

The Thirty Seven Essential Forms of the Yang-style Taijiquan (108¹)

三十七式楊式太極拳(一百八) Translated and interpreted by Sam Masich (馬希奇)

The 37 Essential Forms² listed in the order they first appear in the traditional long form³:

1) Ward-off	péng	棚
2) Roll-back	lǚ	攢
3) Press	jǐ	擠
4) Push	àn	按
5) Single Whip	dān biān	單鞭
6) Raise Hands, Step-up	tí shǒu shàng shì	提手上式
7) White Crane Spreads its Wings	bái hè liàng chì	白鶴亮翅
8) Brush Knee, Twist-step	lǒu xī āo bù	樓膝拗步
9) Hand Plays the Guitar	shǒu huī pí pá	手揮琵琶
10) Step-up, Deflect Downward, Parry & Punch	jìn bù bān lán chuí	進步搬攔捶
11) Apparent Closure (& Counter with Push)	rú fēng sì bì	如封似閉
12) Cross Hands	shí zì shǒu	十字手
13) Fist Under Elbow	zhǒu dǐ chuí	肘底捶
14) Step Back, Repulse like Monkey	dǎo niǎn hóu	倒攏猴
15) Diagonal Flying	xié fēi shì	斜飛式
16) Needle at Sea Bottom	hǎi dǐ zhēn	海底針
17) Fan Through the Back	shàn tōng bèi	扇通背
18) Turn & Chop Opponent with Fist	zhuǎn shēn piě shēn chuí	轉身撇身捶
19) Cloud Hands	yún shǒu	雲手
20) High Pat on Horse	gāo tàn mǎ	高探馬
21) Parting Kick	fēn jiǎo	分腳
22) Kick with Sole	dēng jiǎo	登腳
23) Step-up, Punch Down	jìn bù zāi chuí	進步栽捶
24) Rising Kick	tī jiǎo	踢腳
25) Hit Tiger	dǎ hǔ	打虎
26) Double Winds Pierce Ears	shuāng fēng guàn ěr	雙風貫耳
27) Part the Wild Horse's Mane	yě mǎ fēn zōng	野馬分鬃
28) Fair Maiden Weaves at Shuttles	yù nǚ chuān suō	女穿梭
29) Snake Creeps Down	shé shēn xià shì	蛇身下勢
30) Golden Rooster Stands on One Leg	jīn jī dú lì	金雞獨立
31) White Snake Puts-out Tongue	bái shé tǔ xìn	白蛇吐信
32) Palm Thrust	shí zǐ zhǎng	十字掌
33) Step-up, Punch to Groin	jìn bù zhǐ dāng chuí	進步指裆捶
34) Step-up, Form Seven Stars	shàng bù qī xīng	上步七星
35) Retreat to Ride the Tiger	tuì bù kuà hǔ	退步跨虎
36) Turn body, Sweep the Lotus	zhuǎn shēn bǎi lián tuǐ	轉身擺蓮腿
37) Bend Bow, Shoot Tiger	wān gōng shè hǔ	彎弓射虎

