

SHEN HONGXUN

TAIJI 37

THE SPONTANEOUS
MOVEMENTS OF TAIJIQUAN

WORK TEXT

SHEN HONGXUN QIGONG INSTITUTE

太極卅七

This book is only for use as workbook for TAIJI 37 students.

It is not for sale to non-students.

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Preface

TAIJI 37 is a TAIJIQUAN secret. Normally it cannot be written down. However many people who come to the TAIJI 37 lessons I give already four years in Europe, they like to have a book as a reference for their exercises.

At this moment we did not make a book but a work text. The basis of this text are mostly the notes of Sydney Leijenhorst. In order to become a TAIJI 37 book I must think it through again and again and again and the knowledge of older Masters must be added.

This work text has been edited with the help of many people: Wang Jia Bin, Jan Willem, Pamela, Tang JinYu, Kyrra, Marion and Dirk-Jan.

Therefore I want to thank them very much.

PREFACE

Almost 800 years have passed since Zhang SanFeng's¹ birth. After his death many different styles of Taijiquan developed and were spread out over the world. Today there are about 10 million people practicing Taijiquan.

There are many books on this subject in different languages. In some of these books you will find written that 'Qi'² is the central theme in Taijiquan. It is suggested that through the practice of Taijiquan one can feel, strengthen, circulate or even emit this 'Vital Energy'. Alas, many practitioners of Taijiquan, after years of serious practice, come to the conclusion they have not experienced much of this phenomenon.

So, quite often people ask me: "Why!". "Why do you have Internal Power and External Energy and I don't? The answer is simple. For about forty years I have practiced Taijiquan and have researched many different Taijiquan styles. I followed several grandmasters who where all lineage holders and paid important contributions to the development of Taijiquan. They all had unique and incredible skills.

Grandmaster Xia ZiXin taught me **Taiji 37** from the Southern 'School' of Taijiquan. This method uses posture practice with spontaneous movements as its main practice. It is a very effective method to develop Qi and Internal Power. This system however was taught mainly to family members or 'family students'. As a result this school unfortunately almost died out. I consider myself lucky to have met master Xia ZiXin thirty years ago when he taught me this method.

From the grandmasters Yao HuanZhi, Tian ZhaoLin, Yu JieFu, and others I learned different styles from the Northern school of Taijiquan, mainly Yang-style. Of these, Grandmaster Yao HuanZhi was my most important teacher. All the teachers mentioned above used the method of spontaneous movement in their own practice. However they never taught this method in public. If they did teach it, it would only be

¹According to the legends ZhangSan Feng is the founder of Taijiquan.

²Loosely translated 'Vital Energy'. More explanation about Qi is in the books 'Taiji Wuxigong' and 'Buqi' by Shen Hongxun.

restricted to family members or 'family students'.

I also tried and explored other methods to feel, strengthen, circulate and transmit 'Vital Energy'. After seventeen years of Taijiquan practice it became clear to me which methods were most efficient. After that I was able to teach my students a method which brings them, in a relatively short time, in contact with essential phenomenons like: Dantian movement, Qi-circulation and the transmission of Qi. Here in the west I have many students who agree with this and some of them, after two or three years of practice, transmit Energy over a distance of ten meters.

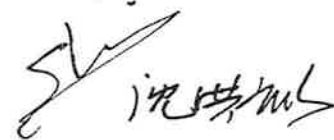
In my opinion and from my experience, the **Taiji 37** method is the most effective method for developing QI and Internal Power. I have used the keypoints of the TAIJI 37 to help people of other styles to have the same effects in the practice of postures of their own style. Many of my students practice the Yang-style and so I applied the principles of **Taiji 37** to the postures of this style. The results of this is presented in this book and in the **Taiji 37** courses I have given in various countries.

Many students have experienced the strengthening effect on their Internal Energy. To illustrate this, a comment of a Taijiquan teacher: "I have practiced Taijiquan for more than 13 years but I never felt the presence of Internal Energy so clearly, the intensity of Master Shen's Qi is truly amazing".

Master Yang ChengFu wanted every student to have students of their own, at least one pupil. In this way he thought Taijiquan would reach an even higher degree of development. I agree with this and would like to add that it's very important to teach the coorect way. Once every year I try to make my contribution by teaching **Taiji 37**. Unfortunately, because of my other activities in Qigong and Buqi I cannot devote more time to teach Taijiquan.

