

TEACHINGS OF SONG SHUMING

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太極功
THE TAIJI ART
宋書銘
by Song Shuming
[1908]

[Wu Tunan wrote in 1983 that this document was presented to him by a friend named Zhang Ximing in 1908. There is no date within the document itself to tell us when exactly it was written. Wu also said that he subsequently made copies of it for Xu Yusheng, Wu Jianquan, Yang Shaohou, Liu Caichen, Liu Enshou, and Ji Zixiu, which would seem to make it the key source text for certain materials that would appear in manuals for several decades that followed. Song Shuming's name does not actually appear in this document, but his hand is implicit in the phrase "my ancestor Song Yuanqiao", who the text is mainly attributed to.]

[PART ONE: TRANSMISSION FROM XU XUANPING]

許先師、係江南徽州府、歙縣人、隱城陽山、結簷南陽、辟穀、身長七尺六、髯長至臍、髮長至足、行及奔馬、每負薪、賣於市中、獨吟曰、
Xu Xuanping was from She County, Huizhou Prefecture, in the Jiangnan region. He lived as a hermit at Mt. Chengyang, dwelling in a thatched hut on the south-facing slope. He avoided eating grains. He was over seven feet tall. His beard reached his navel and his hair reached his feet. He walked like a galloping horse. He often carried firewood to sell in the marketplace, chanting this to himself:

負薪朝出賣、
沽酒日夕歸、
借問家何處、
穿雲入翠微、
At dawn I carry firewood to sell.
By dusk I have spent all my money on wine.
Pardon me, where do I live?
Through the clouds up the verdant hillside.

The Taiji Boxing that Xu taught was called Thirty-Seven, because it had thirty-seven posture names. It was also called Long Boxing, as in: "It is like a long river flowing into the wide ocean, on and on ceaselessly..."

三十七名目書之於後、
The names of these thirty-seven postures are listed below:

四正
[1] FOUR CARDINAL DIRECTIONS

四隅

[2] FOUR CORNER DIRECTIONS

雲手

[3] CLOUDING HANDS

灣弓射雁

[4] BEND THE BOW TO SHOOT THE GOOSE

揮琵琶

[5] PLAY THE LUTE

進搬攔

[6] ADVANCE, PARRY, BLOCK

簸箕式

[7] WINNOWING BASKET POSTURE

鳳凰展翅

[8] PHOENIX SPREADS ITS WINGS

雀起尾

[9] SPARROW LIFTS ITS TAIL

單鞭

[10] SINGLE WHIP

上提手

[11] STEP FORWARD, RAISE THE HANDS

倒攆猴頭

[12] RETREAT, DRIVING AWAY THE MONKEY'S HEAD

撈膝拗步

[13] BRUSH KNEE IN A CROSSED STANCE

肘下捶

[14] PUNCH UNDER ELBOW

轉身蹬脚

[15] TURN AROUND, PRESSING KICK

上步栽捶

[16] STEP FORWARD, PLANTING PUNCH

斜飛式

[17] DIAGONAL FLYING POSTURE

雙鞭

[18] DOUBLE WHIP

翻身搬攔

[19] TURN AROUND, PARRY, BLOCK

玉女穿梭

[20] MAIDEN WORKS THE SHUTTLE

七星八步

[21] SEVEN STARS IN EIGHT STEPS

高探馬

[22] RISING UP AND REACHING OUT TO THE HORSE

單擺連

[23] SINGLE-SLAP SWINGING LOTUS KICK

上跨虎

[24] STEP FORWARD, SITTING TIGER POSTURE

九宮步

- [25] NINE-PALACE STEPS
攬雀尾
- [26] CATCH THE SPARROW BY THE TAIL
山通背
- [27] MOUNTAIN THROUGH THE BACK
海底珍珠
- [28] PEARL UNDER THE SEA
彈指
- [29] FLICKING FINGER
擺連轉身
- [30] SWINGING LOTUS KICK, TURNING AROUND
指点捶
- [31] POINT-THE-WAY PUNCH
双擺連
- [32] DOUBLE-SLAP SWINGING LOTUS KICK
金鷄獨立
- [33] GOLDEN ROOSTER STANDS ON ONE LEG
泰山生氣
- [34] MT. TAI PRODUCES MIST
野馬分宗
- [35] WILD HORSE VEERS ITS MANE
如封似閉
- [36] SEALING SHUT
左右分脚
- [37] KICKING TO THE LEFT & RIGHT
掛樹踢脚
- [38] TREE-BOWING KICK
推碾
- [39] PUSH & FLATTEN
二起脚
- [40] DOUBLE KICK
抱虎推山
- [41] CAPTURE THE TIGER, PUSH THE MOUNTAIN
十字擺連
- [42] CROSSED-BODY SWINGING LOTUS KICK

此通共四十三手四正四隅九宮步七星八卦步双擺連在外因自己多坐用的工夫其餘三十七数是先師之所傳也此勢應一勢煉成再煉一勢萬不得心急齊用三十七勢却無論何式先何式後只要一將式用成自然三十七式皆化為相繼不斷也故謂之長拳脚趾五行懷藏八卦脚之所在為中央之土則可定乾南坤北離東坎西弼捋擠按四正也採捌肘靠四隅也

This totals forty-three [forty-two] techniques. Apart from FOUR CARDINAL DIRECTIONS, FOUR CORNER DIRECTIONS, NINE-PALACE STEPS, SEVEN STARS IN EIGHT STEPS, and DOUBLE-SLAP SWINGING LOTUS KICK, which come from my own experience, the other thirty-seven were what Xu taught.

