

Glossary of Chinese Terms

Nielsen (2003), and Yang (1996) and (2002) are excellent principle sources for Chinese terminology. Note that I generally use traditional Chinese characters, but sometimes lapse into their modern simplified forms. This is particularly the case where the traditional character is very complex (I'm lazy) and/or the simplified character has an obvious semantic connection. For example with ti (body) the characters are 體 and 体 – “body” here from the idea of the root of man in the simplified character provides an easy mnemonic. However, in some cases the simplification is hardly worthwhile, as in shu (number) where the traditional and simplified characters are 數 and 数 respectively. In that case, I generally stick with the traditional character. I'm nothing if not inconsistent.

an jin	按勁	push energy – a downward force, smothering, one of the traditional eight powers (ba jin)
ba gua	八卦	eight symbols – the eight three-lined trigrams of the Yijing (see also liang yi and si xiang)
Ba gua Zhang	八卦掌	eight trigram palm – the name of one of the internal arts (nei jia)
ba jin	八勁	eight powers – the traditional martial energies associated with Taiji Quan
bao gua	包卦	containing trigram – a technical term describing a structural relationship within a symbol (gua) (see also hu gua)
bu	卜	divination – the practical application of the symbols (gua) in order to apprehend the details of one's current situation
cai jin	採勁	plucking energy – uprooting, disrupting the centre of gravity, one of the traditional eight powers (ba jin)
can si	蠶絲	reeling silk – a partner work training exercise from the Wu-Cheng syllabus designed to train adhering, listening and understanding
Cheng	鄭	the family name of Cheng Tin Hung (鄭天熊), my teacher's teacher. This is written as “Zheng” in modern pinyin. Although they share the same family name, there is no relationship to the teacher named Cheng Man Ching (鄭曼青)
chou xiang lun	抽象論	literally: discourse drawing out images, abstract discourse; translated as metaphysics
da jin	打勁	striking energy – using any limb to hit an opponent
Da Zhuan	大傳	Great Treatise – one of the associated texts of the Yijing
dai shu	代數	Algebra – literally: replacement number, the role of the variable in the system (see also xiang shu).
dan tian	丹田	cinnabar field – the central reservoir of the body's energy. A region of the abdomen, anterior to the sacrum

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dao	道	way, path, method – a key philosophical principle
Dao de Jing	道德經	Book of the Way and Virtue – a classic Daoist text
Dao di Dong	道地動	Authentic Movement – a Western internal movement practice
de	德	virtue; also meaning “inner power” in the Nei-Yei
dong jin	懂勁	understanding energy – comprehending your opponent's intention (see also jue jin)
fa jin	發勁	emitting energy – a sudden release of power into an opponent
gong fu	功夫	work and time – any activity that requires a great deal of effort and practice to master. Often applied specifically to the martial arts
gua	卦	symbol – the symbols of the Yijing; two lined gua are bigrams, three lined gua are trigrams and six lined gua are hexagrams
hu gua	互卦	interlocking trigrams – a technical term describing a structural relationship within a symbol (gua) (see also bao gua)
hua jin	化勁	neutralizing energy – redirecting your opponent's force in such a way as to prevent their attack impacting on you
ji jin	擠勁	press energy – a forward thrust or push, one of the traditional eight powers (ba jin)
jin	勁	flowing, connected energy
jing	經	literally meaning the warp threads of a textile, or longitude, and then by extension, a classic of literature (see also wei)
jue jin	覺勁	sensing jins – any energy which allows the practitioner to sense his opponent's intention, energy and movement (see xian jin)
kao jin	靠勁	bump energy – use of the shoulder or torso to strike, one of the traditional eight powers (ba jin)
le jin	掙勁	split energy – spiralling back an incoming force, one of the traditional eight powers (ba jin)
li	力	power, strength – often contrasted with jin
liang yi	兩儀	two matching forms – the combined pair of yin and yang (see also ba gua and si xiang)
lu jin	攔勁	roll-back – leading and diverting an attack to the side, one of the traditional eight powers (ba jin)
men ren	門人	literally “door person” – a student who has been admitted “inside the door” to learn techniques not taught in open class