All together, in this way I hope to make a contribution to a higher development and growth of Taijiquan. For this reason I want to propagate the knowledge I have in this field. Because I have studied with many great Taijiquan masters, I know every master has built up valuable knowledge. Therefore I would be very pleased if other masters could let me know if there are any mistakes in this book.

Gent: july 1991

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Shen Junsheng' in Chinese characters, written in a cursive style.

As the story goes Yang LuChan (1799-1872), the founder of the Yang-style, was from Guan Ping³, Hebei province. When he was a young boy he was sickly. His father invited Wushu masters to teach him Wushu to improve his health. He was a talented and dedicated student. One day he heard that the Chen family from Henan province was very well known for its martial arts. He travelled to Henan to visit the Chen family. However they did not let him in.

Some time later, in the winter time, he would shovel away the snow in front of the entrance of the Chen family's house and pretended that he was mute. They didn't recognize him from his earlier visit. At a certain day he got a shock due to the cold and the lack of food. Chen ChangXing felt sorry for Yang LuChan and let him into his house. He became a laborer in service of the Chen family, which created the Chen-style Taijiquan. He lived on the terrain of the Chen family but the family itself had their own yard with a high wall around it.

One day, after working there already for some years, he got diarrhoea. During the night he often had to go to the toilet, which was at the edge of the premises. On one of these nightly walks he heard strange sounds coming from behind the wall around the yard of the Chen family. He became curious and with some effort he managed to look over the wall. To his amazement he saw many members of the Chen family practicing Taijiquan, although it was 2 o'clock in the¹ of the night.

He had always been fascinated with Taijiquan and wanted to stay and watch. He realized this was a secret training and if he got caught it could mean his death. Yang LuChan however was undaunted and decided to stay. From then on he returned every night to study the exercises and to copy them secretly.

This story about Yang LuChan illustrates the fact that not all the teachings of the Taijiquan lineages were accessible to the public.

³. Nowadays called Yong Nian.

PHASES OF DEVELOPMENT

1. Criteria

To know whether or not your Taijiquan practice is developing you need to have certain criteria. In olden times there were tournaments in which the postures of the participants were judged. However this is a dubious way of action. Taijiquan is an internal martial art and must therefore firstly be judged on the things that happen inside. I think the criteria practitioners use for this kind of judgement must change. They must become more related to the essence of Taijiquan, an martial art which uses internal energy and an art of body-movement. It is my experience that there are three phases of internal energy development in Taijiquan on which you can judge the level of development.

In the **first phase of development** you can feel a vibration in the lower abdomen which resembles the boiling of water. This feeling indicates the activation of the Dantian has begun. In the 'Taiji Classics'⁴ is written: 'When the abdomen is relaxed the energy bubbles like boiling water'⁵. If this has taken place you can say one has made the first step in discovering the essence of Taijiquan.

The **second phase of development** is characterized by a spontaneous turning of the Dantian. This Dantian movement leads the movement of the whole body. The Taiji Classics say: 'moving like a wheel'⁶. The word wheel refers to the Dantian which is the axle of this wheel.

4. The Taijiquan Quan Jing is the Taijiquan 'bible'. It contains many profound treatises on Taijiquan which are written by earlier Taijiquan grandmasters. As such they are preeminently the guides and touchstones for the practice of Taijiquan. There are hundreds of years of experience collected in it. For the sake of convenience we will use the word 'Taiji Classics'.

5. 'Fu Nei Song Jing Qi Tang Ran': 腹内鬆净氣騰然 . This is written in the <Shi San Shi Ge>. 十三勢歌

6. 'Qi Ru Chi Lun' 氣如車輪 . From the <Shi San Shi Xing Gong Xin Jie> by Wu Yu Xiang. 十三勢行功心解

The **third phase of development** characterizes itself by a free control of the Dantian movement and the movement of the Energy inside and outside the body. In the essay < Quan Lun > by Wang Zhong Yue⁷ from the Taiji Classics is written: 'Your body does what your mind does'⁸. At this stage the Mind (Imagination, Intention and Awareness) will naturally activate and regulate the Dantian and the flow of Qi inside and outside the body.

