

Introduction - what is Tai Chi Chuan?

Tai Chi Chuan is a Chinese form of exercise derived from Taoism, one of China's oldest belief systems. The practice of Tai Chi Chuan is beneficial to health and it is also a subtle, sophisticated and scientific method of self-defence.

Since this system of exercise is suitable for people of all ages and requires little or no special equipment, it has gained an enthusiastic reception all over the world. Tai Chi Chuan evolved to help people improve their physical health, equip them to defend themselves against wild beasts and bandits, and also improve their powers of meditation. In other words, Tai Chi Chuan enables people to survive through fitness and self-defence.

Advantages of practising Tai Chi Tai Chi Chuan is good exercise which enables us to develop a healthy body as well as an alert mind. It is a system of exercise suitable for people of all ages. This exercise requires little or no special equipment. It can be practised in a relatively small area either indoors or outdoors. When performed in a slow and relaxed manner, the Tai Chi Chuan Hand Form offers a balanced drill for the body's muscles and joints through the execution of complex manoeuvres in conjunction with deep regulated breathing and the contraction and expansion of the diaphragm. The deep breathing promoted by the slow practice of the Hand Form causes the diaphragm to expand outwards and downwards and contract inwards and upwards. This movement of the diaphragm gently 'massages' the liver and intestines. Deep breathing also promotes a greater intake of air into the lungs than usual. Thus a greater amount of oxygen is available for consumption which increases blood circulation. In so doing it also expands the blood vessels which serve the heart and intestines. Therefore Tai Chi Chuan helps prevent thrombosis and many other ailments of the heart and intestines. The performance of the Hand Form creates a tranquil state of mind through concentration on the movements. In the long term, Hand Form stimulates the central nervous system, which increases the well-being of all the organs of the body. As our muscles move when practising Tai Chi Chuan, they exert pressure on our veins, forcing our blood to flow towards the heart, improving our circulation. The exercise that the stomach muscles receive will improve the digestion, leading to an increased appetite and the prevention of constipation. The graceful movements of Tai Chi Chuan can lead to changes in our disposition, making us more even-tempered and slow to anger.

Benefits of practising

The Benefits of Learning Tai Chi Chuan

Many city dwellers, owing to the pressures of work, traffic congestion and other factors do not take proper exercise. As a result, they become victims of mental strain, nervous tension and other maladies which detract from their efficiency in their daily work.

There are many sports and pastimes which cater to the desires of those amongst us who wish to acquire a fit and healthy body. However, it is difficult to find a system of exercise suitable for persons of all ages, which requires little or no special equipment, and which can be practiced in a relatively small area either indoors or outdoors.

Tai Chi Chuan is such a system of exercise. Those who practice it regularly will develop a healthy body and an alert mind. The improvement in their health will better enable them to

concentrate on their routine tasks and to make effective decisions, all of which leads in turn to a greater success in their chosen career.

The Tai Chi Chuan Hand Form, with its graceful movements and alert actions, resembles a classic dance. Through the execution of complex manoeuvres in conjunction with deep regulated breathing and the contraction and expansion of the diaphragm, the Hand Form offers a balanced drill to the body's muscles and joints.

Over a period of time, the central nervous system will be stimulated by the tranquil state of mind and dedicated concentration on the movements which result from the performance of the Hand Form. This serves to increase the well-being of all the organs of the body as their efficient functioning depends very largely on a sound central nervous system.

We can look upon the practice of Tai Chi Chuan in two ways. First it is a method of physical exercise. Secondly, it acts as a catalyst in that when performed by our body it causes certain beneficial reactions to take place. As our muscles move they exert pressure on our veins, forcing our blood flow towards the heart, improving our circulation. Meanwhile, the deep breathing necessary for the performance of the Hand Form causes the diaphragm to expand outwards and downwards and contract inwards and upwards, and this movement of the diaphragm gently 'massages' the liver and the intestines.

Those who suffer from indigestion will benefit from practicing Tai Chi Chuan, as the exercise which the stomach muscles receive will improve the digestion, leading to an increased appetite and the prevention of constipation. Middle-aged and elderly people will find this of particular comfort.

Since the breathing in Tai Chi Chuan is so deep that there is a greater intake of air into the lungs than usual, a greater amount of oxygen is available for consumption and this increases blood circulation. In so doing it also expands the blood vessels which serve the heart and intestines. Therefore Tai Chi Chuan helps prevent thrombosis and many other ailments of the heart and intestines.

The natural process of human life requires that we take in oxygen and all sorts of nutrients. After various transformations, these are conveyed to different parts of the body, through the medium of the bloodstream. Once they have undergone certain physical and chemical processes, part of the materials taken in are converted to waste products and then excreted. This process is called 'substitution' and without it the spark of life would be extinguished. If substitution is going on in an inefficient manner, arteriosclerosis and other complaints may result, as is often the case with the elderly. As Tai Chi Chuan strengthens the central nervous system, improves blood circulation, stimulates the operation of the heart and intestines and promotes better digestion, it also safeguards the process of substitution and helps prevent sickness.

The graceful movements of Tai Chi Chuan flow like the running water of streams and rivers, while the tranquility of mind is that aimed for in Taoism. It is this that can lead to changes in our disposition, making us more even-tempered and slow to anger. We can go a stage further. The philosophy of our art is to concentrate on the use of the brain rather than brawn, to let thought guide our actions, and this principle we should try to apply to our daily lives.

'Mens sana in corpore sano' (a healthy mind in a healthy body) is what Tai Chi Chuan can give us, but only if we invest the necessary time and effort.