These postures should each be trained one at a time until mastered before moving on to the next posture. Never be impatient for more. It does not matter which of the thirty-seven postures precedes or follows, only that they link together naturally, so that the postures all transform from one into another continuously. That is why it is called “Long Boxing”.

While your feet step according to the five elements, maintain awareness of the eight trigrams [in relation to the feet rather than the hands]. Standing at the central element of earth, you will then be able to stably step to Qian ☰ in the south, Kun ☷ in the north, Li ☲ in the east, or Kan ☵ in the west. The “four cardinal directions” [primary techniques] are warding off, rolling back, pressing, and pushing. The “four corner directions” [secondary techniques] are plucking, rending, elbowing, and bumping.

[Below are five writings belonging to the Thirty-Seven art. There is no specific authorship indicated.]

八字歌

SONG OF THE EIGHT TECHNIQUES

捌捋擠按世間稀
十個藝人十不知
若能輕靈並堅硬
粘連黏隨俱無疑
採捌肘靠更出奇
行之不用費心思
果能粘連黏隨字
得其環中不支離

The techniques of warding off, rolling back, pressing, and pushing are so unique that out of ten skillful people there are ten who do not understand them.

But if you can perform them with both agility and solidity, the qualities of sticking, connecting, adhering, and following will be sure to manifest.

The techniques of plucking, rending, elbowing, and bumping are yet more unusual, and if you execute them unsuccessfully, they will just be wasted ideas.

But if you are capable with the qualities of sticking, adhering, connecting, and following, you will occupy the central position and not be dislodged from it.

三十七心會論

ON MENTALLY UNDERSTANDING IN THE THIRTY-SEVEN POSTURES ART

腰脊為第一之主宰

The lower back is first to command,

猴頭為第二之主宰

the throat second to command,

地心為第三之主宰

the solar plexus third to command.

丹田為第一之賓輔

The elixir field is first to obey,

掌指為第二之賓輔

the palms second to obey,

足掌為第三之賓輔

the soles of the feet third to obey.

三十七周身大用論

ON FULLY USING THE BODY IN THE THIRTY-SEVEN POSTURES ART

一要性心與意靜
自然無處不輕靈
二要遍體氣流行
一定斷續不能停
三要猴頭永不拋
問盡天下衆英豪
如詢大用緣何得
表裡精粗無不到

*First, when your emotions are stable and your mind is calm,
you will naturally be nimble and alert at every point.*

*Second, when energy flows through your whole body,
there is a continuousness that cannot be interrupted.*

*Third, as long as you never show your throat,
you will be able to handle yourself against the best in the world.*

How can these things be achieved?

By way of total awareness, inside and out, in general and in detail.

十六關要論

THE SIXTEEN KEY POINTS

活潑於腰

[1] Liveliness lies with your waist.

靈机於頂

[2] Inspiration penetrates to your headtop.

神通於背

[3] Spirit courses through your spine.

不使氣流行於氣

[4] Flowing is based upon energy, and on not forcing the energy.

行之於腿

[5] Movement lies with your legs.

蹬之於足

[6] Pressing is felt at the foot.

運之於掌

[7] Wielding lies with your palms.

足之於指

[8] Sufficiency reaches to the fingers.

斂之於髓

[9] Gathering is a matter of your marrow.

達之於神

[10] Arriving is a matter of your spirit.

凝之於耳

[11] Concentration depends on your ears.

息之於鼻

[12] Breathing occurs through your nose.

呼吸往來於口

[13] Breath is expressed from your mouth.

縱之於膝

[14] Springiness lies with your knees.

渾噩一身

[15] Simplify things by using your whole body.

全体發之於毛

[16] The issuing of your whole body expresses with every hair.

功用歌

SONG OF FUNCTION

輕靈活潑求懂勁

陰陽既濟無滯病

若得四兩撥千斤

開合鼓盪主堅定

Be nimble and lively, seeking to identify the opponent's energies.

Passive and active are meant to exchange with each other, so do not make the error of getting stuck in either.

Once you have got the skill of "four ounces moves a thousand pounds",

it will be determined by your expanding and contracting, and the rousing of your energy.

[PART TWO: TRANSMISSION FROM LI DAOZI]

俞家江南寧國府涇縣人太極功名曰先天拳亦曰長拳得唐李道子所傳道子係江南安慶人至宋時與游酢莫逆至明時李道子嘗居五當山南岩宮不火食第啖麥麩數合故又名之曰夫子李也見人不及他語惟云大造化三字

The Yu family is from Jing County, Ningguo Prefecture, Jiangnan. Their Taiji art is called Innate Nature Boxing, also called Long Boxing. It was passed down by Li Daozi of the Tang Dynasty. Li was from Anqing in Jiangnan. During the Song Dynasty, he was a wanderer, making friends over wine. Then in the Ming Dynasty, he lived in the Wudang Mountains at the Southern Cliffs Temple. There he did not cook his food, instead snacking on wheat bran several times a day, and therefore he was known also as Master Li. When he met people, his catchphrase was "what a blessing".

