

Old Frame First Routine

Lao Jia Yi Lu 老架一路 (last updated on Sep 9th, 2023)

Lao Jia Yi Lu (or old frame first routine) is an excellent starting form suitable for beginners or seasoned practitioners. The routine or set is designed to promote concentration, condition the body and acquaint students with a set of motion techniques for other styles of Taijiquan or martial arts training. The main characteristic of this routine is that it appears soft and pliable, but within that, there is strength (以柔为主，柔中有钢).

Lao Jia Yi Lu is a key conditioning and training form within the Chen Style Taijiquan system and it is also the parent form of the other major Taijiquan styles. The form contains many slow continuous movements that utilize the silk reeling movement quality of Chen Taijiquan. Lao Jia Yi Lu also contains fa jing, which is the explosive release of refined strength. Martial strategies within the form include strikes, joint locks and throws. Learning Lao Jia Yi Lu is of obvious interest to Chen practitioners, and it is valuable to practitioners of the other classical styles as well, in that they can see the original form and application of the moves they practiced. The movements of Lao Jia Yi Lu tend to be larger, more expansive, and less complex than the other Chen forms and therefore are studied first.

[updated notes] In Sep 2023, I was fortunate to be in Chen Zi Qiang's workshops in France and because we had time to chat, I learned a lot about this form from him. It seems this set has evolved over time based on who is teaching and when it was taught. Chen Zi Qiang shared that what he is teaching now is what he was taught when he was young (~5-year-old). The moving hands were all back stepping not some side, some back. Recently he has been modifying this set to make each move more practical for self defense and fighting. He has been analyzing the movements and making modifications to it. For example, in the kick sections when the arms go over the head and come back down to meet the legs, he felt there was a moment when the front is over exposed and can easily be attacked. He changed it so that the hands start to go out at chest level instead of head level. A constant reminder from CZQ is weight, waist, shoulder, elbow, hand – in that order. I also had a good discussion with Oliver Hübel from Berlin, Germany. He's also into researching the origins of the names of the form. From our discussions, I have changed the Chinese characters and pronunciation of single whip.

Section 1

This section has 15 movements and introduces the student to the various leg stances. In performing Chen Style Taijiquan, the leg stances must be visually clear, i.e. which leg is bearing the weight. There are left and right bow stances as well as empty stances. Weight distribution for the bow stances are usually 70/30 split (provided you can really tell) and empty stances are usually 90/10 split.

1. Preparatory Stance or Starting Form (qǐ shì, yù bèi shì)	预备式 or 起势(起勢)
2. Strong Man Pounds the Mortar (jīn gāng dǎo duì) ⁽¹⁾	金剛搗碓 (金剛搗碓)
3. Holding Coat at the Waist (lǎn zhā yī) ⁽²⁾	攬扎衣(攬紮衣)
4. Six Sealing and Four Closing (liù fēng sì bì)	六封四閉 (六封四閉)

5. Shoulder Pole (biǎn dan) ⁽³⁾ formerly Single Whip (dān biān)	扁担
6. Strong Man Pounds the Mortar (jīn gāng dǎo duì)	金刚捣碓 (金剛搗碓)
7. White Goose Spreads Wings (bái é liàng chì) ⁽⁴⁾	白鹅亮翅
8. Inclined or Diagonal Posture (xié xíng ào bù)	斜行
9. Gathering at the Knees (lōu xī) ⁽⁵⁾	搂膝 (樓膝)
10. Three Steps Forward (shàng sān bù) OR Twisted Steps (ào bù) ⁽⁶⁾	上三步 (拗步)
11. Inclined or Diagonal Posture (xié xíng) ⁽⁷⁾	斜行
12. Gathering at the Knees (lōu xī)	搂膝 (樓膝)
13. Three Steps Forward (shàng sān bù) OR Twisted Steps (ào bù)	上三步 (拗步)
14. Hidden Punch (yǎn shǒu gōng quán) ⁽⁸⁾	掩手肱拳
15. Strong Man Pounds the Mortar (jīn gāng dǎo duì)	金刚捣碓 (金剛搗碓)

