



*CAI LONGYUN*

**WUS HU  
BASICS**

# **Wushu Basics**

**Cai Longyun**



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# Preface

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The ancient tradition of Wushu, also known as Chinese Gongfu (Kungfu), is to this day revered as a national sport in China. It is a form of martial arts that mainly combines kicks, punches, tumbles, strikes and thrusts to control the opponent, with or without weapons. It involves both set sequences and free movements of offense or defense, done swiftly or slowly, blending motion with stillness, and vigor with gentleness. With its ancient tradition and widespread popularity, Wushu has become a valued cultural heritage developed through extended social practice.

Alongside its set routines (*taolu*), Wushu also adopts combat forms. In the commune clan period of prehistoric society, Wushu manifested itself among early peoples in the form of set combat routines such as Jiaodi (wrestling) Game and Ganqi (shield-axe) Dance, both serving as military sports for clan members.

During its long history of development, Wushu has formulated a set of systematic procedures for instruction. For example, basic training should be strengthened before any exercises involving fists or weapons. Basic training also covers exercises for the legs, waist, headstands, hands and eyes to be well-balanced in stake-standing, headstands and various stances, as well as movements including leaps, rolls, whirls, and turns, with specific aims and methods for each training exercise. Take leg training as an example. There are six types of methods: pressing, pulling, splitting, pushing, controlling, kicking, which combine with different training routines to achieve their purposes. For example, the method of training for leg pulling involves boot-“kissing,” crouching, holding, carrying, and heel kicking. These comprehensive and scientific training methods help the Wushu practitioner rapidly improve by avoiding deviations and by also integrating the development of physical fitness.

In 1957 I wrote the book *Wushu Basics*, based on my experience of practicing Wushu over many years. Since its first launch, it has been warmly welcomed by people. Gongfu film star Bruce Lee said this book “exerted a tremendous influence” on him. In *Bruce Lee and Chinese Traditional Wushu*<sup>1</sup>, Li Jianhao and Lu Yun recall: “He (Bruce Lee) bought *Wushu Basics* and *A Road to Huaquan*, written by Cai Longyun, a famous Huaquan master, and began his own vigorous training.” “Bruce Lee gained perfect control of the waist and legs skills through rigorous self-training after reading Cai’s works. He could even wield his legs as flexibly as others wield their hands.” “The chapter on ‘Basic Skills Training’ in the book *Basic Chinese Fist Plays*, the only individual monograph by Lee throughout his life, was taken from Cai’s *Wushu Basics*.” “Furthermore, Bruce Lee performed his ‘striking step with three tornado kicks before landing’—one of his top Wushu skills—at the Long Beach Karate Tournament and in the film *Enter the Dragon*. These, undoubtedly, closely originated from the guidance of Master Cai’s work.”

Now that the program “Master Cai Longyun’s Studio” has been established by the Shanghai Education Committee, I am more than pleased to have professor Chen Lijiang, associate professor Hu Jinju and lecturer Xiong Qianli, all from the Shanghai University of Sports, translate the book into English. It is also much appreciated that Foreign Languages Press is publishing and releasing it overseas. I hope my modest book can further serve the masses and all those in the world who love Chinese Wushu.

Cai Longyun  
May 2012  
Shanghai

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<sup>1</sup> See *Kungfu (Wulin)*, 2003 (11), published by Popular Science Press, Guangzhou.

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## Chapter One

# Basic Skills Training

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# One

Wushu is a sport that involves movement of all the muscle groups, joints and internal organs of the body. The flexibility of the knees, hips and shoulder joints, the elasticity of the waist, the strength of upper and lower limbs and the control of breathing all play decisive roles in Wushu exercises. As Wushu masters often say: “Practice boxing without exercising the legs, and you shall blunder into old age; practice boxing without exercising the waist, and you shall never achieve expertise.” Also: “Exercise stances before other Wushu practice; you shall gain strength in upside-down standing.” “By keeping the waist supple and legs flexible, you can move fists and legs faster than meteors; by practicing stands and headstands, you are empowered to uphold Mount Tai” (*Huaquan Instructions*); “Practice stances first, and other exercises later” (*Secrets of Shaolinquan*). Such sayings fully explain that the fundamental requirements for Wushu skills consist in basic training for the waist and legs as well as for the headstands, stake-standing, and various stances to develop physical quality. They also richly demonstrate the long existence of such systematic training methods for practicing Chinese Wushu.

Basic training for Wushu movements includes exercises for seven main segments: legs, waist, stances, stake-standing, arm-stands, eyes and hands, and fist-punches. Such basic exercises as for the legs may also require certain apparatus for training. Currently, wall-bars are the first choice, whereas people earlier used tables, benches, walls and window-sills for such exercises. When you do the exercises, you can use whatever facilities you have at home, if wall-bars are not available.

## Section 1 Leg Training

### 1. Leg Presses

#### (1) Frontal presses—forward bending to push down legs

**[Movements]** ① Face the apparatus (table, bench, wall, windowsill or installed bars; hereinafter the same), standing two steps away from it. ② Raise the right leg to abdomen level and place heel on apparatus, with tips of toes pointing upward and knee straightened; stand on left leg, knee straightened, with tips of toes directly pointing to apparatus. ③ Interlink the 10 fingers and press on right leg, eyes gazing on tips of toes of the right foot. Bend upper body forward and then press downward with elbows bent, holding this position for a moment, then raise upper body



Fig. 1

to upright position, and continue to bend upper body forward and press downward (Fig. 1). After bending and pressing on right leg several times, place left leg on apparatus (hereafter, all the following exercises require alternating the left and right legs, without further explanation).

**[Objectives]** To exercise the tendons of the biceps flexor cruris, semitendinosus, semimembranosus and triceps; to strengthen the stretching functions of the tendons; in addition, to exercise the inside and outside ligaments of the knee joints and strengthen



the tenacity of the ligaments; at the same time, this prepares for future leg kicking movements and lays a solid foundation to enhance the power of the inside and outside ligaments for future regimen of heel kicks and toe kicks.

**[Key points]** ① Requirements for frontal press exercises: Chest forward, back straight, knees straightened, hips back-sitting (legs placed on the apparatus, hips sitting backward and downward), body forward, toes tightly hooked inward. ② Number of frontal press exercises: Practitioners can determine the number of frontal press exercises according to their own physical condition. Generally speaking, a beginner can perform 10 or 20, and gradually increase the number with practice (this applies to all movements in the following sections, no further explanation hereafter). ③ Degree of frontal press: At the beginning, the practitioner should not press downward too low, to avoid injuring muscle tissue. After a period of practice, the practitioner once capable can press lower forward and downward. ④ After a period of frontal leg press exercises, the practitioner can place the leg at increasingly higher positions, but no higher than chest level, otherwise, it would no longer be leg presses.

## (2) Side Presses—Sideward bending to press legs

**[Movements]** ① Stand two small steps away from the apparatus, with the right side of the body facing it. ② Raise the right leg to abdomen level and place the heel on the apparatus, with tips of toes pointing upward, and knee straightened; stand on the left leg, knee straightened, with the inner side of foot facing the apparatus. ③ Fork the left hand on the waist, and clench the right hand into a fist and press on hip with the right forearm. ④ Bend the upper body rightward and press downward, hold for a moment, then take the upper body to the upright position. Repeat the movement to bend rightward and press downward (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2