既云唐人何以知之至明時之夫子李即是李道子先師也緣予上祖遊江南涇縣俞家方知先天拳亦如予之三十七式太極之別名也而又知俞家是唐時李道子所傳也俞家代代相承之功每歲往拜李道子廬至宋時尚在也越代不知所往也至明時

[Comment by Song Shuming:] (In order to find out if the Master Li of the Ming Dynasty was Li Daozi of the Tang Dynasty, my ancestor traveled to see the Yu family of Jing County, Jiangnan. He there discovered that Innate Nature Boxing was also, like our Thirty-Seven Postures, another name for Taiji. It was also confirmed to him that the Yu family's art had been transmitted from Li Daozi of the Tang Dynasty and was then passed down in the family from generation to generation. Members of the Yu family went every year to Li's cottage to honor him, continuing to do so into the Song Dynasty, though it is not known if they did this all the way into the Ming Dynasty.)

予同俞蓮舟遊湖廣襄陽府均州五當山夫子李見之叫曰徒再孫焉往蓮舟抬頭一看斯人面垢正厚髮不知如何參地味臭蓮舟心怒曰爾言之太過也吾觀汝一掌必死爾去罷夫子李云

重再孫我看看你這手蓮舟上前攔連捶未依身則起十丈高許落下未壞拆筋骨蓮舟曰你總用過功夫不然能扔我者鮮矣夫子李云你與俞清慧俞一誠認識否蓮舟聞之悚然此皆予上祖之名也急跪曰原来是我之先祖師至也夫子李曰吾在此幾十韶光未語今見你誠哉大造化也授你如此如此蓮舟自此不但無敵而後亦得全體大用矣

Yu Lianzhou and I traveled to the Wudang Mountains in Junzhou, Xiangyang Prefecture, Hebei. When Master Li saw us, he called out: “Hey, grandkid, where are you going?”

Yu looked up and saw that this man had a dirty face and matted hair, and he suspected the man would stink. Yu angrily said: “For such rude words, I’m warning you, with a slap you’ll be dead!”

Master Li said: “Sure, grandkid, show me your technique.”

Yu came forward to deliver a series of punches, but before he connected, he was lifted about a hundred feet into the air and then came down without getting any bones broken. He said: “Your skill surpasses everything to be able to throw me like that!”

Master Li said: “Do you not know of Yu Qinghui and Yu Yicheng?”

When Yu heard this, a shiver went up his spine. “Those are names of my distant ancestors.” Hurriedly kneeling down, he said: “You’re their teacher!”

Master Li said: “I’ve been here all these years without telling anyone. To see you now – what a blessing indeed. I will teach you this and that.”

Yu henceforth became not just invincible, but incredible.

予上祖宋遠橋與俞蓮舟俞岱岩張松溪張翠山殷利亨莫谷聲久相往來金陵之境
[Comment by Song Shuming:] (My distant ancestor Song Yuanqiao, with Yu Lianzhou, Yu Daiyan, Zhang Songxi, Zhang Cuishan, Yin Liheng, and Mo Gusheng, all had long-term contact with each other around Jinling [Nanjing].)

夫子李先師授俞蓮舟秘歌云

SONG OF SECRETS – taught to Yu Lianzhou by Master Li

無形無象
全身透空
應物自然
西山懸磬
虎吼猿鳴
泉清河靜
翻江播海
盡性立命

Be formless and shapeless.

Let your whole body be full of emptiness.

Respond to things naturally.

Be like chimes hung in the western hills [their sound resonating far].

Have the roar of a tiger and the cry of an ape.

The bubbling spring keeps fresh the calm stream.

Divert the river and turn back the sea.

Fulfill your nature and accept your destiny.

此歌予七人皆知其句後予七人同往拜五當山夫子李先師不見道經玉虛宮在太白山元高之地見玉虛子張三峯也此張松溪張翠山師也身長七尺有餘美髯如戟寒暑惟一簪笠日能行千里遠自洪武初年至太白山修煉予七人共拜之耳提面命月餘後歸自此不絕其往拜玉

虛子所傳惟張松溪張翠山拳名十三式亦太極之別名也又名長拳

After the seven of us learned this song, we all went together to Wudang to do obeisance to Master Li, but we could not find him there. At the Daoist “Jade Void Palace” on the heights of Mt. Taihe, we instead met Master Zhang Sanfeng, who had already been instructing Zhang Songxi and Zhang Cuishan. He was over seven feet tall, had a graceful beard that was like a halberd, wore the same bamboo hat regardless of winter or summer, and could travel three hundred miles in a single day. Long ago, in the first year of the reign of Emperor Hongwu [1368], he had practiced asceticism at Mt. Taihe.

The seven of us did obeisance to him, opening our minds to his wisdom for more than a month before returning, and from that point on have continued to make such pilgrimages. Master Zhang’s boxing art, which had so far been passed down only to Zhang Songxi and Zhang Cuishan, is called Thirteen Dynamics, another name for the Taiji art, and is also called Long Boxing.

