

## Do not use brute strength

By Ma Yueliang, from the Journal of the Shanghai Jian Quan Taijiquan Association

Translated by Benjamin and Dr. Kasenda

I have a student, who took part in a total of 7 pushhands competitions. He won all of them. Because of his ability in Wu-style pushhands, he did not need to use brute strength.

Wu Quanyou learned as a student from Yang Luchan the Yang-style Taijiquan. His son Wu Jianquan developed his own Taijiquan - the Wu-style Taijiquan – using the Yang-style as a foundation. The pushhands of Wu-style is different from the pushhands of other styles. Based on the eight basic hand movements, thirteen basic rotation procedures are developed. There are rotation procedures for the upper part of the body like *chantoushi* (winding to the top of the head) and *guotoushi* (binding over the top of the head), the middle part of the body like *zhongpingzhou* (middle flat elbow) and *lizhou* (erect elbow) and for the lower parts of the body like *shizishou* (cross hands) and *louxishi* (brush knee). In addition there are three short distance procedures and four long distance procedures. Beside this there are the two introducing methods *kaisimen* (open the four doors) and *huanshoufa* (change hand). With the ability of these techniques you are able to neutralise attacks on all levels of your body, without using too much strength.

In pushhands-competitions the rules forbid the grasping of hands or arms. If you have mastered these thirteen methods you are also able to get loose from a grasp. The idea is to follow the strength of the opponent and to use it at the right moment against them. This is how you lose yourself from the grip of your opponent. This is the principle of “borrowing strength“ to use it against the other. Even if the opponent has great strength you should not work against it, but rather you should use the aforementioned principal, following the strength and striking back at the right moment. This is the art of Taijiquan pushhands.

In my opinion, to develop pushhands, these techniques are fundamental. Concerning the competitions, I would suggest that prior to the competition each participant undergoes a practical test to see if they are able to use pushhands-techniques. If this is not the case, they should not be allowed to compete, otherwise there is the danger of the competition becoming “bullfighting“. Even with this test, the danger of this happening is still possible. It is fundamental, that you should follow the traditional methods and techniques for learning pushhands. Later in practice you can use them within a wide spectrum. This is how it is possible to get good results in the development of pushhands.

One of my students is a blacksmith. As a result of his work he is very strong and although having learnt very little pushhands, he won a competition. Even so he is not able to demonstrate the Taijiquan form. This shows, that he has not much ability and that he won only by strength. Pushhands without form does not work and the opposite way around, the form without pushhands has no practical use, this is why you should combine them.