

BRUSH KNEE AND STEP FORWARD (Lou xi yao bu)

1. *Twisted step.* Turn your body to the right while rotating your right hand clockwise and pushing your left forearm to your right.
2. *Raise your left leg* while your left hand continues to circle down in front of your left knee.
3. *Your left hand continues circling left* and your right hand circles up behind your ear, while your left leg steps (or kicks) forward into a four/six stance.
4. *Shift your weight forward* into a bow and arrow stance as you strike your right hand forward in the an (push) position.





Twist & Shout

BRUSH
KNEE'S
CHIN NA
CONNECTION

BY LEWIS PALEIAS

It could be argued that of the 37 postures comprising Yang tai chi chuan, the quintessential posture is the sequence called brush knee & twist step. This posture contains two parts: The first movement is the neutralizing, which leads to the coiling down the left arm. The second part is the right hand's strike with *an* (push). This article will examine some of the jointlocking opportunities hidden in this sequence.

The depth and content of the art of tai chi chuan is as wide as the philosophy is profound. Today, the amount of interest concerning its health benefits is staggering. People already know through countless studies that tai chi can maintain health, increase bone density, strengthen the physical and chi bodies, relax the mind and spirit, and regulate the emotional and wisdom minds. However, many don't know that tai chi also offers a great foundation for self-defense. Tai chi was originally developed for brutal combat. Yang Lu Chan's (The Invincible) reputation rested on his ability to beat people up. He reached the lofty position of Trainer of the Royal Guard by being a superlative fighter. His son, Yang Ban Ho, served as the martial arts trainer of the Western Garrison in Beijing. From the drills of pushing hands, da lu, sticky hands symbol training, two-person matching set and tai chi sparring, a player can comprehend the keys of yielding, leading, neutralizing, listening, understanding and many other skills for using the soft against the hard and the round to neutralize the straight.

A Complete Art

Tai chi contains the four required and necessary fighting categories to qualify as a complete martial art — striking (along with punching, pushing, pressing); kicking (along with sweeps, steps, trips); wrestling (to destroy someone's root, balance or to throw down); and chin na (grabbing techniques which control or lock the joints, muscles, tendons or seal the breath). Tai chi's martial strategy uses defense as an offense by yielding, neutralizing, following, unbalancing and explosively attacking at the correct moment. In fact, because of the emphasis on sticking and adhering techniques in tai chi's close-range fighting strategy, chin na has always been an important part of the art.

In this close-quarter combat, the above categories are often applied together and cannot really be separated. For example, in the brush knee & step sequence, while one of your hands is grabbing and controlling your opponent, the other hand is used to strike a vital cavity while the leg sweeps or the hip bumps (*kao*) to throw him down as an added attack. In tai chi chin na, the neutralization is done with a

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circular motion; thus, the techniques tend to be smooth and round. Often the opponent will be controlled before he realizes that a technique is being applied. In coordination with circular stepping, chin na can also be used to pull the opponent's root and throw him.

Chin na is generally divided into five categories. These are:

- **Dividing the Muscle/Tendon** — These techniques tear apart the opponent's muscles and tendons.

- **Misplacing the Bone** — These techniques dislocate bones in the joints or stress the ligaments connecting the bones.

- **Sealing the Breath** — Directly or indirectly preventing the opponent from inhaling.