十三式名目並論說列之於後

Below are the names of the postures in the Thirteen Dynamics solo set, followed by writings belonging to the art [with no specific authorship indicated]:

攬雀尾

[1] CATCH THE SPARROW BY THE TAIL

單鞭

[2] SINGLE WHIP

提手上勢

[3] RAISE THE HAND, STEPPING FORWARD

白鷺晾翅

[4] WHITE GOOSE DRIES ITS WINGS

撈膝拗步

[5] BRUSH KNEE IN A CROSSED STANCE

手揮琵琶

[6] PLAY THE LUTE

進步搬攔捶

[7] ADVANCE, PARRYING BLOCK, PUNCH

如封似閉

[8] SEALING SHUT

抱虎推山

[9] CAPTURE THE TIGER AND PUSH THE MOUNTAIN

攬雀尾

[10] CATCH THE SPARROW BY THE TAIL

肘底看拳

[11] GUARDING FIST UNDER ELBOW

倒攞猴

[12] RETREAT, DRIVING AWAY THE MONKEY

斜飛勢

[13] DIAGONAL FLYING POSTURE

提手上勢

[14] RAISE THE HAND, STEPPING FORWARD

白鷺晾翅

[15] WHITE GOOSE DRIES ITS WINGS

搂膝拗步
 [16] BRUSH KNEE IN A CROSSED STANCE
 海底珍
 [17] TREASURE UNDER THE SEA
 山通背
 [18] MOUNTAIN THROUGH THE BACK
 撥山捶
 [19] EXCALIBUR PUNCH
 退步搬攔捶
 [20] RETREAT, PARRYING BLOCK, PUNCH
 上勢攬雀尾
 [21] STEP FORWARD, CATCH THE SPARROW BY THE TAIL
 單鞭
 [22] SINGLE WHIP
 雲手
 [23] CLOUDING HANDS
 高探馬
 [24] RISING UP AND REACHING OUT TO THE HORSE
 左右分脚
 [25] KICKING TO THE LEFT & RIGHT
 轉身蹬脚
 [26] TURN AROUND, PRESSING KICK
 進步栽捶
 [27] ADVANCE, PLANTING PUNCH
 翻身撥山捶
 [28] TURN AROUND, EXCALIBUR PUNCH
 翻身二起脚
 [29] TURNING-BODY DOUBLE KICK
 披身踢脚
 [30] DRAPE THE BODY, KICK
 轉身蹬脚
 [31] TURN AROUND, PRESSING KICK
 上步搬攔捶
 [32] STEP FORWARD, PARRYING BLOCK, PUNCH
 如封似閉
 [33] SEALING SHUT
 抱虎推山
 [34] CAPTURE THE TIGER AND PUSH THE MOUNTAIN
 斜單鞭
 [35] DIAGONAL SINGLE WHIP
 野馬分宗
 [36] WILD HORSE VEERS ITS MANE
 玉女穿梭
 [37] MAIDEN WORKS THE SHUTTLE
 單鞭
 [38] SINGLE WHIP
 雲手下勢

- [39] CLOUDING HANDS, LOW POSTURE
金鷄獨立
- [40] GOLDEN ROOSTER STANDS ON ONE LEG
倒攞猴
- [41] RETREAT, DRIVING AWAY THE MONKEY
斜飛勢
- [42] DIAGONAL FLYING POSTURE
提手上勢
- [43] RAISE THE HAND, STEPPING FORWARD
白鷺晾翅
- [44] WHITE GOOSE DRIES ITS WINGS
撈膝拗步
- [45] BRUSH KNEE IN A CROSSED STANCE
海底珍
- [46] TREASURE UNDER THE SEA
山通背
- [47] MOUNTAIN THROUGH THE BACK
上勢攞雀尾
- [48] STEP FORWARD, CATCH THE SPARROW BY THE TAIL
單鞭
- [49] SINGLE WHIP
雲手
- [50] CLOUDING HANDS
高探馬
- [51] RISING UP AND REACHING OUT TO THE HORSE
十字擺連
- [52] CROSSED-HANDS SWINGING LOTUS KICK
撈膝指腦捶
- [53] BRUSH KNEE, PUNCH TO THE CROTCH
上勢攞雀尾
- [54] STEP FORWARD, CATCH THE SPARROW BY THE TAIL
單鞭下勢
- [55] SINGLE WHIP, LOW POSTURE
上步七星
- [56] STEP FORWARD, BIG DIPPER POSTURE
下步跨虎
- [57] STEP BACK, SITTING TIGER POSTURE
轉身擺連
- [58] TURN AROUND, SWINGING LOTUS KICK
灣弓射虎
- [59] BEND THE BOW, SHOOT THE TIGER
上勢攞雀尾
- [60] STEP FORWARD, CATCH THE SPARROW BY THE TAIL
合太極
- [61] CLOSING POSTURE

太極者無極而生陰陽之母也動之則分靜之則合無過不及隨曲就伸人剛我柔謂之走我順人背謂之黏動急則急應謂之連動緩則緩隨謂之隨雖變化萬端而理為一貫由着熟而漸悟懂勁由懂勁而階級神明然非用力之久不能豁然貫通焉勁頂氣沉丹田中立不倚乍隱乍顯左重則左必輕右重則右必輕虛實兼到仰高鑽堅進之則長退之則促一羽不能加蠅虫不能落人不知我我獨知人英雄所向無敵蓋皆由此而及也斯技旁門甚廣雖勢有區別概不外乎壯欺弱慢讓快耳有力打無力手慢讓手快皆是先天自然之能非關學力而有為也察四兩撥千斤之句顯非力勝觀毫釐能禦衆之情快何能也惟立如平准活似車輪偏沉則隨双重則滯每見數年純功不能運化者率皆自為人制双重之病未悟耳欲避此病須知陰陽粘即是走走即是粘陰不離陽陽不離陰陰陽相濟方是懂勁懂勁後愈煉愈精默識揣摩漸至從心所欲本是舍己從人多悞舍近求遠所謂差之毫厘謬之千里學者不可不詳辨焉

