

Yang-style Taijiquan 'Eight-section Brocade'

楊式太極拳八段錦

In an introduction to his 2011 book 'Yang-style Taiji Real Power' (*Yang-shi Taiji Zhen Gong* 楊式太極真功) author Sun Yizhao explains,

Taiji Baduanjin was originally created by the Yang family as a training method for mobilizing *qi* and training *jin* (*yùnqì liànjìn gōngfǎ* 運氣練勁功法). Like other forms of *baduanjin* there are eight sections but the movements are not the same. It can be distinguished by it's 'forging and smelting' (*duànliàn* 鍛煉) of the sections and joints of the body and the strengthening of the internal organs and their way of functioning. It strengthens visceral system functioning and also contains within it a great deal of attack and defence training methods (*jījī* 技擊).

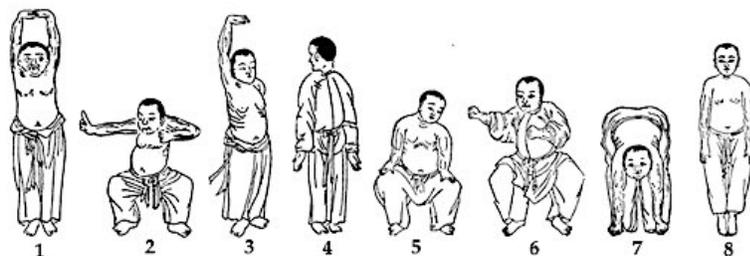
The Yang-style Taijiquan *Baduanjin* was originally an indoor family *neigong* of the Yang family—a secret weapon sorts. It can be seen variously as a good solid warmup and strength and flexibility practice or as an essential piece of the Yang-style Taijiquan curriculum.

Baduanjin (*bādùanjīn* 八段錦) means 'eight-section brocade' and connotes the side by side placement of different weaves of fabric seen, for example, in the robes of Emperors or monks.



Chinese Buddhist monk's silk brocade robe c. 1700-1750

The term *baduanjin* first appears in Hong Mai's 'Records of the Listener' in the Song Dynasty (1127-1279). The Emperor's Chief Secretary Li Siju is described as living a simple life which includes getting up at night to practice deep breathing, self massage and exercises called *baduanjin*. Today a standard set of *baduanjin* is practiced and is readily found in books and on the internet.



Baduanjin Standard Routine

The Yang-style Taijiquan Baduanjin is not related to the standard sequence. It originates with Yang Jianhou (楊健侯 1839-1917), or possibly his father Yang Luchan (楊露禪 1799–1872) and was passed to his disciple Tian Zhaolin (田兆麟 1891-1959). Most practitioners of the Yang-style Taijiquan Baduanjin today descend from the Yang-Tian lineage. Tian Zhaolin began a collaborative writing project with a martial arts enthusiast named Chen Yanlin which was later to be published in 1943 as 'Taiji Boxing, Sabre, Sword, Pole, Sparring Compiled' (*tàijí quán dǎo jiàn gǎn sànsǒu hébiān* 太極拳刀劍桿散手合編), but without Tian's name attached.

In the book Chen Yanlin devotes an entire chapter to a series of twenty-one *neigong* exercises called 'Taijiquan Preliminary Strengthening Body and Mobilizing Qi Method' (*tàijíquán chūbù jiànshēn yùnqìfǎ* 太極拳初步健身運氣法). He warns would-be practitioners not to trivialize it as merely another set of 'eight-brocades' *qigong*. In fact this routine forms a part of the of the Yang Baduanjin, as do several of the single form methods described later in Chen's. The first English language presentation of this part of Chen's book can be found in Stuart Alve Olsen's 1986 book 'Cultivating the Ch'i.'

My own learning and training of the Yang-style Taijiquan Baduanjin is as brocade-like as the exercise itself. Early in my study with Brien Gallagher I learned various parts of the *baduanjin* material that Brien had received from Master Raymond Chung. Some of this material seems to come clearly from Chen Yanlin's book which was always at hand in Master Chung's Vancouver studio. I also learned *neigong* material from Yang Jwing-Ming, Liang Shou-Yu, Jou Tsung Hwa and a host of other masters and instructors.

Through my own research with Chinese written source materials, film footage and by discussions and exchanges with practitioners in North America and China, I discovered traditions that followed the original Yang-style Baduanjin framework. While much of my own method for the Yang-style Baduanjin comes verbatim from my teachers, other aspects have gone through much exploration and revision. A comparison of my approach to this subject and those found in other sources would likely reveal many more similarities than differences, however, several excellent practices I have learned along the way have found a home in my *baduanjin*. The full routine takes 45-90 minutes to complete depending on the number of repetitions. It has become one of my favourite personal practices and I find myself teaching it more and more. The energetic and martial benefits of practice are clear and appear quickly.

List of the Yang-style Taijiquan Baduanjin

Preparation (准备)

Section One: *Peng* and *An* (棚按)

Section Two: 21 Form *Neigong* (初步健身運氣法)

Section Three: The Waist and Spine (腰脊椎)

Section Four: The Arms (胳膊)

Section Five: The Legs (腿)

Section Six: *Zhan Zhuang* (川字式站樁)

Section Seven: *Fajin* and *Chansijin* (發勁纏絲勁)

Section Eight: *Caituigong* (踩腿功)

Cooldown (结束)



Examples of Yang-style Taijiquan Baduanjin



Examples from Section Two: 21 Form Neigong



Section Three
The Arms



Section Five
The Legs



Section Six
Zhan Zhuang



Section Seven
Fajin/Chansijin



Section Eight
Caituibu/Chituibu



Group practice of the 21 Form Second Section