- (1) 金刚 is commonly translated as Buddha's Warrior Bodyguard or Vajra, the two deities you might see outside a temple door. However, the use of 金刚 usually refers to someone who is very strong. There are many subtle movements in this step and CZQ gave me numerous corrections and let me feel how the transitions can be strong and powerful.
- (2) Many translations have listed this as Lazily Holding Coat or something lazy about it. There is absolutely nothing lazy about this movement. The original Chinese characters refers to 'waist' and not 'lazy'. The Romanized representation of these characters are unfortunately the same.
- (3) The lifting feeling is on the right wrist, top of head, and left middle finger. I have changed this from single whip dān biān 单鞭 (單鞭) to shoulder pole biǎn dan 扁担 to represent the shoulder pole which is a farming instrument and more likely to be the source of the name, instead of the whip. This is after some discussion with Oliver and Chen Zhi when we were together in France. You will still hear this referred to as single whip dān biān 单鞭 (單鞭).
- (4) In Chen Village, there are no cranes but lots of geese. So it is always white goose spreads wings and never crane.
- (5) Gathering at the knee requires the two hands to 'he', i.e. come together in a coordinated fashion, like a vise to grip or hit.
- (6) When written as 拗步, this is usually pronounced as Niu Bu and not Au Bu. Technically, this means twisted steps. So, this means going left and right as you move forward.
- (7) Also seen as Oblique Movement, this movement is characterized by the inclined rotation of the body during the execution of the movement and thus its name, which when directly translated means inclined shape. However, when the movement is done, the body may or may not be inclined, depending on execution.
- (8) The right knee points at the toes with the calf on top of the foot. Waist is relaxed. Thighs are 'twisted' outwards to initiate the spiral rotation. The right fist is not closed tight. The moment of impact is about a tenth of a second when it meets the opponent, only then is it tight. Immediately after the jin reaches the fist and after contact, relax the whole body. Gong versus hong. There are many write-ups that have "yan shou hong quan" or "dao juan hong". The Chinese character 宏 (hóng) is like 肱 (gōng). The difference is in their meanings. 肱 means upper arm or humerus, which I believe is what the form is referring to and 宏 means great or grand. While this has been interpreted as punching to the chest, I think this might be punching to the humerus as if someone grabs your left hand and you are going to pull it back and hit with the right fist that was hidden.

Section 2

This section introduces new footwork of walking backwards and sideways but the main characteristics of this section are body rotations. Walking backwards means landing with the toes first. Moving sideways means using the heel.

16. Rotational Body Punch (piě shēn quán) ⁽¹⁾	撇身拳
17. Green Dragon Emerges from Water (qīng lóng chū shuǐ) ⁽²⁾	青龙出水(青龍出水)
18. Push with Both Hands (shuāng tuī shǒu) ⁽³⁾	双推手(雙推手)
19. Elbow Meets Fist (zhǒu dī kàn quán) ⁽⁴⁾	肘低看拳
20. Stepping Backwards with Turning Arms (dào juǎn gōng)	倒卷肱
21. White Goose Spreads Wings (bái é liàng chì)	白鹅亮翅
22. Inclined or Diagonal Posture (xié xíng)	斜行
23. Turn Back Quickly (shǎn tōng bèi) ⁽⁵⁾	闪通背(閃通背)
24. Hidden Punch (yǎn shǒu gōng quán)	掩手肱拳
25. Six Sealing and Four Closing (liù fēng sì bì)	六封四闭(六封四閉)
26. Shoulder Pole (biǎn dan) <i>formerly Single Whip (dān biān)</i>	扁担
27. Moving or Waving Hands (yùn shǒu) ⁽⁶⁾	运手(運手)
28. Pat Horse on High Back (gāo tàn mǎ) ⁽⁷⁾	高探马(高探馬)

- (1) Depending on individual training level, (high, medium or low stances), the hand positions will be different. In high stance, the hands pass above the knees. In medium stance, the hands pass below the knees and in low stance, the elbows pass below the knees. In the final position, the right fist, left elbow and left toes form a straight line and the eyes look down the left elbow to align it with the toes. The left elbow can be used to strike an attacker's elbow (in which case the right is pulling downwards) or hit soft part of the body. The right fist can also be a hit or a pull.
- (2) The character 青 means many things. It can be young, the color green or even the color black. When used in this context, it can also mean the dragon from the da qin mountain or the direction South. The punch at the end is a straight punch or a hammer fist. However, at this point, that punch can change form into elbow strikes or shoulder strikes. CZQ said the left elbow and the right fist are in a line. CZQ said the left elbow still goes back, like a tangent to a circle that supports the punch to the right. I thought that was interesting and it feels more natural. If the elbow and fist are in a line, I feel the energy split up and losing the effectiveness of the punch. With the elbow going back (perpendicular to the torso), it feels more supportive, and the elbow strike is more powerful.
- (3) Sometimes also referred to as double push palms 双推掌(雙推掌). Like Six Sealing Four Closing, there is springiness in the arms when striking and strength is from the center of the back of the shoulders.
- (4) Ideally the elbow hit the back of the head while the left hand holds the chin or used to strike the opponent. Both elbow and fist come together with the coordinated he jin (compression energy).
- (5) Also seen as San Tong Bei (三通背) or turn back three times. Since this movement is used to deflect pushes from the back, there is the quick rotation of the body to bring the left and right shoulders forward. It has also been described as a way to brush off kicks to the groin or to protect the knees which is also possible as that also requires the rotation of the body. The left that extends to the back serves as an antenna or a probe to sense the surrounding and also be used to strike the thighs or groin regions. If the left hands senses someone behind, then jump and turn back.