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

Neither going too far nor not far enough, comply and bend then engage and extend. He is hard while I am soft – this is yielding. My energy is smooth while his energy is coarse – this is sticking. If he moves fast, I quickly respond – this is connecting. If his movement is slow, I leisurely follow – this is following. Although there is an endless variety of possible scenarios, there is only this single principle [of yielding and sticking] throughout. Once you have ingrained these techniques, you will gradually come to identify energies, and then from there you will gradually progress toward something miraculous. But unless you practice a lot over a long time, you will never have a breakthrough.

Press up your headtop. Energy sinks to your elixir field. Stand centered and not leaning. Suddenly hide and suddenly appear. When there is pressure on the left, the left must become neutral. When there is pressure on the right, the right must become neutral. Emptiness and fullness manifest simultaneously. When looking up, it is still higher. When drilling in, it only becomes harder. When advancing, it is even farther. When retreating, it is even nearer. A feather cannot be added and a fly cannot land. The opponent does not understand me, only I understand him. A hero is one who encounters no opposition, and it is through this kind of method that such a condition is achieved.

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

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

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

The basic of basics is to forget about your plans and simply respond to the opponent. We often make the mistake of ignoring what is right in front of us in favor of something that has

nothing to do with our immediate circumstances. For such situations it is said: “Miss by an inch, lose by a mile.” You must understand all this clearly.

一舉動週身俱要輕靈猶須貫串氣宜鼓盪神宜內斂無使有缺陷處無使有凸凹處無使有斷續處根在脚發於腿主宰於腰形於手指由脚而腿而腰總要完整一氣向前退後乃得機得勢有不得機得勢處身便是散亂其病必於腰腿求之上下前後左右皆然凡此皆是意不在外面有上即有下有前即有後有左即有右辟如要向上即寓下意若將物掀起而加以挫之之意斯其根自斷乃壞之速而無疑虛實宜分清處一處虛實處處總此一虛實周身節節貫串無令絲毫間斷耳

Once there is any movement, your entire body must be aware and alert. There especially needs to be connection from movement to movement. Energy should be roused and spirit should be collected within. Do not allow there to be cracks or gaps anywhere, pits or protrusions anywhere, breaks in the flow anywhere.

Starting from your foot, issue through your leg, directing it at your waist, and expressing it at your fingers. From foot through leg through waist, it must be a fully continuous process, and whether advancing or retreating, you will then catch the opportunity and gain the upper hand. If not and your body easily falls into disorder, the problem must be in your waist and legs, so look for it there. This is always so, regardless of the direction of the movement, be it up, down, forward, back, left, right. And in all of these cases, the problem is a matter of your intent and does not lie outside of you.

With an upward comes a downward, with a forward comes a backward, and with a left comes a right. If your intention wants to go upward, then harbor a downward intention, like when you reach down to lift up an object. You thereby add a setback to the opponent's own intention, thus he cuts his own root and is defeated quickly and certainly.

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

十三式行功心法

UNDERSTANDING HOW TO PRACTICE THE THIRTEEN DYNAMICS

以心行氣務令沉着乃能收斂入骨以氣運身務令順遂乃能便利從心精神能提得起則無遲重之虞所謂頂頭懸也意氣須換得靈乃有圓活趣味所謂變動虛實也發勁須沉着鬆靜專主一方立身須中正安舒支撐八面行氣如九曲珠無往不利氣遍身軀之謂也運勁如百鍊剛何堅不摧形如搏兔之鵠神如捕鼠之貓靜如山岳動似江河蓄勁如開弓發勁如放箭曲中求直蓄而後發力由脊發步隨身換收即是放斷而復連往復須有摺疊進退須有轉換極柔軟然後堅硬能呼吸然後靈活氣以直養而無害勁以曲蓄而有餘心為令氣為旗腰為纛先求開展後求緊湊乃可臻於鎮密矣

Use mind to move the energy. You must get the energy to sink. It is then able to collect in the bones. Use energy to move your body. You must get the energy to be smooth. Your body can then easily obey your mind.

If you can raise your spirit, then you will be without worry of being slow or weighed down. Thus it is said [in the Thirteen Dynamics Song]: “Your whole body will be aware and your headtop will be pulled up as if suspended.”

Your mind must perform alternations nimbly, and then you will have the delight of being rounded and lively. Thus it is said [also in the Song]: “Pay attention to the alternation of empty and full.”

When issuing power, you must sink and relax, concentrating it in one direction. Your posture must be upright and comfortable, bracing in all directions.

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

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

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

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

Within curving, seek to be straightening. Store and then issue.

Power comes from your spine. Step according to your body's adjustments.

To gather is to release. Disconnect but stay connected.

In the back and forth [of the arms], there must be folding. In the advance and retreat [of the feet], there must be variation.