⁷. This is one of the most important essays from the Taiji Classics.

⁸. 'Chong Xin Suo Yu' 從心所欲.

SPONTANEOUS MOVEMENT

STILLNESS and MOVEMENT

In Taijiquan literature we find more explanations about the phases of development in Taijiquan practice. A second way to indicate the steps you have to go through to achieve a higher level of practice, makes use of the terms 'Jing' and 'Dong'. The translation of **Jing** can be: 'Quietness', 'Stillness' or 'Calmness'. **Dong** means 'Movement'.

Jing - Dong - Jing

There is one explanation which divides the development in to two steps: 'Find Movement in Stillness ('Jing Zhong Qiu Dong') and 'Find Stillness in Movement' ('Dong Zhong Qiu Jing')⁹.

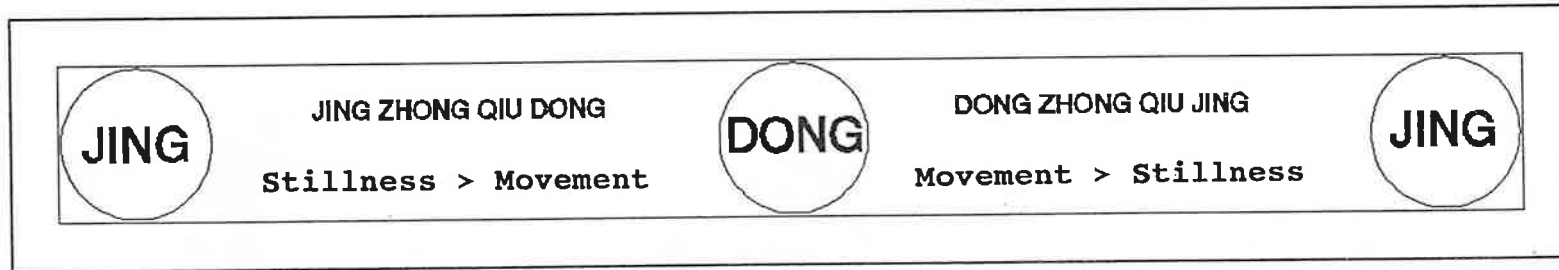
I. '**Find Movement in Stillness**'. Stillness, in the context of Taiji 37, refers to the practice of the Taijiquan postures, the Zhan Zhuang exercises¹⁰. In these exercises you create Stillness (Jing) in mind and body. You relax the body and let go of all your thoughts. After some time the Yuan Qi¹¹ starts to circulate and you will become so relaxed that the circulating Yuan Qi will move the body.

⁹. The original version is 'Jing Zhong Zhu Dong, Dong You Jing' this comes from the < Shi San Shi Ge >. In the Yang-style literature it is accepted to use 'Jing Zhong Qiu Jing, Dong Zhong Qiu Jing'. The meaning of both sayings is the same.

¹⁰. See the last paragraph of this chapter.

¹¹. Yuan Qi is the motor behind all life processes. More on this subject you can find in the book on Taiji Wuxigong and the Buqi course texts.

II. **'Find Stillness in Movement'**. In the beginning the spontaneous movements will become larger and more vehement, because the circulating Yuan Qi is breaking its way through the blockages. The Yuan Qi will be able to move more freely through the body when these blockages decrease, and the spontaneous movements will become smaller and more subtle. There will be less movement 'of' the body and more movement 'within' the body.



There is a second explanation of the development stages which uses the same terms and contains three steps: Stillness - Movement - Stillness.

I. **'Stillness'**. This also refers to the practice of the Taijiquan postures. When you start practicing these Taijiquan postures, there will not be enough Yuan Qi to move your body. Besides this you will be too tensed to let these spontaneous movements happen. At first sight there is 'Stillness', however there is a lot of activity in the form of muscle tension.

II. **'Movement'**. After some practice the amount of Yuan Qi increases and you will attain a deeper state of relaxation of mind and body which makes it possible to let spontaneous movements occur. The circulating Yuan Qi causes these spontaneous movements (Dong).