- (6) The simplified Chinese character for cloud is 云(雲). It is very similar to the simplified Chinese character word for moving 运(運). It is very likely that these characters got translated incorrectly and “Cloud hands” stuck as a name and that is a translation error. Waving or moving hands is more accurate.
- (7) The hooking of the right foot is introduced in this movement. When performing this slowly, the right foot will make two pivot adjustments before completing the movement. I have seen Grandmaster Chen Xiao Xing execute this as drilling into the ground with the right heel while turning. If you can't do that, avoid making too big of an adjustment for the first pivot else the knee will fold in and the peng dang will be gone.

Section 3:

This is a short section but 70% of the footwork, jumping and kicking, is in this section.

29. Right Sweeping Kick (yòu cā jiǎo) ⁽¹⁾	右擦脚 (右擦脚)
30. Left Sweeping Kick (zuǒ cā jiǎo) ⁽¹⁾	左擦脚 (左擦脚)
31. Left Heel Kick (zuǒ dēng yì gēn) ⁽²⁾	左蹬一根
32. Three Twisted Steps Forward (shàng sān bù OR qián tàng ào bù) ⁽³⁾	上三步 (前趟拗步)
33. Punch towards the Ground (jī dì chuí) ⁽⁴⁾	击地锤 (击地锤)
34. Double Jump Kick (tī èr qǐ) ⁽⁵⁾	踢二起
35. Protect the Heart Punch (hù xīn quán) ⁽⁶⁾	护心拳 (护心拳)
36. Tornado Kick (xuán fēng jiǎo) ⁽⁷⁾	旋风脚 (旋风脚)
37. Right Heel Kick (yòu dēng yì gēn)	右蹬一根
38. Hidden Punch (yǎn shǒu gōng quán)	掩手肱拳

- (1) The hands are for show. The top part of the foot ‘slaps’ the hand and not the other way around. In some translation it is written as You Pai Jiao and Zuo Pai Jiao which led to people slapping the foot instead of the other way around.
- (2) Heel kicks are directed to the slightly above the waist or to the knee cap. Eyes look at where you are kicking.
- (3) 前趟 means moving forward. It is unclear why these 2 characters were added in front of Au Bu. It almost feels as if the intent is to move quickly forward which stepping left and right and then at the right moment punch down, which is the next move.
- (4) The left and right arms need to be coordinated. The left fist will sweep downwards under the left knee and then back up to protect the head. The right fist will go up, as the left goes down, in a smaller circle to punch down as the left fist rises up. The use of this move has been unclear. Some say to strike the attacker's foot while others said it is used to strike an attacker after you knock him/her down. It doesn't matter since there is many uses for one movement. The important thing is to not expose your head to your opponent or he/she can take advantage of that.
- (5) As the name implies, both legs will have to kick up. The first kick is a fake kick and the second kick is the real one.
- (6) The protect Heart Punch is a long movement. It is representative of the yǐn shàng xià jìn (引|上下进) method of attacking. First draw across the top while inserting the leg underneath to be in front or behind the attacker. The two fists line up along the midline of the body. Right fist in front of the left fist. I have seen also others placing the fists slightly to the right side of the body. Some explain this as protecting your own heart, which means either center or right is the wrong

placement. I see this as striking someone's left side after exposing it. That side is the opponent's heart side and is usually on my right side. I kept the literal translation of the characters so there's a visual image of the final resting position.

- (7) This kick can be done at various level. The key is to be stable when executing this kick. The left hand meets the inside of the left foot when the body is turned to the final position, 180 degrees and not sooner. The hand can hit the thigh, calf depending on your skill.