Extreme softness begets extreme hardness. Your ability to be lively lies in your ability to breathe.

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

The mind makes the command, the energy is its flag, and the waist is its banner.

First strive to open up, then strive to close up, and from there you will be able to attain a refined subtlety.

又曰先在心後在身腹鬆氣斂神舒体静刻刻在心切記一動無有不動一静無有不静牽動往来氣貼背斂入脊骨內固精神外示安逸邁步如猫行運勁如抽絲全身意在蓄神不在氣在氣則滯有氣者無力有力者無氣無力者純剛即得乾行健之理所以氣如車輪腰如車軸也

It is also said:

First in your mind, then in your body. Your abdomen relaxes and then energy collects. Your spirit should be comfortable and your body should be calm – at every moment be mindful of this. Always remember: If one part moves, every part moves, and if one part is still, every part is still.

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

Inwardly bolster spirit and outwardly show ease.

Step like a cat and move energy as if drawing silk.

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

To obtain the principle of “invigorating activity” from hexagram 1 of the *Book of Changes* [i.e. “Nature acts with vigor. Likewise a gentleman ceaselessly improves himself.”], let your energy be like a wheel and your waist be like an axle.

十三勢歌

THIRTEEN DYNAMICS SONG

十三總式莫輕視	命意原頭在腰隙
變轉虛實須留意	氣遍身軀不稍癡
静中觸動動猶静	因敵變化是神奇
勢勢留心揆用意	得来功夫不顯遲
刻刻留心在腰間	腹內鬆静氣騰然

尾閭正中神冠頂 滿身輕利頂頭懸
 仔細留心向推求 屈伸開合聽自由
 入門引路須口授 工夫無息法自修
 若言体用何為準 意氣君來骨肉臣
 想推用意終何在 延年益壽不老春
 歌歌歌歌百四十 字字真切意無遺
 若不向此推求去 枉費工夫貽嘆息

*Do not neglect any of the thirteen dynamics,
 their command coming from your lower back.*

*You must pay attention to the alternation of empty and full,
 then energy will flow through your whole body without getting stuck anywhere.*

*In stillness, movement stirs, and then in moving, seem yet to be in stillness,
 for the magic lies in making adjustments based on being receptive to the opponent.
 In every movement, very deliberately control it by the use of intention,
 for once you achieve that, your technique will never be gummed up.*

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

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

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

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

長拳者如長江大海滔滔不絕十三勢棚捋擠按採捌肘靠八卦也

Long Boxing: it is like a long river flowing into the wide ocean, on and on ceaselessly... The thirteen dynamics are: warding off, rolling back, pressing, pushing, plucking, rending, elbowing, and bumping – which relate to the eight trigrams:



進步退步左顧右盼中以土定五行也合而言之十三勢也乃太極拳之別名也棚捋擠按即坎離震兌四正方也採捌肘靠即乾坤艮巽四斜角也進退顧盼中定水火木金土也

... and advancing, retreating, stepping to the left, stepping to the right, and staying in the center – which relate to the five elements: metal, wood, water, fire, and earth. Combined [8+5], these are the Thirteen Dynamics, yet another name for Taiji Boxing. Warding off, rolling back, pressing, and pushing correspond to ☰, ☷, ☲, and ☵ in the four principle compass directions [meaning simply that these are the primary techniques]. Plucking, rending,

elbowing, and bumping correspond to ䷋, ䷌, ䷍, and ䷎ in the four corner directions [i.e. are the secondary techniques]. Advancing, retreating, stepping to the left, stepping to the right, and staying in the center correspond to the five elements of water, fire, wood, metal, and earth.

打手歌

PLAYING HANDS SONG

棚捋擠按須認真
上下相隨人難進
任他巨力來打我
牽動四兩撥千斤
引入落空合即出
粘連黏隨不丟頂

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

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

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

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

Guiding him in to land on nothing, I then close up and shoot him out.

I stick, connect, adhere, and follow, neither coming away nor crashing in.

又彼不動己不動彼微動己先動似鬆非鬆將展未展勁斷意不斷

It is also said:

If he takes no action, I take no action, but once he takes even the slightest action, I have already acted. The power seems relaxed but not relaxed, about to expand but not yet expanding. When my power finishes, my intent of it continues.

[PART THREE: TRANSMISSION FROM HAN GONGYUE]

程靈洗字元滌江南徽州府休寧人授業韓拱月太極之功成大用矣侯景之亂惟歙州保全皆靈洗力也梁元帝授以本郡太守卒謚忠壯至程璠為紹興中進士授昌化主簿累官權吏部尚書拜翰林學士立朝剛正風裁凜然進封新安郡侯以端明殿學士致仕卒璠居家常平糶以濟人凡有利於衆者必盡心焉所著有落水集璠將太極功拳名立一名為小九天雖璠之遺名小九天書韓傳者不敢忘先師之所傳也

Cheng Lingxi, called Yuandi, was from Xiuning, Huizhou Prefecture, Jiangnan. He learned from Han Gongyue a Taiji skill that was highly practical. During the Houjing Rebellion [548–552], She County [in Anhui] was protected entirely due to Cheng. The first Liang emperor thus gave him command over the region. After Cheng died, he was given the posthumous name of Zhongzhuang [“loyal and mighty”].

