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Grandmaster Zhong Zhenshan on “You Yi Qiu Rou, Wu Yi Cheng Gang”

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Grandmaster Zhong Zhenshan is the 5th generation lineage holder of the Wu/Hao Style [Tai Chi](#) (Taiji) Chuan. During the 2014 International Tai Chi Symposium, he presented the history and features of Wu/Hao Style.



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Zhong stated that the creator of Wu/Hao Style Tai Chi Wu Yu-Xiang (1813-1880) was from a noble family who owned quite a few properties in Yongnian County, Hebei Province. A Chen Style Tai Chi family member rented a store from Wu's family and opened an herbal medicine shop. Wu admired Chen Style Tai Chi and decided to study from the storeowner at the same time the Yang Style Tai Chi creator Yang Luchan (1799-1872) was studying Chen Tai Chi in Chen village (Chenjiagou). When Yang returned to Yongnian, Wu and Yang practiced Chen Style together. To satisfy his deep interest, Wu later went to Chenjiagou and studied with Chen Chin-Ping. Wu combined his own experience and Wang Zhon-Yue's Tai Chi Chuan Classics and created Wu Style Tai Chi. Wu only taught his style to two nephews and one of them passed the art to Hao Wei-Zhen (1842-1920). For easier teaching, Hao simplified Wu Style and also added the movement of Open-Close. Therefore, the style has been called Wu/Hao. Grandmaster Zhong also mentioned that Sun Lu-Tang (1860-1933) learned Wu/Hao before creating Sun Style Tai Chi.

Born in Yongnian, 65-year-old Zhong has been known for his superb skill as well as profound theory. He has won many gold medals at the national level. He was named a great Tai Chi Chuan master in 1998. He has published more than 20 essays on Tai Chi Chuan theory and principles.

According to Zhong, Wu/Hao has a few features that are different than Chen or Yang. In general, it is considered small framed with all arm movements are close to the body. The stance is high in comparison to other styles. Its footwork is very flexible. In stepping forwards, the back leg follows through; in stepping backwards, the front leg closely follows the leading foot. Each hand protects its respective side of the body. The internal Qi dictates the outside movements. The waist movements lead the upper body movements. Zhong described the Wu Style is like a plum flower, which is sophisticated but not showy.

The training process starts with basic [Kung Fu](#) that includes standing post to train the mind to be calm and still as well as single movement drill. Wu Style form has 108 movements. He suggested starting at a mid-stance and gradually moving to a high-stance. It is essential that the solidness and emptiness are clearly articulated through form practice. The knees can never surpass the toes. The knees do not bend much and the angle between the thigh and the calf in the back cannot be less than 130 degrees. Wu Style is practiced almost at a standing position. Push Hands is a training gateway between form practice and combat. Through Push Hands, a practitioner can correct his form and solidify his skills for fighting. Lastly, one should study weapons. In Wu Style, options are sword, sabre, and staff, which can be practiced solo or with an opponent.

Grandmaster Zhong distinguished Tai Chi Chuan from Shaolin Kung Fu by the way the energy is released. According to him, Shaolin uses force directly against an opponent. But the Jin, or energy, in Tai Chi has to be sunk to the feet first, raised through the spine and sent to the hand or fist. The entire body needs to be fully relaxed. A practitioner uses the mind (or Yi) to generate a piercing power. In Wu Style, there is an axis of mind, which connects the pressure points of Bai Hui (on the top of the head) and Hui Yin (at the center of the pelvic floor, a half-inch in front of the anus) with the ankles and the other parties are considered just hanging on this axis. He stressed the important of relaxing the muscles. He said that we need to separate the bones from the muscle and use the bones to practice Tai Chi Chuan. Once the muscles are relaxed, Qi can sink to the bottom of the feet. With the proper body alignment, the energy naturally will travel upwards. There is a saying, “You Yi Qiu Rou, Wu Yi Cheng Gang” or “you stride for softness and end up with hardness (strength)”.

Zhong insisted that without three internal cohesions (Nei San He), the three external cohesions (Wai San He) means nothing. In Wu Style, a practitioner needs to be very keen and constantly keep the two shoulders and two Kaos on the same plane. The left elbow and the left knee have to work together; the same for the right side of the body. The elbows need to be sank while the knees feel pushing upwards. Both hands need to work together cohesively. The Mind, Qi, and spirit have to work together constantly.

He advised beginners to breathe naturally through nose. Pull the abdominal wall in toward the back when inhaling and make sure that the chest does not become full or stuck out but instead open the chest and pull the shoulder blades outwards so you feel full between the shoulder blades, which can facilitate the Qi travel upwards. Sink the Qi to Dan Tian then to the feet. He emphasized more than once to very slightly tuck the tail bone, relax the waist, and sink Kaos, then energy can move down to the knees and then to the bottom of the feet. In general, one should feel the lower body is sinking while the upper body is pulling upwards.

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