III. **'Stillness'**. Ultimately all blockages will dissolve and the Yuan Qi can move freely through the body. The body as such is not moved (Jing), but there is a free movement of Yuan Qi within the body. In this last phase the Yuan Qi can follow the mind freely, because the body is free

from blockages. If you want you can move your body directly by means of the Energy. Your body does what your mind wants. This last phase in Taijiquan is also called 'Freely Picking Flowers'¹².

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¹². Lun Cai Hua:

ZHAN ZHUANG EXERCISES

The practice of the Zhan Zhuang exercises is a very important part of Taijiquan. Freely translated it means 'to stand like a pillar'. This name does not mean that you have to stand very rigid, but refers to the pillars on which people had to learn to stand and walk to be able to leave and enter the castle or village in which they lived in earlier times.

In former days Chinese castles were surrounded by a deep trench to keep out intruders. In this trench were pillars on which you had to and walk to get in and out. Around and next to these pillars there were sharp knives which stuck out to the sky. If intruders would attack, they would have to walk on these pillars under a rain of stones and arrows, and would risk to fall in these knives. Of course the inhabitants of these castles had to exercise their own ability of walking on these pillars, otherwise they would fall a victim to their own traps. For this reason people practiced first standing and later walking on pillars. From this the Zhan Zhuang exercises are developed which are also used in Taijiquan.

Characteristic for the Taiji 37 Zhan Zhuang postures is the body position in which the center of gravity coincides with the Dantian¹³. If this is the case, the blocked Internal Energy can, all the time, flow back to the Dantian and activates it. As a result the production and circulation of Yuan Qi will increase.

This activation of the Dantian and the circulation of Yuan Qi forms a basis for the spontaneous movements. Spontaneous movement is a second feature of Zhan Zhuang exercises in Taiji 37.

¹³. The lower Dantian is the most important Energy center for humans and is located in the lower abdomen. More information you can find in the book 'Taiji Wuxigong' and the Buqi course text.

SPONTANEOUS REACTIONS

The arousal of spontaneous movements are very important in Taijiquan and is especially well developed in Taiji 37. This method quickly gives clear experiences of Qi and an understanding of how to work with it. Therefore it is an enhancement for everybody who practices Taijiquan.

If you look at it from the energy point of view, the spontaneous movement is caused by the (re)activation of the Dantian. When the Dantian is activated, it will produce more and more Yuan Qi which will circulate through the body. This will produce all kinds of spontaneous movements and reactions, for example:

1. Movements 'of' and 'within' the body through Qi circulation in the channels and meridians.
2. Dantian movements.
3. Changes in the way you breathe. This can manifest in the form of sighing, yawning, deepening of the breath, groans, etc.
4. Emotional manifestations and changes like laughing, crying, shouting, growling, etc.
5. Changes in your Energy field.

The kind of spontaneous movements not only depends upon the activity of the Dantian and the circulation of Yuan Qi, but also upon the blockages in your body and mind. The circulating Yuan Qi encounters these blockages and 'dissolves' them. This process induces spontaneous movements that are sometimes very powerful and big. All this causes the Energy routes of your body to 'open' and helps discharging the Negative Energy.

Actually Taiji 37 uses semi-spontaneous movements, or guided spontaneous movements. Namely every different posture has its own specific Intention/Imagination (Yi¹⁴). This Intention/Imagination channels the spontaneous movements. In the beginning, when you don't have the right amount of relaxation and concentration, the

¹⁴. See the chapter about Yi.

spontaneous movements will be relatively arbitrary. Because of the various blockages in our system there is no direct contact between your Yi/Shen and Yuan Qi. After some time relaxation is enhanced and proper concentration will give the spontaneous movements a more or less specific form. Ultimately one will be able to let the body freely react to the movement of the mind and spirit (see the chapter Development phases).

POINTS OF ATTENTION

STANCES

The stances used in Taiji 37 will be explained before describing a group of Mother Postures that use the same stance. If the stance for a mother posture differs from the standard stance this will be mentioned and explained in the description of that Mother Posture.

The points of concentration for the hips are discussed in the chapter about the torso.

At the end of this chapter there will be a table in which all 37 postures are divided according to the stance. There are more postures because the postures Ban Lan Chui and Dao Nian Hou are executed in two parts. Also Yun Shou (A + B) can be done in two stances, Da Ma Bu and Bing Bu.