The Breathing Method of Tai Chi Chuan

As we have seen the origins of Tai Chi Chuan lie in Taoism. The Taoists themselves used a special method of breathing modelled on the respiratory system of the tortoise, whose hard shell limits the outward expansion of its lungs. Its lungs are therefore forced to expand by extending the length of the body rather than outwards, thus making its breathing deep and harmonious. The tortoise may move slowly, but it lives a long time. This is why the Taoists and later the founders of Tai Chi Chuan adopted and adapted this breathing method.

Our heart and lungs work incessantly to keep our body alive and in good health. To maintain this state of affairs we have a duty to protect them from too much stress and strain when we engage in exercise. Most forms of exercise require lung expansion when we inhale. This expansion forces our muscles and ribs outwards thus increasing the chest's capacity to take in air. However, this puts a lot of pressure on our lungs and we can easily tire out. In the same way, a car which is constantly travelling uphill will sooner or later develop engine trouble.

In practicing Tai Chi Chuan we do not use this common method of breathing which is particularly unsuitable for the sick and those who have passed their prime. We concentrate instead on making our movements relaxed and harmonious and our postures natural so our breathing will also be natural and not forced.

Constant practice of Tai Chi Chuan over a period of time will make our breathing slow and deep, while our internal organs will work in a gentle and harmonious fashion. When we inhale, our diaphragm will expand not only outwards, but also downwards in the direction of the abdomen, giving our lungs more space to expand downwards also. When we exhale, our lungs contract causing the diaphragm to contract also, both inwards and upwards. The rising and falling motions of the diaphragm help our lungs to function properly. At the same time the rhythmic nature of the diaphragm's movements act to massage our stomach and intestines, gently increasing the circulation of blood and transportation of nutrition. This whole process of respiration in Tai Chi Chuan is called, 'The downward extension of breath to the Tan Tin' (a point 1" below the navel).

This is not to say that our diaphragm can or does expand downwards to the Tan Tin, but only that the effect of the downward movement of the diaphragm is to cause the other organs of our body to expand downwards or to contract in proportion to the movements of the diaphragm. This effect is most keenly felt at the Tan Tin. What has happened is that the constant practice of Tai Chi Chuan relaxes the muscles of the diaphragm enabling it to expand downwards instead of merely outwards. There is a common misconception that the air we breathe is brought down to the Tan Tin. This is an illogical and unscientific notion.

In breathing we should at all times both inhale and exhale through the nose. Our mouth should be kept shut and our tongue should rest gently against the roof of the mouth so that we can salivate and avoid a dry throat during practicing Tai Chi Chuan and reaping the benefits of doing so.

Tranquillity of Motion

One of the main reasons for practicing the Tai Chi Hand form slowly, avoiding the application of brute force, is that we can harmonise our thoughts and actions by moving in a smooth and relaxed manner.

The Taoists said 'seek tranquillity in motion'. This means that the slowness of our physical movements when practicing Tai Chi Chuan results in peace of mind which enables us to

concentrate on performing the exercise to the exclusion of outside distractions. Soft slow practice reduces tension and increases concentration. Thus, over a period of time our physical and mental health will improve.

If we are suddenly attacked, we must be able to react swiftly to prevent our opponent from completing his assault. This ability to react swiftly depends upon our body remaining relaxed in such a situation. By constant, soft, slow practice we can make our muscles and tendons relaxed. This will allow our joints to rotate smoothly, making us swift and agile in defence and counter-attack.

Lao Tzu said 'The unbending breaks, the yielding survives'. Our softness allows us to yield before even the strongest attack. But just as the bamboo which has bent before the wind swings back when the wind has ceased, so too our defence must change to attack at the right moment. There is no set length of time for practicing the Hand Form from the beginning to end. The young tend to exercise a little faster than the old, but fifteen minutes is about right.

The Method of Practice

In order to derive maximum benefit from the practice of Tai Chi Chuan, we must first learn the correct method of practicing. The execution of each movement requires patient concentration. Before beginning we must first relax and think of nothing else. Our movements should be slow and we should breathe naturally. We must avoid tension. If we can do this our every action will become smooth and easy, our waist will turn freely and we will feel relaxed and comfortable.

Tai Chi Chuan is an exercise which aims at producing harmony of body and mind. To achieve this and to avoid the application of brute force, we must let our thoughts guide our actions.

Constant practice can make this a habit with us. It is not enough to concentrate on the correct slow execution of individual movements such as raising and lowering the hands.

Both our concentration and our movements must continue in harmony throughout the form. This will make our breathing deeper and help strengthen our body.

General Principals

At first it is difficult for a beginner to judge whether the styles and individual movements he performs are correct or not. In some cases beginners will find styles which are particularly difficult for them to master. However, there are some general principles to be understood and adopted which will help produce correct styles and movements:-

1. Throughout the movements our head should remain in line with our spinal column and not move up and down. If we can do this our neck muscles will become relaxed;
2. We should not hunch our shoulders or fully straighten our arms when we extend them. When we retract our arms, the elbows should be kept close to the body and not allowed to jut out at all angles. We must keep our arms and shoulders relaxed in order to move smoothly. If we fail to do so our movements will be stiff and awkward;
3. We must relax our whole body and avoid stiffening the chest. If we can do this our breathing will become deep and natural and our movements alert;
4. If our waist is stiff and tense we will find it difficult to move in any direction and our co-ordination will be affected as we will be unable to transmit power from the waist to the actions of our arms and hands. If the waist is stiff, our bottom will jut out, making our balance unstable and preventing our movements from being graceful. Relaxation of the waist is essential;

5. With certain exceptions, most postures in the Hand Form require us to rest most of our weight on one leg, making it easy to move the other leg to change posture, and to shift the weight from one leg to the other as we practice. The photographs of the form should be studied carefully so that we get this balance right and are able to move freely

Advice for the Future:

1. Try to practice daily to derive maximum benefit from the art;
2. Watch the instructor when he is teaching others and watch others perform so that by comparing techniques, good points can be adopted and bad ones corrected;
3. Think about and analyse the styles after learning them properly;
4. Ask the instructor questions about the styles to clear up any doubts or ambiguities.

