

By Jeff Lin

Grasp the bird's tail (攬雀尾)

Wang's water style Taijiquan (王氏水性太極拳) is so-named because of the respected Taiji master Wang Zhongyue (王宗岳), who authored *Taijiquan Treatise* (*Taijiquan lun* 太極拳論), and because of Master Wang Zhuanghong (王壯弘). Master Wang Zhuanghong, founder of water style Taiji, not only understood how to interpret the *Taijiquan Treatise*, he was also deeply inspired by the most influential Chinese Daoist motto, "The highest good is like water (*shang shan rou shui* 上善若水)," from *Dao De Jing* (道德經) by Laozi. This captures the principle of Wang's water type Taiji: it mimics the quality and nature of water. Master Wang's entire set of Taijiquan movements are like the movements of water in nature—rolling waves and flowing currents, ups and downs.

Wang's water style Taiji puts important emphasis on "twisting and stretching tendons and turning bones (*fan jin zhuan gu* 翻筋轉骨); use internal force to lead external force." Wang's water style Taijiquan can improve health, nurture the body, and aid in efficient self-defense. As Laozi said, "The highest good is like water. Water is the softest thing in the universe. However, it overcomes the hardest thing in the universe. That without substance can enter where there is no space." If you are to use a substance to describe Taiji, then it is water.

## The Founder

Wang Zhuanghong (王壯弘) was born in October of 1931 in Cixi, Zhejiang province, China (中國浙江慈溪). He is a renowned martial artist and calligrapher, as well as an appraiser and collector of classical Chinese paintings and inscriptions on stone tablets. In addition to being a master of *Zui Baxian* (醉八仙) and *Xingyiquan* (形意拳), he also mastered *Baguazhang* (八卦掌) by studying with the famous Bagua master Wang Zhuangfei (王壯飛). He then studied Yang style Taiji with Chu Guiting (褚桂亭), who was the disciple of Yang Chenfu (楊澄甫). Wang Zhuanghong was talented and intelligent, and extraordinarily perseverant, practicing Taiji every day at 3 o'clock in the morning. By doing this, he won Master Chu Guiting's appreciation.

# Wang's Water Style Taijiquan



## Push Hand



In 1987, Master Wang Zhuanghong was invited to teach calligraphy, identify cultural relics, and exchange Chinese martial arts knowledge at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, the National University of Singapore, the American College of East and West, the Canadian Essence Society, Japan, and Thailand. In that same year, he used Wang's water style Taijiquan skills to win the top gold award at the World Cup Martial Arts Competition held in Los Angeles in 1987.

After settling in Hong Kong in 1989, Master Wang Zhuanghong devoted himself exclusively to studying and practicing Wang Zhongyue's Taijiquan Treatise and Buddhism. His Taijiquan, in the meantime, had reached the utmost level, being called "mystical" by his opponents. His Pushing Hands were so light and swift that his opponents would be on the ground without even noticing it. However, he still emphasized benevolence and friendship when teaching his students, which are the main characters of the martial arts.

## Inheritors

Master Gary Lam (林啟明) was born in Hong Kong in 1950 and has been studying Master Wang Zhuanghong's water style Taijiquan for many years. He is considered a first-generation successor of Wang's water style Taiji. He started studying martial arts in Hong Kong before he turned sixteen years old with his then-mentor Yan Shangwu (嚴尚武), who learned from Northern Shaolin Tiger Gu Ruzhang (known more commonly by the Cantonese Ku Yu Cheung 顧汝章), for many years; he studied Songshan Shaolin (嵩山少林武功), Iron Palm (鐵砂掌), North Shaolin *Changquan* (北少林長拳), various weapons, and Yang style 108-posture Taijiquan. Master Lam's deep love for Chinese martial arts was his motivation to study many styles of martial arts, and within Taiji alone he has been studying the traditional Yang style postures, Wu style Taiji, Qigong, and Pushing Hands.

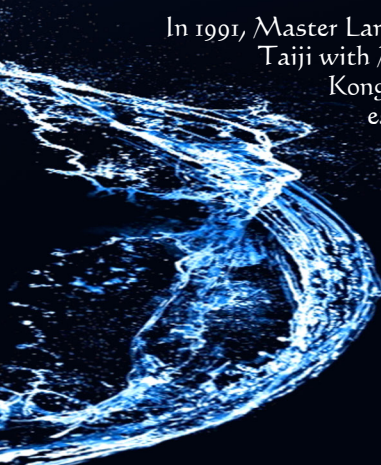
In 1991, Master Lam began studying Wang's water style Taiji with Master Wang Zhuanghong in Hong Kong. After many years, he truly grasped the essence of Wang's water style Taiji and Pushing Hands under master Wang's personal instruction. After Master Lam immigrated to the United States, Master Wang encouraged him to continue promoting martial arts and Taijiquan. His training in martial arts spans over fifty years. Despite



being a modest and low-key person, he is still often consulted by many martial arts experts from different countries.