Section 4

Less foot work in this section and more hand work for pushing, grasping and hitting.

39. Small Grasping and Hitting (xiǎo qín dǎ) ⁽¹⁾	小擒打
40. Push Mountain from the Head (bào tóu tuī shān) ⁽²⁾	抱头推山 (抱頭推山)
41. Six Sealing and Four Closing (liù fēng sì bì)	六封四闭 (六封四閉)
42. Shoulder Pole (biǎn dan) <i>formerly Single Whip (dān biān)</i>	扁担
43. Protect the Front (qián zhāo) ⁽³⁾	前招
44. Protect the Back (hòu zhāo) ⁽³⁾	后招
45. Part Wild Horse's Mane (yě mǎ fēn zōng) ⁽⁴⁾	野马分鬃 (野馬分鬃)
46. Six Sealing and Four Closing (liù fēng sì bì) ⁽⁵⁾	六封四闭 (六封四閉)
47. Shoulder Pole (biǎn dan) <i>formerly Single Whip (dān biān)</i>	扁担

- (1) I have read that the "Small" in this movement comes from the small frame. I don't think so since the small frame came after this routine was created. The grasping technique is very commonly used when attacker grabs the wrist. There is coordinated he jin using the back of the right palm along with the left hand (on top of the attacker's hand) to lock the wrist joint. The complete execution requires stepping into the attacker to obtain space to rotate right arm while holding on to the attacker's hand. The palm strike can also be a fist, aiming for the soft parts of the body and left hand can be used to protect the head after drawing the attacker's arm away. CZQ (*Sep 23*) said he improved this movement by moving the left hand closer to the head to be more protective.
- (2) The push is an upward push, so the dang goes down and then up along with the push. This is used to uproot the attacker.
- (3) The 招 comes from 招呼, to greet. It is like greeting someone who comes in front or behind you. The jin used here is horizontal jin so the strikes to the front and rear are along a horizontal plane. I see this as a protection by parrying.
- (4) The movement here resembles a woman using a hairpin to part their hair. It has to be pierced and then flipped over. This first parting starts with right hand between the legs and ends with right palm facing up. Then turn to face the back with left hand between the legs and ends with palm facing outwards, ready to do the pulls. The leading arm pierce, rotate and part just like the hairpin. First to the right and then to the left. Can also use this as a side silk reeling exercise.
- (5) Also referred to as Big Six Sealing Four Closing (大六封四闭) because of the extra two circles to turn to face front.

Section 5

This section is mainly a review section but introduces some big movements like jumping far, reaching high, and diving lows. This section also introduces the lotus kick.

48. Jade Maiden Shuttles back and forth (yù nǚ chuān suō) ⁽¹⁾	玉女穿梭
49. Holding Coat at Waist (lǎn zhā yī)	攬扎衣 (攬紮衣)
50. Six Sealing and Four Closing (liù fēng sì bì)	六封四閉 (六封四閉)
51. Shoulder Pole (biǎn dan) <i>formerly Single Whip (dān biān)</i>	扁担
52. Moving or Waving Hands (yùn shǒu)	运手 (運手)
53. Double White Lotus (shuāng bái lián) ⁽²⁾	双白莲 (雙白蓮)
54. Arrange Legs to Split (bǎi jiǎo diē chà) ⁽³⁾	摆脚踏岔 (擺腳跌岔)
55. Golden Rooster Stands on One Leg (jīn jī dú lì) ⁽⁴⁾	金鸡独立 (金雞獨立)
56. Stepping Backwards with Turning Arms (dào juǎn gōng)	倒卷肱
57. White Goose Spreads Wings (bái é liàng chì)	白鹅亮翅
58. Inclined or Diagonal Posture (xié xíng)	斜行
59. Turn Back Quickly (shǎn tōng bèi)	闪通背 (閃通背)
60. Hidden Punch (yǎn shǒu gōng quán)	掩手肱拳
61. Six Sealing and Four Closing (liù fēng sì bì)	六封四閉 (六封四閉)
62. Shoulder Pole (biǎn dan) <i>formerly Single Whip (dān biān)</i>	扁担
63. Moving or Waving Hands (yùn shǒu)	运手 (運手)
64. Pat Horse on Back (gāo tàn mǎ)	高探马 (高探馬)