Strategy and Tactics

Tai Chi Chuan - The Art of Overcoming Hardness with Softness

a) The Problem

The theory of Yin and Yang has taught us that hardness can overcome softness and that softness can overcome hardness. Let us now see how this theory works in practice when applied to Chinese martial arts.

A common occurrence in martial arts would be where A attacks B with all his strength and B uses all his strength to block the attack. Here the parties are engaged in a battle of force and the stronger side will win.

In another typical situation let us suppose that two men, one weak, the other strong, go to the same martial arts school and learn the same techniques for an equal length of time. In a fight between the two, the stronger will still defeat the weaker.

Wang Chung Yueh, a Tai Chi Chuan master, who lived during the Ming Dynasty, studied this type of situation. After many years of observing various hard styles of the Chinese martial arts, he came to the conclusion that, stylistic differences aside, when used in combat the end result was always the same; victory would go to the swiftest and strongest, and not necessarily to those who had made an intensive study of their art.

Chang San Feng had studied the same situation, even before Wang did. Driven by a belief that victory need not inevitably go to the strong, but that brain could defeat brawn, he used his knowledge of Taoism to create a martial art based on the principles of Tai Chi -- the changes of Yin and Yang. He called it Tai Chi Chuan, the 'Chuan' meaning 'Fist' and thus implying martial art.

Correct application of Tai Chi Chuan techniques in combat will result in the situation where a slight application of force is sufficient to deflect, divert, or otherwise render harmless a force which is many times greater in magnitude. Thus the soft overcomes the hard and the weak need not fear to do battle with the strong. For the purposes of Tai Chi Chuan in combat, softness is the child of wisdom, and is not merely a weak force which can somehow magically defeat a stronger one.

The two major principles of Tai Chi Chuan self-defence strategy are using stillness to defeat motion, and using softness to defeat hardness.

b) The Solution Part One: Stillness defeats Motion

The practice of this principle requires a clear mind. We should wait for our opponent to begin making the first move then 'pre-empt' him by reacting decisively before he can complete it. We do this because, when facing our opponent, we do not know his intentions, and so we do not know which part of our body he will attack. It is better, then, to wait until he commits himself to an attack so that we can divert it before it reaches its conclusion, and then we in turn can counter-attack by striking his weak points. We must avoid taking this principle to the absurd conclusion of waiting for our opponent to hit us without moving a muscle in response. That is why in a classical text on the Thirteen Tactics it is written, 'If the enemy does not move, we do not move, but as soon as he begins to move we move at once.'

In using this principle, our mind must remain clear to enable us to detect our opponent's slightest movements and to counteract any intended attack. The key to this principle is that once our opponent has committed himself to an attack it is already too late for him to react to our counteraction. In the words of the military strategist Sun Tzu, 'We must know ourselves and our opponent.' We can only do this by remaining calm and collected until we clearly detect an impending attack to which we then immediately respond.

c) The Solution Part Two: Softness overcomes Hardness

In the practice of this principle we must consciously avoid using brute force in attempting to counteract the attacks of our opponent. Mind and body must work in harmony in the correct application of the techniques of defence and counter-attack.

The idea is to divert the attacks of our opponent in such a way as to turn his own force against him. This requires the use of one or more of the Eight Powers of Tai Chi Chuan, which are discussed below. Thus, if our opponent tries to punch us in the chest, the use of 'Li', a slight diversion to the side, will be enough to divert even his strongest attack and pave the way for our counter-attack. In the Song of Tai Chi Pushing Hands it is written, 'A force of four ounces can overcome a force of a thousand pounds.'

Constant practice with a partner over a number of years is necessary to develop the ability to apply this sophisticated concept of self-defence. Even then we still require tuition from a competent instructor. To put this in simple terms, most of us are aware that an ox can be led with a length of string. Let us take the string to represent the four ounces and the ox to represent a thousand pounds. If the string is tied to a ring on the end of the ox's nose it can be easily led, but if it is tied to its hind leg a different result can be anticipated. The value then of a competent instructor is to teach the correct application of softness, or slight force.

The use of hard force has certain clear-cut disadvantages, even for the mighty among us. It requires a greater expenditure of energy, whether used in defence or attack. This affects our breathing and increases our heartbeat which in turn puts a strain in our central nervous system, thus indirectly slowing our actions and reflexes. All this is of course very much to the advantage of our opponent. The use of softness on the other hand requires the expenditure of very little energy; our muscles remain relaxed and supple making our actions swift and sure. It also serves to develop clarity of thought and sensitivity, and to reduce stress.

The net result is that when using this softness in combat against a 'hard' opponent, whether in hand or body contact with him, our body acts as a radar system, feeding us information about our opponent's intentions, which his own hardness or tension allows our softness and sensitivity to detect.

The other disadvantage in relying on strength alone is that there is always someone stronger. It should be recognised that even the strong get old some day.

To further ram home theory and practice we only have to look at Western history for our vindication. Perhaps the best example of its use was in the war between Greece and Troy, where for years the Greeks laid siege to Troy and thousands of lives were lost on both sides in a bitter war of attrition. Finally, at the suggestion of Odysseus, the most cunning of their leaders, the Greeks pretended to sail away, leaving behind the gift of a huge wooden horse. The Trojans hauled this into their city as a triumph, believing the war to be over. Late at night, a party of Greeks, who had hidden inside the horse, broke out, killed the guards and opened the gates for their comrades who had returned and were lying in wait. The Trojans, unprepared and unarmed after a night of celebration, were no match for the Greeks and Troy was put to the sword. This illustrates that the real meaning of softness lies in the use of intelligence rather than brute force.