Horseriding Stance		Closed Stance
Small Horseriding Stance	Large Horseriding Stance	
WUJI ZHANZHUANG TAIJI ZHANZHUANG/HE TAIJI YU NU CHUAN SUO	SHI ZI SHOU A + B YUN SHOU A+B BAO HU KUI SHAN	YUN SHOU A+B

Forward Stance		
Small Forward Stance	Large Forward Stance	
LAN ZHA YI- PENG LAN ZHA YI- AN LAN ZHA YI- JI LOU XI AO BU BAN LAN CHUI A ZAI CHUI ZHI DANG CHUI SHUANG FENG GUAN ER WANG GONG SHE HU DA HU	DAN BIAN/PING DAN BIAN SHAN TONG BEI YE MA FEN ZHONG/XIE FEI	
Unwaverable Stance	Sitting Stance	Yu Ji Stance
RU FENG SI BI	LAN ZHA YI - LU DAO NIAN HOU B DAN BIAN XIA SHI	BAN LAN CHUI - B
Immortal Stance	Retreating Stance	One Leg Stance
BAI HE LIANG CHI/TUI BU KUA HU HAI DI ZHEN ZHOU DI KAN CHUI GAO TAN MA QI XING CHUI	SHOU HUI PI PA TI SHOU PI SHEN CHUI BAI SHE TU XIN	DAO NIAN HOU A JIN JI DU LI FEN JIAO DENG JIAO BAI LIAN TUI

WUJI ZHANZHUANG

WuJi literally means 'No Limits' or 'Limitless'. Here it refers to the fact that this posture is not limited or regulated by a specific intention/imagination as with the other 36 postures. In this posture one remains thoughtless, the mind is empty. Also the physical aspect of the posture is not very different from a natural standing posture.

Zhan Zhuang means 'Pillar Stance'. Together it means '**No Limits Pillar Stance**'. Because of this, the spontaneous reactions that can occur while practicing this posture are less specific than in most of the other postures. This also characterizes the limitlessness of Wuji Zhan Zhuang.

Wuji is also often translated as 'Emptiness' or 'Nothingness'.

POSTURE/MOVEMENT

Legs and Feet

Small Forward Stance; the legs, hips, knees and ankles are only slightly bent.

Torso

Standard.

Arms and Hands

Both hands are open and the Laogong points are turned backward and slightly inward. Almost like they hang naturally.

The arms are almost straightened.

Eyes



The eyes are nearly closed. See below.

Intention/Imagination

- A. Think about nothing, forget everything, but keep sensing everything inside and around you. In other words: find the middle between sleeping and being awake and remain in this state of mind and body.
- B. Imagine that your eyelids are so heavy that it would take effort to open your eyes if someone would call your name.

REMARKS

For beginners it is advisable to stretch the wrist a little towards the back of the hand and to turn the palm outward, downward and slightly forward. The little finger should be slightly higher than the thumb and point forward. In this hand position the meridians and joint of the arm are stretched open more intensely. This gives a stronger discharge of Sick Energy and is therefore more appropriate for beginners.

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站
橋

TAIJI ZHANZHUANG

'Taiji' means 'Ultimate Limits' or 'Ultimate Poles'. These ultimate limits are called Yin and Yang. Here it refers especially to the Lower and Upper Dantian on which you focus in this posture. 'Zhan Zhuang' means 'Pillar Stance'. Together it means '**Ultimate Poles Pillar Stance**'.

POSTURE/MOVEMENT

Legs and Feet

Small Horseriding Stance. Opposed to Wuji Zhanzhuang you sink down deep in this posture, bending the hips, knees and ankles.

Torso

Standard.

Arms and Hands

Both hands are open. The arms are almost straight and the hands are obliquely in front of the thighs. The Laogong points of both hands point downward, outward and a little forward. The wrists are stretched backward slightly. The little finger is a little higher than the thumb and points forward.



Eyes

The eyes are open. See without watching.

Intention/imagination

A. Relax completely, only feel the areas of your Lower and Upper Dantian.

B. You can also imagine that you are a snowman that melts completely from the warmth of the lower and upper Dantian.

REMARKS

Often this posture is practiced with the fingers pointing forward. With the hand position prescribed here, the meridians and joints of the arm are opened more.

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