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na jin	拿勁	locking energy – controlling an opponent through manipulation of their joints or their centre
nei gong	內功	internal work – also, a specific set of conditioning exercises from the Wu-Cheng syllabus for developing both health and martial power (see also qi gong)
nei jia	內家	internal art – a family of Chinese martial arts conforming to certain principles of movement and energy generation (see also wai jia)
Nei-Yei	內業	Inward Training – a Daoist classic describing techniques of physical and spiritual cultivation
pan jin	盤勁	rooting energy – the ability to connect one's centre into the ground
peng jin	棚勁	ward-off energy – an upward force to divert or strike, one of the traditional eight powers (ba jin)
qi	氣	air, breath, vapour – in the context of Chinese health exercises, the energy that flows in the body and throughout the universe
qi gong	氣功	exercises involving breathing and postural work – generally focussed on the health aspects of personal development (see also nei gong)
quan	拳	fist – sometimes used to name a martial art (see also zhang)
san ti shi	三体式	literally “three body posture” – a traditional posture common to many martial arts
shang hu gua	上互卦	upper interlocking trigram – representing the psychic domain in the human (see also xia hu gua)
Shuo Gua	說卦	Explaining the Trigrams – one of the associated texts of the Yijing
si xiang	四象	four images – the four symbolic figures composed of two lines of yin or yang (see also liang yi and ba gua)
tai ji	太極	great polarity – the metaphysical state after yin and yang arise, but before they separate (see also wuji)
Tai ji Quan	太極拳	Great Polar Fist – the martial style based directly on the theory of yin and yang
ting jin	聽勁	listening energy – feeling your opponent's movement and energy (see also jue jin)
tui shou	推手	pushing hands – a collection of partner work exercises intended to train the various physical energies required for effective martial application
wai jia	外家	external art – those martial arts generally emphasising muscular strength and hard technique in training (see also nei jia)

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wei	緯	the weft threads of a textile, and then by extension, portions of the literary tradition that diverge from the content of the classics (see also jing)
wen	文	language, pattern, culture, civil (I thought about offering 文數 as a particular instance of dai shu 代數, in the same way that xiang shu 象數 is an instance)
Wu	吳	name of the family originating the style of Taiji Quan that I practice
wu	武	martial, military
Wu dang	武當	literally “martial duty” – the name of a sacred mountain in China
wu ji	無極	unpolarized, preconceptual, the void – the metaphysical state before taiji
Wu ji Zhan	無極站	unpolarized standing – the foundational meditative standing posture
wu xing	五行	five phases – a philosophical system based on the constructive and destructive interactions of five different states of being
xia hu gua	下互卦	lower interlocking trigram – representing the somatic domain in the human (see also shang hu gua)
xian jin	顯勁	manifested energies (see also jue jin)
xiang shu	象數	image and number – an approach to interpreting the symbols of change (gua) that makes extensive use of the structural properties of the symbols (see also dai shu and yi li)
xing	形	form, shape
xing er shang shu	形而上學	metaphysics – the study of what is beyond form, outside of actual experience
Xing yi Quan	形意拳	Form and Intent Fist – an internal style of martial art
xuan li	玄理	a profound principle, a metaphysical idea
xuan xun	玄學	Profound Study – another route to metaphysics
yang	陽	the positive, active principle power (see also yin, and liang yi)
yi	意	intent, thought
Yi jing	易經	Book of Change – the classic text exploring the theory of yin and yang
yi li	義理	meaning and principle – also, righteous reason. An approach to the interpretation of the symbols of change often contrasted with xiang shu (image and number) which emphasises the moral and ethical dimensions of the text

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Yi Quan	意拳	Intent Fist – a style of martial art derived from Xingyi Quan
yin	陰	the negative, passive principle power (see also yang, and liang yi)
Yun Shou	雲手	Cloud Hands – a movement pattern from Taiji Quan
zhan nian jin	沾黏勁	touching and adhering energy – the key technique for connecting to an opponent and understanding their intent
zhan zhuang	站樁	standing post – the practice of holding static postures to develop correct internal alignment (see also zheng xing)
zhang	掌	palm – sometimes used to name a martial art (see also quan)
zheng xing	正形	align form – a key physical and spiritual technique from the Nei-Yei
zhong xiang	中象	middle image (bigram) – a structural relation within a symbol (gua)
Zhong wen	中文	middle language – the name for the Chinese language
zhou jin	肘勁	elbow energy – using the joint to divert or to strike, one of the traditional eight powers (ba jin)
Zhou Yi	周易	Changes of the Zhou, another name for the Yijing, taken from the Zhou dynasty (1055-256 _{BCE}) associated with the creation of the book in its current form.
zhuan jin	轉勁	twisting energy – the generation of power through turning the waist