



张三丰 《太极拳论》
Zhāngsānfēng "tàijí quán lùn"

"Tai Chi Theory" by Zhang Sanfeng

**Suggested exercises to explore some taiji principles
suggested by Grandmaster Zhang Sanfeng:**



尤须贯串- Yóu xū guàncuàn
All movements are linked one with the other..

Focus on one particular technique/section of the form. Repeat it a few times. Now notice where the movement seems to start in your body. Bring your awareness here a little while, as you perform the movement.

Can you notice another part of your body that may move slightly before this one? With a partner, can they notice any other part of your body moving before your selected area moves?

If somewhere new has been discovered through this exercise, now as you perform the movement/technique bring your awareness to this new area first and discover how the technique is born from this new place.

无使有缺陷处，无使有凹凸处，无使有断续处
Wú shǐ yǒu quēxiàn chù, wú shǐ yǒu āotú chù, wú shǐ yǒu duàn xù chùlíng.

No deficiency or excess, peaks or lows; there can be no interruption.

We are trying to optimise balance in our movements (internal and external) and posture during practice. See if you can notice some of these common examples of lack/deficiency/lows and/or excess/peaks in your own practice:

Deficiencies/Lows:

- When stepping from *ding bu* (transition stance with one foot flat and one foot on tip toe) to *gong bu* (bow stance), or moving from *gong bu* one side to the other side, the back foot can end up pointing backwards rather than adjusting to point 45 degrees forwards. It is left behind by the body movement and pressure is then put on the knee.
- When rotating the upper body, there is insufficient *Peng* bubbling energy between the legs, so one or both knees can collapse inwards with the upper body rotation. This can cause misalignment and pressure on the knees. A common point in 28 is stepping into *White Crane Spreads Wings*.
- When stepping into *gong bu*, the transition of *mabu* (horse stance) can be forgotten to there is insufficient rooting and power to be expressed into the *gong bu* posture. It ends up being a lunge.

Excess/Peaks:

- The Front knee can extend beyond the toes when bent in *gong bu*. Drop the hips and straighten the back to take the knee back so you can see your toes just protruding in front of the knee.
- The back can lean forward rather than being straight with the hips dropped lower
- The taiji bubble in the upper body can burst from elbows/arms being too straight or extending past the shoulder line during turning movements. This can be adjusted by turning from the waist while keeping everything in front of the shoulders, keeping arms bent and let the power come from the torso itself.

To notice this is then to work on a smoothing out process, bringing everything in towards the centre and uniform motion. For an exercise only (but do not create pain or discomfort), try and intentionally exaggerate these common mistakes in your own practice, then work on smoothing, returning to a balanced practice within these dimensions.

由脚而腿而腰 ***Yóu jiǎo ér tuǐ ér yāo***
From the feet to the legs to the waist.

Do slow *xiebu* (cross/resting stance) twists from one side to the other. Focus on the feet first, changing weight, lifting up and placing down toes within the movement. Notice how this will affect the alignment of the knees, legs and hips. In turn notice how the waist and above is either constricted or freed up by the movement, alignment and placing of the feet, legs, hips and waist.

As a point of comparison (again do not push into pain), try doing the *xiebu* twists from the top of the body down, and see what parts of your lower body need to move in accordance, to achieve the same final movement and posture.

Now notice the same sequence of cause and effect in the 28 form as you step out behind you into the first *gongbu* of the form and the sequence that follows.

向前退后，乃能得机得势 ***Xiàng qián tuì hòu, nǎi néng dé jī dé shì***

When all these requirements are fulfilled, no matter how one moves: the superior position and advantage is gained.

In our next pushing hands sessions we will try and explore the impact of optimal versus suboptimal alignment and movement on both your embodied experience, feedback from your partner, and the outcome of competitive pushing hands itself!