arts Association, senior adviser to the Jinan Martial Arts Academy, and adviser to the general headquarters of Wah Lum Kungfu of USA.

Master Hong's understanding and superb ability in Taijiquan are next to none in recent history. His honesty and modesty can be easily seen from what he frequently says to his students, "I am just an unaccomplished student of Grandmaster Chen Fake."

The publication of this book is an auspicious occasion for Chen Taijiquan practitioners and enthusiasts. It is hoped that this book will produce useful discussions of the art. We wish Master Hong a long life, and hope to see his other books in the near future.

陈式太极拳实用拳法

Chen Style Taijiquan Practical Method

Volume One: Theory

1. Introduction

概论

Hong Junsheng

Development and Evolution

In the development and evolution of Chen Family Taijiquan, changes are necessitated by the passage of time and replacement of people. Changes that do not betray the principles are called developments while changes departing from the principles are regressions. “*The Taijiquan Treatise*” says: “Although there are myriad variations, there is only one underlying principle.”

Taijiquan has its principles. Taijiquan movements or forms, with various manifestations are called “techniques” as long as they are still faithful to the principles. The Taijiquan techniques are adjusted when applied to different opponents in varying situations, but the guiding principles behind them do not change. The principle specific to the spiral movements of the Chen Family Taijiquan is based on *chansijin*. According to Chen Family Taijiquan, the Chen family used to possess seven different bare-hand sets, as well as a Taijiquan Long Fist (also called, Taiji Tongbei). Later, these routines were reduced to the First Routine [*Yilu*] and the Second Routine [*Erlu*, also called Cannon Fist] that we know today.

This change, I presume, is the result of revisions by Chen Wangting according to his martial art experiences. According to Chen Xin, the forms after the “Tornado Kick” used to be like this: both hands touch the ground after the turning of the body, and the head is hanging down; both feet kick upwards at the same time. This was later changed to the following: both hands stretch out flatly to the right while the right foot is planted firmly on the ground; the left foot in the meantime kicks flatly to the left.

The popularity of Chen Style Taijiquan today has also produced divergent variations, as there are now many people in the country teaching and promoting it. There are only a handful of people who learned from masters like Chen Fake. This is not to say that those who did not learn from famous masters are not qualified to teach. The fact remains, though, that

many people practice and teach a Chen Taijiquan system which is heavily influenced by other styles of martial art.

The form that I am practicing and teaching today is not the original Chen Fake form either. In 1956, over twenty years after I started learning from Master Chen Fake, I changed the old form according to the teachings of Chen Fake, the teachings of Chen Xin (*"An Illustrated Book of Chen Family Taijiquan"*), and the experiences I gained from many years of teaching. I went to Beijing with this revised system and performed it for Master Chen Fake. He readily assured me that my system was essentially the same as his own and encouraged me to concentrate on the principles instead of the outer appearances. I now understand what he meant, because with the system that he taught Feng Zhiqiang later, Master Chen Fake showed that he had also changed his own system.

Chen Zhaokui, Chen Fake's son, taught in Nanjing and Shanghai, and the system he taught also varied greatly from the system I originally learned from Chen Fake.

In summary, I believe that we should measure a form according to what Chen Fake repeatedly told me: "This set of Taijiquan does not have one technique which is useless. Everything was carefully designed for a purpose." The best way to test whether a certain technique is correct is to put it into practice in Taijiquan push hands. The following is a record of what I heard [learned] from Grandmaster Chen Fake, using my own interpretations, as a specific introduction to the silk reeling of Chen Style Taijiquan.

The Basic Principle: Chan Fa

Chan Fa is the basic principle of Taijiquan. The technique of *chan* first appeared in *"An Illustrated Book of Chen Family Taijiquan"* by the sixteenth generation grandmaster Chen Xin. He is the first to propose that Chen Style Taijiquan is the "technique of *chan*." He further explained that without knowing *chan*, one could not truly comprehend the meaning of Taijiquan. Chen Xin thus established the importance of *chan* energy in Chen Family Taijiquan. The *chan* energy can be divided into many sub-sections

such as forward *chan*, retreating *chan*, left *chan*, right *chan*, top *chan*, bottom *chan*, inward *chan*, outward *chan*, positive *chan* and negative *chan*. According to my experiences, I believe that these different *chan* should be categorized under two main divisions: positive *chan* and negative *chan*. But what are the criteria for these two main types of *chan*? Chen Xin did not elucidate this point in his book. In addition, there are many different interpretations concerning the meaning of *chan* in the available literature. I have summarized for reference here my criteria for these two *chan* to make them clear to my students.

Torso: the turning of the torso to the left is considered positive *chan*; the turning of the torso to the right is considered negative *chan*.

Legs: when the body turns to the left, the left leg is positive *chan* and the right leg is negative *chan*; when the body turns to the right, the right leg is positive *chan* and the left leg is negative *chan*. For positive *chan* one should raise the knee and for negative *chan* one should lower the knee. However, the knees can only be as follows: one up while the other one is down. Under no circumstances can they be both up or both down (level); under no circumstances can they move from side to side.

Hands: when the thumb turns outwards with the palm facing upwards, it is positive *chan*; when the small finger turns outwards turning the palm downwards, it is negative *chan*.

When the hand and hip work together to turn left and right, front and back, up and down, it is called a “revolution.” The directions of revolution are left, right, front, back, up and down. While making left-right and up-down revolutions, there is also a rotation within. Rotation only has *shun*. [Using the right hand as an example, *shun* is when the little finger turns towards the torso while the thumb turns away from the torso. *Ni* is the opposite.]

When the right hand turns right, *ni chan* opens from the upper portion and *shun chan* closes from the bottom portion, it is called a “positive circle.” When opening, *ni chan* requires that the hand leads the elbow and the elbow leads the shoulder. This motion continues from the heart (right-hand action) to the chin and continues to turn out until the hand reaches the height of the eyes. This is the upper half of the circle. Then loosen the shoulder, sink the elbow, even out the wrist, raise the fingers and withdraw

the elbow to the side of the ribs. The elbow touches the ribs. After that only the forearm will turn upward via the navel to the heart.

Chen Xin said that each hand is only responsible for half of the body. In applications, the hand is the sentry whose main task is to protect the torso, but he originally said that the center demarcation line is the nose. I changed this position to the heart in order to avoid the mistake of students withdrawing their hands to the nose.

Wang Zongyue also said, “Without extension or deficiency.” Therefore, there must be a standard as to what “extension” is and what “deficiency” is. In Chen Style Taijiquan, the hand cannot be higher than the eyes. It cannot be lower than the navel. In addition, it cannot go past the heart. [This requires the right hand to face the heart and to never go past the centerline of the torso.] To pass the abovementioned lines will cause one to lose power while not reaching those lines means that one is resisting stiffly.

In general, from the heart to the eyes [the hand] turn is ninety degrees. This is the essence of the positive circle. In the form, examples of this movement can be found in the left and right hand movements in “Cloud Hands” and the right hand movement in “Block Touching the Coat.”

The negative circle movement of the right hand revolution is like this: *shun chan* pulls the right hand inward from the right upper corner. The fingers still point in the same direction. The elbow should withdraw to the bottom of the breast. Then change to *ni chan*. The elbow should first stick to the ribs. The hand leads the elbow to travel from the heart to the *kua*. Then the hand travels back up to eye level. An example is “Cross the Hands” in the *Yilu* Routine. This is a negative circle revolution.

There are very few examples of the negative circle on top and at the bottom of the body. It is only in “Golden Rooster Stands on One Leg” that the hands are one up and one down while doing the negative circles. The two hands in this move are separated into negative circles in front of the heart. The upper hand first travels in a *shun chan* circle to the heart and then changes to *ni chan* to continue to travel through the mouth, nose and the *baihui* point on top of the head. It is like pushing an object up to the top. The lower hand changes to *ni chan* from the heart to travel down to the *kua* and pushes down at the outside of the *kua*.

This form [Golden Rooster Stands on One Leg] only rotates with *shun*

and *ni* for two turns. Attention must be paid to make sure that the top hand is upright while the lower hand is slightly slanted.

The revolving movement of the front hand and rear hand is both negative circles. The rear hand travels in a *shun chan* circle to the heart and then changes to *ni chan*. It then travels past the front of the *kua* sideways to the back until it reaches ninety degrees (calculated in reference to the heart) and then changes back to *shun chan* to sink the elbow to the ribs. The wrist then changes to *ni chan* and travels from the bottom of the ear to the front of the chest. An example of this move is “Punch Covering the Hand.” In this form, the rotational *chan* movements change four times. In “High Pat on Horse”, when the elbow withdraws to the ribs in *shun chan* and the hand turns up to the ear, it changes slightly to *ni chan* to travel from the bottom of the ear out as *shun chan*. This form has the *chan* method changing five times. In the form “Tame the Tiger” of the Cannon Fist routine, there are six changes.

Therefore, in different forms the hands must change the direction of its *chan* method at different locations of the body. There cannot be any room for error. The “*Taijiquan Treatise*” said, “A deviation of one millimeter at the source will cause an error of a thousand kilometers at the destination.” This assertion is not without reason. Learners of Taijiquan should pay attention to this point.

In forms such as “Brush the Knee” and “Step Back to Whirl Arms on Both Sides,” the movement of the hands to the front and back also has a rule [obedience to the principle]: the front hand is straight while the rear hand is slanted; or the front is thin while the back is thick. These refer to the directions for the coordination of the hand. Learners should also pay due diligence to this law.

Is there a *shun* and *ni* difference with the eyes? Of course there is! The eyes are the organs of the body that signal and notify the mind. The mind can then command the entire body to adapt according to the changes of the opponent. The eyes are also responsible for observing the opponent’s situation and the geographical environment.

Chen Xin once said, “In solo practice, imagine you are fighting an opponent; in fighting an opponent, imagine you are practicing a solo form.” Sunzi also said in his “*Art of War*” that knowing your opponent and your-

self will ensure that you are invincible. The statement “In solo practice, imagine you are fighting an opponent” refers to the eyes deciphering the opponent’s movements so one’s own movements coordinate in response to the actions of the opponent. It is the method of knowing the opponent. The first method in knowing your opponent is to observe the way your opponent stands, and through observation of his stance, one can estimate his direction and method of attack.

This is achieved through the coordinated efforts of the eyes and mental judgment so as to flexibly and quickly plan defense and attack measures. Based on this, each movement in Chen Style Taijiquan has a main direction. Main directions are the directions for stance movements before stepping out. The directions are decided according to the final target of the hand. Therefore, when the direction of the eyes and the stepping of the body are the same, it is considered *shun*; when the direction of the eyes and the stepping of the body are not the same it is considered *ni*.

Whole-Body Coordination

From the whole body point of view, Chen Style Taijiquan coordination relates to the eyes, torso, feet and hands. The torso is further divided into three sections of upper, middle and lower. We will start with the torso. From the head to the neck is the upper section. Chest, back and waist comprise the middle section. Lower abdomen, coccyx, *dang*, [the arch shaped area from one knee to the *mingmen* then to the other knee] leg and foot comprise the lower section.

The head in the upper section must be upright. The [classic] terminology said, “Suspend the collar to push the energy up.” “*The General Song of Movements of the Thirteen Postures*” said, “The whole body is light and the head is suspended.” Push and suspend are two different words but the method they refer to in this case is the same.

This is congruent with Chen Xin’s description of moving “as though the whole body is suspended by a rope tied to the *baihui* point.” So long as the chin is slightly tucked in, the head will naturally be erect and the neck will be straight. I have mentioned earlier that the eyes should always

look horizontally straight forward towards the main direction of each posture. Chen Xin added, “The ears should listen to what happens behind the body.” This is to protect against attack from behind.

The vertebrae of the middle section should be erect as the energy pushes up. The chest does not push out, nor suck in. The classic terminology is “to hold in the chest and pull out the spine.” Some say that in Chen Style Taijiquan certain vertebrae should stick out. Master Chen [Fake] did not concur. I cannot say I agree with this either. Whether the word was to hold in (含) or to contain (涵), they both refer to the same thing. The chest must be comfortable so that the lungs are not suppressed and ease of breathing is ensured.

The waist should also be upright. But Chen Style Taijiquan requires that movement must be activated with either a left or a right turn. In general, the turning should not exceed forty-five degrees. In the forward or backward movement (advance or retreat), the turn can be enlarged to ninety degrees, or even larger than three hundred and sixty degrees. The waist always turns left or right in response to the changes of the opponent in order to activate the stance movement. Therefore, the waist must be upright. It cannot lean sideways. It must also be flexible as though one side is hidden while the other side appears. The waist is not allowed to lean forward or backward.

Let me talk here about the fundamental differences between Chen Style Taijiquan and other styles: the slight push out of the coccyx of the lower section. Chen Xin pointed out “the *changqiang* point (located at the lower portion of the coccyx) slightly pushes outward.” Such a posture encourages the lower abdomen to turn inward.

On the one hand this posture makes *qi* naturally sink into the *dantian*; on the other hand the two major ligaments of the thighs will relax. This makes it possible for the torso to turn at a large angle and the center of gravity to sink as the torso moves. This action is the act of “always balanced as the body moves.” In all other styles, they regard the tucking in of the tailbone as the edict. I believe this is not wrong. I believe they use this edict to correct the error of the coccyx pushing out too much.

However, if tucked in too much as some have suggested, the *dantian* will be pushed up with the lower abdomen and the coccyx will be in the

same direction as the nose which is contrary to basic human physiology and martial art requirements. Some also compare the coccyx to the helm of a ship. The part of the rudder in the water that points backwards, not in the same direction as the ship is headed. Therefore, I say that the requirement that the coccyx slightly pushes out (which Chen Xin advocates) is fundamentally different from other styles. Within the Chen Style Taijiquan, this is the most important key to keeping the torso upright.

Chen Style Taijiquan requires the *dang* to be open and round. A pointed, acutely angled *dang* is forbidden. The pointed *dang* is closely related to the direction of the coccyx. As long as the coccyx pushes out slightly (only a bit and absolutely not a protrusion of the coccyx) the posture is just like the sitting posture on a chair. I remember the posture in *Qigong* meditation described by Mr. Jiang Weiqiao is just like this. When the *dang* is rounded, it will also be sunk. The center of gravity will be lowered and the torso will be stable. In the case of a pointed *dang*, no matter how wide the two feet are apart the *dang* cannot sink. It is like a wooden structure with two legs. A light touch from front or back will topple it.

In Chen Style Taijiquan, the upper section is called the push energy; the middle section is called the waist energy and the lower section is called the *dang* energy. The push energy is upward; the waist energy must be horizontally leveled; and the *dang* energy must sink down.

Another body part is related to the coccyx and the *dang* movement described above. It is the knees. One knee must go upward while the other one downward. This action is in accordance with the turning of the torso. The roundedness of the *dang* is related to its flexibility and responsiveness. The upward and downward motions of the knees are related to the stability of the movement. The rule for this action is: Whenever the torso turns left, the left knee must lift upward in *shun chan*; in the meantime the right knee must push downward in *ni chan*. If the torso turns right, then the right knee must lift upward while the left knee pushes downward.

The “*Taijiquan Treatise*” talks of “standing like a balance scale.” Chen Xin also said, “*Quan* is authority.” “Balance” is the weighing scale we normally refer to. “Authority” is the counterweight [a classical Chinese word that has this meaning] of the scale. In my opinion, Chen Style Taijiquan is like using two sets of scales at the same time.

The hand is like the counterweight of a balance scale. Its function is to redirect the oncoming force from the opponent towards my body so as to “entice into emptiness.” The knee is the counterweight of the balance. When the oncoming force is on my left-hand side, I will use my left knee to push the force up to neutralize it.

At the same time, the right knee will be lowered to make me stable. This action is the same as leverage. The upward push creates a pivoting point. The oncoming force is the weight. My hand and knee are the levers.

However, the purpose is not the same as weighing things in our daily life. In weighing things, we seek balance. In Taijiquan, it is different. When the opponent comes with a strong force, I will decrease the pivoting point to make him fall into emptiness. When the opponent comes with a small force, I will increase the pivoting point to bounce him back. This is made possible through rotating in *shun* and *ni chan* and creating appropriate frictions in order to borrow the power [from the opponent] and intercept the [opponent's] power.

The leg and foot are responsible for advancing and retreating according to the command of the eyes and in accordance with the situation of the opponent. According to the standard rule for rounding the *dang*, the base of the thigh [*kua*] should be level with the knee. When advancing or retreating, the turning motion of the waist carries the calf into the movements.

Today, practitioners cannot reach this level any more. We, therefore, cannot require our students to do so. When making a move with the legs, the solid leg must first sink into the *dang*. The empty leg can then slide forward or backward. When advancing, the toes point up; the heel hangs down and slides out along the ground. When reaching the desired position the toes can then land. When retreating, the toes should touch the ground to move back and the heel should be slightly raised. When reaching the desired position, the heel can then land. Whether advancing or retreating the knee must be lifted.

The foot must move in an inside or outside curve according to the size of the posture, whether it is front or back. The knee must face the heel and slightly curve inward to form a triangle. The line between the kneecap and the ground should be ninety degrees. The kneecap must be on top of the inside of the arch of the foot. Any extending knee must coordinate with the

base of the *kua* and foot. They must form a triangle slightly to the inside.

Roughly, there are five stances: Horse Stance, Bow Stance, Cross Stance, Empty Stance and Freestanding Stance.

The Freestanding Stance requires that the toes slightly point outwards, and the knee is not extended. The suspended knee levels the *dang* and the calf must be relaxed. The foot is naturally flat (Do not flex the foot to make the toes point downwards because this action will expose the intention of kicking. It is better to relax the calf so that the foot can move in any direction). The Freestanding Stance has the distinction of left and right positions.

The Horse Stance has the Small Square Horse Stance whose feet are shoulder width; the Left-Side and Right-Side Horse Stance whose front knee is less bent (Master Chen [Fake] always used this stance when issuing power during push hands to avoid double heavy of hand and foot); the Inside Knock-Kneed Horse Stance whose front toes curve inward to be used in swift transitions.

The Bow Stance has a left, a right and reverse positions (also known as a Flat Stance). The postures require that the front knee must bend and lock, the rear knee extend open, and the toes swing to the left or right. In the Chen Style Taijiquan Bow Stance, the knee that extends must be relaxed. The ligaments on the leg cannot be tight. This requirement ensures that there is flexibility when switching stances and double heaviness is avoided. The Flat Stance is the equivalent of the *Pu Bu* stance in other martial arts. Its rear knee bends down with the toes turned outward forty-five degrees. The front toes hook inward with the heel pushing forward on the ground. The knee opens slanted inward. When the foot steps out, the calf can touch the ground. An example of this is “Fall into a Split” in the *Yilu* Routine.

The Cross Stance has five variations: Left Cross Stance, Right Cross Stance, Large Cross Stance, Small Cross Stance and Half Cross Stance. These stances usually follow Left Side Horse Stance, Right Side Horse Stance and Bow Stance. If it follows a Side Horse Stance, the rear knee slightly drops and the toes of the front foot turn outward ninety degrees. If it follows a Bow Stance, then the rear knee loosens down and inward while the front foot pivots on the heel and turns its toes outward ninety degrees. The rear foot pivots on the big toe and turns the heel outward forty-five

degrees. The Half Cross Stance that follows a Horse Stance only turns the front toes while keeping the rear knee unchanged.

There are four Empty Stances: Left Empty Stance, Right Empty Stance, Front Empty Stance and Rear Empty Stance. The solid foot is slanted while the empty foot points straight forward. In terms of weight distribution, there is only the matter of one remaining light while the other is heavy. There is no such thing as one being entirely empty or the other being one hundred percent solid.

As to the arm, it is separated into three sections. The shoulder is the root section; the elbow is the mid section; and the hand is the tip section. The “*Taijiquan Treatise*” requires one to “loosen the shoulder and sink the elbow.” Chen Xin’s explanation of “loose” is unclear. He said, “The arm is as though hung on the shoulder.”

In sinking the elbow, whether the movement is in a *shun chan* or in a *ni chan* action, the tip of the elbow must always point downward. A point for attention is when turning upward in a *ni chan* circle, the hand turns out from the position of the heart, the tip of the elbow does not move. When the hand leads the elbow to open, only the hand leads the forearm to turn. The elbow is often five inches lower than the shoulder. Even when the middle finger is at the eye level, the tip of the elbow should still slant outward and downward. It must not point horizontally outward.

When a *ni chan* opens to the left or right toward the rear, the hand must go past the inside of the *kua* before turning toward the rear and outside. It is not allowed to directly travel from the heart in a *ni chan* to the rear and back. If this rule is not adhered to, the move would easily lead to a protrusion of the elbow to the rear and thus cause a conflict in energy.

In the case when the *ni chan* hand withdraws from a high position in the left, right, and the front, the hand must also lead the elbow to the side of the ribs. Then the hand can turn to the front of the *dang* (such as in the right-hand position of the posture of “Cannon at the Bottom of the Den” from the Cannon Fist Routine). The elbow cannot leave the ribs to come inward because doing so will cause the hand to leave the centerline and cause the loss of energy.

There are three ways of using the hand in Chen Style Taijiquan. They are palm, fist and hook. The fingers in the palm must naturally spread out.

The base of the thumb should be close to the left base of the palm. The tip of the thumb naturally opens. In movement, the *shun* and *ni* of the forearm cause the fingers to spiral. In general, the turns are always forty-five degrees or ninety degrees. In special cases, the angles can be enlarged. Under no circumstance can the palm face straight up or down.

The fist must be held tightly in a spiral. The method is to start with the small finger then move each finger in sequence to the index finger and tighten them all against the palm. The thumb presses sideways against the middle knuckle of the index finger and the middle finger. The end result is a spiral fist.

The hook hand is made with the index finger and ring finger joined at the bottom of the middle finger. The thumb presses against the bottom of these three fingers. The small finger goes in the crack between the thumb and the index finger. It is like the shape of a chicken's head or chicken's beak.

The wrist is not allowed to curve or turn downwards. In Chen Style Taijiquan, the wrist moves with the *shun* and *ni* movement. Whether it is a palm or a fist, a *shun chan* move will require the wrist to turn inward. When opening outward, the middle finger of the palm or the middle knuckle of the fist must turn outward and upward sideways. When withdrawing inward, the palm and fist should withdraw toward the front. When in a *ni chan* movement, the wrist should turn outward slightly. When opening the directional path is: side, front and then the upward corner. When withdrawing, the directional path is: side, back and the downward corner. Both *shun* and *ni* movements must be spirals.

