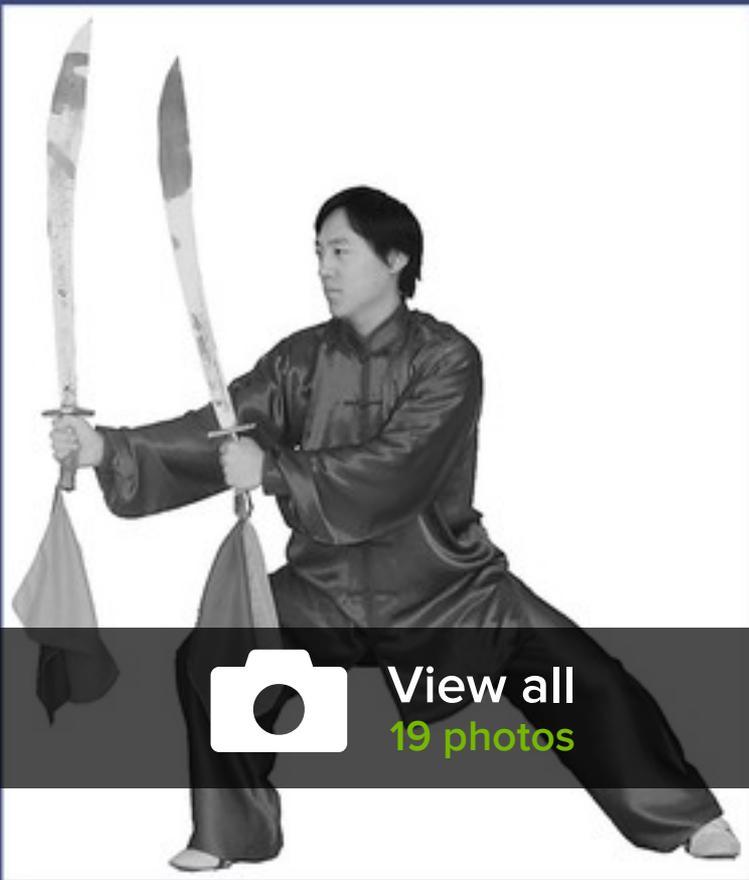


## Recommended: a complete Tai Chi weapon system

December 7, 2014

7:35 PM MST

There are five major [Tai Chi](#) (Taiji) styles; Chen style is the origin. Chen Style Tai Chi has the most complete weapon system, which includes Single Straight Sword, Double Straight Sword, Single Broad Sword (Saber), Double Broad Sword, Spear, Guan Dao (Halberd), Long Pole, and Double Mace (Baton). Recently Master Jack Yan translated and published Grandmaster [Chen Zhenglei's](#) detailed instructions on all eight different weapons plus Push Hands to English in two different volumes.



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*Chen Zhenglei Culture*



*Jack Yan*

Grandmaster Chen is a 19th Generation Chen Family descendent and 11th Generation Chen Style Tai Chi Lineage Holder. He is sanctioned as the 9th Duan by the Chinese Martial Art Association the highest level in [martial arts](#). He was selected as one of the Top Ten Martial Art Masters in China for his superb Tai Chi skills and in-depth knowledge. He has authored a complete set of books on Chen Style Tai Chi bare-hand and weapons forms. Master Jack Yan translated three other volumes on bare-hand forms. With these two new additions, all of Grandmaster Chen's writings are accessible in English.

Each of the Chen weapons has its features. Straight swords, sabers, and batons are short weapons while long pole, halberd, and spear are long weapons. Volume Four is for short weapons while Volume Five is for long weapons and Push Hands.

Chen Style Single Straight Sword is one of the oldest weapon routines with forty-nine movements, tightly connected with specific and clear sword techniques, namely pierce, chop, upward-swing, hook, point, slice, lift, upward-block, sweep, cut, jab, push, and neutralize. The routine consists of extended postures, nimble and solid footwork, and free exchange between soft and hard moves and fast and slow moves. It is considered the most exquisite form to watch. The Double Sword routine was created by Grandmaster Chen Zhaopi with thirty-nine movements and is also quite enthralling.