Strategy of the Five Step Path

Before being able to apply the tactics of Tai Chi Chuan in combat, we must first understand the strategy which governs their use. In the Song of Tai Chi Pushing Hands it is written 'a force of only four ounces can overcome a force of one thousand pounds'. This approach means we must rely on skill and intellect rather than brute force; it also requires us to follow a set path of five principles:-

Adherence

We must maintain contact with our opponent, remaining sensitive to his every action. Thus we are able to detect his attacks and sense his weak points.

Spontaneity

Our reactions to any attack should follow the principle that as soon as our opponent moves (attacks) we move (counter) before he can complete his movement. Defence and counter-attack are a series of smooth, unbroken movements.

Softness

When applying the principle of adherence, we should maintain only a soft or relaxed contact with our opponent. The sensitivity thus developed enables us to detect any changes in our opponents intentions. It is an early warning system. Our softness also makes it difficult for our opponent to detect our own intentions.

Yielding

Once we have detected the direction of our opponent's force we must go with it, not against it. This is the key to the Tai Chi tactic of using 'four ounces of force' to divert even the fiercest attack into the void. While our opponent is using all his energy to attack us we are able to conserve ours.

Rejection of Brute Force

Arm contact with our opponent must be both soft and continuous. We must neither withdraw the arm nor let it become tense. This constant soft contact enables us to detect change and to make spontaneous response without unnecessarily wasting energy.

By adopting the strategy of the Five Step Path we are able to achieve the ideal of using the minimum amount of force necessary to produce the maximum effect.

To sum up, we must intercept any attack in a relaxed manner, adhering to it while we use only a minimum force necessary to guide it gently away from its original target, and to the void. By doing this we can detect any changes that may occur in the attack and respond to them accordingly. This would be impossible if we used brute force to block the attack. Our actions must be harmonious and continuous.

One of the special characteristics of Tai Chi Chuan is the emphasis placed on diverting attacks and using our opponent's own force against him. This is why we adhere to the strategy of the Five Step Path.

Adherence is useless without softness as we can only be sensitive to our opponent's changes if we are relaxed.

Yielding is useless without adherence as we can only monitor our opponent's movements and know when to counter-attack if we keep in contact with him.

Brute Force used against our opponent's force will prevent us from detecting his weaknesses and this runs against Tai Chi Chuan principles which demand that we know the opponent as well as we know ourselves.

This then is the strategy we must follow when applying the Tai Chi Chuan combat tactics. These tactics are practiced when we do the 'Pushing Hands Exercise' which is the first step towards developing our ability to apply in a practical way the fighting tactics of Tai Chi Chuan.

Principles of the Thirteen Tactics

The ancient name for Tai Chi Chuan was the Thirteen Tactics. This referred to the Five Directions and the Eight Powers. Traditionally the Five Directions have been associated with the Five Elements while the Eight Powers have been associated with the Pa Kua or Eight Trigrams.

a) The Five Directions and the Five Elements

The Five Directions have traditionally been explained by way of the Five Elements. In Tai Chi theory before there was Tai Chi there was Wu Chi (literally 'No Chi'). Wu Chi gave rise to Tai Chi which in turn gave rise to Yin and Yang. In Chinese philosophy the interaction and continuous changes of Yin and Yang, as well as producing the Eight Trigrams of the Pa Kua and the sixty-four hexagrams of the I Ching, also produced the Five Elements of Metal, Wood, Water, Fire and Earth, which in their turn were considered responsible for the formation of all matter in the world.

The Five Elements were held to interact thus:

- Metal gives birth to Water
- Water gives birth to Wood
- Wood gives birth to Fire
- Fire gives birth to Earth
- Earth gives birth to Metal
- Metal destroys Wood
- Wood destroys Earth
- Earth destroys Water
- Water destroys Fire
- Fire destroys Metal

Each element is stronger than the element which gave birth to it. Thus, as Metal gives birth to Water, Water is stronger than Metal. When any element is opposed by another quantity of the same element, the stronger quantity will win. To sum up, any element is stronger than two of the other four elements, and weaker than the remaining two. The interaction between the elements is eternal and continuous. Each element also has Yin and Yang characteristics. Thus Metal could be sharp and shiny or rusty and dull, while Water could be a roaring waterfall or a muddy pool. Let us take each one of the elements to represent one of the Five Directions:

- Metal represents Forward
- Wood represents Back
- Water represents Left
- Fire represents Right
- Earth represents Centre

If our opponent uses Metal (moves Forward) our response must follow the theory of the Five Elements. In other words we must use Water (move Left) or Fire (move Right) to destroy his Metal. If instead we use Metal (move Forward) also, then the stronger Metal will win, but this is contrary to Tai Chi Chuan principles. If we remain rooted to the Earth (Centre) Element we will be overcome by the advancing Metal. If we make use of Wood (move Back) the Metal will thrust forward in pursuit and cut us down when there is no more room to run.

The Five Elements teach us which are the most advantageous and least advantageous of the Five Directions in any given situation. We do not actually need to step forward, back or to the side when moving from the centre, a slight shift of weight in the appropriate direction will normally suffice. These directions refer to the direction in which our body is moving at any one time and we apply the Eight Powers in conjunction with such movements. This gives us a wide variety of possible actions and responses.

b) The Eight Powers and the Eight Trigrams

All genuine martial arts contain some method of applying force. This method may be hard or soft in nature and may be applied in attack and defence. It is called 'technique'.