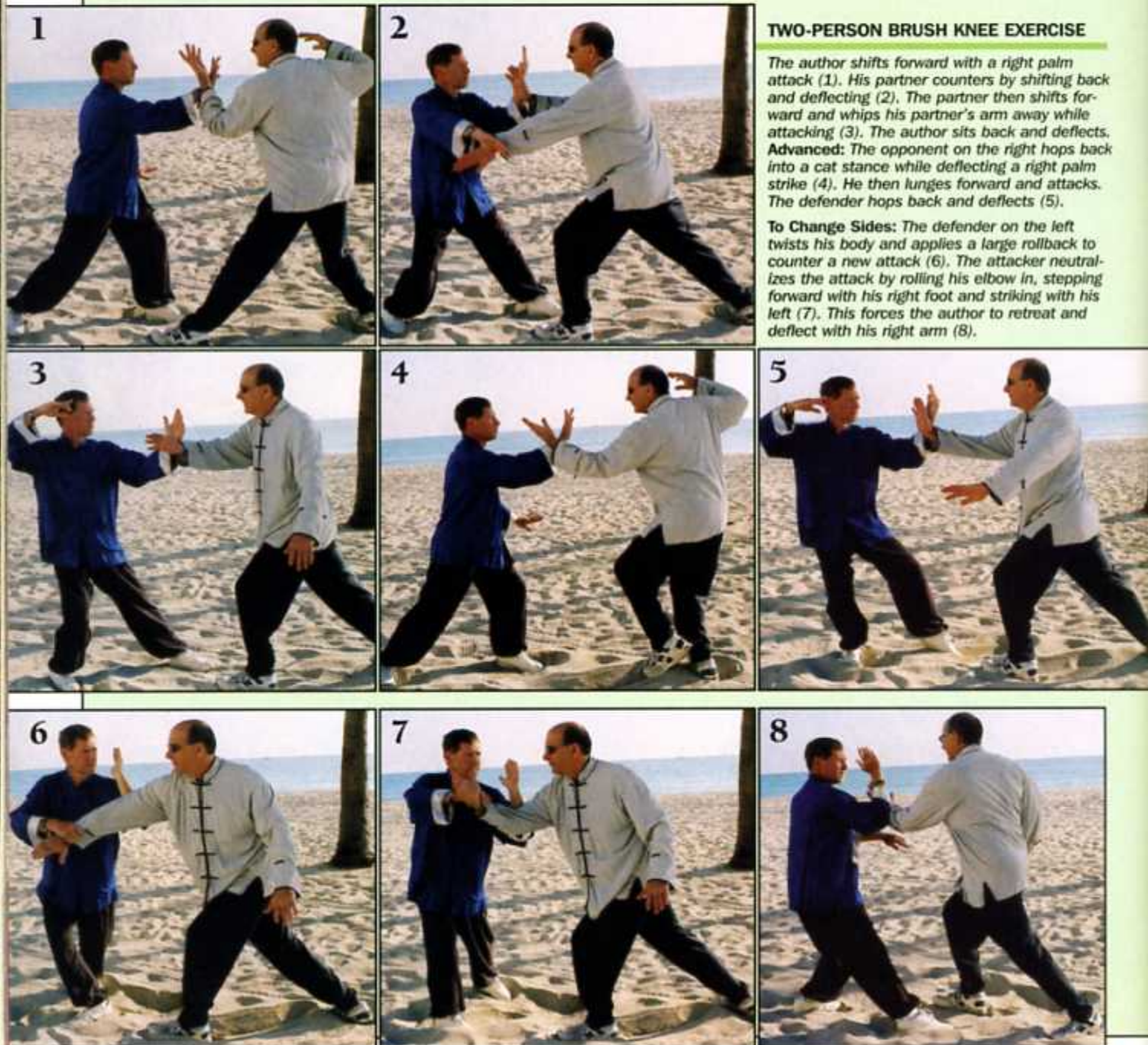
- **Sealing/Blocking the Vein/Artery** — Striking or pressing to stop circulation or rupture an artery.

- **Acupoint Cavity Press** — Directly or indirectly attacking the 108 qi cavities that relate to the 12 internal organs.

Again, they usually can't be completely separated: Misplacing the bone usually is combined with dividing the muscle.

A "Martial" Plan

To help students understand the martial applications of tai chi, pushing hands practice is usually introduced soon after learning the solo form. Pushing hands teaches you to feel the opponent's jing (martial power) and chi (energy). From this feeling, you learn how to stick and adhere your body to the opponent's. This allows you to redirect and neutralize his power into emptiness and destroy his root and balance, creating the perfect set up for chin na. Even though tai chi excels in chin na, we don't ever look for it: it just emerges naturally through the flow of following and adhering. That's



TWO-PERSON BRUSH KNEE EXERCISE

The author shifts forward with a right palm attack (1). His partner counters by shifting back and deflecting (2). The partner then shifts forward and whips his partner's arm away while attacking (3). The author sits back and deflects. **Advanced:** The opponent on the right hops back into a cat stance while deflecting a right palm strike (4). He then lunges forward and attacks. The defender hops back and deflects (5).

To Change Sides: The defender on the left twists his body and applies a large rollback to counter a new attack (6). The attacker neutralizes the attack by rolling his elbow in, stepping forward with his right foot and striking with his left (7). This forces the author to retreat and deflect with his right arm (8).

LARGE ROLLBACK

From the twisted step (1), the author locks his opponent's arm in an arm bar (2), crosses his leg and locks his left leg, and forces him to the ground (3).



the key. In tai chi, unlike some more-aggressive arts, all martial techniques must respond to and follow the situation. The techniques must be alive, flowing, skillful, fast and powerful. Chin na must take the opponent by surprise. To successfully apply a grabbing chin na you often need to fake or strike your opponent first to set him up for your controlling technique.