The original Chen Style Single Saber had only thirteen movements and Grandmaster Chen Zhaopi added nine more movements, which became the form we practice today. Though it is a short form, it encompasses thirteen solid techniques: roll, jam, jab, block, chop, hack, swing, sever, wrap, shake, uplift, slice, and pick. The Double Saber is older with a few hundred years of history and has 35 movements.

The Double Baton is at least 2,000 years old. They were made of bronze or iron but wood has become the most popular material. Batons are square, not round, 27 to 35 inches long depending on the height of a practitioner, with concave surfaces and hard ridges. Chen Style Double Baton was built upon the Chen style training of hand, eye, body, and footwork coordination. Baton training can enhance coordination and arm strength.

Chen Style Spear has a fancy name of “Pear Blossom Spear with White Ape Staff”. The seventy-one movement routine combines the techniques of spear’s linear piercing and staff’s wide coverage during combat. It requires a practitioner to train with coiling and sticking methods. Typical techniques include jab, block, split, shock, sweep, point, lift, chop, brush, up-hold, coil, wrap, pierce, slam, and various rotations. Even if it is a long weapon, a practitioner needs to know how to maneuver it with the flexibility of a short weapon.

Chen Style Halberd is also called “Spring and Autumn Halberd” or “Green Dragon Crest Moon Halberd”. Tai Chi creator Chen Wangting fondly nicknamed it “General Guan” so many people call it “Guan Dao”. It has a spear on one end and saber like weapon on the other end. The routine has thirty movements and takes not only Tai Chi skill to play it but also demands strength of the waist, legs, and arms. It can generate destructive power and therefore called “The general of all weapons.”

The Long Pole is a heavy weapon made with a 9.8-foot (or 3-meter) long white ash. The thirteen-movement routine is extremely powerful. It is a true test for coordination of the crotch, waist, and arms. You can practice Long Pole solo or with a partner. The interactive training has either three movements or either movements. It is versatile and dangerous with one person holding a Long Pole while the opponent using a two-section pole made of a 6.6-foot (or two-meter) white ash pole with pommel on one end and a hard wood tip 15.7-inch (or 40-centimeter) log attached by metal rings on the other end.

Push Hands is an interactive drill on the basis of solid hand form routine. Two practitioners stick hands to each other and move in wrapping and coiling motions. Grandmaster Chen introduces five types of Chen Style Push Hands, and they are Rotations (Single Hand Rotations and Double Hands Rotations), *He Bu* Push Hands or Fixed Stance Push Hands, *Shun Bu* Push Hands or One Step Forward and One Step Backward, *Da Lu* or Large Posture Push Hands, and Moving Step Push Hands or Free Style Footwork. Bare Hand Routine practice trains oneself to know oneself while Push Hands practice trains one to know the opponent. It is a great way to learn how to “listen” to other’s energy or *Jin*.

Like all the three volumes, the new books give clear instruction of each movement with body requirements and explanations of its martial art application. Bonus material comes with each volume. In Volume Four, Grandmaster includes literature from Chen Style masters Chen Wangting, Chen Xin, and Chen Changxing. It does not matter which Tai Chi style you practice, you will find the Ten Tai Chi Fundamentals by Chen Changxing invaluable. In Volume Five, he includes short stories and biographies of seven Chen family masters, which are fascinating to read.

In principle, weapons should only be learned once a person is fluent in Chen Style Tai Chi marquee form Old Frame Routine One (*Lao Jia Yi Lu*). Grandmaster Chen shared his personal story that he was not allowed to learn any weapon until he studied Lao Jia Yi Lu for over ten years. With a solid foundation in Tai Chi Chuan, it took him a year to learn all weapons. Even though this weapon system was designed for Chen Style Tai Chi, anyone who is interested in it can learn it by studying Chen Style coiling and footwork to gain a foundation.

Disclosure: I am a disciple of Grandmaster Chen Zhenglei.

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## SUGGESTED LINKS

- [Chen's Taichi For Health & Wellness by Grandmaster Chen Zhenglei](#)
- [Chen's Tai Chi Old Frame One and Two by Grandmaster Chen Zhenglei](#)
- [Grandmaster Chen Zhenglei donated Tai Chi books and DVDs to Pacific Asia Museum](#)
- [Grandmaster Chen Zhenglei brought Tai Chi to "Forbidden City"](#)
- [Chen Style New Frame Routine One and Two now in English](#)



**Violet Li**

Tai Chi Examiner