Because of the intrinsic relationship between Tai Chi Chuan and Taoist theory the student of Tai Chi Chuan must not only train technique, but, before he can apply technique properly, he must also understand the underlying theory which governs its use. The Tai Chi Chuan method of applying force is called Pa Peng which can roughly be translated as Eight Powers.

Just as from the Pa Kua (Eight Trigrams) we are able to derive the sixty-four hexagrams of the I Ching, so from the basic Eight Powers, by applying them in different ways, in different directions, we can produce all the fighting techniques of Tai Chi Chuan. Furthermore, just as the sixty-four hexagrams can, by mathematical process, produce further diagrams, so our Eight Powers, if used imaginatively, can produce an indefinite number of fighting techniques.

In effect, each of us is a three-dimensional Tai Chi, containing both Yin and Yang, which for present purposes we will take to mean defence and attack. From Yin and Yang, the theory tells us, come Sei Jeung, which are Old Yin, Young Yang, Young Yin and Old Yang. These tell us that although there can be both pure attack and pure defence, attack can also contain elements of defence and likewise defence can also contain elements of attack. When we attack or defend we use a method of applying power called technique. When this technique is one governed by Tai Chi theory we are using one or more of the Pa Keng or Eight Powers.

Let us now attempt to explain these Eight Powers:-

6. Pang is the use of force in an upward direction such as when our opponent thrusts forward and diagonally upward and we respond by tracing the direction of his attack, and using our hands in a smooth and circular movement to divert it even further upward and forward, causing him to lose his balance.
7. Li is the use of force in a sideways direction, such as where we intercept and move with a forward directed attack, simultaneously diverting it slightly to one side and thus to the void. The greater the force of his attack, the greater the resulting loss of balance on the part of our opponent.
8. Tsai is a forward directed thrust such as a well-directed push when our opponent is off balance.
9. On is where we direct force downwards such as pressing down on our opponent with our hands as he loses balance in a forward direction.
10. Tsoi is where our opponent loses control of his centre of gravity, and we use a technique to disrupt his balance to such an extent that he is uprooted completely from his position. It is something like a strategically placed lever lifting a heavy rock.
11. Lit is where we use force in the form of a circular diversion which, as it passes the half-way point starts to move back in the direction of our opponent, spiralling the force of his own attack back against him.
12. Tsou is the use of the elbow or knee joint to divert our opponent's attack and make him lose his balance or to strike his weak points.
13. Kou is the use of the torso to divert our opponent's attack or to strike him when at close quarters, such as when he attempts to divert our punch into the void, and in reply we continue our forward momentum using the shoulder to strike him.

These powers when applied should result in a circular application of defence and counter-attack. They also contain elements of one another. Pang contains Li which in turn can contain either Pang or Tsai. Lit contains Tsoi and On. These powers must be applied flexibly depending on the circumstances that arise. Other so-called 'powers' are in fact derived from these Eight Powers. Though the Pa Keng are normally thought of as hand and arm techniques, their use can equally be adapted to foot and leg techniques.

There is much confusion and misunderstanding about the traditional connection between the Pa Keng and the Pa Kua. First of all there are two major ways of setting out the Eight Trigrams octagonally. These are reproduced below:-

Fu Hsi's Pa Kua were said to represent the world in its pre-natal stage while King Wen's were said to represent the state of affairs after the birth of the world.

King Wen's Pa Kua were included in the Chinese Almanac where compass points were assigned to each of the individual trigrams. However, Western cartographers represent the direction North as 'Up' and the direction South as 'Down' while traditional Chinese cartographers looked at maps 'upside down', thus making South 'Up' and North 'Down'. Thus, in the Chinese Almanac, the Pa Kua were represented as:-

It was when various authorities tried to explain the Pa Kua to Westerners in terms of compass points that confusion arose. Some simply turned the compass points inside Fig. 3 around 180 degrees, others turned both the compass points and the trigrams around 180 degrees, while others

still used Fu Hsi's or other octagonal arrangement to represent the trigrams around the compass points.

Relating the Pa Kua at Fig. 3 to the use of the Pa Keng, we can imagine ourselves standing at the centre of a circle made by the trigrams. When our opponent launches an attack from the direction of any one trigram, we use one of the Pa Keng to divert its force in the direction of another trigram.

c) Conclusion

For interest's sake we list below the Eight Powers and their related trigrams, as well as the Five Directions and their related elements. Together they make up the Thirteen Tactics:

Eight Powers				
Tactic	Trigram	Natural Phenomenon	Directions	Elements
Pang	Chien	Heaven	Forward	Metal
Li	Kun	Earth	Back	Wood
Tsai	K'an	Water (as in rain)	Left	Water
On	Li	Fire	Right	Fire
Tsoi	Sun	Wind, wood	Centre	Earth
Lit	Chen	Lightning		
Tsou	Tui	Water (as in lake or marsh)		
Kou	Ken	Mountain		

Five directions	
Directions	Elements
Forward	Metal
Back	Wood
Left	Water
Right	Fire
Centre	Earth

Those who have studied Chinese philosophy may care to consider why and how each particular tactic is related to the relevant trigram, or element, but this question is largely irrelevant for our purposes. Suffice it to say that Wang Chung Yueh set out the above relationship, but we have no record of how he arrived at it.

Just as from North we derive North East and North West, so from North West we derive North North West and West North West. Thus, just as compass points are not limited to the eight points shown at Fig. 3 so directions of applying Pa Keng (Eight Powers) are likewise without limit, as we may use the Pa Keng in combination with the theory of the Five Directions and the Five Elements.