Unity of Opposites

From the introduction of the whole body coordination above, we have established that Chen Style Taijiquan movements conform to the principle of the unity of opposites. In order to accomplish this unity, the *shun* and *ni* movement of the rotation must not be neglected. The “*Taijiquan Treatise*” says, “In order to avoid this problem, one must understand *yin* and *yang*. *Yin* does not depart from *yang*. *Yang* does not depart from *yin*. *Yin* and

yang compliment each other. This is the understanding of energy.” The so-called *yin* and *yang* in this book contain several pairs of opposites. They include the empty and solid of the energy; hard and soft; open and close; advance and retreat; and withdraw and issue.

They also include the unity of opposites in directions of the above pairs. We can look at them using the *shun* and *ni* of the hand as an example. *Shun chan* is the energy of opening; *ni chan* is the energy of closing. This rule is invariable. But in *shun chan*, the small finger turns inward while the thumb turns outward. Doesn't this contain unity? Opening energy is hard while closing energy is soft. Open and close; hard and soft are achieved in one movement at the same time. Doesn't this hard compliment soft? Isn't this “to withdraw is to issue”?

Chen Style Taijiquan revolution is a positive circle or negative circle coupled with self-rotation in the form of *shun* and *ni* movements. Although positive and negative circles move along a curve, in the corners they move along an “S” or “Z.” Chen Xin said, “The gaining of posture comes from contention for the meridian. The element of surprise resides in the turning of the joint.” Meridian refers to the energy path. “Turning of the joint” refers to the coordination of timing, direction and angles at the time of the direction change in the positive or negative circle of the *shun* and *ni* movements. These relate to how to borrow the opponent's energy in fighting applications and how to change to intercept the opponent's power. “Without extension or deficiency” is the natural result of correct practice of *zhuofa* [a method of adherence] and the perfect application of it.

The “*Taijiquan Treatise*” said, “From perfection one will eventually comprehend the energy... with the comprehension of energy one will become more and more skilled. Through subtle discoveries one will reach a level of the union of mind and body.” Indeed the understanding of the general theory and specific method must start with an understanding of the method of adherence.

I believe that the understanding of the energy refers to knowing appropriately when one should be in the correct direction and know the variations of the energy paths. One must also understand in technique why it must be this way. Understanding the energy must start with understanding the application at the time of learning the postures. When and at what

angle does a posture change into the next posture? Why does it have to be in such a manner in reference to application?

In general, people think that one cannot understand the secrets of Taijiquan without learning push hands. My opinion is that push hands is only a process of experimentation after learning the postures. Students can use this process of experimentation to test the validity of what they have learned. If errors are detected, they should be corrected in a timely manner according to the rules of Taijiquan. This way, one can go from perfection to the comprehension of the energy of Taijiquan. If one only talks about the comprehension of energy without knowing the application, he will not have a chance to understand the energy. Chen Style Taijiquan contains minute variations within coordinated changes. If one does not understand the variations of the energy path, he will not achieve the result of “four ounces overcome one thousand pounds” and “I always flow with the force while my opponent always fights against the force.”

Thirteen Postures in Push Hands

This section refers to the thirteen postures in push hands. If we compare Taijiquan to a building, then the thirteen postures are its building materials. In hand techniques there are eight: *peng*, *lu*, *ji*, *an*, *cai*, *lie*, *zhou* and *kao* [ward off, rollback, squeeze, push, tear, split-break, elbow strike, and hitting with any part of the body]. In stance work there are two: *qian jin* [advance] and *hou tui* [retreat]. In eye movement there are two: *zuo gu* [left gaze] and *you pan* [right look]. In torso movement, the only requirement is to be upright. Chen Style Taijiquan and other styles of Taijiquan share the same guiding principles. However, in interpretation and application of those same principles, they differ. Here I will give an introduction for the order of eyes, torso, stance and hand.

Eyes

The eyes are the organs responsible for observing location and gather-

ing enemy information so as to direct the body to act accordingly.

In general the direction of attention is forward and not backward. The eyes observe a radius of roughly one hundred and fifty degrees. In addition, within this field of vision, what is observed becomes the focal point for the overall situation. In traditional terms we say that the eyes can see six directions. This should mean that the eyes are able to see “everything”, not that the eyes will move in six directions.

Therefore, I think that the “left gaze” and “right look” of the thirteen postures should mean that there is “right look” in “left gaze.” On the other hand, there should be “left gaze” in “right look.” “Gaze” is the focal point of vision. In the *yin* and *yang* theory it refers to the solid aspect. “Look” is the peripheral vision. In the *yin* and *yang* theory it refers to the empty aspect. Some Taijiquan practitioners treat left as “gaze” and right as “look.” This line of thinking has no basis. I don’t think this is a proper explanation for “gaze” and “look.”

Some also confuse the “left gaze” and “right look” with the advance and retreat of the body. They believe this is a rule for stance. This explanation is not valid either. The feet don’t have eyes and the eyes cannot have stances.

Torso

The torso is responsible for activating the stance and hands to move in response to the opponent’s actions. The rule it adheres to is natural uprightness in motion. It cannot be a static uprightness. The whole body movement of Chen Style Taijiquan is based on spirals, and the torso is not an exception. As long as the eyes are fixed on a target and the torso turns left or right there will be spiral movements.

A point of attention is that in general there is only a forty-five degree rotation. The torso rotation should be coordinated with the upper and lower body. The section below the chest can rotate slightly over forty-five degrees with the *dang* energy sinking down. Of course with the movement of the stance, the torso will accordingly rotate more. During the torso rotation, one shoulder should be slightly higher than the other. This will form the main body of spiral movement. Too much exaggeration of the shoulders will break the waist energy.

Stance

In Chen Style Taijiquan, the rules concerning the coordination of the upper and lower body are rather important. Therefore Chen Xin said, “When the hand is there [does its job] but the leg is not there it is not considered a superior course of action. When the hand is there [does its job] and the leg is there, the power is like yanking grass.” The so-called “there or not there” refers to stance.

In general martial arts, there is the saying, “The hands are like two doors. It is the foot that fights the enemy.” This also refers to stance. Too often this was misunderstood to mean that the hands can only be used for defense while the foot should be used for offense like kicking with the heel or other parts of the foot. That is the wrong interpretation. I have given an introduction to Chen Style Taijiquan stances earlier in this book. Here I will explain the eight techniques of the foot and the movement (advance and retreat) of the stance.

The eight techniques of the foot are: *ti* 踢, *deng* 蹬, *chuai* 踹, *bai* 摆, *sao* 扫, *duo* 跺, *tao* 套 and *chen* 衬. The energy of *ti* is at the tip of the toes. The energy of *deng* is at the heel. The energy of *chuai* is at the side of the foot. The energy of *bai* is at the outside of the back of the foot. The energy of *duo* is on the whole foot (but is separated into front and back *duo*. The front *duo* has the energy from the inside of the heel. Back *duo* has the energy from the inside of the toes). *Tao* is to put one’s foot to the outside of the opponent’s leg. *Chen* is to put one’s foot between the opponent’s legs. (Some call this action *cha* or “poke through.” It can also express the idea of a forward advance. It is not as appropriate as the word *chen* as Chen Style Taijiquan leg movement requires that the leg must move in while touching the opponent’s leg. *Cha* can cause inaccuracy).

The first six techniques require that the hand must first control the opponent and then the foot techniques are applied. This is a safety measure. Otherwise, the opponent has the opportunity to catch my foot with their hands and push me over. The method of using the foot is to first lift the knee before the issue of power on the foot. The knee should also have some reserve and not be fully extended. *Ti* can be as high as the chin [your own]. *Deng* can only reach to the knee and *kua*. Whenever the leg and foot are

used, the solid foot must be stable. The *dang* must loosen and sink. The torso should slightly lean forward. There must be centripetal force present. Otherwise, the kicking of the foot will be repelled by the opponent's reaction force.

Tao and *chen* are often used in conjunction with the advance and retreat of stances. Utilizing "four ounces to overcome one thousand pounds" is not achieved with the hands. It is the method of *tao* or *chen* from the lower section that moves the opponent's center of gravity. Only when the center of gravity is destroyed will the power of "four ounces overcome one thousand pounds." Of course, this is not possible without the perfect coordination of the upper and lower sections.

The Eight Hand Techniques

Peng has two meanings. One refers to energy, or *jin*. It is *an* energy that is obtained through the enduring practice of *shun* and *ni* in a positive or negative circle. It is the *chansijin*, or silk reeling energy. Master Chen Fake called it *peng* energy. It is the same as what is commonly referred to as internal energy. When this energy is applied to various techniques it becomes the eight techniques of *peng*, *lu*, *ji*, *an*, *cai*, *lie*, *zhou* and *kao*.

The second meaning is the technique of *peng* as one of the eight techniques. *Peng* is a method used to greet [take] the opponent's oncoming force. As the oncoming force of the opponent can come from the four sides and eight directions, *peng* in Chen Style Taijiquan has positive and negative sides.

From the front it is called "front *peng*" such as in the first move of the "Buddha's Warrior Attendant Pounds Mortar." From the back it is called "reversed *peng*" as in "Double Kick", "Embrace the Head to Push the Mountain", and the first move of "Tame the Tiger" in the Cannon Fist Routine. The method of *peng* changes in accordance with the actions of the opponent. In "Buddha's Warrior Attendant Pounds the Mortar", "Embrace the Head to Push the Mountain", and "Double Kick" *shun chan* is used. "Tame the Tiger" in the Cannon Fist Routine uses *ni chan*. In the second "Buddha's Warrior Attendant Pounds the Mortar" a left-side *peng* method

is used. In the third “Buddha’s Warrior Attendant Pounds the Mortar” a right-side *peng* method is used. Left-side *peng* uses *ni chan*. Right-side *peng* uses *shun chan* (some say only *shun chan* is *peng*, which is a flawed assumption). There are other *peng* methods such as left, right, top, bottom, advance, and retreat. I will not talk about each of them here. Overall, *peng* is mainly based on the energy of enticing and neutralizing.

Lu, *cai* and *an* are all methods using the left or right side of the body to entice the opponent into emptiness. The only difference among these methods is the coordination of hand self-rotation and revolution, the opening and closing of energy, and the sizes of the circle.

The laws regulating the hand contact in Chen Style Taijiquan are: “Right hand meets with the opponent’s right hand; left hand meets with the opponent’s left hand.” According to my experiences with Chen Fake and my own experimentation, I added the four words: “meet at the outside.” This will enable one hand to control both hands of the opponent.

Next, I will talk separately about the coordination and function of *cai*, *lu* and *lie*. In *cai*, the contact with the opponent is made with *shun chan*. As soon as contact is made with the opponent’s wrist, I will immediately change into *ni chan*. I then will lead the opponent on the left or on the right towards the top rear corner. The elbow should still be relaxed and sunk. The hand cannot exceed the height of the eyes. The front hand should go in a *shun chan* circle with the part between the palm and the wrist fixed on the top of the opponent’s elbow. In the fashion of sinking and grinding outwards, the hand first travels in the same direction as the rear hand using a combined force (closed energy). When the elbow parallels the nipple, the energy changes to a splitting force (open energy). By this time the opponent will be forced to lean sideways behind me. This is just like the third movement of the “Buddha’s Warrior Attendant Pounds the Mortar.”

In *lu*, I also use *shun chan* to make contact with the opponent’s wrist. Then, I will use the method of withdrawing to entice him to the left bottom corner or the right bottom corner. When the hand reaches the heart, the tip of the fingers will turn in and down. The thumb will grind outwards. The elbow will stick tightly to the ribs (the left elbow will stick to the ribs on the left side and the right elbow will stick to the ribs on the right side.) The torso will turn left or right accordingly. The front hand will be placed

on the top of the opponent's elbow in a *shun chan* position. It will move in a fashion of sinking and grinding out. When the elbow reaches the front of the chest, the energy changes from *heli* [combined force] to *fenli* [separated force]. The third move of “Six Sealing and Four Closing” is a left *lu* technique. “Cannon to the Front Gate” is a technique of retreating right *lu*.

In *lie*, the coordination of the two hands is different from that of *cai* and *lu*. In *cai* the right hand changes into *ni chan* immediately after making contact with the opponent in *shun chan*. It travels to the rear in a high position. The front hand is in *shun chan* and the fingers are at the height of the chin. *Lu* uses *shun chan* on both hands and the position is chest high.

Lie also uses *shun chan* on both hands; the front hand is below the chest. When making contact, the energy is from a combined force which is immediately changed to a separating force. It is a move against joints. *Lie* is used in the first step of the retreating moves of “Step Back to Whirl Arms on Both Sides” and the torso turning move of the “Cut Hands” in the Cannon Fist Routine. Master Chen [Fake] repeatedly told me to use this move with caution.

The above are double hand *cai*, *lu* and *lie*. There are also occasions that single hand *cai*, *lu* and *lie* are used in combination with additional techniques of the other hand. For example, in “White Crane Spreads Its Wings” the right hand is in a right *cai* technique in conjunction with the left hand executing a left side downwards push. In “The Fist Hitting the Ground” the left hand uses *cai* to supplement the right hand hitting downwards. The third move of the third “Buddha's Warrior Attendant Pounds the Mortar” has the right hand in a single *lie* in combination with the right foot withdrawal.

When the back of the hand faces outward it is *ji*. When the palm faces outward it is *an*. Both *ji* and *an* have variations of single, double, left and right. One must know that it is in the turning of the palm that distinguishes the *shun* and *ni*, *ji* and *an*.

There are also several elbow techniques in Chen Style Taijiquan such as *shun lan* [same side blocking], *ao lan* [opposite side blocking], and *lian huan* [Left-right continuous blocking]. When the direction of the elbow is the same as the stance, it is called *shun lan* (all other Chen Style Taijiquan books use the Chinese characters 顺鸾 [same side royal chariot] and 拗鸾

[opposite side royal chariot]. The character 鸢 [pronounced “luan”; royal chariot] does not have a particular meaning here. It is a misspelling of the character 拦 which means to block. The elbow is used to block the energy path of the opponent. I changed them into *shun lan* and *ao lan*).

When the elbow is the opposite of the stance, it is considered *ao lan*. In the “Hand and Elbow Posture” (the original name was “Beast Head Pose”) of the Second Set the two hands punch out interchangeably while the two elbows issue simultaneously to the back. Therefore, this posture is called the “Serial Elbows.”

A word of caution: In Chen Style Taijiquan only when the stance acquires a position that the bodies of the two involved are very close can the elbow strike be used. Therefore in a *shun lan* elbow strike, *ni chan* is used. The palm faces right to the heart and the tip of the elbow is slightly outside of the ribs. In an *ao lan* elbow strike, the left hand pulls the opponent’s arm while the right elbow strikes. The elbow uses the energy of *shun chan* and sinking outwards. Although the elbow is several inches away from the chest, the hand does not go beyond the heart.

Chen Style Taijiquan also has several *kao* techniques: shoulder *kao*, *kua kao*, hip *kao*, and knee *kao*. Shoulder and *kua kao* require that the stance must get into or outside of the opponent’s leg so that the torso is very close. In this position the toes will land to issue power. The direction is from the left or right side. When issuing power, the torso can only make left or right turns. It is not allowed to seek the opponent with your torso. Hip *kao* uses the sinking *dang* energy to press the opponent’s leg, such as the second move of “Ground Dragon.” It is a method to counter the opponent catching my waist from the back.

Knee *kao* is a method of frontal knee attack to the opponent’s *dang* area. Master Chen used to caution us that this method is about life and death [a very dangerous technique]. It cannot be used lightly.

Now that we understand the basic principles of the thirteen postures, we also need to know how to apply the principle of “the upper body follows the lower body” in push hands.

First of all, the eyes must be focused on the movement of the opponent at the appropriate height. Taijiquan advocates that “If the opponent does not move, I do not move.” This conforms to the military principle of “If

the enemy does not strike, I do not strike first.”

In 1956 when I sought instruction from Chen Fake for a second time, he said, “There is not one move in this routine that is empty. They are all useful.” This is when he changed the opening posture to the two hands in front of the chest with one in front and the other on the chest. This was an indication of self-defense, not aggression. This is the *peng* technique of two opponents touching each other in push hands.

In the second move of the “Buddha’s Warrior Attendant Pounds the Mortar” I use both hands to roll back the opponent’s hand. My left hand sinks and grinds out to make the opponent’s energy fall into emptiness. At the same time, I advance my left foot to the outside of the opponent’s right leg. My hand uses the technique of *cai*. My foot uses *taofa* [a technique of trapping] to prevent the opponent from changing stance or to pull his foot back.

The opponent will first realize that his outer limbs are neutralized by my *peng* energy. Then he will try to use his elbow to attack, but this attempt will also be countered by my sinking and grinding out. He will then have to use his shoulder to *kao*. At this time I change my torso to a left turn and use the back of my left hand to lever his right. This is the technique of *ji*. At the same time I will use my right hand to seal his right hand to his abdominal area. This is left *ji* and right *an*. This completes one full circle of three moves which include the techniques of *cai*, *lu*, *ji* and *an*.

The opponent should slightly turn his torso to the left to neutralize me. He will use his left hand to *chan* my left hand. His torso changes by turning right and he advances his right foot to control me with a *cai* technique. I then will turn my torso to the left and open my left foot to forty-five degrees. This is followed by an advance of the right foot between both legs of the opponent. The upper body uses *ji*, *zhou* and *kao* to continuously advance. The opponent will turn left and will also use left *ji* and right *an* to neutralize my advance.

The abovementioned method of advance and retreat can be practiced repeatedly in order for perfection. Both parties will follow the rules but will not be controlled by the rules. One must change according to the opponent’s movements in order to adapt to their movements. On one hand one’s own equilibrium must be maintained while on the other the oppo-

ment's balance must be destroyed to distinguish the winner from the loser.

The method for adapting to the movements of the opponent is very simple. It is only a matter of being good at “adding” and “subtracting.” Addition and subtraction refer to the angles of the *shun* and *ni* turns; and the changes in the direction of the positive and negative circles. These don't appear to be difficult issues. But it is not easy to precisely control the timing, speed and the size [accuracy] of the angle. One must become highly skilled and precise through continuous training. When using these methods, one must let natural reflexes do the adaptation. In popular Taiji periodicals it is stressed that mind-intent is used instead of force. Mind-intent in this case is regarded as a force of mystery.

Mind-Intent, Strength and Dynamics

Human physical movements are controlled by the mind-intent. In practicing a martial art, one should think of “mind-intent” as a thought process that conforms to the principles of martial theory. Mind-intent is a desire, not an empty fantasy. According to my learning experience, I am convinced that the learning of a martial art, especially Chen Style Taijiquan, requires the use of “mind-intent” as opposed to awkward force. However this does not negate the use of force. One should combine force with skill. One should also acknowledge that force is the initial required condition and skill is a scientific method of using the force. Skill comes out of training. Therefore, force and skill cannot be separated from one another.

In Taijiquan competitions that I have seen, many of the competitors will start with a few circles in compliance with the rules. But then they will let loose and start using force to push and pull. It appears that the standard *peng*, *lu*, *ji*, *an* and other methods are all invalid at competitions. The competitors must haphazardly surprise their opponent. Most likely they do not have a clue what kind of martial art their employed method comes from. According to this trend, how can this internationally loved Taijiquan [tradition] steadily move into the international [sport] arena?

Common Problems

Because there have been many educated people practicing Taijiquan, many periodicals on Taijiquan have been published even before liberation [1949]. After liberation, there have been publications in Chen, Yang, Wu (武), Wu(吴)and Sun styles. The National Sports Commission has compiled the Simplified 24, 48, and 88 forms. Kan Guixiang compiled the Chen Style Taijiquan 36-Form. Chen Xiaowang compiled the Chen Style Taijiquan 38-Form. These have all gone abroad. From the point of view of forms, these were originally good endeavors. But from the point of view of Chen Style Taijiquan, the people who compile these forms have different degrees of comprehension concerning the terminology involved and they have different interpretations of the postures. These differences leave the learners of this style with no idea what to follow. Here I will raise a few important issues.

Chan

Chen Xin was the first to propagate the concept of *chan* as a major principle of Taijiquan. He solemnly declared, “Without knowing this, one does not understand Taijiquan!”

But in “*Chen Style Taijiquan*” by Shen Jiazhen, *chansijin* [silk reeling energy] was listed as the third characteristic of Taijiquan. He used the example of “White Crane Spreads Its Wings” and said that it uses the “right *shun* and left *ni chan* method.” In the explanations of the posture he said, “Double *shun* turns into double *ni*.” He obviously contradicted himself. He said that the standard for *shun* and *ni* is the turning of the palm up and down. In his *shun* and *ni* illustration, he had six stages. Only the first and second turned the palm. The rest only had the fingers turn in or out.

In explaining the *shun* and *ni* of the hand, he said there is one *shun*, one *ni*, double *shun* and double *ni*. But in the hand and leg *shun ni* coordination the explanations are the opposite again. The book also said that the hand and leg *chan* are the same. This is another contradiction. In other books the explanation of *chan* is not consistent either. It seems that they don't really care for *chan* or they don't understand *chan*.

Center of Gravity

The “*Taijiquan Treatise*” is the origin of the sayings “erect like a balance” and “the waist is like an axle.” Balance and axle are all about the pivoting point of a lever. The pivoting point cannot shift. However each Chen Style Taijiquan book in dealing with the changes of stance says that “the center of gravity should move to one leg.” Not only does this contravene the requirements of balance and axle, it is also contrary to the Chen Style Taijiquan principle of balance in motion.

Double Heavy

This terminology was first used in the “*Taijiquan Treatise*.” The treatise already explained what double heavy is and how to avoid double heavy. “Heaviness on the left will cause it to be empty. You will not recover control when sinking into the right.”

In reality this refers to the coordination between the hand and the foot. If we added the words hand and foot to the original text, it would be very easy for the learners to understand: When the left hand is solid the left foot must be empty. When the right hand is solid the right foot must be empty. Because classic language is very abstruse, the proponents all hold their different views.

