

## Zhong Ding at every second

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*Zhong* means center or central. *Ding* means balance or “settled down”. *Zhong Ding* is an important [Tai Chi](#) (Taiji) phrase and oftentimes translated as “reaching a state of central equilibrium”. It is the last state or energy of the thirteen Tai Chi postures (Taiji Shi San Shi). Many instructors teach students to settle down into a *Zhong Ding* state upon completion of a movement. Sifu Benjamin Wu of New York has a tall order for all practitioners and insists *Zhong Ding* to be present throughout the entire form.



Charles Daniel Dawson

In general, there are five modern Tai Chi Chuan family styles, namely Chen, Yang, Wu, Wu/Hao, and Sun and all of them are directly or indirectly derived from the Chen Style. Wu Quanyou, father of Wu Style creator Wu Jianquan was a student of Yang Style creator Yang Luchan and his son Yang Banhou, who specialized in the small frame Yang Tai Chi Chuan. There was an understanding that Wu could not teach the Yang Style to others. Wu Jianquan honored the code and created Wu Style Tai Chi based upon the Yang’s small frame but with a new emphasis of an angular movement. In his old age, Wu Jianquan also created a circular frame Tai Chi Chuan focusing more on health that has become the

commonly known Wu Style Tai Chi. For various reasons, the Yang Style small frame is no longer practiced. The Wu Style angular frame would also be extinct if not for Wu Jianguan's close friend Zhang Daquan. Zhang, a renown Tai Chi grandmaster in his time, taught the angular frame to many including Dai Ying. Born in Shanghai, China, and having no family tie to Wu Jianquan, Sifu Benjamin Wu started his Tai Chi journey at age 24 with Master Dai Ying.

According to Wu, the angular frame bears square formation externally and circular rotation internally, or the form looks angular but the intent is round. External movements directs to four corners of East, South, West and North as well as four bevels of Southeast, Southwest, Northwest, and Northeast. The so-called quartet and octet must be strictly observed and the practitioner must be fully aware of the four corners during each of the movements. Throughout the transition of positions, the intent and energy remain continuous without any breakage.

Benjamin pointed out there are three other major distinctions between the Wu angular frame and Yang small frame: 1. The Wu's upper body is slanted while the Yang's upper body is upright at a bow stance; 2. The Wu's feet are positioned in parallel while the Yang's feet are positioned in a L-shape; 3. The Wu's body weight distribution is 100% for the solid foot and 0% for the empty foot unless is 50/50 for postures like White Crane Spreading Wings and Flash Back. The Wu angular frame only has one bare-hand routine that has 117 movements and Push Hands. There is no weapon form. The Wu angular frame also practices Silk Reeling as a foundation. You can see the attached video that Sifu Wu demonstrates Angular Tai Chi.

Career-wise, Benjamin is a computer science engineer. He never planned to teach Tai Chi until prompted by his son. He then formed [Taiji Probe](#) to find out the deeper meaning of Tai Chi chuan. He does not teach for living, but he takes teaching extremely serious. According to him, everybody has his own learning process and pace. He prefers private lessons instead of group classes so he can tailor to the individual's needs. He does not require his students to kick high; he emphasizes the importance of performing every movement correctly. He does not talk about how to move Qi or the life energy; he asserts that once a student adheres to the proper body alignment, Qi will naturally sink into the Dan Tian. *Song* or relaxation is the key in the form practice and in Push Hands. He does not teach Tai Chi *Ba Fa* or Tai Chi eight methods of *Peng* (ward off), *Lu* (roll back), *Ji* (squeeze), *An* (press), *Cai* (plucking), *Lie* (splitting), *Zhou* (elbowing), and *Kao* (bumping); to him, the *Peng* energy or the buoyancy of Qi is the only guidance and eight methods are nothing but different applications of the *Peng* energy. *Zhong Ding* has to be maintained at every second during a form practice; therefore, any tiny maneuvering must be well controlled. A test of one's *Zhong Ding* is whether one can keep his balance without shaking or faltering when one of his legs is still in the midair and his movement is abruptly stopped. This is a check that you can test yourself - try to step out and stop while your advancing foot almost touches the ground. If you can hold in that position for a long time without falling or dropping your foot, you can pat yourself on the back. Otherwise, keep practicing your *Zhong Ding*.

## SUGGESTED LINKS

- Grandmaster Zhong Zhenshan on “You Yi Qiu Rou, Wu Yi Cheng Gang”
- Recommended: a complete Tai Chi weapon system
- Congratulations to Being Tao and Master Woo
- Master He Yu Lu on He Style Tai Chi
- Ditch the treadmill and try Tai Chi



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