In order to be able to use these Thirteen Tactics effective knowledge of the theory is insufficient. Constant practice of the Pushing Hands is essential before we can freely and fluently apply them.

Pushing Hands

Doing the Pushing Hands practice with a partner is the best method of training the Five Strategies and Thirteen Tactics mentioned earlier. This practice will develop the sensitivity of our arms enabling us to detect our opponents intentions. It will also help to speed up our own reactions.

Pushing Hands practice is not designed to train us to fight, though it does link the combat strategy and tactics with the practical application of the Hand Form. This training, using a limited number of actions in a number of situations, conditions us to respond to our opponent's movements in a natural way. Only when we have a good understanding of the Pushing Hands should we start to learn the Self Defence.

The Tai Chi Chuan Classics tell us that once our opponent has just started a move then we should counter him before he can complete the movement. We can only accomplish this if we have attained a high degree of sensitivity which will allow us to detect any such movement. Such sensitivity can best be developed through the Pushing Hands practice.

There are eight types of Pushing Hands. Five are 'fixed step', meaning that the sole of the front foot may be raised or lowered provided the heel rests on the ground but that no other movement of the feet is permitted. The other three style are 'moving step' and develop our ability to move forwards, backwards and to the side in a nimble manner while applying the Pushing Hands Techniques.

When starting to learn Pushing Hands we must concentrate on adopting correct stances and postures and relaxing during the movements. Next we must ensure that we adhere to our opponent's arms so that we can employ the 'radar' of our sensitivity to detect his intentions and then use the Eight Powers in combination with the Five Directions to thwart these intentions. We must affect his balance by using his own force against him and then attack his weak points. A good stance and sense of balance are crucial.

There are three main stages in Pushing Hands:-

14. The first and highest stage is where the sensitivity of our hands is such that our opponent's intentions are an open book to us while our intentions are a source of mystery to him. He will be completely frustrated, unable to attack or defend.
15. The second stage is where our sensitivity is not fully developed and so we can only determine our opponent's intentions at the last minute and so may not be able to react in time to counter his attack.
16. The third stage is where our sensitivity is so poor that we cannot detect our opponent's attack at all. This attack will then be successful and we will be defeated.

If we are to be genuine Tai Chi masters, we must be able to apply and combine the Thirteen Tactics freely and fluently. Practising Pushing Hands with such a master is like rowing a boat in a rough sea, since our actions will always be beyond our control. Our attacks would be too slow and too obvious to be effective, while our defence would also be inadequate to respond to his attacks. In every martial art knowledge of techniques, in itself, is useless; constant, thoughtful, concentrated practice is essential. Only in this way can we reach the first stage in Pushing Hands.

Self Defence

Tai Chi Chuan Self Defence Techniques are the practical applications of the individual styles of the Tai Chi Chuan Hand Form.

We know that practice of the Hand Form is good for health. Many 'masters' have a first class knowledge of the Hand Form, but little if any knowledge of how to apply the techniques contained therein. It is as if they learn to recite a beautiful poem without being able to understand the words.

Practice of Pushing Hands is not sufficient either, as this is only an exercise to train our bodies and minds in the Strategy of the Five Step Path and the Principles of the Thirteen Tactics. It is a preparatory step to learning the Self Defence Techniques. Furthermore, in a real fight our opponent will not engage in Pushing Hands with us, but will attack with fist and foot from all directions. If Pushing Hands practice was sufficient in itself, what is the purpose of the different styles of the Tai Chi Chuan Hand Form?

What we must try to do is to learn the application of these styles. Some Tai Chi Chuan 'masters' try to interpret the styles themselves or blindly follow the way the styles are used in the Hand Form, as they lack both the experience and knowledge of how to apply them practically.

Individual interpretations of the styles from the Hand Form, in the absence of any practical fighting experience, can lead to disastrous results. The same applies where the Hand Form movements are blindly followed, as the requirements and purposes of the Hand Form are quite different from those of combat. If we are to learn the Self Defence Techniques properly we must follow a capable and experienced Tai Chi Chuan master. We also require a partner to take on the role of opponent. In the absence of another student the master himself will take on this role.

The next step is to learn the Self Defence Techniques, one at a time. At first we must practice slowly, learning how to respond and then counter attack when attacked by our opponent. With practice over time we will be able to use the techniques to respond to even the fastest and fiercest attacks of our opponent. Reaching this stage should make us confident of our ability to defend ourselves we need not fear any attacker. Once we have become well versed in one technique we can then move on in the same manner until we become well versed in all the Self Defence Techniques.

The final stage which we are aiming at is the ability to combine all the Self Defence Techniques and make them as one. This ability will only come with constant practice. What it means is that, following the Strategy of the Five Step Path and the Principle of the Thirteen Tactics, we should reach the stage where we apply the styles as a natural reflex action. In other words, just as there is no definite limit to the way we can be attacked, just so there should be no definite limit to the ways in which we respond to such attacks. It is senseless to think only in terms of 'in the event of attack X use response Y'. We must be able to mix and merge the techniques as the situation demands.

Tai Chi Chuan Self Defence Techniques also include wrestling techniques which may be used when grappling with our opponent at close quarters or in response to an attempted punch or kick. We must apply these wrestling techniques speedily, with sensitivity and softness, so that we can detect our opponent's force and use it against him while he is unable to detect ours.

We must learn to be soft and yielding where our opponent is strong, but to be strong where he is weak. In other words we must avoid his strong points and attack his weak points. If he is strong on the right side we must attack on the left. If his upper body is strong, we must attack his lower body.