Some say that the “Horse Stance is double heavy.” Others say that “in pushing hands when the opponent is solid I should be empty to entice and neutralize him.” There was an anonymous author who wrote “*Explanations of Taijiquan Light, Heavy, Float and Sink*.” This text says that “double heavy is an error while double sinking is not. Double sinking is superior hand [skill] and the practitioner will be light and floating.” There are also those who would only talk about using a single weighted stance [at all times] to avoid double heavy. The validity of the above theories will be easily shown by testing them against the rules of hand and foot coordination in Chen Style Taijiquan.

When the left foot advances in “Buddha’s Warrior Attendant Pounds Mortar” the left hand is turning to the right top corner. When the right

foot advances in “Block Touching Coat” the right hand is withdrawing to the left. These examples show that if the hand is solid then the foot must be empty [or the other way around]. If the front hand and foot are both solid, then the front foot cannot move freely. When practicing the routine empty handed, how can one know whether the front foot is empty? Chen Xin said that when practicing solo, one should imagine that they are fighting with someone. This requires that one must have an imagined target in mind during practice. Practice this way will be both strict and practical.

Since there is an imagined target, I must have in mind what the opponent’s technique will be. Then I will also know the necessary technique used to counter him. In the first “Buddha’s Warrior Attendant Pounds Mortar” the opponent attacks from the front with his right fist. I take it with my right hand. My left hand touches the outside of his right elbow and pulls it in towards the right top corner. At this point the sinking and grinding out action of my left hand is solid. Therefore my left foot must be empty so as to make an advance.

In the second move of “Block Touching Coat” the opponent pushes my right wrist with both hands. Though I don’t resist with force, my energy and the power of the opponent’s push will combine to make my right hand solid. If my right foot is not empty, it cannot advance either. The Chen Style Taijiquan verbal key is “front issues [power] while the rear sinks.” Master Chen [Fake] only used a Half-Horse Stance when he issued in push hands. He did so in order to avoid being double heavy.

Other Issues

In the Chen Style Taijiquan revolution of the positive circle, the *shun chan* portion must first sink the elbow and stick it to the ribs. The forearm turns sideways while the middle finger is raised. The right hand of the “Buddha’s Warrior Attendant Pounds Mortar” is like this. When changing into *ni chan*, the hand must lead the elbow to turn outwards. The elbow should be about five inches lower than the shoulder. The elbow is not allowed to be level with the shoulder. Nowadays, Chen Style Taijiquan practitioners always have their fingers pointing down. This is obviously

erroneous.

In addition, the revolution of the left hand in “Buddha’s Warrior Attendant Pounds Mortar” is a negative circle. When turning upwards the elbow must withdraw first. Nowadays, Chen Style Taijiquan practitioners never pay attention to the withdrawal of the elbow. This is a serious error.

2. Chen Style Taijiquan Practical Method Three-Character Canons

三字经

Note to readers from the translator:

The original text is in poem form with only three characters in each line. To make the poems more easily comprehensible to the readers, the translator decided to ignore the three-character special feature and render the text into simple poetic verses.

One Introduction

In Chen style Taijiquan
The theory is precise
But the method is complex
Yin and *yang*
Both part of an interplay
The myriad of changes
Are rooted in one source
Only silk reeling
Is the foundation
Each Taiji movement
Is shaped in spirals
That must be
Rounded and loose
Like a towel
Repeatedly wrung
Condition the entire body
Internally and externally
Open the meridians
For the blood and *qi* to flow
Get rid of the illness
Bring in health and peace
And no more pestilence
We must be persistent
Focus on the techniques
Make the body agile
Use soft to neutralize
And hard to attack
Adapt to your opponent
All in spirals

2. Three-Character Canons

Notes:

The above deals with the *yin* and *yang* theory from the “*Book of Changes*” which is the source of Chen Style Taijiquan. Today, it still complies with the principle of the union of opposites. This form of exercise not only enhances physical well being, but also has martial implications. Its basic rules are within the movement of the spirals.

Two **Silk Reeling**

When talking about silk reeling
Attend to the details
The inside and outside spirals
Are distinguished
By *shun* and *ni*
Shun energy opens
Ni energy closes
Hardness and softness
Complement one another

Three Eyes

The mind gives the orders
The eyes pass them on
Appraise the landscape
Assess the enemy position
The eyes can see
With focus and peripherally
The focus is *gu*
Pan is the peripheral
The torso, stance and hand
Follow *gu* and *pan*
Lock onto the target
Do not wander

Four Torso

Talking about the body
There is upper, middle and lower
Lead with rising head energy
Follow with sinking *dang* (1) energy
The waist is like an axle
Avoid protrusion and indentation (2)
The *changqiang* point
Is at the end of the tailbone
Tuck it towards the body
But turn it slightly out (3)
Qi is loosened and sunk
Into your lower abdomen (4)
Center becomes low
Movement does not cause crookedness
Inside the *kua* is loose
The *dang* is open and round
Both are agile, stable
And natural (5)
Both knee caps
Are flush with the heels (6)
Turn with the torso
One knee up, the other down (7)
The theory of leverage
Lies in the pivoting point (8)
Like a scale weighing grain
Weight is added
The counterweight shifts (9)
Making the center
Automatically balance (10)
Keep the center
Don't move position (11)

2. Three-Character Canons

Notes:

- (1) The upper part must be suspended while the lower part is loosely sunk.
- (2) This is pronounced as “*gu wa*.”
- (3) This requirement is the fundamental difference between Chen Style Taijiquan and other styles of Taijiquan.
- (4) This refers to the point of *qihai* (Sea of Qi) under the naval. Daoist books refer to this point as the “*dantian*.”
- (5) As the *dang* opens the lowered center of gravity will allow increased stability. Inside the *kua* the ligaments will loosen. This will increase your flexibility to enable turning left or right.
- (6) The knee and the front of the foot are not allowed to be level with each other. Otherwise the calf will lean forward, causing double heaviness and you lose the ability to turn.
- (7) When the body turns left, then the left knee points up and the right knee points down. When the body turns right, then the right knee points up and the left knee points down. This keeps the center of gravity level.
- (8) The pivoting point is on the *baihui* point on top of the head and it points up. It forms a vertical axis down to the tailbone. The weight bearing point is anywhere on my body to which the opponent applies power. The power point is any part of my body that is used to entice the opponent with *peng* energy.
- (9) An ancient treatise says, “Stand like a scale.” This conforms to the theory of dynamics. On a scale, when the weight is increased, then the counter-weight on the scale must be moved correspondingly to keep the scale arm balanced. This is the

function of the Taijiquan *peng* method. This refers to adjusting your balance accordingly.

- (10) This refers to the concept of “balancing as one moves,” or balance in action.
- (11) According to the requirement of the ancient treatise, “standing like a scale”; “waist is like a wheel’s axle” (The wheel’s axle cannot toss back and forth or sideways), the body must be upright and relaxed as well as not leaning forward or falling backward. Some say that Chen Style Taijiquan should move all the weight to one leg. This does not conform to the rules of Chen Style Taijiquan.

Five Stance

Stance moves forward and backward (1)
It must turn with the body
Either diagonally or straight
It must change
According to the position
Talking about stances
We have Horse, Bow and Twist
Empty and Solid
They change back and forth
The movement is like water
Flowing in winding rivers
When it stops
It is stable like a mountain
Within the heavy sinking
There is ability

Notes:

- (1) The advance and retreat of the stance must follow a curved line. This is caused by the toes turning outwards or inwards. The foot must absolutely not move on a straight line.

Six Hand Techniques

Talking about the hand
Is most complex
Shun and *ni* turns
Are totally mixed
Whenever it is *shun*
The palm turns up
The small finger comes in
And the thumb grinds up (1)
Whenever it is *ni*
The palm turns down
The thumb comes in
And the small finger turns up (2)
Whenever it is *shun*,
Sink the elbow and wrist
Guide the palm
To draw a curved line
Whenever it is *ni*
The palm leads
The hand leads the elbow
The elbow carries the shoulder
Shun and *ni*
Belong to self-turning
Whenever rotating
There must be a revolution
And revolution changes
Causing positive and negative circles
In the positive circle
Shun and *ni* are each half (3)
Ni is out on the top
Shun is back at the bottom
Low is level with the naval
High is level with eyes (4)

2. Three-Character Canons

The elbow withdraws while sinking
And sticks to the side of the ribs (5)
The opening and closing of the hand
Is accomplished in front of the chest (6)

The negative circle
Is the same as the previous one (7)

Ni is down and out
Shun is up and return

The elbow returns
To the front at the nipple
The *chan* is *shun*

The palm does not slant (8)
Turn the elbow down
Stick it to the edge of the ribs
The hand leads the elbow
Making *ni chan*

Open along the *kua*
And then turn up
The elbow is loose and sunk
And this never changes
The shape of this revolution

Is like an egg
With the big or small end
There are restrictions
In the positive circle
The small end is in front of your heart (9)

In the negative circle
The small end changes
In front of your eyes (10)

Either left or right
Or back and forth (11)

Left or right circles
Positive or negative (12)
Front circle or back circle
Practice diligently

The methods of *chan*
Have complex variations (13)
The hand is: *ni* out
To the rear outside (14)
Changing to *shun* on return
It passes the side of the ear (15)
Within its circle
All eight techniques
Are encompassed (16)
Basic training
Do not take it lightly

Notes:

- (1) This refers to the small finger turning inward and the thumb grinding out and upward.
- (2) This refers to the thumb turning inward and the small finger grinding out and upward.
- (3) Within one positive circle, half must be *shun* while the other half must be *ni*. It is the same for the negative circle.
- (4) Not lower than the navel and not higher than the eyes. This refers to the parameter for the circle. Within this parameter, the exact size of the circle can vary according to the postural requirements.
- (5) The elbow position also changes according to the postural requirements necessitated by the opponent. Whenever needed, the elbow can touch the ribs. Whenever there is no need, the elbow does not have to stick to the ribs. "Elbow does not touch the ribs" is not a rule of Chen Style Taijiquan.
- (6) Chen Style Taijiquan requires that each hand must not pass the

2. Three-Character Canons

body's centerline. The requirement is for the palm of the right hand to face the heart (on the left side of the body).

- (7) This refers to the half *shun* and half *ni* within one circle. See note 3.
- (8) The elbow withdraws toward the front of the nipples but the fingers continue to point in the original direction.
- (9) In a positive circle, the small end is in front of the heart while the big end is at eye level.
- (10) In the negative circle the small end is on the outside lower edge. When turning upward to eye level, turn the wrist to *shun chan*. The big end of the circle occurs during the withdrawal of the elbow toward the nipple, the hand turns out along the *kua*.
- (11) This would be used for example in Cloud Hands.
- (12) Examples would be Brush the Knee in Oblique Stance and in Step Back to Twist on Both Sides.
- (13) The changes of the left and right positive or negative circles are: one side is *shun* while the other side is *ni*. It can also be double *shun* or double *ni*. Though front and rear circles use negative turns, the *chan* method changes at least four times and sometimes as many as five or six times. An example of this would be in the moves for Brush the Knee, Step Back to Twist on Both Sides, Fist Protecting the Heart and Tame the Tiger.
- (14) In the negative circle, the hand follows the outside lower edge of the *kua*.
- (15) One must first withdraw the elbow to the ribs and then the

hand travels by the ear, jaw line and finally to the front of the chest. This is a Chen Style Taijiquan rule.

- (16) This refers to *peng*, *lu*, *ji*, *an*, *cai*, *lie*, *zhou* and *kao*, the eight techniques. They all must change according to the modifications that occur with the eye, torso and stance.

Seven Coordination

It is more important
To talk about coordination
The waist (1) is the key
To upper and lower body coordination
Your eyes give the order
The hand and foot must be there
Inside and outside
Must become one (2)
Top and bottom
Must shine on each other (3)
The hand matches the stance
This distinguishes *shun* and *ao* (4)
The inside or outside curve (5)
Depends on the need
Either slanted or straight
Either big or small
Agile but sunk
The energy will be clever
Ten thousand variations
As if it is miraculous
Stick to the rules
Practice makes one skillful
Do hundreds of repetitions
Don't say it is hard work

Notes:

- (1) The waist is the center joint. It is also the hinge between the upper and lower bodies.
- (2) The inside three harmonies are: mind to *qi*; *qi* to force. The outside three harmonies are: shoulder to *kua*; elbow to knee;

and hand to foot.

- (3) This refers to that fact that the outside three harmonies must be synchronized between the upper and lower bodies.
- (4) When the hand and foot are on the same side it is *shun*. When the hand and foot are crossed it is *ao*. For example in “*shun lan* elbow,” the right elbow issues to the right and the right foot is on the same side. This is how the form name was given. When the right elbow issues power to the front and left and the right foot is behind, it is called “*ao lan* elbow.”
- (5) The trajectory for the hand and foot movement has an inside curve and an outside curve. There is also the distinction between an upper turn and a lower turn. The foot has the distinction of having a front and back.

Eight Push Hands

When the form is adequate
You should learn to push hands
This will provide you an opportunity
To check with your partner
Whether your form is correct (1)
The thirteen postures
Must all be checked
Against each other
Cai, lu, lie and don't overlook
Enticing into emptiness (2)
Ji and *an*; *kao* and *zhou* (3)
All these are attacking methods
Peng is the leading one (4)
Whenever touching an opponent
You must utilize *peng* energy
And your heart must be tranquil (5)
Use the same hand (6)
As the attacking one
To defend yourself
Sink and loosen your elbow
Watch the movement
Of your opponent
Whether to use *cai, lu, or lie*
Depends on the postures
If he comes to me strong,
I will counter with a soft (7) response
When the oncoming force
Is straight and horizontal
I counter with horizontal *ji* and *peng* (8)
Utilize the method of *chan* (silk reeling)
But don't retreat or fight head on (9)
Entice in your opponent's body

To make him fall into emptiness
When he loses his posture
He will lean forward
He will change his move
And there will be
A moment of hesitation
Seize this chance
And attack with *ji* and *an*
Use the elbow to strike
And your body to *kao*
Follow the posture
And you will succeed
Your eye, body and stance
Must coordinate with the hand
Upper and lower body
Must be coordinated
And the torso must be erect
Keep the center of gravity
And don't lose your center (10)
Staying undefeated is the way
To seek to win
If you don't want to lose
You need to avoid double heaviness (11)
In the movement of the spiral
We seek to be sticky and voracious
Accumulate experience
From push hands
Learn from your classmates
And encourage each other
Praise the accomplishments
And correct the mistakes
Don't pay attention
To loss or winning
Defeat or success (12)
In dealing with fellow practitioners

2. Three-Character Canons

One must respect the aged ones
Be polite to each other
And don't fight to be the first
Learn with an empty heart
And your ability will increase
If you initiate power [*fajin*]
You must keep safety at heart
It is good to play the game to a draw
And both feel good about it
Keeping your opponent's reputation
Will make your heart feel at ease
If you run into a bully
Don't engage him
Treat him with polite words
And a humble attitude
Live in peace with everyone
And all must feel the peace inside

Notes:

- (1) Push hands is a scientific method of experimentation. It is similar to learning to recognize words, to read text and to learn to make sentences and a composition. Push hands is used to test whether each move is practiced correctly.
- (2) *Cai*, *lu* and *lie* are all methods of enticing into emptiness. One must follow the rules to execute these moves and not take them lightly. In the "*Song of Push Hands*" there are the words, "*peng*, *lu*, *ji* and *an* must be treated seriously." Also, "entice into emptiness and when everything is harmonized the opponent will bounce out."
- (3) When the back of the hand touches the opponent it is called "*ji*." When the palm of the hand touches the opponent, it is called "*an*." *Kao* is on the shoulder, back and the *kua*.

- (4) It does not matter whether you are enticing or attacking, you must use *peng* energy. Without *peng* energy there is only shape, without any substance.
- (5) When the principles, theory and methods are understood, one should attain expertise. One with expertise will have calmness naturally in him.
- (6) According to the verbal transmission, Chen Style Taijiquan follows the rules of “Right hand meets up with the right hand; left hand meets up with the left hand.” One should use *peng* energy to receive oncoming force from the outer edge of your hand. With this method, one can control an opponent’s two hands with one of your own.
- (7) The “*Taijiquan Treatise*” says “When the opponent is hard and I counter with softness, this is called movement.” This word “softness” should be understood as a spiral movement, not as a soft and weak linear withdrawal.
- (8) The original “*Peng and Neutralization Song*” is “straight come, horizontal block; horizontal come, vertical strike.”
- (9) When blocking, if one does not know how to appropriately use “*chan*” (not retreating and not forcing) then they cannot neutralize.
- (10) The concept of “central equilibrium” in the thirteen postures belongs to the realm of body stance. It is the central equilibrium of movement, not of stagnancy. The movement of the hands and feet are also part of the effort to maintain the central equilibrium.
- (11) Wang Zongyue was the earliest to raise the question of “double heaviness.” When one is double heavy, the center of gravity can

2. Three-Character Canons

be easily controlled. This is a “cardinal sin” within Chen Style Taijiquan. Please see the chapter on “double heavy.”

- (12) One should not be conceited because of winning; nor shamed because of loss.

Nine Double Heavy

When we talk about “double heavy” we are referring to the condition of the hands and feet being solid at the same time; the hand moves too slowly and the foot turns with stagnation. This will cause the center of gravity to tilt leading to the inability to perform the desired technique (1).

In Chen Style Taijiquan
The front foot is void
The *dang* is loose and sunk
While the rear foot is solid
Void does not mean empty
Solid is not rigid
In between void and solid
Is the disparity of the weight (2)
Void is agile; therefore good
For the switching of centers (3)
Solid is stable; therefore good
For establishing a root
To trick one's opponent
One relies on the power of the foot
When the foot has no power
Tricks cannot be applied
Whenever receiving an attack
The hand comes out first
I use softness and turning
To entice his power
The oncoming force is on my arm
Though I am void of power
It is the same as being solid (4)
To avoid double heavy
The waist is more than a key
It must be like the turning
Of an axle to avoid tossing

2. Three-Character Canons

Sink the center of gravity
To the area of the *dantian*
Your body and stance
Always change to match whatever comes (5)
Forward and backward movements
Do not belong to the Chen Style (6)
One small wrong movement
The posture is lost (7)
At this time, it is up to
The *chan* of the leg
The *chan* of the leg
Uses one *shun* and one *ni* (8)
The power of the hand
And the elbow
Is also forbidden to be double heavy
Every time the elbow sinks
The hand must come up
Shun chan energy neutralizes
When the opponent's power
Is on my elbow (9)
Sinking down is soft
While rising up is hard
When the palm turns downward
It is moving in the *ni chan* path (10)
At this time you must face forward
Directly towards the opponent
The shoulder, elbow and hand
Must use *yin* and *yang*
But once in a while
There is a smart person
He avoids the word "double"
And talks about "single heavy"
He does not understand
The importance of coordination
When both feet are on the ground

One is somewhat stable
What is the use of single footed stances
Golden Rooster Stands on One Leg
And the kicks (11)
All depend on the hand
Catching the opponent first
Or double catching
That forces the opponent
Into a disadvantageous position
Only then look for a chance
To attack with knee and foot (12)

Notes:

- (1) The condition of “double heaviness” occurs whenever the hand and foot on the same side are weighted solidly at the same time. This will cause the hand to be slow in enticing and neutralizing and a loss of control will ensue when switching stances. Techniques that are attempted under these circumstances will be rendered useless.
- (2) Normally, people explain “double heavy” as the condition when both feet are equally strong and the center of gravity is centered between the two legs. This has been treated as the fundamental taboo of Taijiquan. I think otherwise. Some also say that “double heavy” is when two opponents have equal power. However this observation complies with the requirement of: “When the opponent is hard then I am soft” from the “*Taijiquan Treatise*.” This method avoids the problem of head-on power. But this straight line of retreat will cause the rear to be double heavy and the energy to become lost. In order to void the mistake of double heaviness and achieve the ability of “not losing nor powering up,” one must coordinate the upper and lower body by using spiral movements. The change of direction and the timing of those changes must be totally controlled

2. Three-Character Canons

to “exact appropriateness.” “The opponent is hard while I am soft” is realized when the hand is solid while the foot is empty. This will avoid double heaviness, but the solidness of my hand is the result of the opponent amplifying my power. I use self-rotation to neutralize. This is the “solid inside of emptiness.” It also is “hard against hard.”

- (3) The requirement for the feet is that the empty foot is lighter than the solid foot. It is definitely NOT one empty and the other solid. The ratio is about 40% for the empty foot and 50% for the solid foot, saving 10% for the waist to be used to coordinate while changing the ratio of the power on the feet.
- (4) Turn refers to the outward or inward turn of the toes and to the forward and backward movement of the stances; change is the movement of adhering to the turn to switch between empty and solid.
- (5) When the opponent applies power to my wrist, elbow or shoulder, I will neutralize softly without losing all power. Therefore this emptiness is actually solid. At this time if the foot underneath the hand is also solid, then “double heaviness” occurs because both the hand and foot are solid.
- (6) The body stances have numerous variations, but the center of gravity is always kept.
If the center of gravity is moved to one leg, it is a violation of the Chen Style Taijiquan principle: “Upright like a plumb line and the waist is like the axle of a vehicle.”
- (7) When both the front hand and front foot are solid, you will fall forward. When both the rear hand and rear foot are solid, you will definitely fall on your back.
- (8) The *chan si* energy of the two legs must always be one positive

while the other is negative.

- (9) This is meant to say when the opponent adds power to my elbow.
- (10) If the opponent adds power to my wrist and the energy path is directed towards the floor, then a negative circle retreating downwards is considered “soft.”
- (11) This refers to “Golden Rooster Stands on One Leg”, “Left Rub the Foot, and “Right Rub the Foot.”
- (12) When attacking with the knee or foot, Chen Style Taijiquan requires that the opponent’s hand must be controlled with your hand first.