The Thirteen Families of the Thirty Seven Essential Forms

一三家 三十七式 楊式太極拳

1) Peng family:	péng jiā	棚家
1) Ward-off	péng	
3) Press	jǐ	
27) Part the Wild Horse's Mane	yě mǎ fēn zōng	
15) Diagonal Flying	xié fēi shì	
19) Cloud Hands	yún shǒu	
2) Lü family:	lǚ jiā	擡家
2) Roll-back	lǚ	
16) Needle at Sea Bottom	hǎi dǐ zhēn	
14) Step Back, Repulse like Monkey	dǎo niǎn hóu	
19) Cloud Hands (Roll Back into Press Variations)	yún shǒu lǚ, jǐ	
3) An family:	àn jiā	擠家
4) Push	àn	
3) Press	jǐ	
8) Brush Knee, Twist-step	lǒu xī ǎo bù	
28) Fair Maiden Weaves at Shuttles	yù nǚ chuān suō	
11) Apparent Closure (& Counter with Push)	rú fēng sì bì	
4) Single Whip family:	dān biān jiā	單鞭家
5) Single Whip	dān biān	
17) Fan Through the Back	shàn tōng bèi	
29) Snake Creeps Down	shé shēn xià shì	
5) Raise Hands family:	tí shǒu jiā	提手家
6) Raise Hands, Step-up	tí shǒu shàng shì	
9) Hand Plays the Guitar	shǒu huī pí pá	
13) Fist Under Elbow	zhǒu dǐ chuí	
6) White Crane family:	bái hè jiā	白鶴家
7) White Crane Spreads Its Wings	bái hè liǎng chì	
20) High Pat on Horse	gāo tàn mǎ	
35) Retreat to Ride the Tiger	tùi bù kuà hǔ	
7) Step-up, Hit family:	jìn bù chuí jiā	進步捶家
10) Step-up, Deflect Downward, Parry & Punch	jìn bù bǎn lán chuí	
23) Step-up, Punch Down	jìn bù zāi chuí	
33) Step-up, Punch to Groin	jìn bù zhǐ dāng chuí	
8) Cross Hands family:	shízì shǒu jiā	十字手家
11) Apparent Closure (& Counter with Push)	rú fēng sì bì	
12) Cross Hands (Embrace Tiger, Return to Mountain)	shízì shǒu (<i>bào hǔ guī shān</i>)	
34) Step-up, Form Seven Stars	shàng bù qī xīng	
9) Kick family:	jiǎo jiā	腳家
21) Parting Kick	fēn jiǎo	
22) Kick with Sole	dēng jiǎo	
24) Rising Kick	tī jiǎo	
30) Golden Rooster Stands on One Leg	jīn jī dú lì	
36) Turn to Sweep the Lotus	zhuǎn shēn bǎi lián tuǐ	
10) Turn Body family:	zhuǎn shēn jiā	轉身家
28) Fair Maiden Weaves at Shuttles	yù nǚ chuān suō	
12) Cross Hands (Embrace Tiger, Return to Mountain)	shízì shǒu (<i>bào hǔ guī shān</i>)	
18) Turn & Chop Opponent with Fist	zhuǎn shēn piē chuí	
36) Turn to Sweep the Lotus	zhuǎn shēn bǎi lián tuǐ	
11) Hit Tiger family:	dǎ hǔ jiā	打虎家
25) Hit Tiger	dǎ hǔ	
26) Double Winds Pierce Ears	shuāng fēng guàn ěr	
37) Bend Bow, Shoot Tiger	wān gōng shè hǔ	
34) Step-up, Form Seven Stars	shàng bù qī xīng	
12) White Snake family:	bái shé jiā	白蛇家
31) White Snake Puts Out Tongue	bái shé tǔ xīn	
30) Golden Rooster Stands on One Leg	jīn jī dú lì	
32) Palm Thrust	shí zǐ zhǎng	
16) Needle at Sea Bottom	hǎi dǐ zhēn	
13) Seven Stars family:	qī xīng jiā	七星家
34) Step-up, Form Seven Stars	shàng bù qī xīng	
6) Raise Hands, Step-up (Hand Plays Guitar; Fist Under Elbow)	tí shǒu shàng shì (shǒu huī pí pá; zhǒu dǐ chuí)	
7) White Crane Spreads Wings (High Pat Horse; Ride Tiger)	bái hè liǎng chì (gāo tàn mǎ; tùi bù kuà hǔ)	

¹ The *Yang Style Taijiquan* barehand routine is often described as comprising one hundred and eight movement forms. This number—considered sacred in Buddhism—likely reflects the legacy of the form's partial Buddhist Shaolin style martial art roots which predate Chen family origins. The 108 count however, is only one of many ways of tallying the movements of this form. Reckoning depends on such factors as: individual teachers' preferences for number of repetitions in grouped movements (i.e. 'Wave Hands Like Clouds', three repetitions or five); whether or not such grouped movements are counted individually (i.e. 'Wave Hands Like Clouds' five times as a single count or as five counts); whether or not grouped movements are counted the same way in subsequent repetitions (i.e. 'Cloud Hands' three times, as three counts the *first time* it appears but as only a single count thereafter); etc. There are various counting permutations in the 'Commencing' and 'Closing' parts of the form. Some enumerate 'Opening Stance' as well as 'Opening Form' or 'Closing Form' as well as 'Return to Origin'. Criteria for making tallying decisions are vague, therefore the count is subject to interpretation. While there is not much consistency in this matter from school to school, neither is there much discord as to which way is correct or ideal.

Here are some examples of the different counts (from lesser to greater) for the Yang-style Taijiquan long form by various teachers and authors. While tabulations vary, each enumerates the exact same series of postures:

81—Tseng Ju-Pai; 82—Douglas Lee; 85—Yang Chengfu/Fu Zhongwen; 88—Li Tianji; 89—Wen-Shan Huang—; 103—Yang Zhenduo; 105—Jou Tsung Hwa; 105—Lee Shu Pak; 108—Chen Yanlin; 108—Chung Yun Man; 108—Dr. Yang Jwing Ming; 108—Moy Lin Shin; 124—Yang Shouzhong; 150—T.T. Liang.

In fact there are between thirty-five and forty individual forms in the Yang barehand form. But even in this matter there is some difference as to what qualifies for counting, as some schools recognize '*Opening*' and '*Closing*' as independent forms. Decisions as whether or not to list similar type movements such as; '*Kick with Sole*' and '*Rising Kick*'; or, '*Turn to Chop Opponent with Fist*' and '*White Snake Puts-out Tongue*'; or, '*Punch Down*' and '*Punch to Groin*' can also affect the basic tally. So can counting left and right-style variations (which could bring the number up to between 50-55).