To sum up, we must let our opponent move first, so that we can detect his weak points and use his own force against him in a devastating counter attack. If our opponent doesn't move, we should use feints or draw out his attack and then deal with it in the same way as before. To apply this method properly we need to practice the Self Defence Techniques frequently and under the watchful eye of an experienced master who can advise and guide us in the practical application of the theory.

This is only a brief introduction to Tai Chi Chuan Self Defence Techniques. One cautionary note we should heed is that such techniques are only of value if we are in a fit state of health to apply them. This means that we must do Internal Strength training to build up our health and strength because, even if our reactions are good, if we lack striking power we will be unable to counter attack effectively. This is a particularly dangerous state of affairs if we are facing more than one opponent.

Internal Strength

In ancient times, Internal Strength (Nei Kung) was the first thing which a student of Tai Chi Chuan would be taught. IT provided a strong foundation on which to build the rest of the art. However, as teachers began depend on Tai Chi Chuan for a living and had to teach more students, Internal Strength was only taught to students of good character. It takes time to assess students so nowadays students will normally be taught the hand form and some pushing hands first.

Internal Strength is the most important part of the art of Tai Chi Chuan, as well as being the most mysterious and least understood. When faced with more than one opponent, even if our defence is good, we must expect to take some punishment. If our body is weak we may sustain severe injuries, while our own blows are too weak to have any effect. This means that before we can be good fighters we need to develop a strong physique.

The Internal Strength regulates breathing and improves blood circulation. Practice loosens and relaxes the joints, making our movements more fluid, which in turn leads to quicker reactions and greater speed in attack and defence. Our sense of balance will also improve with practice. There is a series of twelve Yin exercises and a complementary series of twelve Yang exercises. The Yin exercises are designed to develop health and physique. It is for this reason that the Yin exercises are taught first. The Yang exercises are designed to increase our power and physical strength.

Taijiquan Training

Tan Jing (Talking About Jing)

Because Taijiquan expands upon external boxing methods, researching the internal flow of jing, that's why there is the appearance of sticky jing (nien jing), neutralising jing (hua jing), holding jing (na jing), emitting jing (fa jing), peng jing, long jing (chang jing), short jing (duan jing), etc commonly known traditional names. There are always some people who like to do according to their will and create new names.

In Taijiquan, how many types of jing are there? So many its a mess. And even the explanation of each type of jing are not the same. Because internal jing (nei jing) is a combination of many elements not all visible, and training methods are mostly combined with movements, some are really not easy to explain, and since every one's understanding through practice is not exactly the same, its very hard to come to a consensus.

For example: "what is peng jing?" is already hard to get a simple and clear explanation. One day there will definitely be some hard working compilers of a "Wushu Terms Dictionary". Some people explain it thus:

"Peng Jing is after long periods of sincere practice of Taijiquan and push hands, resulting in a type of sung (no tension) yet not sung, soft but carrying in it hard, active but sunk and heavy, elastic and pliable type of jing, which includes sticking (nien), neutralising (hua), bouyant (fu) and capable of trapping (kun) kind of jing, also called internal jing (neijing)". Also we have from from myriad schools and students who hold "Taiji is peng jing, movement goes in spirals (luo xuan)" as the central maxim.

These two explanations, are all too much on the surface, not able to grasp peng jing's reality. At the very least, with expert's peng jing, its not exactly the same.

If we say "it is sung but not sung", "sunk and heavy" then it is peng jing, then when pushing with teacher Ya Xuan (here he refers to his teacher Li Ya Xuan who was a noted disciple of Yang Cheng Fu), he feels extremely without tension, very soft, insubstantial, only lightly contacting with the skin. Is this kind of jing peng jing? Actually its does not really feel as if he has a pliable characteristic, much less "sunk and heavy". He only feels insubstantial, empty and we can't feel his jing. Does this count as peng jing? If we say that he does not have peng jing, then why is it that we can't get him? Why is it that he always wins?

Saying "Taiji is peng jing, movement goes in spirals", is even less accurate. How can Taijiquan be totally explained by peng jing! If we say that Taijiquan is sinking jing (chen jing), that is also a way to get a taste of it; if we way it is sticky jing (nien jing), we see that it is not necessary wrong either. Spiraling is specifically guided by a continuous rounded shape, only if we say Taijiquan goes by different kinds of curves, and also in straight lines, then we are closer to the truth.

Another saying "the stronger nei jing is, during push hands you can bully your opponent more". This is the saying of beginning students who have have only beginning push hands skills. When one attains the level where "people don't know me" then can one be considered an expert. "Using four ounces to deflect 1000 pounds, strength does not necessarily win" says that great strength is not the correct way of Taijiquan. "Wonderous way is being able to borrow strength", being able to use and express our agile sensitivity, to control the opponent's movement of jing, using lesser strength to beat a greater strength. Using soft and weak to beat hard and strong. This then is the direction we must work hard towards for those of us who practice Taijiquan.

Saying "peng jing is also called nei jing". Rollback (Lu), Press (Ji), Push (An), etc, jings become external jings then? If they are all nei jing. Then why specially point out that "peng jing is also called nei jing"? Isn't this baselessly saying things, creating your own classifications?

I have thought about it alot, spent alot of time, then wrote out the explanation: "peng jing is agile, formed in a curve, can neutralise oncoming strength, can also elastically bounce out whilst soft and sticking jing". Such a long winded explanation, many people will definitely shake their heads in disapproval, even I myself am not satisfied with it, but it is very difficult to condense it. Because it is like that, the line of expression was broken earlier. Questioning those famous practitioners within our country, we don't know whether they will agree or not.

Nei jing's large and small, cannot depend on one's own feeling, saying "the stronger nei jing is, during push hands you can bully your opponent more", actually, this is your opponent making the mistake of resisting jing (ding jing). If your opponent is moving, he knows how to remain attached but not resisting, and so is not receiving your strength, then where does the bullying come from? Then stronger nei jing is, doesn't that mean that it makes it easier for your opponent to listen to your jing (ting jing)?