For example, in the brush knee & step sequence, you can use a strike to cause your opponent to block and then

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you quickly grab the hand to control him. Or you might first kick his shin to draw his attention to his leg and immediately grab his hand or coil and lock the elbow or neck.

The twisted step is a good example of showing the intricacy of even the simplest tai chi movements. The rotational twisting power to the right (beware of the right), generates the right hand's cai (pluck) and the left hand's lu (roll back): Actually the body is in roll back; the left hand has some downward and sideways peng (ward off) energy. The two powers combine to create a third power: lie (split or rend).

The hardest aspect of learning tai chi chin na is capturing the right feeling. Otherwise, you will often miss the key angles or points for effective locking. Participating in chin na seminars offered by qualified teachers is highly recom-

mended, because you can correct years of mistakes in just a few hours. Constant practice with other players will make you ever more skillful, but be very careful while practicing with your training partner: when the angle is right, it takes very little effort to injure someone. Some chin na injuries are permanent or require surgery to reattach ligaments.

The Exercise

The application of all the chin na depicted in this article can be learned through a two-person brush knee exercise. Both players face each other in a left-foot forward stance. In stage one of this exercise, your partner shifts forward into a bow stance and hits you with a right palm or fist; you sit back into a four/six stance while deflecting the blow with your left arm. That left arm then whips your opponent's attacking

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arm open while you shift forward, striking his chest with your right hand.

When you want to change sides (to the right leg/left striking hand), you twist your body to the right while deflecting your opponent's strike and lock his elbow with the movement "large roll back" (da lu). Your partner counters by rolling his elbow inward, steps forward with his right leg and strikes you with his left palm. This forces you to retreat back with your left leg and deflect his strike with your right arm. Continue for a while on this side.

In stage 2 of this exercise, as your partner lunges forward to attack, you hop back into a left false stance (cat stance), creating distance and an

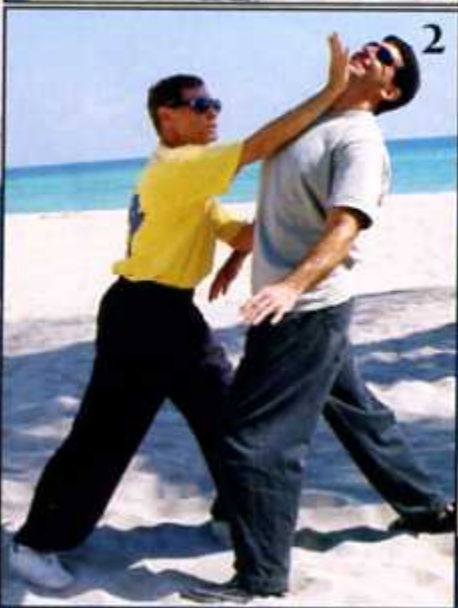
opportunity to kick. Then you lunge forward, sidestepping a little to the left as you strike with your right. This gives you the opportunity to lock your opponent's left arm while avoiding his right. As you continue this exercise, you'll find that the constant slight sidestepping to the left causes you both to circle each other. When you can do this smoothly, make it alive by varying your speed, tempo and distance. When you're comfortable enough, start adding the jointlocks: wrist, elbow, upper arm, back and neck, and against the kick (remember that cat stance?). When you can apply a lock against someone who knows it's coming, you're honed to apply it on someone who is less enlightened. Partner training allows you to bridge the gap between form and combat.

Every one of the approximately 108 movements of the traditional Yang

long form has at least six different jointlocks, throws and myriad strikes and kicks. If you're interested in learning more about the hidden tai chi chin na techniques, a good place to start would be the book or video, "Taiji Chin Na" by Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming.

In fact, Dr. Yang has a host of different chin na books and videotapes on the market. Why? Because even this one single category of Chinese martial arts contains a vast ocean of knowledge. Watching two masters play together is a lot of fun. Every lock has a counter, every counter a counter-counter, and so on forever. Like pushing hands, it becomes the seamless flow of yin and yang. You and your partner, separate yet one. But isn't that what tai chi is all about? ☯

Lewis Paleias is a Florida-based instructor under Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming. He last wrote about the deerbook swords in the February, 2003 issue.



FEUDAL LORD PUSHES THE CALDRON.

An initial attack (1) leads to a deflection. The defender then sidesteps to the left to avoid the left hand (2) and coils his left to his attacker's lower back. He adds a strike to the face. His left hand then presses toward him while his right hand pushes forward (3). The defender steps past his attacker and throws him to the ground (4).