Older documents describe thirty-seven essential 'forms' in the Yang family long-fist (chang quan 長拳) routine. The most famous use of the number '37' as a counting device is in Zheng Manqing's (Ch'eng Man-ching) popular 37 movement routine. Not all the actual essential postures are present in the Zheng sequence however, and this may have been a factor in obfuscating the topic in recent generations.

² shì 式 — literally 'styles', 'forms' or 'patterns'. Often translated as 'movements' or 'postures'

³ Yang Chengfu lists thirty-seven core forms in his 1931 book, 'Taijiquan Method and Application' (Tàijíquán Shǐyòngfǎ 太極拳使用法)—[not to be confused with his 1934 'Essence and Applications of Taijiquan' (tǐyòngquánshū 太極拳體用全書)]—and suggests that these are essential to the understanding of martial application. He indicates that a more exhaustive explanation would be forthcoming in a later volume. Yang died in 1936 and no such book is known to have been written. Yang's thirty-seven itemize several forms in both left and right side variations and lump 'peng', 'lu', 'ji' and 'an' together under the banner of 'Grasp Sparrow's Tail'. As well 'Rising Kick'; 'White Snake Puts Out Tongue'; and 'Turn to Sweep the Lotus' are omitted. In this sense this is not quite a true list of the 'essential forms'. Here is the list of Yang Chengfu's 'Thirty-seven Forms of Taijiquan Individually Named' (三十七式太極拳各式名稱):

1. Grasp Sparrow's Tail (lǎn què wěi 攬雀尾);
2. Single Whip (dān biān 單鞭);
3. Raise Hands (tí shǒu 提手);
4. White Crane Spreads its Wings (bái hè liàng chì 白鶴亮翅);
5. Brush Knee, Twist-step (left style) (lǒu xī āo bù (zuǒ shì) 左擻膝拗步);
6. Brush Knee, Twist-step (right style) (lǒu xī āo bù (yòu shì) 右擻膝拗步);
7. 'Pipa' (pí pá 琵琶式);
8. Deflect Downward, Parry & Punch (bān lán chuí 搬攔捶);
9. Apparent Closure (rú fēng sì bì 如封似閉);
10. Cross Hands (shí zì shǒu 十字手);
11. Embrace Hands, Return to Mountain (bào shǒu guī shān 抱手歸山);
12. Fist Under Elbow (zhǒu dǐ chuí 肘底捶);
13. Step Back, Repulse like Monkey (dǎo niǎn hóu 倒攆猴);
14. Diagonal Flying (xié fēi shì 斜飛);
15. Needle at Sea Bottom (hǎi dǐ zhēn 海底針);
16. Fan Through the Back (shàn tōng bèi 扇通背);
17. Chop Opponent with Fist (zhuǎn shēn piě shēn chuí 撇身捶);
18. Cloud Hands (yún shǒu 雲手);
19. High Pat on Horse (gāo tàn mǎ 高探馬);
20. Parting Kick (fēn jiǎo 分腳);
21. Left Turn Body and Kick with Sole (zuǒ zhuǎn shēn dēng jiǎo 左轉身蹬腳);
22. Step-up, Punch Down (jìn bù zǎi chuí 進步載捶);
23. Turn-over Body Kick with Sole (fān shēn dēng jiǎo 翻身蹬腳);
24. Right Turn Body Kick with Sole (yòu zhuǎn shēn dēng jiǎo 右轉身蹬腳);
25. Double Winds Pierce Ears (shuāng fēng guàn ěr 雙峰貫耳);
26. Left & Right Hit Tiger (zuǒ yòu dǎ hǔ 左右打虎);
27. Part the Wild Horse's Mane (yě mǎ fēn zōng 野馬分鬃);
28. Left Fair Maiden Weaves at Shuttles (zuǒ yù nǚ chuān suō 左玉女穿梭);
29. Right Fair Maiden Weaves at Shuttles (yòu yù nǚ chuān suō 右玉女穿梭);
30. Single Golden Rooster Stands on One Leg (jīn jī dú lì 單下金雞獨立);
31. Right Golden Rooster Stands on One Leg (yòu jīn jī dú lì 右邊金雞獨立);
32. Facing Palm (yíng miàn zhǎng 迎面掌);
33. Brush Knee, Punch Groin (lǒu xī zhǐ dāng chuí 擻膝指襠捶);
34. Step-up, Form Seven Stars (shàng bù qī xīng 上步七);
35. Retreat to Ride the Tiger (tuì bù kuà hǔ 退步跨虎);
36. Turn Foot to Ride the Tiger (tuì jiǎo kuà hǔ 轉腳擺蓮);
37. Bend Bow, Shoot Tiger (wān gōng shè hǔ 彎弓射虎)