- (1) This movement is used to break yourself out of a group surrounding you. At a high level of skill, the ideal is to leap as far as you can. Another very common interpretation for this is jade maiden works the shuttle. A shuttle is a piece of a loom that moves back and forth between yarns. I think the name is describing a lady moving back and forth quickly like the shuttle of a loom and not the lady working the shuttle of a loom. When both hands turn upwards, there is a he jin compressing into the center. Hands and right leg lift first, then the left leg. Left leg land first and then right making two stomping sounds.
- (2) In Xin Jia, another character that sounds like 白 (bái) is used. 摆 (bǎi) means to arrange, so it is likely that this movement is 双摆莲.
- (3) Key here is that you must be able to get low without sitting down on the ground. This can also be performed at low, mid and high stance.
- (4) This movement requires you to reach high with palm striking upwards. Common mistake is to rotate the palm with palm's heel towards the right or left. Between the left and right legs, there is another the yǐn shàng xià jìn (引上下进), so the hands will lead the movement to the right and drawing to the left while stepping to the right happens together.

Section 6

This section can appear to be confusing. There are only two ding bu (stationary postures) and the rest flows from one movement into another.

65. Cross Kick (shí zì jiǎo) ⁽¹⁾	十字脚 (十字腳)
66. Punch to the Groin (zhǐ dāng chuí) ⁽²⁾	指裆锤
67. White Ape Presents Fruit (bái yuán xiàn guǒ or yuán hóu tàn guǒ) ⁽³⁾	白猿献果 or 猿猴探果
68. Shoulder Pole (biǎn dan) <i>formerly Single Whip (dān biān)</i>	扁担
69. Earthworm burrowing under the mud (què dì lóng) ⁽⁴⁾	雀地龙 (雀地龍)

70. Step Forward to Form the Seven Stars (shàng bù qī xīng) ⁽⁵⁾	上步七星
71. Step Back to wrap with forearm (xià bù kuà gōng) ⁽⁶⁾	下步跨肱
72. Turn Back and Wave Double Lotus Kick (zhuǎn shēn shuāng bái lián) ⁽⁷⁾	转身双白莲 (轉身雙白蓮)
73. Cannon Fists to the Head (dāng tóu pào)	当头炮 (當頭炮)
74. Strong Man Pounds the Mortar (jīn gāng dǎo duì)	金刚捣碓 (金剛搗碓)
75. Close (shōu shì)	收勢

- (1) The Chinese characters 十字 mean intersection, although some will think it has something to do with the number 10. Cross kick is as good a description as I can find. This movement uses the Wai Bai Jiao footwork where you whip the right leg around to hit the left hand.
- (2) This is like the punch to the ground but the direction is aimed at the groin and below.
- (3) In Lao Jia Yi Lu, this move has a couple of names. 白猿献果 (bái yuán xiàn guǒ), white ape presents fruits or 猿猴探果 (yuán hóu tàn guǒ), monkeys and apes searching for fruits. Based on how the movement is executed, I think the ape presenting the fruit is the most descriptive. Immediately following this movement is a move similar to Six Sealing Four Closing to push the attacker away after uprooting the attacker. Some listing will list the Six Sealing Four Closing as another movement. I suspect the direction of the push is more forward than downwards based on Grandmaster CZL's description on how it is used.
- (4) The Chinese characters compose of a sparrow and earthworm. The story is that the earthworm would creep under the mud pushing sand to the top, forming small mud hills. As children, they would look for the white sand and then scoop the earthworms out from the base of those mud hills. With the sparrow in front of the worm, it may mean a sparrow searching for the earthworms and would scoop in like the children's hands. In the low form, left leg is straight in front, left leg is bent. The drop is on the calves not on the buttocks. Some description has this as flying down like the sparrow.
- (5) The 7 stars represents the Northern Dipper 北斗七星 (běi dòu qī xīng). This movement needs more clarifications from my teacher. I have heard that the 7 stars are formed by the head, shoulders, elbows and wrists. One version has it that the 7 stars are in a line like the Dipper. Another describes the box formed at the end of the move as the box in the Dipper, and thus stepping into the 7 stars. Key things to note is left goes up first and right side follows.
- (6) This has been written up as "Ride the Tiger's Tail" and there is really no tiger involved. It is likely that translation came from the Xin Jia Yi Lu's movement, 退步跨虎 (tuì bù kuà hǔ). This movement is about trapping and tripping the attacker with the right thigh and wrapping your forearm around their waist to push them back.
- (7) Originally when this was practiced in the village, this was only a 180 degrees turn but since it is rude to put your back to the judges or audience during competition, an additional 180 degrees turn was added.