Ten Understanding the Energy

When learning Taijiquan
You should understand the energy
 When you start
 You should ask (1)
Seeking to understand the energy
 Is not difficult
 Eight hand techniques
 All in the routines (2)
 For each movement
 You must analyze
When blocking the hand
 First use *peng*(3)
 Cai, lu, lie
 To entice use
 Zhou, ji, kao
 Three joints interplay
 The top, middle, and root
 Their roles interchange (4)
 Back of hand *ji*
 Center of palm *an* (5)
 Ji or *an*
 Can be switched
 Using *shun* or *ni*
 The turning of the hand
 Angles are difficult (6)
 Speed is first
 Soft overcomes hard
And depends on circularity
 Fight for speed
 In turning the joints
 In any turn
Are countless points (7)

Point to point
Energy is issued (8)
Angles are precise
Timing is difficult
For the key to understanding
First is *zhuo*
With each move
Make an experiment
When saying directions
Shun and *ni*
In self-turning
There is a revolution
The revolution of a turn
Is positive and negative
Open and close
Timing decides the sequence
Everything changes
According to the opponent
Through minute changes
Don't confuse these (9)
Like learning words
Distinguish the points and lines
Like the eight techniques (10)
One form in the routine
Is equal to a sentence
The whole routine
Is equal to an article
Read the book well
Then write the composition (11)
At the examination
Your heart is calm
When training do the routine
As though fighting
When pushing hands do it
As though practicing

2. Three-Character Canons

Approach it this way
Respond the same way
The heart is tranquil
Because of training

Notes:

- (1) The concept of “understanding the energy” was originally introduced by Wang Zongyue. In the “*Taijiquan Treatise*” he said, “From familiarity with the routines, one will eventually understand the energies.” Some people promote the idea of seeking the understanding of the energies through push hands. This approach neglected “familiarity.” If one has no ability in “familiarity” and the variations of the routine, how can one reach an understanding of the energies? Therefore, I believe, beginners must learn to understand the usage and application of each and every move in the routines. After this step, they can gradually understand the energies. Familiarity is a tangible action while energy leads to the intangible variations and internal changes.
- (2) Some people call the *peng, lu, ji, an, cai, lie, zhou, and kao* the “Eight Gate Energy Variations.” This is somewhat inappropriate. These in reality are the eight methods used for the upper body. The energy of Chen Style Taijiquan is only one: *chansijin* (silk reeling energy) which is commonly known as *peng* energy. The above eight techniques are methods of utilizing this one energy. Further, Chen Style Taijiquan has a very complex system of hand usage. It is not “only in the form of ‘Grasping the Bird’s Tail’ that there are the four energies of *peng, lu, ji* and *an*”, as some suggested.
- (3) During push hands, two parties should first use their hands to make the *peng* contact.
- (4) The top, middle and root are hand, elbow and shoulder. This

can be changed from *ji* to *zhou* and then *kao*. Reversely, this can also be changed from *kao* to *zhou* and then to *ji*.

- (5) When applying *ji*, the back of the hand faces the opponent. During the use of *an*, the palm of the hand faces the opponent.
- (6) The changes required for silk reeling focuses on the split second during the turning of the palm. The angles and the slant of the hand must not be one millimeter off.
- (7) The circle is composed of numerous points. One circle has 360 degrees and each movement has 180 degrees. Thus, there are 180 variations of points and lines interacting.
- (8) When pushing hands, the opponent also has this invisible variation of points and lines. Whenever the opponent moves slightly slower than my move, his point will be exposed. If the delay is within a fraction of a second, I can use my point to issue against his point and throw him out.
- (9) The “*Treatise*” says, “A mistake of one millimeter can put one a thousand kilometers off course.” When using *chansijin*, the coordination of angles and timing must be so precise that not one bit is off.
- (10) The hand techniques of the routine should be the same as the eight techniques used for the writing of Chinese calligraphy.
- (11) The Taiji routine is the same as the writing of an article. There should be an introduction, body, climax and conclusion.

Eleven Learning

If you want to learn the routines
You must first know the theory
You must be civilized
You must also be courteous
In addition to that
You also need to know about science
Learn some dynamics
And human physiology
The methods of leverage
And spiral energies
The emptiness and solidity of energies
Are connected to blood and *qi*
Strengthen your body
And enhance your [martial] abilities
To know the theories
You need to find
A teacher who understands
If the teacher does not understand
He only misguides the students
The teachings of the teacher
You must record carefully
The demonstrations of the teacher
You must watch closely
From physical understanding
To mental understanding
Contemplate frequently
Practice regularly
Persist
Follow the rules
Seek progress
Don't rush
Without knowing

Ability has increased
You also need
To have good friends
With friends
You can help each other
And experiment with each other
Ponder it
Right or wrong
All becomes clear

Twelve Teaching

Being the teacher
Is a heavy responsibility
First of all
You must be truthful
Understand the theories
Avoid superstitions (1)
Demonstrate in detail
And don't gloss over (2)
Treat students
With due patience
So that they
Will not lose interest
Treat youth
With strictness
They must learn the rules
Without any recklessness
Urge them to study diligently
Give them attention
Treat seniors and the sick
Differently
Practice softly
Don't seek speed
Wait until their health recovers
Then add more vigor
Exercising with vitality
There is appropriateness
For each person
So you can maintain
Health and safety
Teaching and learning
Supplement each other
While learning and teaching

Avoid conceit
When people come to learn
There is only one teacher
Whoever comes to learn
He is also my teacher
The student will push the teacher
Review the materials diligently
Learning never stops
It is an endeavor for a life time
If you want to succeed
You need the collective intelligence
Of everyone
Don't consider yourself the teacher
And upon reaching the peak
Counsel the students
To surpass the teacher
Improve with the teacher
Together we achieve

Notes:

- (1) Taijiquan is a scientific art. In Taijiquan books from the past, there have been many writings that lean towards the superstitious. Learners should be vigilant of this.
- (2) The teacher should explain in detail the basic rules and variations of the thirteen postures of Taijiquan to the students. In combination with demonstrations, the teacher should experiment scientifically with the students in order for them to gain a thorough understanding.

3. On Chen Style Taijiquan

太极拳品并序

Preface

There are special treatises on the appreciation of poetry and guidelines for understanding books. The ancients appreciated works of writing in the form of poetry. How can the art of Taijiquan exist without such appreciation? Therefore, I use the writing style of the ancient Si Kong and create this “*Treatise on the Appreciation of Taijiquan*.” The level of appreciation is in reality dependent on the level of ethical standing of the person reading it.

One Solemnity

Though Taijiquan belongs to the realm of a traditional sport, it is a perfect art form with a precise theory and a complex methodology. It is also a suitable method for maintaining people's health. Students of this art should follow the rules strictly and attempt to solve the difficulties. They should also carefully seek to know the rules. In doing so, the first rule to be recognized is the requirement to be "solemn."

Though a minor skill
It enables the body
Eye, torso position and hand
All must obey the rules
Movement, tranquility
Open and close
Hardness, softness
Curvature and straight line
Are coordinated through spirals
That result in contradictory harmony

Two Roundedness

One must follow the rules strictly in learning this form. But at the same time it is also taboo to have restrictions. One must come out of the “solemn” state and pay attention to roundedness and harmony.

The sport of Taijiquan
Does not depart
From squares and circles
Upper and lower follow each other
The key is in the spirals
The exchange of the curved line
And the interchange
Of the inside and outside
The switching
Of the emptiness and solidness
The determination
Of cardinal or diagonal directions
Thousands and thousands
Of variations
But the center is never off
The mind, body and movement
Are all one
These are not easy
For ordinary people

Three Agility

Roundness is the method for coming out of restrictions. Agility is the result of the roundedness.

Roundness will give rise to lightness
Harmony will give rise to agility
The sudden turn of the wind
Streaming by the swallow
The dipping into water
Of the dragonfly
Intending to go forward
But suddenly returning
Intending to see off
But instead welcoming
Speed is not fleeting
Without any hesitation or delay
Elegant like a startled kitty-hawk
Graceful like a swimming dragon
Rounded and smooth as your will
Within this is the decision

Four Stability

Agility without stability will gradually cause floating. Therefore the next step must be stability. The method to achieve this is to have your energy suspended. The center of gravity then goes into natural self-adjustment. The method for using the eyes is to keep them on the target to maintain tranquility within the movement.

The wheel flies like wind
But it does not depart
From its axis
Stable and agile
Use the hardness
To supplement the softness
Hardness is not stiff
Softness does not retreat
The center spirals down
The method is in the movement
Of the *dang* and knees
Like a ten thousand ton ship
Riding the ocean waves
Under the control of
One single helmsman

Five Power

Stability lies within internal energy. Power resides in the postures. Inside and outside compliment each other. However, unless one has followed the rules strictly for an extended period of time they will not reach this level.

Avalanche and tsunami
Tiger's stare
And the gaze of the hawk
A thousand miles of tornado
Ten thousand pounds of lightning
Strengthen my power
Belittle my enemy
Without any pretension
With truthfulness within
Moving with health
And without cessation
The central *qi*
Permeates and purifies
Power without violence
Is the genuine power

Six Elevation

If you are leaning too much towards power, you are getting close to becoming “unruly.” Mediate this situation using “elevation.”

Humble and careful
Void of conceit and temper
The mind-intent can then mix
The physical form
Can then be elevated
The dripping water of the creek
The floating of the clouds
The swimming fish
In the shallow water
Gentle wind
That moves the weeping willow
The observer loses
All thoughts of restlessness
The pure blue flame
Is the pure ability
That comes from training

Seven Complexity

If one achieves “elevation”, they must still follow the rules. One must then continue to study the details so as to reach the level of “complexity.”

Heavenly clothes have no seams
There is no trace
Of the needle and thread
Follow the rules strictly
So that every move
Is naturally a form
Spirals turn thousands of times
Each time results in success
Not one feather can be added
So sensitive that speed is achieved
Not one fly can land
The variations cannot be predicted
Issue and withdraw
Without any gaps
Movement and tranquility are one

Eight Softness

Complexity will cause tightness. The remedy is to use softness to ensure that one adheres to the principle of contradictory harmony.

The sources are all mixed
So the river flows strongly
The sources are full
So that the flow is far
Like a spring worm spitting silk
Making a cocoon
Back and forth reeling
Thousands of times
Stop and enjoy
You will understand instantly
And rise above
The method does not
Depart from circles
Other methods are futile

Nine Spirit

The movement of the outer body is both complex and soft. The expression of the spirit should be serious and lively.

Practice for precision
You will gain the spirit
The expression of the spirit
Is in the eyes
Show neither happiness nor anger
The horse neighs against the wind
The hawk comes out of nowhere
The bird aims for the mouse
In the garden
The fish jumps out of the water
A beautiful flower is in first bloom
The autumn moon is often renewed
Both the body and the spirit
Are elegant
Youth is forever kept

Ten Reserve

To excessively expose the spirit is another error that must be resolved. To accomplish this, one must also be reserved.

The internal energy is full
The outside
Does not have any pretension
A thousand pound bow
Four ounces of arrow
Pulled tightly but not released
As if it has already
Reached the target
Mountain rain is coming
A pleasant wind is starting
Just like using military strategy
Stay still like a virgin
With one touch it all releases
With one taste all must cease

Eleven Elegance

Reserved does not mean to be shy. One must be graceful and present the demeanor of elegance.

Light silk garment and soft belt
The style of a gentleman
Leisurely but prepared
The demeanor is elegant
Ordering ten thousand soldiers
The flag is bright and clear
The rising sun in the vast sea
The strong pine tree on Mount Tai
The rolling of the autumn clouds
The fullness of the spring water
Moves sparsely and tightly
Into an order
Like the stars in the sky

Twelve Meaning

Once you enter this art, the training will become enjoyable and meaningful. The meaning is endless.

In the practice there is a vision
The vision creates emotion
Mountains beyond mountains
And water over water
At the dark corners
Of the weeping willow
There is a place of bright flowers
Good friends on your side
Are better than teachers afar
The joy is beyond description
When the situation
And the emotions are perfect
The meaning is endless
Like cooking carp
Both fattened and fresh
The beautiful woman
In light makeup
And the lotus flower
That comes out of water

Thirteen Natural

“As wonderful as that from nature, the result is not that of human effort.” This quote is excerpted from “Anthology of Books” and fits perfectly with Taijiquan practice.

Follow the rules strictly
Through osmosis
You will be enlightened
The heart and the hand
Will be both forgotten
At this time you are the rules
The real expert
Is Baoding the Butcher ¹
Leaving no trace of his knife work
The movements
Are purely those of the spirit
The wonder of nature
Comes from hard training
Persist without stopping
At the higher level
You must strive to go still higher

¹ Boading is noted for being so precise while using his small boning knife that the knife did not require sharpening for many years.



Hong Junsheng refused to attend official gatherings. This is his only participation at a taiji masters gathering in Shanghai in 1982. He is 6 from right in the back row. Other masters in this photo include **Yang Zhen duo**, **Wang Peisheng**, **Ma Yueliang**, **Feng Zhiqiang**, **Gu Liuxin**, **Sun Jianyun** and **Fu Zhongwen**.



Hong Junsheng with Japanese and Chinese students.

陈式太极拳



Hong Junsheng with Grandmaster **Chen Fake**. Hong is second from left in the back row.



Grand Master **Hong Junsheng** with his disciple **Li Enjiu**.



Hong Junsheng teaching Japanese students, assisted by his disciple **Chen Zhonghua** who is third from right.

陈式太极拳

Grand Master Hong Junsheng

洪均生宗师



Hong Junsheng with his family after his eldest son **Hong Youren** got married. **Hong Youren** is third from right at the back row.



Hong Junsheng with his disciple **Chen Zhonghua** in 1991.



Hong Junsheng demonstrated how the fingers are used in grabbing.



Hong Junsheng with family

陈式太极拳



Hong Junsheng with Yi Jing (*Book of Changes*) scholar Liu Ziheng.



Hong Junsheng with Japanese students.

陈式太极拳



Hong Junsheng in his apartment in 1984.



Hong Junsheng practicing in his backyard.



Young **Hong Junsheng**

陈式太极拳



陈式太极拳

Annotations on Taiji Treatises

王宗岳太极拳论臆解

Preface

In the literature of Taijiquan, one book with its precise theory and concise language has been universally regarded as the “Canon” by all Taijiquan stylists. It was the “*Taijiquan Treatise*” by Wang Zongyue of Shanyou², written at the time of Emperor Qianlong during the Qing Dynasty.

Its content was derived from the theory of *yin* and *yang*, movement and tranquility. Its explanations are coherent and comprehensive. It dealt with many of the Taiji relationships such as the learning of theory and acquisition of skill; the movement of open and close; the external movements of a straight line and a curve; the parameters of extension and deficiency; *shun* energy (the following type of force), *bei* energy (the resisting type of force), *gang* energy (a rigid force) and *rou* energy (supple energy) during the exchange of power (such as in push hands situations). Wang Zongyue even expounded on the process of progressing from a mastery of the skills to an understanding of the energies involved.

If those who read his work have the ability to understand his original intentions and are good at following his rules, they will become more and more skilled given that they practice persistently. It is not impossible to reach the level of “*sui xin suo yu*” (actions mirror the intent of the heart)³.

Although this treatise is not archaic, it cannot be easily understood. Some terms must be understood through personal experience and practice. For example, the issues of “double heavy” and “comprehension of energy” were not clearly explained and no learning methodology was offered, though there were some words vaguely regarding these issues such as: “In

² Shanyou is a place name that can also refer to Wang Zongyue.

³ This refers to the highest level of Taijiquan training. It is a state of total physical and mental integration. At this level, one’s ability equals what he thinks. In other words, the master has the ability to project his thought into action.

order to avoid this fallacy, one must understand *yin* and *yang*.” The relationship of *yin* and *yang* is a union of the opposites that states: “*Yin* does not depart from *yang* and *yang* does not move away from *yin*. *Yin* and *yang* supplement each other. This is called the comprehension of energy.”

There is the saying, “*wu guo bu ji*” (无过不及 “Without extension or deficiency”) and “*cha zhi hao li, miu zhi qian li*” (差之毫厘, 谬之千里 “a deviation of one millimeter at the source will cause an error of a thousand kilometers at the destination”). Both of these sayings refer to the exactness required for each move, but the parameters for this were not specified. These ambiguities do not provide readers with a clear direction towards the key to the actual movements.

Today both the number of different styles of Taiji and the differences between them continue to increase. The methods of understanding and skill levels of the teachers, as well as the achievements of their students, are quite varied. Though there have been annotations to the “*Treatise*” in the past, there is no clear understanding of what the text is about. For example, the text “...shows that obviously it is not power that wins” and “what can speed do?” were originally criticisms of the natural abilities and reminders to the learners to “learn to use force”, not a negation of the use of “force”, “speed” and “ability.” The intent was in the scientific use of power to utilize the “four ounces” of a small power to move the “thousand pounds” of a greater power. Using power minimally and efficiently will naturally cause “speed.”

However, some “learned” practitioners of Taiji could not understand the original meaning, thus they put emphasis on “intent” and “*qi*,” and as a result they reject the word “force.” Even worse, they created the absurd notion of “slow defeating fast” which, no doubt, changed science into superstition. This caused today’s learners to use only an awkward force in their push-hand competitions without having any Taiji abilities. All those who love Taiji and love to protect the cultural treasure called Taiji must be worried!

I started Wu Style Taijiquan with Master Liu Musan. He was the first to show me a hand-copied version of the “*Taijiquan Treatise*.” Later on I learned Chen Style Taijiquan from Chen Fake. Through time and practice I gradually understood that the words “follow the curve and open into the

straight line” refers to the spiral movements of Taijiquan. Through push hands experimentation, I gradually understood that “left heavy will cause the left side to be empty” is about the upper body (hand) and lower body (leg) coordination (they cannot be solid on the same side). I always realized how to “lead” so as to understand “Four ounces can move one thousand pounds.”

I am writing down my understandings of the “*Treatise*” based on my personal experiences for the benefit of the readers. Maybe some will think that I am biased as my basis for understanding is from a Chen Stylist’s point of view. As a matter of fact, Wang’s treatise was written prior to the creation of the Yang Style. Therefore I think Wang’s treatise could be the same as Chen’s treatise. Using Chen as a basis for understanding is like having a key for a lock. The readers will have to make their own decision whether my writing is appropriate.

Translators Note:

In order for the reader to better grasp the special nature and meaning of the following poems, each poem is shown first in the original Chinese characters, then in an exact word for word translation and finally the poem is rendered into a more readable poetic translation

Verse One

太极者,无极而生。
动静之机,阴阳之母也。

Taiji, *wuji* give birth
Movement tranquility's catalyst
Yin yang's mother

Taiji, born of *wuji*
Is the catalyst
For movement and tranquility
And the mother of *yin* and *yang*

极 “*ji*” means “pinnacle” or “limit.” Adding the character 太 “*tai*” to it, makes it like our colloquial saying of “primitive.” In ancient China, the term “Taiji” had the connotation of “the origin of everything.” *Wuji* is the terminus for “nothingness.” Therefore it is natural to say that Taiji occurs from *wuji*.

In our vernacular, we say “something comes out of nothing.” Everything there is comes out of “nothing.” The existence of matter in the universe is infinite. But we human beings cannot predict what is already there because of our own physiological and environmental limitations. Therefore, we must start with the “nothing” state (that is without knowing) to discover and to invent. This is the “progress” of something. Discovery, invention, creation and progress are all achieved through scientific knowledge. But this is the external reason. The internal reason is the two opposing forces or the *qi* of *yin* and *yang*. The *qi* of *yin* and *yang* contradict each other, but at the same time act upon one another and limit one another. Therefore we say *qi* is the “catalyst” of movement and tranquility and the “mother” of *yin* and *yang*.

Verse Two

动之则分,静之则合。
无过不及,随曲就伸

Move, then separate
Tranquility, then combine
Use neither excess nor deficiency
Follow the curve; adapt, extend

During movement it separates
In tranquility it merges
Without extension
Or deficiency
Follow the curve
And adjust to the extension

This verse states that the direction of movement and tranquility is the opening (to separate) and closing (to merge). The parameters for open and close must be appropriate: neither excessive nor deficient. More importantly, it points out that the basic principle of movement and tranquility is “follow the curve and adjust to the extension.” This perfectly expresses the movement of the spiral.

Accordingly, “open and close” are movements that occur as a result of natural experience. “No excess and no deficiency; follow the curve and adjust to the extension,” are both scientific methods. When we tie this to the “*shun*” (clockwise) and “*ni*” (counter clockwise) silk reeling of Chen Style Taijiquan, we come to the conclusion that to “follow the curve and adjust to the extension” must refer to self-rotation and revolution.

“Opening and closing” is a natural phenomenon that even new-born babies are capable of doing. Therefore, they are also capable of self-rotation and revolution. This is the internal reasoning. But to “follow the curve and to adjust to the extension” must be achieved through learning and practice, so that we may employ this ability appropriately.

However, this treatise only pointed out to “avoid excess without de-

iciency”; it did not explain the criteria. The use of the word “deficiency” actually confuses people.

In his “*Illustrated Book of Chen Family Taijiquan*,” the sixteenth generation descendent Chen Xin (whose official name was Pin San) put forward the idea that “Each hand protects half of the torso with the nose as the demarcation line.” This is much clearer than what was said concerning this point in Wang’s treatise. But the trajectory of the hand movement does not intersect the nose. My view is that the demarcation method is to aim the center of the right palm towards the heart which is on the left side of the body.

Mr. Chen Xin also advanced the idea that during movement the self-rotation is divided into the two directions of *shun* and *ni*. According to the demonstrations of Chen Fake, I added the idea of forward and backward, left and right, and top and bottom pairs of directions during the self-rotation. Through this I discovered the principle governing the positive (*shun*) and negative (*ni*) rotations and revolution. During experimentation, I also formulated the principle that “excess is loss while deficiency is rigidity.”

Based on the above, the principle of “no excess, no deficiency” permeates the upper and lower body coordination of the postures, the stances and the hand techniques. Every action must strictly adhere to the principle of “no excess, no deficiency.” In addition, if there is excess or deficiency, then “*cha zhi hao li, miu zhi qian li*” [or, in English: a deviation of a millimeter at the source will end with a mistake of a thousand kilometers at the destination].

Verse Three

人刚我柔谓之走，
我顺人背谓之粘。

People hard, I soft, call walk
I follow people against, call stick

When the opponent is hard and I am soft
This is called to flow
When I am with the force
While my opponent is against the force
It is called adhesiveness

These two sentences refer to the principles for push hands or *san shou*. When the opponent attacks with a hard strength, I must flow (neutralize) with softness. On the surface, this is a simple statement. In reality, when beginners use softness to neutralize hardness, he will easily lose power (be deficient).