The art was later passed down to Cheng Bi, who [in 1193] was a graduate of the court-level examinations in Shaoxing Prefecture. He was made Head of Records for Changhua County, as well as Minister of Personnel, was honored with a degree from the Hanlin Academy, served as an imperial courtier whose bearing inspired awe, and finally, given the title of Marquis of Xin'an Prefecture [modern day Huizhou in Anhui], as well as Scholar of the Hall of Clarity. While he ran his estate, he often sold grain for a much lower price to relieve people when there was less to go around, sincerely wanting to benefit the masses. He

is the author of the *Ming River Collection*.

He changed the name of his Taiji Boxing art to Small Highest Heaven. Although he inherited the art, he recorded that it was Han Gongyue who taught it, never daring to forget the master who passed it down.

小九天法式

Postures of the Small Highest Heaven art:

七星八步

[1] SEVEN STARS IN EIGHT STEPS

開天門

[2] OPENING THE PALACE GATE

什錦背

[3] BROCADE DRAPED OVER THE BACK

提手

[4] RAISE THE HANDS

卧虎跳澗

[5] CROUCHING TIGER JUMPS OVER THE STREAM

單鞭

[6] SINGLE WHIP

射雁

[7] SHOOT THE GOOSE

穿梭

[8] THREADING THE SHUTTLE THROUGH

白鶴升空

[9] WHITE CRANE RISES TO THE SKY

大擋捶

[10] BIG PUNCH TO THE CROTCH

小擋捶

[11] SMALL PUNCH TO THE CROTCH

葉裏花

[12] FLOWER IN THE LEAVES

猴頂雲

[13] MONKEY HOLDS UP THE CLOUDS

攬雀尾

[14] CATCH THE SPARROW BY THE TAIL

八方掌

[15] EIGHT-DIRECTIONS PALM

太極者非純功於易經不能得也以易經一書必須朝夕悟在心內必須朝夕會在身中超以象外得其囊中人所不知而已獨知之妙若非得師一点心法之傳如何能致使我手之舞之樂在其中矣

If Taiji is not based purely on the *Book of Changes*, you will not be able to succeed in it. To use the *Book of Changes*, you must at all times realize its ideas in your mind and manifest them within your body, transcending outward appearance and instead holding to what is in the center, thereby possessing the marvel of “the opponent does not understand me, only I understand him”. But if I had not personally received corrections from my teacher, I would not have been able to delight in these movements.

[Below are two pieces belonging to this art, with no specific authorship indicated.]

用功五誌

FIVE STUDY REMINDERS [These five terms are originally from the “Zhong Yong” – chapter 31 of the *Book of Rites*.]

博學（是多功夫）

[1] Learn abundantly. (Work on a great variety of skills.)

審問（不是口問是聽勁）

[2] Inquire meticulously. (This does not have to do with querying verbally, but with listening to energy.)

慎思（聽而後留心想念）

[3] Ponder wholeheartedly. (After a session of listening, contemplate the experience constantly.)

明辨（生生不已）

[4] Discriminate clearly. (New things will always continue to come at you [and you should keep yourself from being distracted by things that are not important].)

篤行（如天行健）

[5] Practice sincerely. (“Nature acts with vigor. [Likewise a gentleman ceaselessly improves himself.]” – Hexagram 1 of the *Book of Changes*)

四性歸原歌

SONG OF THE FOUR NATURES RETURNING TO ONE

世人不知己之性
何能得知人之性
物性亦如人之性
至如天地亦此性
我賴天地以存身
天地賴我以綴局
若能先求知我性
天地受我偏獨靈

*Unless you understand your own nature,
how can you understand human nature?*

*The nature of things is similar to human nature,
and the nature of the universe is similar in turn to that nature.*

*We depend on the universe for existence,
but the universe depends on us for relevance.*

*If I can first seek to understand my own nature,
the universe will teach me and reveal my own unique talent.*

[PART FOUR: TRANSMISSION FROM HU JINGZI]

胡境子在揚州自稱之名不知性氏此是宋仲殊之師也仲殊安州人嘗遊姑蘇台柱上倒書一絕云

“Hu Jingzi” was the name he called himself while in Yangzhou, but we do not know what his

name actually was. He taught his art to Zhong Shu of the Song Dynasty. Zhong was from Anzhou [present-day Anlu in Hubei]. He once traveled to Gusu Tower, where he wrote this poem on a pillar [a poem which drew the attention of Su Dongpo, who Zhong then became friends with]:

天長地久任悠悠
你既無心我亦休
浪迹天涯人不管
春風吹笛酒家樓

*Universe eternal, on and on forever,
you have no mind, so I likewise quiet mine.*

*I wander to the ends of the Earth, nobody paying me any attention [“people not piping” – a pun foreshadowing the next line],
but when spring breezes come, I blow my flute for them in taverns.*

仲殊所傳殷利亨太極拳名曰後天法亦是棚捋擠按採捌肘靠也然而勢法名目不同其功用則一也如一家人分居各有所為也然而根本非兩事也

The Taiji Boxing that Zhong taught to Yin Liheng was called Acquired Nature Method. It too contained the techniques of warding off, rolling back, pressing, pushing, plucking, rending, elbowing, and bumping [although the list below focuses entirely on elbowing]. Although its posture names were different, its method of use was the same as before. If a practitioner of a system goes off on his own, he and the original system will each do things their own way, but the fundamentals in either case will remain the same.