## The Origin of Wang's Water Style Taijiquan Forms

With his basis of Yang Chenpu style 85-form Taijiquan, Master Wang also observed the ways of earth, water, fire, and wind, as well as the movements of animals such as birds and fishes. He studied various parts of traditional Chinese culture such as Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Yi Ching, and martial arts; along with his own experience in various martial arts, Master Wang used these to create his new system of Taijiquan. Master Lam further enhanced Wang's water style Taijiquan by adding two elements – *fan jin zhuang gu* and *nei dong dai wai dong* (內動帶外動) (internal movements lead external movement) – making it a more complete system for health, healing, and self-defense.



## Four Major Principles of Wang's Water Style Taijiquan

Use your mind, not force; leverage force from external (*yong yi bu yong li, li you wai jie* 用意不用力, 力由外借).

Surrender yourself, follow your opponent's movements (*she ji cong ren* 捨己從人, learning through reception, not action).

Be flowing, soft, and ever-changing like water (*po li yong zhong, min gu hua liu* 破力用重, 泯固化流; use weight, not force, all movements are fluid, not solid).

Think of the whole body as a singular unit that consists of points, lines, planes, and three dimensions (*dian, xian, mian, li ti zheng ti si wei* 點、線、面、立體整體思維).



## Wang's Water Style Taijiquan's Five Beginning Waves

The opening posture, the five waves, is the foundation for all other movements. Wang's water style Taiji simulates the movements of water, and the formation of waves. The churning, rushing, and the resulting vortex constitute all of Taiji's basic elements. The five beginning waves are: 1) Rising Wave, 2) Churning Wave, 3) Surfing Wave, 4) Opening and Closing Wave, and 5) Swirling Wave + Small Surfing Wave + Swirling Wave + Cutting the Fish Head.

## Fan Jin Zhuan Gu (翻筋轉骨)

For internal martial arts, "the power comes from tendons and bones." This internal strength stems from *Fan Jin Zhuan Gu* (twisting and stretching tendons and turning bones). Taiji's secret is "practicing being soft and supple long enough to eventually become hard like iron." This comes from exercising and moving tendons and bones in a completely relaxed way, so that eventually stillness and movement will coexist simultaneously in the body.

You will have the power of a tiger and a dragon if you can relax your waist and hips (*kua* 胯). An old saying goes, "The spine is like a dragon, and the *kua* is like a tiger." Strength in the spine is called the "strength of a dragon," obtained by relaxing the iliac-sacral and lumbosacral joints. The strength of "shaking" comes from the waist/hip area and is called the "strength of a tiger," obtained by relaxing the hip joint. Water style Taiji emphasizes the strengthening of the pelvis bone and the spine for health, healing, and self-defense. Every movement in Wang's water style Taiji utilizes the three-dimensional "S" movement of the waist and hip to drive the opening and closing of the "door of life" (*mingmen* 命門) in order to mimic the movement of waves.

People think if someone can *fajing* (discharge force 發勁), then one must possess internal strength. However, this power is narrow and locally focused, like the power from an arrow. This is not the same thing as internal strength, which is from the whole body and can flow like water in all directions.



Wang Zhuanghong (3rd left 1st row) and Gary Lam (1st left 2nd row) in 1993



## Counter Over Shoulder Throw



## Pulling and Lengthening Tendons (*dui la ba chang* 對拉拔長)

Every movement in water style Taiji is an act of lengthening the tendons by pulling in opposite directions. The basic principle is “move hands up/move body down, move body up/move hands down, hands to the left/body to the right, hands to the right/body to the left, hands forward/body back, hands back/body forward.”

Utilizing this lengthening by pulling not only makes the practicing of Taiji appear graceful from the outside, it also makes the person practicing feel relaxed. This is because when using this technique, all joints are open and relaxed, the meridians are open, and the circulation of

blood and qi is smooth. The secret to water style Taiji's health and self-defense benefits is that every movement is lengthening the tendons by pulling them. An old Chinese doctor's saying goes, “Lengthen the tendon by one inch, add 10 years to your life.”