Therefore, we must understand how to use hardness and softness. What is soft and what is hard? How do the two coordinate and exchange? Without learning Chen Style Taijiquan, or learning Chen Style Taijiquan without understanding silk reeling, the hard and soft energies are both, unavoidably, the straight lines of advance or retreat. Otherwise, the movement is a curved, rotational line without the complement of the self-rotation. Therefore the perception of the learner is that hardness will result in a head-on collision while softness will result in losing control.

In Chen Style Taijiquan all movements are circular, no matter what the size is for each of the movements. The half circle formed within a curved line of 180 degrees is made up of dots (in reality it is the dots that form the line). When in contact with the opponent, the line feels soft while the dot feels hard. When the dot runs into the line, it must glide over the line to become soft. Only when a dot points to another dot does the power of hardness come out. If both dots are front facing dots, then there is a collision force. In this case, it doesn't depend on who has the greater power and

who has the lesser power, but which one can move faster. The one with the slower movements will be forced out.

In Chen Style Taijiquan, one needs to use his own dot to hit the opponent's dot. But one's own dot is the one that is spun out from the spiral, not a real dot. This way there is an issue of force without any stiffness.

But how can one be with the flow while the opponent is against the flow? I believe this has to do with the coordination during the spiral movement of the torso, stance and hand techniques. In general, when self-rotating, *shun* and *ni* must be governed by the opponent's changes. The revolving movement must change into triangles according to the opponent's movements. Movements of hand with hand, stance with stance and hand with stance, all must be triangles.

Verse Four

动急则急应, 运缓则缓随。

Move fast, then fast reply
Maneuver slow, then slow follow

Fast movements
Must be met with fast movements
Slow maneuvers
Must be met with slow maneuvers

These two sentences point out that the timing of movements must also adapt to the opponent's movements and the requirement of "no excess, no deficiency" also applies to timing. The principle of contact is: "If the opponent does not move, I cannot move." This method is reasonable and advantageous. The principle of "no excess, no deficiency" however, gives definition to limitations.

Taijiquan is a high level martial art; its strategy is based mainly on self defense. It conforms to the principle of: "If I am not violated, I will not violate." This is being reasonable. Without movement, the opponent cannot detect my intentions. Isn't this advantageous? The words "no excess, no deficiency" leads one to react if action is initiated, then the target is accurately attacked. In the meantime, one's own central equilibrium is not compromised and safety is guaranteed.

Because the timing of the movements must adapt to the speed of the opponent's movements, practice of the form must also vary from slow to fast. But in Chen Style Taijiquan this means when you practice slowly, the whole form must be practiced slowly; and when your practice is fast, the whole form must be practiced fast. It is not one movement fast and slow, like some people have said, "When making turns, movements should be slow." Most importantly, one must not misunderstand the principle as: "slow movements overcome fast movements."

Verse Five

虽变化万端，
而理唯一贯。

Though change, ten thousand ends
But only through one theory

Though there are myriad variations
Only one principle pervades

There is only one principle for Taijiquan. According to the ancient way, it is called “the union of the opposites of *yin* and *yang*.” According to the new approach, it is called “the contradiction within a harmony.” In reality, it simply means if it is reasonable, there has to be an explanation for it. Its fundamental principle is the spiral movements of *shun* and *ni* in self-rotation and the positive and negative circle in revolution. In contact, only the eyes are not allowed to move or turn with the body or hand. The rest must turn left or right; the stance must advance or retreat; and the hand must self-rotate or revolve. The angles and directions of these movements must adapt to (by adding to or subtracting from) the movements [the original word was requirements] of the opponent. In addition, the size and timing of the addition or subtraction must be precise. Every second must be fought for. Indeed there are myriads of variations in execution, but the principle of silk reeling is constantly present.

Therefore I believe, it is important to understand the theories, but even more important to master and utilize the methods. Talking about theory alone without knowing the method is totally empty as with Zhao Kuo who liked to talk about military strategy [but had never fought].

Verse Six

由着熟而渐悟懂劲，
由懂劲而阶及神明。

From familiarity
Then gradually understand energy
From understanding energy
Then step to the bright spirit

Familiarity with the form
Will gradually lead
To understanding the energy
Understanding the energy
Is the necessary step toward elucidation

This verse is referring to the method needed to advance from learning the form to using it in combat and the level of skill progression.

First of all, we should clarify what *zhuo* is. Generally, the *zhuo* of Taijiquan is the eight techniques of the hand and the five directions for the footwork. It is divided into hand, stance, eye, and torso and yet they are all interconnected. The eye method uses only advance while looking left and right, to maintain one's central equilibrium. The body work has advance and retreat while turning left and right (on a left turn, the left retreats and the right advances; on a right turn, the right retreats while the left advances; and the body position shifts with the advance and retreat of the body). Hand and stance advance and retreat also contain left and right changes and are also governed by the principle of central equilibrium. Without central equilibrium, the advance and retreat will have no anchoring point.

“*Peng*” has two meanings. One refers to internal energy, which is the silk reeling energy of Chen Style Taijiquan. This energy permeates the entire body and is utilized for all techniques. Without *peng* energy, *zhuo* is form without substance or function. Another meaning of *peng* is the *zhuo* method. Its function is the “enticing into a neutral position” during contact.

Therefore in Chen Style Taijiquan, in every movement including each connection of movement, *peng* is always present. There are forward *peng*, side *peng*, horizontal *peng*, downward *peng*, left *peng*, right *peng*, advancing *peng*, and retreating *peng*. In the first and second routines of the Chen Style Taijiquan forms, there are roughly dozens of *peng* energies.

I believe that *peng* in Taiji is like the dot (“*dian*, 点”) in Chinese calligraphy. A Chinese character is made up of horizontal lines (*heng*), vertical lines (*shu*), forward slash type strokes (*pie*), backward slash type strokes (*na*), corners (*zhe*), and hooks (*gou*). But all these start from a dot on the paper, and then the changing directions of this dot results in movement to form the character. From one dot to several dots, to a dot on the top, on the side and at the bottom, they all have directional differences in the way they match up to make the whole character.

In the character for “main” (主), the dot must be in the center. Its position relative to the horizontal line of the character “king” (王) must be appropriate. In the character for “jade” (玉), the dot must be at the bottom-right on the horizontal line of the character for king. But in the character for “dog” (犬), the dot is on the top-right corner of the character. In the case for the word “extreme” (太), the dot must be at the left-bottom corner of the word “big” (大). In addition, the timing for the writing of the dot stroke is also different in each case.

In the character for “sheep” (羊), the two dots are on the top of the character. The two dots can also be in the middle such as in the cases of “fire” (火) and “increase” (曾). It can also be at the bottom of the word as in the case of “only” (只). In addition, they can also be on the left hand side such as in the characters for “cold” (冷) and “ice” (冰).

There can be three dots on the side as in “river” (江) and “sea” (海). Four dots can be at the bottom such as “a point” (点) and “fish” (鱼) [This character shows the simplified writing method. The non-simplified character has the four dots at the bottom instead of the line]. Not only are there variations in the coordination, there are also changes in the directions of the stroke just like in the *shun* and *ni* of silk reeling. In the three dots (three drops of water) the first two dots are written in *shun* strokes while the last dot is in a *ni* stroke. In the case of the four dots at the bottom of a word, the first dot is in *ni*, but the rest are all in *shun*. In calligraphy this is the case.

In silk reeling however, one must vary between *shun* and *ni* in accordance with the direction and power of the oncoming force.

In the book “*Chen Style Taijiquan*” by Shen Jiazhen, the author described *shun* as *peng*. With this description he only got half of the correct idea. The other half is that *ni* can also be *peng*. He also said that *ni* is roll-back energy. This is not realistic. It also contravenes the principles of Chen Style Taijiquan. Chen Xin said, “Follow the rules, but don’t be controlled by the rules.” By this he is saying that the rules of *shun* and *ni* must be followed to the letter, but the angles of turn can be modified accordingly. In my teaching I tell students, “In learning the form, one must be dead on. That is to say, precise and without one millimeter of deviation. In applying the form, one must be ‘alive’. That is to say, add or subtract accordingly.”

Cai, *lu* and *lie* are all *zhuofa* (methods of application that are different from technique) or methods of enticing the opponent into emptiness by going with the direction of the oncoming force. But the circle has size variations and the force has differences in regards to separation and combination. In *cai*, the circle is high and big; there is no combined force, only the separated force. In *lie*, the circle is small and there is more separation of force. In *lu*, the circle is medium sized; and the force is combined at the beginning and then is separated. The combination and separation of force is half and half. *Ji*, *zhou* and *kao* are *zhuofa* that use the shoulder, elbow and hand in sequential movements to neutralize and attack the opponent. *An* is the *zhuofa* that counters the attack of *ji*, *zhou* and *kao*. These *zhuofa* permeate each and every one of the moves in the form.

This article raised the question of *zhuoshou* (the ability to apply and create perfection). I believe that at the beginning, one must first understand the application of each form and each movement. Why do you have to move this way; what is the usage of the whole body coordinating in this way? On the basis of this understanding, one can then practice to perfect the moves. Only through this method, will the learner not waste their time.

After *zhuoshou* why did the author say “gradually it will lead to understanding the energy.” I believe that if one wants to understand the so called “energy”, one must first of all understand what energy is and how to use it. *Zhuo* is physical while energy is internal. Energy gradually comes

from correct imitation and careful practice. The word “understand” here should refer to the utilization of energy. The method is to gradually understand through form repetition and scientific experimentation in push hands. This is to say to understand the combination of timing, direction and their changes.

What is *shenming* (elucidation)? This word does not refer to a religious god. It refers to the unpredictable changes and the ability to surprise. The key word here is “elucidate.” It is inseparable from “*zhuoshou*.” The ability to use a technique indicates that one has graduated from understanding to perfection. Likewise, the energy will then change from exposed to hidden. The advancement of one’s ability is one step at a time. Therefore the text contains words like “gradual” and “stepping into.” Mr. Chen Xin also has the poetic verse stating “The element of surprise is in the turning of the joints.” The “surprise” that he referred to is the same as the “*shen*” used here. But when he used the phrase “turning of the joint” he unveiled the mystery of the “*shen*” in Chen Style Taijiquan. Why does the “turning of the joint” give away the secret of “surprise”? This answer resides in the fact that when two parties are fighting, the key element is the precision of the angle and the timing. This “turn” can cause the seeming loser to win. When this is applied correctly, even the practitioner himself will realize that the art is “even I don’t know how mysterious this mysterious art is.” Doesn’t this make people applaud? How is this feat achieved? We will follow this up next.

Verse Seven

然非用力之久，不能豁然贯通焉

However not use force's long
Not can cut through
However, not use force's long
Not able cut through open

However one cannot
Completely understand
Unless he has put in
His due diligence

The “force” that is referred to here is not one’s usual clumsy force. It refers to studying while utilizing your heart and practicing persistently. This is what Master Chen Fake referred to as “Learn it correctly according to the rules; practice until perfect; understand it clearly; get to the details; and experiment with each one of the moves.” “Cut through” is the development of understanding. The understanding of a beginner is limited to each move and each form. “Through” refers to overall understanding; understanding from the outside to the inside; from one point to many points; and understanding one point to help clarify different points.

The words “understanding the energy” were first used by Wang Zongyue in his treatise. Taiji practitioners stress the importance of understanding energy. But in some books and periodicals, authors “swallow the date without spitting out the pit⁴.” They say that in order to understand energy, one should first listen to energy; in order to listen to it, one should first ask for it. How are they going to hear energy? How are they going to deal with it if they can hear it or if their asking is answered? They can not be specific about these questions. Some also propose that learning Taiji must be accompanied by the learning of push hands. This is reasonable. This is because every movement in Taijiquan is like a dot or stroke in Chinese

⁴ 囫圇吞枣: In whole, swallow the date. This is a Chinese idiom that refers to the use of something without understanding it first.

calligraphy. Every form⁵ is like a sentence in an article. One routine⁶ is like the whole article. In learning, one must first of all, recognize the shape of the characters, the pronunciation of the characters, and the meaning of the characters. Then he can use these characters to make sentences. Eventually he will be able to write an entire article. Push hands is like making a sentence. Free sparring is like composing articles. If one does not understand the meaning of the words, how can he write good articles? Du Fu⁷ said, “When you break ten thousand books, your writing is akin to being guided by the gods.” But, “break” does not mean any damage to the books. It refers to the ability to read between the lines, as referred to in this article. Therefore I believe push hands is a stage of learning used to test the correctness of movements after learning the routines. The secrets (subtleties) should be learned through learning the moves and then having the teacher explain and test the applications on you. This method should give one a rough understanding of the subtleties.

Someone claimed that without push hands you will never get the secrets of Taijiquan. I do not understand this claim. Others claim that the learning of push hands must be accompanied by the practice of iron staff for power; wrestling and boxing for techniques, and so on. These claims are too bizarre for me to understand⁸. Does this mean that there is nothing to be learned from Taijiquan in terms of practical fighting techniques? Must there be help outside of Taijiquan? I will leave this question to other learned scholars.

⁵ 式子。A short sequence of a movement that has a complete application, such as all the movements in “White Crane Spreads Its Wings.”

⁶ 拳套,also called 套路. In Chen Style Taijiquan, there are two bare hand routines, *Yilu* and Cannon Fist.

⁷ 杜甫。One of the three sages of Chinese poetry. He was a poet during the Tang Dynasty. The three are Li Bai, Du Fu and Bai Juyi.

⁸ There was a claim that Hong kept a 20 pound iron broom in his backyard. He practiced with it late at night when everyone was gone. This has been refuted by Hong, as well as members of his family and all of his senior disciples.

Verse Eight

虚领顶劲,气沉丹田,
不偏不倚,忽隐忽现。

Empty collar push-up energy,
Qi sink *dantian*
Not-to-the-side not leaning, suddenly disappear
Suddenly appear

Above the neck suspend the head
Sink the *qi* to the *dantian*
Balance perfectly
Your energy becomes elusive

This verse talks about the principles governing the upper, bottom and middle sections of the body.

Suspended energy is a major part of the upper section of the body. The upper section is considered to be located from the base of the neck and continuing up to the top of the head. Suspended energy is mainly based on the *baihui* point located at the top of the head. Because it is the upper section, the energy must be suspended upwards. Mr. Chen Xin said that this would be like hanging a person up with a rope attached to their *baihui* point. His words answered my questions regarding the phrase, “the whole body is light with suspended head” from the “*Song of the Principle of the Thirteen Postures*”⁹(十三式歌). This demonstrates that only when the energy is suspended upward will the body be light. As to the “suspension”, we are not talking about an actual rope here. It is just an image to indicate the feeling for the energy.

Number one of the “*Ten Tenets of Taijiquan*”¹⁰ (太极十要) refers to “empty and agile with suspended energy” (虚灵顶劲). I believe this is a

⁹ It was another classic writing of Wang Zongyue.

¹⁰ This is another classic by Chen Changxing, the teacher of the Yang Style creator, Yang Luchan.

case of misspelling: the word collar (领) was mistakenly spelled as agility (灵). From the point of *baihui* to the point of *changqiang* in the *weilu* there must be a line. In terms of leverage, this line is the fulcrum. The fulcrum must be upright and straight. It cannot sway. Therefore we have sayings in the “*Taijiquan Treatise*” such as, “when standing it is like a level”; and “The waist is like an axle on a cart’s wheel.”

Sink the *qi* down to the *dantian* talks about the rules for the lower section of the body. The idea for the *dantian* was originally from Daoist terminology. In the meridian theory it is called “*qihai*.” We can also say that it is the center of gravity for the body. According to the theory of dynamics, lowering the center of gravity will increase stability.

But the method of sinking the *qi* down to the *dantian* is another story. It is not pushing your breath down to push out the lower abdomen. The sinking of the *qi* to the *dantian* in Chen Style Taijiquan has a lot to do with the actions of the coccyx. Chen Style Taijiquan asserts that the coccyx at the end of the tailbone should curl up backwards. This is completely opposite to commonly held views in society that the coccyx tucks in. The structural posture of the coccyx curling slightly up and backwards encourages the lower abdomen to slightly tilt inwards. Thus the *qi* in the chest and abdomen can naturally go down to the lower abdomen. In the meantime, this posture also loosens the sinews on the inside of the thigh. In this way the *dang*¹¹ can be rounded. This will also lead to increased ability for the body to be able to turn sideways. This not only increases stability for the center of gravity, it also increases the agility of the stances.

The next two lines (“balanced perfectly, your energy becomes elusive”) talk about the rules for the central section which is the waist. The first sentence calls for uprightness. The following sentence points out that the waist turns sideways back and forth. When the waist turns right, the right side is hidden while the left side is exposed; when it turns left, the left side is hidden while the right is exposed.

¹¹ The *dang* is the area from one knee to the other, including the thighs and the lower back. In Chen Style Taijiquan, this area should form an arch.

The above lines mention the rules for the three sections of the body. When is the sequence as follows: top, *dantian* and then waist? I believe this is the perfect sequence for learning, because the top and bottom must first of all become one line. Only then can the waist naturally be upright and not lean sideways.

In order to instruct students how to suspend the head, some teachers tell their students to put something light on their head. In reality, pushing something up and pulling up are totally different energies and different actions. Pulling is from top to bottom. Push is from the bottom going up. The word “suspend” is a much better choice than the original word “pull.”

Verse Nine

左重则左虚,右沉则右杳。

Left heavy then left empty
Right sink then right lost

Heaviness on the left
Will cause it to be empty
When sinking into the right
You will not recover control

This verse explains the coordination that occurs between the hands and feet. It is difficult to understand from just reading the words. Earlier in my life I saw a hand-copied version that said, “When the left is heavy the right is empty; when the right is heavy, the left will be empty.” At the time I thought the hand-copied version made more sense. Later I realized that these comments are too ordinary to be part of the treatise. Through Chen Style Taijiquan push hands, I realized that the verses are meant to indicate the coordination of hands and feet. This is the key to avoiding the syndrome of “double heavy.” It will be much easier for people to understand it as it was originally written, “When the left hand is strong, the right foot must be empty; when the right hand is heavy, the right foot is light.”

There are others who interpret the above lines as rules for push hands. They believe, “When the opponent is hard, I must be soft.” This also appears to make sense. However, whether the opponent will attack my left hand with his left or attack my right with his right hand is highly uncertain.

Verse Ten

仰之则弥高，
俯之则弥深，
进之则愈长，
退之则愈促

Fall-back then too high
Fall-forward then too deep
Enter then too long
Retreat then too short

When he advances towards me
I retreat further than his advance
When he retreats from me
I advance greater than his retreat

These last four lines and the two prior ones are all about how to change directions. The first two are about the coordination of the left and right directions. The up and down are about height. Advance and retreat are about the rules for such directions.

We can appreciate that the word 之 *zhi* represents both the opponent and the self. If it is the opponent, then when the opponent uses *cai* to pull me up, I should move higher than his intended pull so that I don't lose my central equilibrium. If the opponent pushes me downwards, I will move down lower than his intended push. This reference to higher and lower is not a linear height. It must be executed with spiral movements that contain revolution, rotation and the coordination of body parts and stances. When the opponent uses *cai* on my right hand, my right hand must move in a *shun* (positive) reeling to follow this move upwards. In the meantime, the tip of the elbow must turn inward towards me. The tip of the finger is not higher than my eyes and is facing his center. The right foot steps into his *dang* (crotch and leg arch) area. My own *dang* energy must be sunk. From the surface, you cannot say that the hand is high. The actions of the forearm withdrawing, the foot stepping in and the energy sinking down have a combined effect of making the opponent feel I am always higher than him,

no matter how hard he tries to lead me out. These actions can be done with reference to the coordinated body movements in the move of “Wild Horse Parts Its Mane” during the stepping of the right foot.

In the case of the opponent stepping in to push my right hand downwards, I should use the move of “Cannon at the Bottom of the Den” 窝底炮. I must first retreat with the left foot and then follow that retreat with the right foot which is placed about one foot from the left foot. Then the *dang* energy must be well sunk. The right arm moves in a negative circle and its elbow sticks to the ribs on the right side. The hand is in the area of the *dang*. When you increase your turning from this position, the opponent will feel that the more he pushes down, the deeper he goes.

When the opponent uses *lu* on me, I will turn sideways (*lu* on the right, then turn left; *lu* on the left, then turn right). Step in with the right or left foot, loosen the shoulder and sink the elbow. First the hand goes in to press using a negative circle. The upper arm above the elbow moves in a positive circle. The wrist turns towards his left or right rib area. He will feel that the more he uses *lu*, the longer my arm.

If the opponent pushes on my right elbow joint, then I will react according to the direction of the oncoming force. If the force is slightly on the upper part, I will use *shun* reeling in a negative circle to withdraw the tip of my elbow. If the force is slightly lower, I will also use *shun* reeling but in a positive circle to move my elbow towards my ribs. In both cases, the hand must point towards the opponent. The foot can be either advancing or retreating. For example, in the forms of “Cross the Hands” and “Block Touching the Coat” the torso, stance and hand techniques are all done in this manner. The opponent feels unable to advance.

However, if the opponent uses the above technique to respond to my application of *lu*, I then use the second move of “Buddha’s Warrior Attendant Pounds the Mortar” (of the first routine) to counter. The force is on the left hand with sinking and outer grinding¹² energy. I can also use

¹² 下塌外碾: “Sink down and grind out” is one of the major concepts of Chen Style Taijiquan according to the 16th generation master Chen Xin and 18th generation master Hong Junsheng. These are not simple techniques. They are fundamental internal energies.

the second move of “White Crane Spreads Its Wings” to use an upward *cai* move with my right hand while using the left hand to push onto the right side of his lower abdomen. The former uses the left foot to advance with double *cai*; the latter retreats with the right foot while using *cai* with the right hand and *an* for the left hand. Both methods will render the opponent feeling that I am higher than he can reach. He will be forced to retreat.

When I apply the technique of *an* (push) on my opponent and he uses “Cannon at the Bottom of the Den” in the same way that is described above to counter my push, my counter move is to increase the left turn and my sinking energy while the right hand uses *shun* reeling to turn into his *dang*.