後天法目

Contents of the Acquired Nature Method:

陽肘

[1] ACTIVE ELBOW

陰肘

[2] PASSIVE ELBOW

遮陰肘

[3] GROIN-COVERING ELBOW

肘裏鎗

[4] INWARD-SPEARING ELBOW

肘開花

[5] BLOSSOMING-FLOWER ELBOW

八方捶

[6] EIGHT-DIRECTIONS PUNCH

陰五掌

[7] PASSIVE FIVE PALMS

單提肘

[8] SINGLE LIFTING ELBOW

雙鞭肘

[9] DOUBLE-WHIP ELBOWS

卧虎肘

[10] CROUCHING-TIGER ELBOW

雲飛肘

[11] CLOUD-FLYING ELBOW

研磨肘

[12] GRINDING ELBOW

山通肘

[13] MOUNTAIN THROUGH THE ELBOW

兩膝肘

[14] ELBOW TO BOTH KNEES

一膝肘

[15] ELBOW TO ONE KNEE

以上太極功各家名目因予身臨其境並得其良友往來相助皆非作技藝觀者人也一家人恐其久而差矣故筆之書以授後人玩索而有得焉則終身用之有不能盡者矣其餘太極功再有別名別目者吾不知之矣待後人有所遇者記之可也且記無論用何等名目拳法惟太極則不能兩說也若太極說有不同斷乎不一家也却無論工夫高低上下一家人必無兩家話自上之先師而上溯其根原東方先生再上而溯始孟子當列國紛紛固將立命之功所謂養吾浩然之氣塞於天地之間欲大成者則化功也小成者武事也立命之道非氣體之充胡能也由立命以盡性至於窮神達化自天子至庶人何莫非誠意正心修身始也書及此後世萬不可輕洩傳人若謂不傳人當年先師何以傳至予家也却無論遠近親朋自家傳者賢也尊先師之命不敢妄傳後輩如傳人之時必須想予緒記之心血與先師之訓誨而已

The above descriptions of various schools of Taiji and their terminology are based on my own experience and on help from good friends who are not the type to show off their skills. I fear that a person within any of these styles will after a long period end up corrupting it, therefore I have written these things down to supply future generations with material to ponder and learn from. This art will last you for your entire life and you will never be able to use it up.

If there are any other Taiji styles with different names and different postures names, I am not aware of them, and I will leave it up to later generations to encounter and record them. No matter what names they may use for their techniques, the Taiji art itself cannot be considered to be more than one art. If some version is explained totally differently than the rest, then that is assuredly a different art altogether, but otherwise no matter what a person's skill level might be, he should not proclaim his version to be a different art.

Tracing further back from the previous masters above, we encounter the likes of Dongfang Shuo [a Han Dynasty scholar who was subsequently placed in the ranks of Daoist immortals], then tracing back further still, there was Mengzi, who traveled from kingdom to kingdom to present his art of "accepting one's destiny". He said [*Mengzi*, chapter 2a]: "I am so good at nurturing my noble energy... that it fills up the world."

The greater achievement is personal transformation, while the lesser achievement is martial skill. The Way of accepting destiny cannot be achieved without filling the body with energy. From accepting one's destiny, there is then the fulfilling of one's nature, and ultimately one's spirit is transformed. From king to commoner, how could this process not initiate sincerity of intention, correctness of mind, and cultivation of the body?

Later generations must never pass down this material casually, for there are some kinds of people who should not be taught. After all, why did past masters pass the art down to us? It really had nothing to do with family relations, only with being worthy. We must respect the life's work of past masters and not dare to teach their art rashly. When you later generations teach this art, you must try to get the work you put into it to live up to the efforts of the earlier masters.

此書十不傳

TEN TYPES OF PEOPLE NOT TO BE TAUGHT

一不傳外教

1. Do not teach those of different traditions.

二不傳無德

2. Do not teach those without virtue.

三不傳不知師弟之道者

3. Do not teach those who do not understand instructions.

四不傳收不住的

4. Do not teach those who cannot endure.

五不傳半盡而廢的

5. Do not teach quitters.

六不傳得寶忘師者

6. Do not teach those who gain the treasure but forget the teacher.

七不傳無納履之心者

7. Do not teach those who are ungrateful for what they receive.

八不傳好怒好慍者

8. Do not teach those who are prone to losing their temper.

九不傳外欲太多者

9. Do not teach those who take excessive delight in worldly pleasures.

十不傳匪事多端者

10. Do not teach those who cannot handle a great variety of tasks.

此書有四忌

FOUR PROHIBITIONS

忌飲過量之酒

[1] Do not drink wine excessively.

色當色者夫婦之道要將有別字認清

[2] Do not be distracted by sex, for the ways of women will lead you to bad decisions.

忌取無義之財

[3] Do not be obsessed with wealth.

忌動不合中之氣一飲一啄在內

[4] Do not act in opposition to a balanced lifestyle, trying to get more for yourself than is reasonable.

用功三小忌

THREE LITTLE PRACTICE PROHIBITIONS

食吃多

[1] Don't eat too much.

水飲多

[2] Don't drink too much.

睡時多

[3] Don't sleep too much.