## Using the Hip Bone's (Pelvis, The Body's Engine) Movement to Produce Power

Master Lam's attention to the hip bones and special requirements of the hip joint in Taiji forms is unprecedented. The hip bone is the largest bone in the body and is located in the middle of the body, and the hip joint is the largest joint in the body, surrounded by large

# MARTIAL ARTS FANS

AVAILABLE AT **MARTIALARTSMART.com** CALL TOLL FREE **1-800-824-2433**



**Dragon Iron Fan**  
(Red) 45-07R, (Black) 45-07B  
\$39.99



**Phoenix Iron Fan**  
(Red) 45-08R, (Black) 45-08B  
\$39.99



**Black Bamboo Fan**  
45-09B \$14.99



**Kung Fu Plastic Fan**  
45-09P \$9.99

**Wushu Iron Fan**  
45-07WR \$39.99



Master Ding Yan Qing



**O-mei Pure Wind Fan (DVD)**  
DVD-TC011 \$19.95



**O-mei Pure Wind Fan Master's Kit w/ Iron Fan**  
DVDK-TC011 \$50.95



**O-mei Pure Wind Fan Master's Kit w/ Black Bamboo Fan**  
DVDK-TC011B \$29.69



muscles and very strong ligaments. Thus, the hip joint has a large range of motion and can sustain frequent use. The hip bone leads the upper and lower body in all water style Taiji movements. The tendon in the hip joint (the joint between the hip bone and thigh bone) controls the movement of the hip bone and of the lower body; the hip, lumbar sac and sacral joint control the movements of the hip, waist, and upper body. Thus, the hip bone and hip joint control almost all of the body's activities. The power generated by the pelvis is not visible; the opponent can get hurt by it without knowing where it came from. In other words, Wang's water style Taiji emphasizes using the pelvis to drive the spine, and then the spine to drive the arms and legs to produce power.

## Striking the Balance Between Sinking (*chen zhong liang* 沉重量) and Floating (*piao fu liang* 飄浮量)

Water style Taiji stresses the opposing forces of "sinking" and "floating." "Sinking is the feeling of heaviness due to gravity, whereas "floating" is the feeling of lightness due to geocentric reaction force. Water style Taiji requires every movement to be balanced between the opposing forces of sinking and floating. The movements are arranged such that by applying gravitational force and anti-gravitational force to your body, you get the effect of giving yourself an internal massage.

In Wang's Taiji, we use bodyweight, not force. Apply your own weight (not force) as well as the power from opening and closing the joints to the point of contact with your opponent. Your opponent will feel this heaviness, so wait for his resistance and then switch to floating instead. You do not want to perform this switch too early or too late, and you also do not want to break contact or begin to fight your opponent's force with force. The contact point also needs to have space—not a gap, but space filled with energy. The feet should stand firmly on the *yongquan xue* (literally "bubbling well" – an acupuncture point in the center of the foot 湧泉穴). The spirit rises to the head while the qi sinks to the *dantian* (丹田), and the tail bone (*weilu* 尾閭) is tucked in and pulled up.

## Pushing Hands in Taijiquan Is the Essence of Perception

The purpose of Pushing Hands is for partners to develop the ability to perceive, and thus gain insight into the secret of Taiji. During practice, partners must give up their egos and competitiveness to achieve total relaxation of their whole bodies. During practice, your partner should not be able to detect any of your internal movements because your whole body should be relaxed, but you should be able to detect your partner's intended movement through the contact point. Your mind should be relaxed, because a tense mind will make the body tense, which will then make your internal and external movements unnatural and rigid. Practice like water, be soft but with strength. The more potent your internal strength is, the more threatening you are to your partner, thus causing him to make mistakes by fighting with force.

Wang's Taiji's Push Hand essentials can be summarized as follows: Others cannot detect me, I alone detect others (*ren bu zhi wo, wo du zhi ren* 人不知我，我獨知人). Borrow the strength of others to defeat them (*jie li shi li* 借力使力).

Utilize sensitivity (*li yong ting jing* 利用聽勁). Use a small force to overcome a large one (*yi xiao li sheng da li* 以小力勝大力). Softness defeats hardness (*rou sheng gang* 柔勝剛).

In Taijiquan, the highest level of achievement is to find the state of nothingness (*xu wu* 虛無).

Having a state of nothingness will enhance your sensitivity so that you can be one with nature. Wang's water style Tai Chi asks you to "Practice alone as if you are with a partner, and practice with a partner as if you are alone". ☺



Turn and push opponent (轉身撇身錐-按)

Jeff Lin, a retired hi-tech executive in Silicon Valley, has trained Taijiquan including Yang and Chen Styles for more than 20 years. He has earned a few medals in Tai Chi championships. He learned Wang's Water Tai Chi from Master Gary Lam. Mr. Lin has volunteered in promoting tai chi and internal culture publicly for the past 6 years. Many thanks are given to Steve Han and Master Lam for their great contributions to the completion of this article. To view a demonstration of Master Gary Lam's Water Taijiquan, visit [KungFuMagazine.com](http://KungFuMagazine.com)'s YouTube channel in March.