In dealing with *lu*, *lie* and advance, although my body and hands physically retreat, as long as the front hand sinks down and grinds out, he will never be as long as I am.

When the front hand using *cai* and *ji* follows the turning of the opponent’s torso and hand push, sink the elbow so that *shun* or *ni* reeling occurs, then the directions and the height of the hands can change. As a result, the opponent will not be able to retreat.

In general, a satisfactory effect can be achieved if the body, stance and hand techniques are appropriately coordinated¹³ with the eye direction remaining unchanged.

¹³ The original text is: the body, stance and hands add and subtract appropriately.

Verse Eleven

一羽不能加, 蠅虫不能落。

One feather not can add
Fly worm not can land

One feather added would be excessive
Even a fly cannot land

The first word group is about sensitivity. The second section is about the quickness of the rotation.

Verse Twelve

人不知我,我独知人。

People not know me.
I alone know people.

He sees me as a mystery
But is completely revealed to me

These two sentences talk about strategy and tactics. When we mention the words “to know”, there is a lot to understand about the word “know.”

The method of “to know” is generally derived by understanding the opponent’s physical position.

Seeing his standing position, I will know whether he is standing to my front, left or right. Then from this observation, I will know which of his feet are in front. Next, I will know which direction he is likely to turn. Lastly, I need to know which part of my body he is looking at.

If we could learn from our own experiences in push hands or “*san shou*”¹⁵, then we can discern the intentions of the opponent from observing his physical appearance. This will give us the ability to act accordingly. However, we must follow the principle of “My actions will not precede his actions.” We must “use tranquility to wait on movement.”

What is not easy to know are the internal energy changes. This knowledge only comes after you understand the physical experience. There is an idiom in the martial art field that says, “As soon as the expert reaches out his hand, he knows whether there is or there isn’t.”

This is to say that by extending your hand to touch your opponent you will know whether your opponent has real *gongfu* and the level of his *gongfu*. Roughly put, a well-built large person will come with a strong force and he will likely try to use his force to seek a quick win. This use of force

¹⁵ *San shou*: loose hand is a form of fighting with fewer restrictions than push hands. It is closer to real fighting.

is inevitably straight and hard. All I need to do is to turn slightly with my body and hand; he will fall into emptiness and get thrown out. If the opponent comes with a softer force and he is good at changing and turning, then I should be on the alert and act with caution.

How can I make myself difficult to assess by my opponent? First of all, I must know myself before knowing my opponent. To know myself is to know the contacting methods and the functions and variations of the routines I have learned. I also must be good at knowing the timing and angles of the changes. I must appropriately and precisely adapt in a timely manner to the changes of the opponent. When you are capable of these, even an opponent who knows the rules of Chen Style Taijiquan cannot predict your changes. Further, the wonder and mystery of Chen Style Taijiquan is not only the circular motions, but also the S-curve and counter S-curve at the point of the turning of the joints. Their horizontal, vertical, slanted and upright positions are changeable all over the body. Not only can the opponent not predict my moves, I cannot predict them either. Mr. Chen Xin puts it this way: "I don't even know the depth of the mystery." This is indeed the reality of the art.

Verse Thirteen

英雄所向无敌,盖皆由此及也。

Hero faces no enemy,
Because all from here come.

The hero is without opponent
Because of this

These two lines summarize all the poems. Because there are no enemies, he is called a hero. The reason that he has no opponent lies in the fact that he follows all the rules and practices persistently. He therefore went from familiarity to understanding the energy and then steps further up to the level of elucidation. The rules of the text are referred to by using the word “this” in the above lines. In the beginning chapter of his “*Illustrated Book of Chen Family Taijiquan*” Mr. Chen Xin stipulated these rules to students. He said, “Learning must start from understanding the theory.” I believe the theory points to both the Taiji form and the way of living. He continued to say that, “Once Taiji is mastered, one must not lose control physically and verbally.” If you lose control over your physical body, you will cause trouble. Nobody likes a person who cannot control what he says either. He further explains, “Speak agreeably so people will treat you fairly no matter whether you win or lose.” In general, modesty is a basic principle for human life. In martial arts, it is a martial virtue.

Verse Fourteen

斯技旁门甚多,虽势有区别,
概不外乎壮欺弱,慢让快耳。

This art side door quite many
Though posture has difference
Generally not outside of
Strong bully weak
Slow let fast

In this art
Are many off-shoot variations
Although postures differ
They are all roughly based
On the concept
Of the strong bullying the weak
And the slow giving way to the fast

This verse and the next two verses introduce the difference between Taijiquan and other martial arts.

“This art” refers in general to martial art. “Side door” refer to the various routines. Although the coordination of postures is different, in most cases the strong overcome the weak. In this case, strong is equated with fast people or moves that will beat slow ones.

Some feel that the use of the words “side door” shows conceitedness and that this usage was a slight referring to other forms. I believe that the author was talking in general terms and no ill intent was meant.

Verse Fifteen

有力打无力,手慢让手快,
是皆先天自然之能,非关学力而有所为也。

Has force hit without force
Hand slow let hand fast
Is all early heaven nature's ability
Not related (to) study force then has ability

When the strong beats the weak
And the slow gives in to the fast
This indicates the power
Of one's natural ability
Not their acquired ability

This verse gives us the weighing scale of natural ability versus learned behavior. He enlightens people to put the focus on learning and not depend only on the natural power with which one is born. "Uncarved jade is not jewelry." Advancement is the combination of internal and external factors.

Verse Sixteen

察四两拨千斤之句,显非力胜,
观耄耋能御众之形,快何能为。

Observe four ounces move one thousand *jin*
Obviously not force win
Watch eighty and ninety year old
Defend crowds
Fast what can do.

When you see four ounces
Overcome one thousand pounds
You realize obviously
That it is not the power that wins
When you see old masters defend against
The attack of a young crowd
You know that it is not speed
That reigns

This verse uses a poem quote and eye-witness facts to demonstrate the effectiveness of learning.

“Four ounces overcomes one thousand pounds” is the fourth verse in “*Ode to Hand Contact*” by an unknown author. This quote was used to demonstrate that it is not untrained force that matters when four ounces can overcome one thousand pounds. When you look at the way eighty or ninety year old Masters defend themselves against a crowd of attackers, you realize that the quicker movements of the young people cannot do harm to the older masters.

Although “obviously it is not force that wins” and “it is not speed that reigns”, I believe that the author did not negate the fact of power and speed. The author tried to enforce the concept of “learn to power up.” If power and speed that one is naturally born with can be trained, then one will gain more efficiency. I endorse the explanation of force in “Nine, Nine, Eighty-One” [Nine times nine equals eighty-one]. It said that the words

“four ounces” and “one thousand pounds” were used to indicate that by following the rules of Taijiquan, one can use a small force to overcome a large force. It did not precisely mean using four ounces of force. In reality to accomplish this one still needs a thousand pounds of reserve force.

However, in some books and magazines by learned people, force is often described as a useless waste product. These people propose to “use intent not force.” They describe intent as a mystery. For example: when his force slightly touches my skin, my intent already went into his bones. Others added the word “*qi*.” For example: when his force slightly touches my skin, my *qi* already went between his skin and connective tissue. Since intent and *qi* are so important, why did Wang Zongyue only mention learning, practicing, applying the form, timing and angles? And why did he only talk about how to understand the energy?

Some books say that Wu Ruxiang could lift three hundred pounds and Hao Weizhen could lift several hundred pounds. I have seen with my own eyes Chen Fake lifting the two hundred some pounds of Li Jianhua over his head. From these examples, we can see that it is not a bad thing to have strength or force. It depends on whether you are using a scientific method to apply your strength or force.

There are also those who change the word “force” to *jin*. They say that force comes out of bones and is therefore straight and hard. *Jin* is born of the tendons and is therefore soft and pliable. But when we watch Taijiquan push hands competitions, many competitors use force to push and pull. They lack techniques. Maybe it is because their learning was void of dynamics.

Verse Seventeen

立如平准,活似车轮,
偏沉则随,双重则滞

Stand like a balance
Alive as car wheel
Side sink then follow
Double heavy then sluggish

Stand balanced and upright
Rotate easily like a wheel
One-sided actions must be corrected
Double heavy will make you stagnant

These four lines reiterate the Taijiquan rules for movement, tranquility and the method for action.

“Balance” is a type of scale that street merchants use to weigh things. An old style scale has a column in the center. On top of it there is a “balanced beam” that is centered on the column. Thin cords are tied from each end of this beam to plates that hang beneath. When using it, one plate is used for the object to be weighed; the other for scale weights. The weights have engravings on them indicating their weight. The reference to the scale here is to show that in Taijiquan the trunk must be upright, equal to the pivoting point on a lever. The two plates are equivalent to the two human hands. The hand that touches the opponent is like the plate that carries the object. This is the weight bearing hand. The other hand is like the scale weight. It acts to keep the balance. It is the action point.

Chen Xin said, “*Quan*, a scale.” It can be used to measure the weight of the oncoming force. This and the theory of Wang Zongyue are both in conformity to physical dynamics. However when we weigh an object, we require that the weight and counter weight must balance. In Taijiquan on one hand, we keep the balance on our body but on the other, we seek to destroy the balance of the opponent. If the oncoming force is strong, then we take away the counter weight so that the force will return to itself. In ad-

dition, Chen Style Taijiquan has two counter weights; one is the rear knee that sinks down all the time and that helps to keep the body stable. The other one is the hand. The hand is not limited to one function. It moves in rotation and revolution in relation to the opponent's actions. The hand moves at all times and is very ingenious and quick. It is also extremely difficult to master the ability to control these necessary minute variations.

The next line used the phrase “move like a wheel” to depict the manner and function of Taijiquan hand and foot movements. A wheel must have an axle. When a wheel turns the axle does not wobble. This is the tranquility in movement. This sentence mirrors the statement about the scale, above. The scale has two plates. When weighing an object, you must go from tranquility to movement. This is the idea of movement in tranquility.

When one side is lost, it must be followed. This is just like the coordination of the scale plate and the scale weight. Another example using the wheel metaphor is when the brake is applied, the wheel will not move. This is double heavy. The idea of “double heavy” was first raised by Wang Zongyue. Many Taijiquan researchers have their own viewpoints on this issue. Later, I will state my further point of view concerning it.

Verse Eighteen

每见数年纯功不能运化者,率皆自为人制,
双重之病未悟耳。

Each time see many years pure *gongfu*
Not able to neutralize
All self control by others
Double heavy's ill not understood

Quite often you see people
With many years of training
Without any ability
The fundamental cause
Is the lack of understanding
The quandary of double heavy

This verse reiterates that the 滯 blockages caused by being double heavy are rooted in the lack of movement. If one wants to understand what the movements are about, he must first know clearly what double heavy is.

Verse Nineteen

欲避此病须知阴阳。

Want avoid this ill
Must know *yin yang*

If one wants to avoid
The pitfalls of double heavy
He must first recognize
Yin and yang

Yin and *yang* is the main code or symbol for ancient Chinese philosophy. It can represent the two opposite sides of a conflict. Wang Zongyue was very well versed in the theory, coordination and exchanges of *yin* and *yang*. His writing talked about the excess of *yin* and *yang* to the deficiency of *wuji*, as well as Taiji, movement, tranquility, separation and unification. He also talked about using hard and soft in making contact; the *shun* (flow with) and *bei* (go against) in moving and sticking; the slow and fast regarding speed. In the end, he summarized the regularities into the principle of the myriad variations governed by one underlying principle. He had a thorough understanding of the theory of *yin* and *yang*: i.e., the principle of contradictory conformity. Therefore he understood the mystery of Taijiquan. He bestowed his understanding to his successors and they in turn regarded his writing as a classic, which is completely fitting.

Verse Twenty

粘既是走,走既是粘,
阴不离阳,阳不离阴。
阴阳相济,方为懂劲。

Stickiness then is walk
Walk then is stickiness
Yin not leave *yang*
Yang not leave *yin*
Yin yang aids each other
Then is understanding of energy

Adhesion is in movement
Movement is adhesion
Yin does not depart from *yang*
Yang does not separate from *yin*
Yin and *yang* benefit mutually
This is called
The comprehension of energy

This verse further elaborates the conformity contradiction concerning adhesion and flow that was explained in Verse Three earlier (“When the opponent is hard and I am soft, this is called to flow. When I am with the force and my opponent is against the force, it is called adhesiveness.”) But how is it that adhesion can be combined with flow? This is because the unity of adhesion and flow is characteristic of Taiji in that “*yin* does not depart from *yang* while *yang* does not depart from *yin*” and “*yin* and *yang* aid one another.” Only when this is understood can one understand that the theory of *yin* and *yang* is the same as the theory of hardness and softness.

In terms of theory, this verse is quite clear. But in executing movements in the Taijiquan form, how can one physically carry out this theory? I believe that only in the two movements of Chen Style Taijiquan (the self rotation of *shun* and *ni* and in the revolution of the positive and negative circle) can one experience the *yin* and *yang* interactions which aid one another, as

well as the hardness and softness which compliment one another. In Taijiquan practice, these theories of contradiction are represented through the saying, “To withdraw **is** to issue.”

First of all, we must know that all movements in Chen Style Taijiquan are spirals. No matter if it is the torso, limbs, or even fingers, all movement must be spirals. The curvature of the revolution is created to coordinate with the rotation. Revolution is not only curved, it is also shaped like an “S” and its mirror image, “2” It is shaped like a propeller. The oncoming force must be met with the self-rotation and revolution along the same direction as the force. This is the “flow” in “when the opponent is hard, I flow to neutralize it.” Flow neutralizes the oncoming force; it does not flow away. Therefore, soft is not weak. It is rotation.

“Flash, spread, hop and shift” are methods that Chen Style Taijiquan considers taboo. However, Chen Style Taijiquan does have these four techniques. They are adapted using the spirals to “adhere, connect, link and follow.” Let us use a screw as an example. Putting a screw into wood requires a forward movement. Taking a screw out of the wood requires a backward movement. Because of the spiral on the screw, one cannot push it in or pull it out. It is as though it sticks to the wood. This is what is referred to in the statement, “Adhesion **is** flow.”

Now let's use the screw metaphor to reflect on *yin* and *yang*. The tip of the screw is *yang* while the cap of the screw is *yin*. The in and out of the screw is caused by turning the screw's head with a screw driver. On the shaft of the screw there is also *yin* and *yang*. The raised spiral lines on the screw are *yang*. The recessed spiral lines on the screw are *yin*. The spirals will not have *yin* and *yang* if they don't have any protrusion or indentation. If you observe the way the screw moves you will find that the left and right, top and bottom and advance and retreat are all the same movement. No one action is isolated. Mr. Chen Xin once used the screw as an analogy for the advance and retreat of the body in Chen Style Taijiquan. This, however, is only the simple movement of an object. Taijiquan is a whole body movement. The torso is a vertical screw while the two legs are screws that angle down at a slant. The two arms are flexible screws that can move up and down, sideways, straight or slanted. There are no restrictions for the arm directions. Because of this, emptiness or solidity; hardness or softness;

open or close are all difficult to predict. Although the whole body is like a mechanical clock (each part can rotate independently), the torso is still the main section. Because of this, the “*Treatise*” said, “The control is in the waist.” The rotations of the waist can activate the hands and feet, but the hands and feet must also coordinate with the movement of the waist. This treatise raised the important issue of “double heavy” that demands research and attention.

Various Taijiquan books and periodicals also put a strong emphasis on this subject but are not consistent. Some say that the center of gravity for a Horse Stance is in the middle, therefore it is double heavy. Some say that double heavy is when two sides clash in push hands. Some say that when doing Taiji, the center of gravity should be totally on one leg. These people went to the extent of promoting a new idea called “single heavy.” The most strange and laughable example is an anonymous author who in his “*Explanations of Taijiquan, Light, Heavy, Sink and Float*” said that double heavy is an illness while “double sinking” is *kungfu*. He coined the phrases “double light”, “double floating”, “half sinking”, and “half floating.” These people have no clue that Wang Zongyue’s “double heavy” concept is about the coordination of the upper and lower bodies. The important factor is in the word double, not the literal meaning of heavy or sinking. How can the change of a word make this flaw into *gongfu*? Are the meanings of heavy and sinking the same? I believe this is the self proclaimed wisdom of the “learned man” who does not understand. The attitude of playing with words can only misguide newcomers. There are also those who treasure the past and belittle the present. They regard everything from the past as treasures. An example of this is the quote from this article [“*Explanations of Taijiquan...*”] as a reference in “*Chen Style Taijiquan*” by Shen Jiazhen.

I believe that in learning from ancient writings, we must take its essence and do away with its dregs. We must selectively accept and reject. In dealing with contemporary authors, we must regard their writing with respect, but only accept what is useful. Useless things must be amended. Only in this way can we adopt a scientific attitude.

My understanding of “double heavy” and “comprehension of energy” went through a tough and treacherous path. I am including it here as a reference for future learners and as research material.

When I first started learning the Wu Style Taijiquan from Mr. Liu Musan, he showed me hand-copied versions of various Taijiquan writings. In regard to the issue of “double heavy”, Mr. Liu adopted the common view of a Horse Stance being double heavy. I believed this theory at the beginning but eventually came to doubt it. If it is true that the balanced position of a Horse Stance puts the center of gravity in the middle and causes double heaviness, then the solution would be too simple: make one foot light! Why then does the “Single Whip” of the Wu Style still keep the Horse Stance? After all a Horse Stance is more stable than any stance that uses one solid foot and one empty foot. Why is it considered an illness then? Wang Zongyue said, “Quite often you see people with many years of training without any ability. The root cause is the lack of understanding of double heavy.” Many years of training will not automatically make a person understand the useable properties of double heavy. One can gather from this that double heavy is not a simple matter that can be resolved by making something light and the other heavy.

After many years of practicing Chen Style Taijiquan, and through the explanations of my teacher and with experimentation, I realized that “double heavy” was about the coordination of the upper and lower body. The upper and lower portions of the body cannot be solid at the same time. Invariably, in the training and application of Chen Style Taijiquan, the front hand is solid while the front foot is empty or vice versa. For example, in the first “Buddha’s Warrior Attendant Pounds Mortar” there is a move called “left foot stepping *cai*.” In that application, the left elbow sinks down and grinds out. That is the solid part. The left foot is in front. It steps out and is empty. In the second “Buddha’s Warrior Attendant Pounds Mortar”, the left hand uses front *peng* energy and is solid while the left foot has its toes turned sideways and is empty. When the right hand pushes forward, the right foot lifts to step in. At this time, it is empty. Again, the hand is solid while the foot is empty. But from the onlooker’s point of view, the weight distribution of the hand (solid or empty) cannot be seen. Once you touch you will know that the opponent’s front hand is under my left ribs while his rear hand is on my left wrist. If I open the right foot, I would advance the left foot; if I open the left foot, I would advance the right foot. When the foot and hand on the same side are both solid, your other foot cannot

advance. You cannot even open the foot at all. This proves “If the left is heavy, then it is empty.” It is a smart method for avoiding double heavy. Use the same method when the right foot steps in and the right elbow sinks down during the move “Block Touching the Coat.”

In coordinating the foot and hand, double heaviness must be avoided as well as in the coordination of the two hands. For example, in the double push hands in both “Six Sealing and Four Closing” and “Embrace the Head to Push the Mountain,” the right hand is heavier than the left hand as the body is turned towards the right. The triangular shape of the legs also shows that the coordination of the two feet is “front issue” while the rear is “sinking.”

Mr. Chen Xin was most detailed when he talked about the three joints. When talking about the arm, he said the shoulder is the root; the elbow is the middle; and the hand is the tip. As far as the hand is concerned, the wrist is the root; the palm is the middle and the finger is the tip. Even a finger has the distinction of possessing a root, middle and tip. Therefore, within the three joints there are another three joints.

In general, they must all be viewed as a whole. In his writing, he often used the words host hand and guest hand. At first I didn't quite understand what he meant. Recently, through push hands experimentation with friends, I realized that the entire torso and limbs are filled with pairs of empty and solid. In the same way not one place is allowed to be double heavy.

We often used the fifth and sixth moves of “Embrace the Head to Push the Mountain” for experimentation. In the fifth move the right elbow is in a negative circle in a *shun chan* mode. Its function is to lock the left wrist of the opponent which is fixed on the curve of my right arm. At the same time my right foot steps into the inside of the opponent's thigh. By then my two hands are pressing on my opponent's chest.

From my point of view [if I switch position with my opponent], the fifth move is mainly an elbow move. When the opponent turns left and steps in from the right, both his hands are about to press on my chest, I will follow the momentum of his attack and sink my body slightly to the left. My left middle finger moves in *shun chan* to his right front. This move will go a bit lower to dispel the inside of his right arm. This way I can easily

entice his energy into emptiness.

From this minor movement, we can tell which one is the main move [host]. If both hands are used in this case, they won't be effective at all. But if all the fingers and even the elbow move when the middle finger moves, one will commit the mistake of double heavy. Although the focus is on the left middle finger, the coordination of the finger with the sinking of the *dang* and the turning of the torso must be appropriate.

In particular, the eyes must be focused on the opponent. In this move the direction of the eyes are opposite to the turning of the torso. If the eyes turn left with the left turning of the torso then the energy is lost and the whole technique will be rendered useless. Therefore I must further understand the issue of double heavy. Although we study the problem of double heavy from the coordination of hand-foot and top-bottom, we cannot depart from the principle of "the upper body will follow the lower body."

The key of keys is whether the direction of the eyes and the direction of the coccyx are correctly aligned. From the point of view of internal energy dynamics, the decisive factor is whether equilibrium can be maintained.

The quotes "erect like a balance" and "the waist is like the axle of a wheel" of the "*Taijiquan Treatise*" totally conform to the principles of a lever. Though the ancients did not know the theory of the lever, their principle of Taijiquan certainly is congruent with it. The vertical line of the balance and horizontal axle of the wheel are both pivoting points. Pivoting points cannot be moved.

In my early years I studied Wu Style Taijiquan. There was no toss to the left or right, forward or backward of the center when moving the body. Chen Style Taijiquan is even more precise. I do not know when or who started to say the center moves to a certain place. Even worse, the book "*Chen Style Taijiquan*" wrote that "the center moves totally to one leg." From that point on, people started to believe that the shifting of the center is the distinguishing of empty and solid. They do not know that "distinguishing empty from solid" is not logical or practical. Taiji belongs to the realm of contradictory conformity. Within this realm nothing can be separated.

I have no right to comment on other styles as I have not studied them. In Chen Style Taijiquan though, I insist on the principle of equilibrium in

the movements. In teaching, I explain patiently but strictly.

I believe that the above knowledge is only an understanding of energy. The real understanding of energy is in repeated scientific experimentation.

Of course push hands is one of the scientific experimentations in learning Taijiquan. I believe push hands is not all of it. In addition, it is difficult to find a good push hands partner. The best opponent is first of all a teacher who understands. But students cannot take up all of the teacher's time. A good friend is the second best partner. A good friend among fellow students is a bit easier to find. It is not possible everyone has the time to work on Taijiquan with you all the time. The problem with friends is that you want to keep the friendship. This will make it difficult to use fully what you have learned. The best experimentation partner is an accomplished student.

We should start with “*zhou*” [attachment]. On the one hand we explain how each move is used to make contacts with the opponent and how to make physical preparations, on the other hand, how *chan fa* is used on the opponent. We should also try to experience how silk reeling energy changes and what the effects are. This way if we continue day after day, not only will the learner start to understand; the teacher will also become more skilled. Teaching and learning compliment each other. The knowledge of Chen Style Taijiquan that I have accumulated is through such a process of learning from my master Chen [Fake], teaching students and doing experiments with each other.

Verse Twenty-One

懂劲后,愈练愈精,
默识揣摩,渐至从心所欲。

Understanding energy after
More practice more skilled
Quiet understand and figure out
Eventually to from heart as will

After understanding the energy
One will attain better skills
With more practice
Thinking becomes subconscious
Action will equal mind-intent

This verse tells people not to be conceited after reaching a high level. It encourages students to further enhance their skill.

“Understanding the energy” comes through the process of learning, practicing, and experimenting. We can also say that it is a process of physical imitation to internal actualization. There is no end in learning. Skill can still further lead to precision. What is precision? It is the minutest exactness with not one particle of disorder. This is the required level of precision. How does one become precise like that? It still comes out of practice and subconscious understanding. Using the subconscious is to remember with the mind. What does one remember? It is the success and failure of experimentation. Think about the opponent’s moves and variations. Come up with new theories and methods to counter the opponent’s moves. Novel methods will eventually come to you subconsciously. “Actions equal mind-intent” was first uttered by Confucius. But after that there were three other characters. They are “not exceed limits.” In Chen Style Taijiquan, we use tranquility to counter all moves. Use non-action against all changes. This is the method of using the basic principle, silk reeling, to counter all techniques.

Verse Twenty-Two

本是舍己从人,多误舍近求远。
所谓差之毫厘,谬之千里。
学者不可不祥辨焉。

Originally was lose self follow him
Most mistake lose here seek far
So called difference of millimeter
Error of thousand *li*
Learner cannot not know

Originally we were supposed to follow
The opponent's moves
But most mistakenly seek the farther path
A deviation of one millimeter at the source
Will cause an error of a thousand kilometers
At the destination
Learners, be aware

This is the conclusion. It is pointed out that not only in the usage of *zhuofa* one should adapt to the changes of the opponent, but also in the learning of principles and techniques. One must give up personal views and obey the correct guidance. One must not seek the distant path [far] and ignore the road in front of him [near] for the pursuit of speedy improvements. Once a person takes the wrong path, then a minor error of a millimeter will lead to the grave mistake of a thousand kilometers. At the important junctures, one must be careful in order to choose the right path to avoid mistakes.

First, let us take a look at the meaning of “near” and “far.” When learning the routines, the principles and techniques of Taijiquan are considered “near.” Routines from other systems are considered “far.” From the point of view of the source of Taijiquan, movements in Taijiquan are rooted in daily life. Movements in daily life are considered “near.” Movements that are not rooted in daily life are considered “far.”

I firmly believe that Taijiquan movements are totally similar to those in daily life. Even the basic principles of Chen Style Taijiquan are found in daily life. They cannot depart from daily life at all. Therefore, I often use daily life situations to test the validity of the routines. I ask students to use daily life situations as examples of Taijiquan movements. This method has been confirmed effective.

In the study of Taijiquan any method that departs from daily life is ineffective [missing the near and seeking the far]. It is fundamentally wrong to depart from Taijiquan principles to learn from wrestling and even judo in order to gain an edge in push hand competitions. Minor differences in the thinking process will also cause grave consequences. In view of this, Wang Zongyue urged students to distinguish right from wrong in principle and in technique.

学拳回忆录

5. Memoir of Learning

学拳回忆录

Hong Junsheng
October 1986

Chen Fake's Background

The Chen Family ancestor, Chen Pu, moved to Changyang Village, Wen County, Henan Province from the Big Locust Tree of Shanxi in the seventh year of the Hongwu Reign during the Ming Dynasty. At that time the village was renamed Chen Jia Gou. In this village, from generation to generation, Taijiquan was passed down. By the fourteenth generation, Chen Changxing's disciple, Yang Luchan, was teaching in five palaces in Beijing. Since then, Taiji has become known to the world.

Chen Fake was officially named Fusheng. He was the great-grandson of Chen Changxing and the third son of Mr. Yanxi. Chen Fake became a famous seventeenth generation Chen Taijiquan master.

The name of Chen Fake's wife is not known. She gave birth to two sons and one daughter. The senior son was Zhaoxu, officially named Xiaochu, and birth named 'Small Dragon'. The second son was Zhaokui, birth named Taibao. The daughter was Yuxia and was married to Shi Donghua. The grandsons are Xiaowang, Xiaoxing of Zhaoxu and Yu of Zhaokui. All are capable of passing on the family art.

How Chen Fake Came to Beijing

Prior to 1928, Chen Fake's nephew was working in a pharmacy. He came to Beijing to deliver herbs from his hometown. He stayed at the [herbalist] Tianhui Pharmacy of Damochang, outside of the Qianmen Gate in Beijing. At the time, Taijiquan was already popular in Beijing. Practitioners of Taijiquan all knew that the method of Yang Luchan came from the Chen Village. On hearing that Zhaopei was a descendent of the Chen Family and that he excelled at the art, many people came to learn from him. Over time, the Nanjing Special Municipal Government heard of his reputation and hired him, giving him a high salary.

Chen Fake said, “At the time, there were many who learned from Zhaopei, but none had finished learning the form yet. The Nanjing government offered him 200 silver dollars per week to teach there. The students could not prevent him from going, but they refused to give up their instruction. Zhaopei was caught between a rock and a hard place, but thought of a solution. He said: “My art came from my third uncle and my uncle is a hundred times better than me. Why don’t I invite my uncle to come to Beijing to teach you and then I can go to Nanjing? This will benefit all of us. Thus, he invited me to Beijing.”

Chen Fake said about himself, “I came to Beijing in 1928. At the beginning, I stayed with the students Liu Zicheng and Liu Ziyuan. I taught them Chen Style Taijiquan *Yilu*, *Erhu*, broadsword and double broadsword. Their house was in Zaolin (Date Tree Forest) yard. There were two girls, Yue Qiu and Yue Hua. They also learned from me and were pretty good.” (I have seen the two sisters demonstrating together. They both wore pig-tails and wore short purple uniforms. They were both soft and agile as the following example relates. There is a jump forward before “The Jade Girl Works at Shuttle”; there is a jump sideways during “Whip Covering the Body”; and there is a split in “Falling into a Split.” When they did these jumps, they could both jump over ten feet. When splitting, they both had their calves on the ground. Indeed, they were both excellent students of this art. When I went to Beijing again in 1956, I saw Zicheng, who was recovering from a paralysis. Ziyuan had stopped training. Most unfortunate was that both girls had died from scarlet fever! At the time the famous martial artists in Beijing were: Xu Rusheng (also known as Chonghou), Li Jianhua (a professor from North East University who was best at Bagua), and Liu Musan (from Wuxi of Jiangsu Province. The latter was the director of the telegraph bureau of Beijing and was good at Wu Style Taijiquan. There was also Doctor Liu Rongzhan, and Shen Jiazhen, who was famous for his 1963 book “*Chen Style Taijiquan*.” These were students of Chen Fake at the time. For over thirty years, Chen Fake taught more than a thousand students. I started learning from him in 1930. Unfortunately, none of the students were as good as Yang Luchan. I am the most unaccomplished among all the students. I have not lived up to the expectations of my master!

Sickness Led Me to Taijiquan Meeting a Great Master

I have been sick since childhood. When I was seventeen, I had to quit school because of illness. After I married at the age of twenty, I realized that the source of my illness was due to a lack of exercise. Therefore, I tried to correct this bad habit. Every morning, I would go out to take a two-hour walk. Xiannong Tan and Tian Tan of Beijing, Daming Lake and Baotu Lake of Jinan were my frequent destinations. Gradually, the illness started receding and I became slightly stronger. But between the changing of each of the four seasons I still felt uncomfortable. In the winter of 1929, I caught winter plague and stayed in bed for three months. I recovered by 1930. My neighbor was Zhou Huaimin (named Ren) and was from Wuxi. He was working at the Beijing Telegraph Bureau. He was also good at Chinese landscape painting. Today, he is a supervising member of the Nationalist Revolutionary Party. He introduced me to his neighbor to the north, Mr. Liu Musan, so that I could begin to study Wu Style Taijiquan. Several months later, I saw in the “Xiaoshi Paper” of Beijing the news that a martial art actor, Yang Xiaolou, became healthy and could perform heavy roles after learning from Chen Fake of the Chen Village. Through several personal connections, I invited Chen Fake to come to Liu’s home to teach. At this time, the approximately thirty students of Liu’s from the Telegraph Bureau also became his students. I was one among the many who became Chen Fake’s student.

When I first started to learn the Wu Style, Master Liu said, “One should learn this form with slow movements - the slower the movement, the better the *gongfu*.” This also means that only when the *gongfu* is better can one do it slower. When Master Chen first came to Liu’s home, he demonstrated Chen Style Taijiquan first and second routines after introductions. Everyone was ready for a treat of more than an hour from the respected master, but the event only took a little more than ten minutes for both sets of routines. Even worse, the Cannon Fist was fast with jumping and foot stamping that shook the tiles on the roof. After a brief rest, Master Chen left. He left the students in a heated discussion. Some said that such rapid movement must have “broken the silk” in the movement

“like pulling silk” while others said that the stamping of his feet did not conform to the principle of “movement like that of a cat walking.” Master Liu said, “Though his movements were fast, they were circular. Though he issued power, his power came out relaxed. Since we have invited him, we should learn from him. After the form, we will ask him to teach us push hands. If he is better than me, then we will continue to finish the Cannon Fist. “Thus we decided to learn!”

My first question to Master Chen was, “Should the movements be slow or fast?” He answered, “At the beginning, you should be slow in order to get the postures correct. Practice makes perfect. Later on, you will be able to move quickly and yet be stable. When pushing hands, speed varies according to the changes or the opponent. Slow is a learning method, not the aim. Slow movement also puts the legs to work. That is beneficial too.” After that, my mind was set on learning. My learning method is worthy of mention here for reference.

My method was to observe before practicing. The thirty-odd classmates were all from the Beijing Telegraph Bureau and I was the only student who did not work. At the beginning, it was courtesy on my part to let my “brothers” learn first so that they could go to work afterward. I was always the last one to receive my lesson. After a few days of watching, I felt more familiar with the moves. When I was learning, I gained a clearer idea of the movements, so my moves were more at ease. The way my master taught also gave me opportunities to watch. No matter how many people were present, he always taught them one by one. For example, if there were twenty people and he demonstrated five times to each student, by the end, I would be able to watch him demonstrate one hundred times. This way, I had a good idea in my mind first. The learning naturally became easier. Several days later, I started watching each movement sequentially. I would watch the hands, the stances, eye directions, body coordination and timing. I roughly remembered the whole body coordination, timing and directions. At this point, I did not practice the whole routine much (two routines a day) but I practiced single movements a lot.

The method continued as I would ask my master for demonstrations of each movement I learned. My master was never reluctant to show me. If there is one move that I performed which did not resemble my master's, I

would practice it hundreds of times in order to get it just right. Therefore, I was taught in this manner from 1930 to 1944, close to fifteen years. From that time it was thirteen years until the second time I went to see my master which was in 1956. Every movement of my master and even his facial expressions with each movement was always vivid in my mind's eye. I said to a Shandong Television reporter, "I was weak and lazy with the routine practice, but my mind was not lazy. Until today, I can remember everything as if new." Therefore, in 1956 when I went to Beijing again to further my learning with my master, he said upon watching my first and second routines, "Movements are not wrong and the *gongfu* has improved a lot too." This was my method of learning. Now let me talk about the practice method of my master.

Gongfu is Imbedded in Hard Practice

Master Chen Fake often said, "Learning martial arts is even more difficult than learning literature." As long as one is smart and good at memorization, he can freely utilize what was learned in order to come up with a composition. In martial arts, one not only has to learn correctly, but also must practice until he is perfect with it. Persistent practice will make the whole body absorb the *gongfu* through osmosis. Only in this way can you use the learned skills at will when dealing with enemies. Therefore, learning and practicing must go hand in hand.

My master said of himself, "I had brothers but they all died in their youth due to plague. I was born when my father was over sixty years of age. I was spoiled by my parents since childhood. There was no regularity in my eating habits. I developed a growth in my abdomen. Whenever it acted up, I was in such terrible pain that I would jump and toss in bed. Though knowing that martial art was good for my health, I was too lazy and sick to do it. My parents were not willing to force me to do it either. As a result, by the time I was a teenager, I did not have any *gongfu* skills.

At the time, my father was hired by Yuan Shikai to teach his son and father did not have time for me. A cousin of mine, from my father's side,

used to work in the field with me. In the evening, the uncles on the father's side would chat and would talk about me: their branch of the Chen Family had an outstanding martial artist in each generation but look at this child, he is fourteen already and is still so sick. Their martial art will die with him. Though I was a child, these words shamed me greatly. I vowed to myself that the martial art would not die with me. I thought that my cousin was very good. As long as I could catch up to him, I would be good enough. I was eating, working and sleeping with him. If I progressed, he would progress as well. How could I ever catch up to him? Because of this, I could not eat or sleep very well. Three days later, as we were going to the field early in the morning to work, my cousin realized that we had forgotten the farm tools to be used that day. He asked me to go back to get them while he walked slowly and waited for me. I hurried home to get the tools and caught up with him. After the day's work and during supper I thought about his words, "You go quickly and I will walk slowly and wait for you." I tied this to the practice of *gongfu* and figured that if I doubled my efforts, I would catch up to him one day.

I made up my mind what to do, but decided not to tell my cousin about it. Each day during his siesta after lunch, I would practice. After a short sleep at night, I would get up to practice again. Each day, I practiced at least sixty routines and sometimes as many as one hundred routines. I practiced for a little over three years. When I was seventeen, the growth in my abdomen disappeared. I grew to be a stronger person. I first asked my uncles about the methods of pushing hands and then asked my cousin to show me how to push hands. My cousin said, laughing, "Everybody in our family has tasted the 'flavor of my fist'. I did not dare beat you up since you were too weak. Now that you are stronger and can withstand a beating, you can have a taste of my fist." We went at each other. He was trying to wrestle me, but three times I threw him down. My cousin was upset. He said to the other members of the Chen Family clan, "This art must have secrets. We should all quit now. You see even the weak one is better than me now." As a matter of fact, during these last three years, my father had never come home. What secrets could he impart? My skill development was only due to training hard while adhering to the rules.

Master Chen said, "About that time, my father came home and he

saw the progress I had made with my form. One day, during the winter of that year, the old man was in a happy mood. He stood in the middle of the field and asked his nephews to attack him. At that time, my father was over eighty years old. He was wearing a padded overcoat with a vest on top. Both hands were inside the sleeves. When the attackers touched him, he slightly turned his body and they all fell to the ground.” My father said, “If I want to issue, I must do it with my body in the postures of the form. My *gongfu* is still lacking as I cannot use any small movement to cause an effect as my father was able to do.”

Since my Master had come to Beijing, I have seen him progress with amazing speed. When he taught the method of catching, people such as Xu Rusheng and Li Jianhua who both possessed a high level of *gongfu*, he was able to throw them with small turns of his body. He had reached a level of wonder.

This kind of progress is rooted in one word, “practice.” Gu Liuxin said, “Master Chen continued to practice thirty routines a day during the dozens of years he was in Beijing.” Though I did not hear about this directly from my master, I personally observed that every time he moved to a new residence, there would be several lines of broken bricks on the floor in a short while. Even when sitting, he would cross his hands and rotate them. He told me to do the same. At the time, I did not understand what this was supposed to achieve. Later on, I realized that this practice was used to be aware of the silk reeling.

Patient Tutelage

My master often said, “In learning Taiji, one must pay attention to details to progress steadily. *Gongfu* is such that the time and effort you put into it is always the same as the result. If you put in as much time as I do, you should be as good as I am. If you put in more time than I do, your *gongfu* must be better than mine. In this art, there is no cheating. There is no short cut.” He also said, “The children of any person who has developed a famous art have the conditions for inheriting that art, but they don’t have the right to inherit it because it is not an object to be inherited by children

or grandchildren. When people come to learn, I want to directly give it to them, but that is not possible. The job of a teacher is like that of a guide. Learning must be done by the student. How far, how fast and whether you will ever reach the destination, are all dependent solely on the student. But the correctness of the direction is dependent on the guide.”

When teaching, my master not only described how he succeeded, but also talked about the natural talent of people and the method they should use. He said, “People vary with their natural abilities but the difference is insignificant. For those a bit smarter, it will be a bit faster during the learning stage but this will always lead to a lack of effort. There are three kinds of slow people: one is the type of person who is slow but refuses to admit it. These persons cannot be helped. The second kind is people who admit they are slow but they also have low self-esteem. They don’t think they are as smart as others and are not willing to even try to learn. The third kind is those who know they are slow but are strong willed. They believe that if others can learn, they too can learn. They must learn it well and surpass others. Their method is: If others can do one, I will do a hundred; if others can do ten, I will do one thousand. This is the same as the ancient method of learning: acquire knowledge widely, inquire carefully, contemplate deeply, distinguish clearly, and most importantly, act accordingly.

Master Chen never withheld anything when he was teaching. According to his own words, “Even if I don’t reserve anything, I will not be able to teach correctly and the students will not be able to learn well. Why withhold anything?” Therefore, whenever there was a question, he would always answer it with detailed explanations of the functions such as *peng*, *lu*, *ji* and *an*. He would demonstrate the actions repeatedly, sometimes more than ten times.

At that time in Beijing, Taiji teachers always taught push hands after finishing one routine. Supposedly, it was to learn the ability to “listen to” the energy and even to “understand” the energy. In reality, it was just about exercising the body. As for how to understand the energy, that is for further research.

When my master finished teaching the first routine, he would ask the students to practice for more than half a year and then teach them the second routine. He would not teach them push hands early in their training.

My master said, “Pushing hands is the first step towards power confrontation. Therefore, even at the early stages of learning the form, one must understand which move is *peng*, *lu*, *ji*, *an* and *cai*, *lie*, *zhou* and *kao*, and how these moves are applied and changed. When the student does not yet have enough of a foundation, it is of no use to focus on it. When students work on push hands with each other, they will develop the fear of losing and a desire for winning. Because of the fear of losing, they will not neutralize their opponent’s oncoming force. They will fight back. The opponent feels the resistance and knows that his opponent has not lost his center. He will power up even more with the desire to win. This is not the correct way, but he wins. Because you use force and he also uses energy, both will develop the habit of fighting back. This is contrary to the Taiji principle of “not losing and not fighting back.” This approach will mislead the learners. (Currently at Taiji Push Hands competitions, in almost all cases, the two competitors will both use strength and the stronger one wins. Where is the Taiji in this?).

Once in a while, when my master was in the mood, he would pick a move out of the form and show its application. For instance, when he was teaching “Six Sealing and Four Closing”, he said the third move was a left *lu* method. First, he used his left hand to capture the opponent’s left wrist with silk reeling. Then, he used his right wrist to push onto his opponent’s left elbow. Following the oncoming force, he turned his body to the left. His left leg sank down and the right leg was relaxed. At this time, his left hand was the rear hand. He used *shun chan* with his waist to turn inward. His right hand was the front hand. He loosened his shoulder and sank his elbow. The energy sank down and the power went out in a *shun chan* fashion to coordinate with the left hand *lu*. The left hand used “enticing into emptiness” while the right hand was “throwing outwards.” The opponent wanted to come in but arrived into emptiness instead.

As he was explaining, he would execute those moves. Then he would tell students to try it on him. Whenever there was a move that was not correct, he would demonstrate again to show the effect of doing *lu* correctly. He would seem awkward at first and then actively change the energy path. The student would feel in control, but then lose control. He would then teach the student how to change accordingly. Through this teach-

ing method, every move was understood by the students. (Chen Zhaokui changed the left hand into *ni chan* and the hand does not touch the ribcage but instead rises up to the left. In addition, the distance between his two hands are wider than one forearm's length. Shen Jiazhen said in his "Chen Style Taijiquan," "*Ni chan* is *lu*. These are all contrary to the teachings of Master Chen).

In 1956 when I went to Beijing again to ask my master to correct my forms, my master said, "There is not one move in this form that is empty. They all conform to the eight techniques of the hand." He explained each move and each action. He did so for four months. By then I understood the words of Chen Xin when he said, "The theory is precise while the method is complex." It is unfortunate that students usually stop progressing after learning one routine. This is the equivalent of a graduate from an elementary school who will not progress to understanding anything from high school and beyond.

A Precise Art

Master Chen used to say, "Learning will never end. Art has no limit." An old Jinan martial artist, Yan Chongren, who is originally from Guangle, Shandong is 92 years of age this year. He is good at Yanqing Chui and Shaolin Silk Reeling. He also said, "The applications of the traditional forms are all superior. But more importantly the superiority is decided by who is using them and who the victims are." We can see that the old masters both conform to the dialectic philosophy and they are both rooted in modesty.

My master related the following story about himself: "One year, the Red Spear Gang (a group of local bandits) surrounded the town of Wen Xian. The county government asked me to help defend the town. At the time the government had a staff martial artist. On hearing that I had arrived to help, he came to challenge me for his honor. I was sitting on the left of the Baxian Table (classic table with eight corners) in the Tang House (a house that faces the south). I was about to take a smoke while holding the water pipe in my left hand and the wick in my right hand. He came

from outside and punched me with his right fist while yelling, “How are you going to take this one?” I was half way up to meet him and his fist was already at my chest. I used my right hand to catch his right wrist and send him away, slightly. He was instantly thrown out to the yard. Without a word, he went back to his room, packed up and left without making any fuss.”

On hearing this, I knew that my master had this special ability. But I could not figure out how he could issue on contact. Later on I understood that even though he was only using his right hand, in fact he was using the first move of the “Buddha’s Warrior Attendant Pounds the Mortar” with the exception that his circles were smaller and the silk reeling was sped up. (In 1962 after recovering from an illness, I was attacked by a student with his right fist. It was a strong fist and a powerful punch. I raised my right hand to defend myself, mindlessly. On touching his right wrist, he flew out over ten feet. It was the same technique.)

After finishing the first routine, Master Liu Musan asked Master Chen to teach him push hands privately. We, the students, all thought: Master Liu had over ten years of Wu Style Taijiquan training. His theory and ability were both the talk of Beijing. Compared to Master Chen, they should be almost equals. Surprisingly on contact, Master Liu’s stances became totally messed up. It was as if he was a three-year old being played with by an adult. His ligaments were accidentally pulled and he was in pain for over a month.

After that incident Master Chen said, “I was careless. Master Liu’s force was a bit stiff (maybe it was because of his nervousness). My silk reeling was a bit too fast and too tight. That caused the injury.” After that accident, we did not dare to ask Master Chen to teach us push hands any more. Master Chen laughed and said, “As long as you relax and turn smoothly, you should be able to follow and neutralize. I will try moves on you and will be more careful. There shouldn’t be any injuries.” (According to my younger Taiji brother Feng Zhiqiang, when he pushed hands with Master Chen, he was shocked, became nauseous and vomited. In 1956 I studied push hands with Master Chen for over three months. Though he threw me easily, I did not have the sensation of nausea. Maybe it was because I didn’t have any energy; therefore I couldn’t feel any energy bouncing back at me.)

Xu Rusheng was a descendant of the nobleman Ronglu from the Qing Dynasty. At one time, he had many martial artists by his side. Since childhood, Xu was an avid martial artist. His *gongfu* was very advanced. After the founding of the Republic of China, Xu became the Principal of the Beijing Sports School. He was quite respected. As he had a good long term reputation and was quite old, Master Chen agreed to teach him, half as a master and half as a friend. One day Xu was talking about his understanding relating to how to neutralize a left wrist lock. He said, "Use the right fist to hit the left forearm hard, then the left hand can come out. Next use the right fist to punch the opponent's chin." Master Chen playfully tested his theory. When Xu was about to hit, my master added silk reeling to his right fingers. Xu yelled and fell to the ground. Later on he said to others, "My Master's *gongfu* is a hundred times better than mine. His martial ethics are especially impressive. When we first met, my master treated me as a friend in order to save face for me. Right now, even if I have to become his disciple in front of all the martial artists in Beijing, I will be more than willing." Master Chen also praised Xu's *gongfu* by saying that he could issue crisp power.

One year, Xu was hosting a Beijing Martial Art Leitai Competition (an ancient competition with no or few rules). Xu was going to invite Master Chen to be a judge. Master Chen turned this invitation down, saying that he only knew Chen Style Taijiquan and was therefore not qualified to be a judge. Xu then invited him as an advisor for the competition. When discussing the time for each fight, everybody was suggesting fifteen minutes. Master Chen said that fifteen minutes would be too long. It would exhaust the competitors and was no guarantee that a winner could be chosen. In addition, there were too many competitors (several hundred). During each hour only four pairs or eight people could compete. It would take too many days. Everybody thought his suggestion was reasonable and then asked him for a suggestion. He said, "How about three minutes?" Li Jianhua said, "Is that enough time?" Master Chen said, "This is a compromise. If it was up to me, I would say count to three, or simply count to one. Real martial art is seen right away." Jianhua saw that my old master was in high spirits. He put his hands on my master's right arm (at the time my master had his right arm in front of his chest). With a slight turn, Master Chen

issued power with his right elbow. The two hundred some pounds of Li Jianhua were thrown up several feet. All the photos on Xu Rusheng's wall fell to the floor. Everybody laughed. Jianhua also laughed and said, "I believe you now, but you scared my soul out of me!" My master smiled, "What are you afraid of?" Li said, "What if you hurt me?" The master said, "Where do you hurt?" Li thought about it. He only felt that Master Chen's right elbow had touched his clothes. He didn't feel anything and then flew up. When he landed, his back scraped the wall. The chalk from the wall got into his clothes and could not be shaken off. There was so much powder that the chalk was embedded into the threads. He had to use a brush to clean it off. Everyone had words of praise about Chen's amazing ability.

Master Chen said, "Power and technique must be integrally combined. But power is the foundation while technique is the method. When I am suddenly attacked, I must use power to defend myself so as to not lose my balance. But when the *gongfu* is deep, there is no need for power to come out. The oncoming force will cause an automatic reaction to cause the attacker to fall forward or backward into emptiness. With Jianhua's power, I enticed and then issued. For instance, machines are made from steel. Making wheels and other parts out of steel requires compliance with rules. When the parts are assembled, they can be used. When learning a martial art, one must seek to know the application of each move in detail."

As a matter of fact, Master Chen was very powerful. I had seen with my own eyes that he had lifted Li Jianhua over his head with one hand on his neck and the other on his feet. This was when Li Jianhua was saying that with his two hundred pounds of weight, nobody could do anything to him. Using his elbow to throw was the combination of power and technique, but lifting Li Jianhua over his head was real power.

One day a guest arrived who claimed to be an envoy from the National University to invite Master Chen to teach there. Through conversation Master Chen found out that several months before the university hired a Shaolin master who used to sell fried meatballs on the street. Master Chen said, "My accepting the job cannot jeopardize this man's job." The envoy agreed to discuss this at the university. Master Chen was ushered into the large reception hall. This hall used to be the hall for a prince of the Qing Dynasty. It was a big hall with bricks that each measured two square feet

and covered the floor. Master Chen repeated his conditions when he met with the person in charge. Immediately he demonstrated his form. When he performed the “Falling into a Split” after the “Double Lotus Kick”, the foot stomping shattered a two to three inch thick floor brick. The shards from the brick hurt the faces of the onlookers. It was as though a grenade had exploded on the brick. After the demonstration, Master Chen turned down the offer using the excuse that he had no teaching experience. He said this because the university was not willing to keep two masters on staff. On the way home, Master Chen told me, “My carelessness broke the host’s brick.” I asked, “How can foot stomping be so powerful?” The master answered, “When stomping, there were three to five hundred pounds of power loosened onto the foot from the whole body and there was a combination of acceleration. That’s how there was so much power.” Several years after the incident, I realized that it wasn’t my master’s carelessness. It was his intention to leave a mark. It was not because he was not up to it that he didn’t accept the job!

There was a new dirt road on the western side of Beijing called Chengfang Street. It ran north to south. The road was about ten meters wide. One day, a fellow student, my master and I were on this road heading south. We heard screams behind us. A rabid dog bit a woman on the east side of the road and was on the west side biting a rickshaw boy who was sitting on his rickshaw. When we saw this, the dog turned back east and headed straight for my master. Without panicking, my master raised his right hand and kicked the dog with his right foot. The twenty to thirty pound dog was kicked to the other side of the road. It yelped and died with blood coming out of its mouth. When he kicked, his right hand bounced back for balance and got scraped on a tree branch. There was blood on his fingers. After this scare, he said, “A rabid dog always tries to bite the neck. But most people get bitten on the leg. This is because people will dodge and the dog will then bite the leg instead. When the dog came at me, I raised my right hand. I knew the dog would look up and expose its neck. My kick cannot miss.” It was easily said, but kicking the dog to over thirty feet away was not an easy accomplishment.

Master Chen also said that when he was helping defend the town of Wen Xian, he killed a member of the “Red Spear Gang” and caught two

bandits. It was all “simple tasks.” In 1956 investigators from the county came to Beijing to look into the matter as a crime. Master Chen said it was a touchy issue to deal with. The fact of the matter was that to destroy the “bad dog” of society was a good deed and the government should not treat it as a crime.

In September of 1964, Comrade Gu Liuxin came to Jinan to attend the Martial Art Demonstrative Competition and we thus met. Before returning to Shanghai, while bathing at the Qing Quan Chi Bathhouse, we talked about his experiences with Chen Fake. When Master Chen’s hands were locked up, Gu used “*an*” to push into him. As if Master Chen’s forearm had electricity, Gu was launched out far. Gu exclaimed that there was no skill higher than Master Chen’s.

I have been learning martial arts for over fifty years and have befriended many famous masters. There was not one person in my life that had skills like my master. Master Chen once received a silver shield in Beijing with the inscription “Taiji, the Only One.” Indeed he deserved it.

High Ethics

Master Chen was an honest person. He was extremely filial to his mother. When I first met him, I noticed that his eyes were bloodshot. Through asking I found out that it was because he was attending to his aged mother. His mother was paralyzed and was overweight. She had difficulty going to the bathroom and she was constantly in need of assistance. Master Chen attended to her day and night for three years without one day with a good sleep. His eyes got blood-shot and infected and stayed that way.

Every time there was a banquet, my master would only drink one glass of liquor. He said that at one time he was able to drink five pounds of “white lightening” without getting drunk. One day he was drinking with his younger uncle on his mother’s side. They drank a keg of white lightening. He slept for three days but his uncle died. Since then his mother ordered him to avoid liquor. He was only allowed one glass at any occasion. For over ten years, he never faltered from that order.

Master Chen used to say, “The method of living must be rooted in

honesty. The method of dealing with people must be rooted in modesty and harmony. Without honesty there will be no trust; without modesty there will be no progress and without harmony, there will be no friendship. But modesty and harmony are rooted in honesty, not in hypocrisy.”

My master never considered himself to be a master of the internal art. He said, “Everything is divided into internal and external. If Taijiquan is an internal art and you have studied it for three days, and you cannot even mimic the external appearance, can you call yourself internal?” My master always praised other people. He also wouldn’t criticize others. For example, when we saw people practicing Taijiquan in the park, we would ask our master to make a comment. He always had three answers. One was “good.” The second was “there was *gongfu*.” The third was “I cannot understand it.” It took me a long time to figure out what he was saying. “Good” meant that both the form and the *gongfu* were good. “There was *gongfu*” meant the person had practiced hard for a long time though the form was not satisfactory. “I cannot understand it” referred to those whose form and *gongfu* were not worthy of anything. He would not directly say anything negative, even about people like this.

My master always took it upon himself to safeguard reputations and to benefit others. For instance, “Xiao Shi Newspaper” of Beijing once promoted the hundred-year old Wang Jiaoyu as a direct disciple of Yang Luchan. Wang was teaching in the Luzu Temple of Xi Wa Chang in the He Ping Men Nei Street. At one time he had many students. My classmate Li Henian was young and was in the habit of causing trouble. He tried to go there to test the ability of the disciple of Yang Luchan. It was said that Wang rented three rooms in the temple. He would sit on a bed the way Stone Tablet Chen would. His nephew would teach on his behalf. Li He came back to tell the others that Wang turned out to be an empty coffin [a Beijing idiom that means an old and weak person]. Li He did not fight with him. My master asked, “Why did you visit him?”

There was a story behind this. Three years ago, my master and I were at Xu Rusheng’s house. Someone presented a business card. On the card was the calligraphy “Wang Jiaoyu.” It was a martial art visit. Immediately he was welcomed in. Wang introduced himself and stated that he had studied in the Yang family. Because he was old and had no means of income, he

would like Principal Xu to give him a job at his school in order to make a living. We asked him to demonstrate. He performed half of the form and was out of breath. Xu said, "We are both martial artists. We should help each other. But in my school there are staffing procedures. Even as principal, I cannot add staff at any time. However, I will keep you in mind for the future." As a gesture, Xu gave him ten *yuan*. Master Chen and I both gave five *yuan* each. At that time, Wang Jiaoyu said he was over sixty. Three years later, he had surprisingly aged to be a hundred. This was because if he was not a hundred years old, he could not have lived long enough to be alive during Yang Luchan's lifetime. On the table top inside his room, there was a red character tablet that said, "The seat of my master, Yang Luchan." This was to demonstrate that he had been taught by this ancient master. It was common in the old days to see this kind of deceitfulness. Even in new China, there is also an eighty-year old master who claimed to be a hundred and nobody would expose him. This is another demonstration of the good nature of the people in our country.

Several years ago, I saw somebody's hand copied quotations of Old Wang's teachings. It said: The sinking of the *dang* should be like sitting to go to the bathroom. Maybe Old Wang did learn some secrets from the Yang family. My master told me not to mention the encounter with him [Wang] in Xu's house so that his livelihood could be protected. How benevolent of the master!

Mr. Shen San was the number one wrestler of the time. One day at a martial art competition he met up with Master Chen. The two old masters exchanged greetings and hand shakes and got into a conversation. The esteemed Mr. Shen said, "I heard that Taijiquan mainly uses soft energy. A Leitai competition draws lots to select opponents. What will happen if a Taiji practitioner draws a wrestler for a bout?" Master Chen answered, "I think there should be a way for Taiji to fight wrestling. I personally do not have any experience. When two armies face each other on a battlefield, you cannot ask the opponent what style of fighting he is trained in." Mr. Shen said, "How about the two of us doing some research on this?" Master Chen said, "Though I don't understand wrestling, I like to watch the art of wrestling. I saw that the wrestler liked to grab the opponent's sleeve and then use technique." As he was saying this, he reached his hands out for

the esteemed Mr. Shen to grab. Some students and I were watching this. I thought there would be a great show by these two famous masters and I could learn a few tricks. But just at that time they were called away to a meeting. The two old masters left laughing and talking.

Two days later, we were at the master's house. Mr. Shen came visiting again with a box of gifts. My master welcomed him into the house. Mr. Shen said, "Thanks for letting me off the hook the other day." My master answered, "Not so at all, it was vice versa." When I heard this, I thought they had a go at each other elsewhere. I thought it was a pity that I missed the chance after all. Mr. Shen saw that I was confused and asked, "When your teacher came back, didn't he tell you?" I said no. Mr. Shen slapped himself on the thigh and exclaimed, "You have a great teacher! He has great ethics. You must learn from him. When the experts fight, they immediately know their opponent's ability. When I touched your master's hand, I could not apply power to it. I knew right then how good he was." After a little while, the esteemed Mr. Shen left in high spirits.

After he left a student asked rudely, "In that case, why didn't you beat him?" My master said with a serious face, "Beat him? Why beat him?" This student saw the mood of his teacher and did not dare to say another word. The master asked him sharply, "Tell me, do you like to be beaten in front of everyone?" The student muttered, "No." My master said, "So you don't like that! If you don't like it, why do you want to do it to others? You shouldn't even have thought of that!" His attitude then changed and with kindness on his face declared, "It is not easy to become famous. We should always try to protect other people's reputations." At the time, I was very impressed by my master's character. Later on I also realized that Mr. Shen was also a man of shining character. He didn't have to tell anyone what happened since no one would ever know. The two of them are the same type. No wonder they became long time friends.

This story, his encounter with Li Jianhua and the breaking of bricks at the National University were written up by Feng Dabiao of the China News Agency and published in the magazine "Wulin." In July of 1982 I met with Chen Xiaowang in Shanghai. Xiaowang said, "Master Shen's son Shao San is upset about the story." In fact I was telling the truth. I respected the frankness of Master Shen. When Master Chen was talking to us, he

also said, “Only through this one touch, I felt that Master Shen was very quick. If we were to fight, the outcome would be difficult to predict.” We can see that the two masters had respect for each other. The two masters are both models for us to learn from. We shall never forget them.

Deeply Indebted

I started learning Chen Style Taijiquan from Master Chen with some thirty people from the Beijing Telegraph Bureau led by Master Liu Musan in 1930. The only payment I gave my teacher was the two *yuan* each month during the first few years. After the July 7th incident [The date the Japanese invaded China in 1937], Master Liu was transferred to Taiyuan. Many students were also transferred elsewhere and the original group was dispersed. At that time, I did not give my master any financial help. But my master loved me even more. Sometimes he would come to my house to stay for two or three months at a time. Each morning he would come to my wife's window and shout, “Jinlan, get up! It's time for practice.”

When the Japanese invaded Beijing, my life took a downturn. There were days when I couldn't afford any food. I would take my six children to my master's house to have a big meal of millet porridge. We were like father and son and felt that was the way it should be.

Master Chen used to tell me, “Among my students, Yang Xiaolou is the smartest one. He can understand the theory instantly and can understand the books he reads. It is a pity that he is too old to get the whole thing. Small Dragon (Zhaoxu's birth name) and you are both mentally and physically capable. You should carry it through.” He then said, “You should spend three years practicing professionally. It will be as good as other people's practice of ten years.” His dear words showed his hopes for me to carry on his art. But during the first three years of my training, I was too weak. My master treated me as if he was a kind mother. He hoped for me to learn fast but didn't push me hard enough. I practiced mainly softly without stomping or powering up. I didn't jump around either.

After the first three years, my master saw that I was becoming stronger. He taught me to continue with full postures. Each move was executed with

my calf touching the ground. He said, "After finishing one set, you must feel as if you are sitting in a chair. That way the energy from your *dang* will sink properly. The legs will change weight with the turning of the waist." He urged me to practice more each day. He changed into a serious teacher that required his students to be strict, hardworking and practical. He tirelessly explained to me the eight techniques of the hand and how they coordinate with the body.

In order to cope with these new requirements, in 1934 I started working hard according to his instructions. At the beginning I could not do five moves. Later on I could do the routine twenty times a day. By then I realized how true my master was when he said to me, "Strike the iron while it is hot." Unfortunately, I only practiced like this for a little over a year. The Japanese invasion of China caused me to be depressed. I stopped practicing like this.

By 1944 I said "good-bye" to my teacher with tears in my eyes and moved south of Beijing to Jinan in order to make a living. In 1956 I returned to Beijing again to beg my master to correct my forms. After thirteen years apart, master and disciple were reunited and it was as if a long lost son had returned to his mother on his knees. The emotions were beyond description.

My master said that my form had no moves that were empty. Each day, he taught me push hand techniques. He went through all the moves, explaining their application and counter moves. My mind opened up as if the clouds in the sky were cleared. Everyday for four months we went on like this.

I had no wife and my younger daughter wasn't married yet when I had to bid farewell to my master again. To my surprise, my master passed away the next year in 1957. Until today, I have not met my master's expectations and have become an unaccomplished old disciple. I feel ashamed.

Yet the transition from a weak student who made medicine his only companion to a healthy eighty year old man was the endowment of my master. My evolution from innocent beginnings to being on the correct path, researching the intricacies of the theory and practice of Taijiquan is also his doing. Every time when I think of my master, I have a special place in my heart for him. I vow to pass on his teachings to his descendants and to the entire world as an enduring act of tribute to my master.

About the Author

作者

Grandmaster Hong Junsheng was born in Yuxian County, Henan Province in 1907 and passed away quietly in Jinan, Shandong Province in 1996. At an early age, he went to Beijing with his family. During his school age years, he developed a debilitating disease that prevented him from attending school.

In 1930, he became a disciple of the most famous Chen Family Taijiquan Grandmaster, Chen Fake. He was with Chen Fake for fifteen years until 1944. In 1956, he went back to Beijing and studied with Chen Fake again for another four months.

Hong Junsheng was the only master privileged to study with Chen Fake for such an extended period of time. Through such a proper pedigree of pure Chen Style direction, transmission, hard work and his intelligence, he became one of the most proficient Chen Style Taijiquan masters of the 20th century.

Grandmaster Hong Junsheng's special ability is that he never "pushed" any of his opponents. They always mysteriously bounced themselves out. People from all over the world came to Jinan to learn this special feat of his Chen Style Taijiquan Practical Method. Japanese students called him "the Man with the Magic Hand".

His personal life was a tragedy. Born in the last days of the Qing Dynasty, he grew up in the heyday and downfall of the Nationalist government, witnessed the invasion of China by the Japanese during World War II and was abandoned by society.

Hong adopted a total Daoist living. He never possessed material things. He gave away all he had learned and knew. When he passed away, he left not a penny to his name. Instead, he left a huge reputation and an enormous legacy of Chen Style Taijiquan.

About the Translator



Like his masters, Chen Zhonghua's life is that of total determination.

Born with poor health during the natural calamities of the 1960s in China, he was not expected to live past the age of five. By the age of eight, he was not fit enough to attend school. Western and traditional Chinese medicine alike could not help him. He sought martial arts for a cure.

By the time he was eighteen, he had achieved normal health and attended Shandong University in Jinan. His martial art was already so powerful that he was teaching privately at the university sports field by then.

He met Grandmaster Hong Junsheng by chance and embarked on a life of Chen Style Taijiquan. From 1979 to 1985 he studied under the tutelage of Grandmaster Hong Junsheng. After spending seven years in Canada he started visiting Hong every year from 1991 till his (Hong's) death in 1996.

In 1998, Chen Zhonghua became a disciple of Grandmaster Feng Zhiqiang. Feng was the last disciple of Grandmaster Chen Fake. Through Grandmaster Feng, Chen Zhonghua learned the Chen Style Xinyi Hunyuan Taijiquan System.

With persistence, hard-work, and personal ingenuity, Chen Zhonghua reached a level rarely seen in this century. His ability to purely utilize Chen Style Taijiquan in combat is a true embedment of the tradition of the Chen Style Taijiquan of Chen Fake.

Chen Zhonghua was originally self educated in English and later received an English degree in China and a Master's Education (in Linguistics) in Canada. He was a member of The Translator's Association of Saskatchewan and was a certified Chinese-English interpreter and translator for the Translation Bureau of the Secretary of State for the government of Canada.

With his abilities in Chen Style Taijiquan and English translation, he was able to render this book in a most insightful and authentic manner.

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