When I was young in my village, there was alot of water and paddi fields, I loved to play with mud. When I got bored, I would sling mud at my companions. The mud also exhibited the bouncing out power like the opening of a flower. If I scored, it can also stick on to the nose of my opponent and remain there for a long time. I have also used a stone to sling at my opponent but it won't stick on to him.

Hard things cannot stick. From observation, we come to understand the theory that only soft things can stick. This then is the reason why Taiqiquan uses soft jing (rou jing).

What Taijiquan researches, mainly is sticking jing (nien jing). How then to get sticking jing to a high level is the goal of our hard training.

The myriad other jings, all are just different uses of sticking jing.

Sticking a result of being sung and soft with sensitivity. Like sticky things, like a stamp stuck on an envelope, causing myself to stick to my opponent, in not letting go and not resisting, listening to his jing, this is the reality of nien jing.

Sticking is the method for understanding completely your opponent's condition.

Only when you have good sung then you can stick well. When you can stick, then you can fully utilise sensitivity's agile characteristic. Agility comes from sung and comes when one is calm and quiet. Not being light means not being able to be sung, this skill is all from practicing the boxing form. Boxing theory is from nature and is so made complete, we need to express it completely when doing the form. The postures in the form have high and low, every person's sung and softness level is different, so sticking jing's sensitivity will come according to each person differently.

When beginning to learn push hands, normally the sticking is very heavy, even if you want to lighten it you can't, the feeling is like having both person's bones against one another, in actual fact it is still resisting (ding). A little more advanced, when you can lighten it, the bones will no longer be in contact, you can only feel the flesh being in contact. High level sticking, the contact is only on the skin surface. The higher the level, the lighter the contact, the clearer and faster you can listen to jing, the easier it is to control your oppoonent.

Sticking is the feeling when both are in contact. Skill levels have deep and shallow, internal jing (nei jing) has large and small, its quality has soft and hard, the feeling of sticking is never always the same. "Not resisting and not letting go" (Bu Tiu Bu ding) then becomes the bridge for getting to a high level.

If we look at the classics, in it there are large sections that talk about being sung and soft, about being light and agile, about correct body coordination (completeness), because only in this way then you can you train a high level sticking jing with soft and agile qualities.

Sticking jing is one of the big treasures of Taijiquan. Experts need only lightly stick to totally control the other causing him to topple to the east or lean to the west, not be able to stand stably like a drunkard, causing him to knit his brows and bite his tongue in effort, a big calamity coming down on him, his life feels like a fainting spell. Teacher Ya Xuan has this ability, causing people to call it ultimate, even more causing people to aspire towards it. Where does it have "the stronger nei jing is, during push hands you can bullying your opponent more"?! In pushing hands, the ward off (peng), rollback (lu), press (ji) and push (an) and in Big Rollback (da lu) the pluck (tsai), split (lieh), elbow (chou) and lean (kao), normally is termed as eight kinds of jing. From external appearances they have obvious differences. Actually it is sticking jing's eight types of usage. Calling them the eight methods of Taijiquan (taijiquan ba fa) is more suitable.

Taijiquan uses soft jing, dissolving hard jing (ying jing); is internal jing (nei jing) and not obvious jing (ming jing). Internal jing cannot be seen. Hard jing and obvious jing can be easily seen; strictly speaking, it is hard strength (ying li), and cannot be called jing.

Ward off, rollback, etc eight methods when in use, mostly use sticking jing, peng jing and sinking jing in combination, in actual fact is a combined jing. Its not individual jings being used alone.

In combat, Taijiquan strongly uses soft neutralisation, very much welcoming the opponent to rush in, and does not aim at making the first attack. Previous generations have created a complete method of training for gaining victory from opponents. With sticking jing, neutralising jing (hua jing), holding jing (na jing), emitting jing (fa jing) these four types. This is the combat theory that is stored in each of the eight methods, it is the essence of Taijiquan. If internal jing is not soft, we can mostly only get the external structure, without a way of getting to a high level.

Sticking jing is coming into contact and knowing your opponent.

Neutralising jing (hua jing)'s meaning is neutralising to nothingness the incoming force. It emphasizes enticing the opponent to lead him into nothingness, causing his attack to come to nothing.

Holding jing (na jing) is used after neutralising the incoming force, following the opponent's jing path, cause him to come into danger.

Emitting jing (fa jing) is after determining the weak point of the opponent, focusing available resources, emitting a return attack and gaining the fruits of victory.

We, in sticking, neutralising, holding and emitting, which is wonderfully complex, and always without limits, are learning to understand internal jing. Like climbing a famous mountain or touring a famous garden, every step, every scene, we receive the trueness, causing one to stay even longer and forget the normal world, becoming a boxing lover. But it is because it is so hidden, so complex, so deep, our intelligence limited, our skill insufficient or teacher's undertaking not high, it is like entering a treasure mountain and returning empty handed, and there are many such people. That is why those after learning boxing and training the body, only a few are able to gain effectiveness in combat and are seldom seen. It is because the internal and external requirements are too numerous and too lofty.

Now lets talk about peng jing.

One of the goals of training boxing is to gain the qualities of the whole body being sung and soft and the joints gaining a high level of agility, we can see that peng jing is not hard jing (ying jing).

The original rationale of pushing hands is in sticking circularly we entice into emptiness, following others, not letting go and not resisting. We can also see that peng jing is not using strength to go against (di kang) the opponent, pushing him out the door, instead should welcome the opponent in. When two forces go against each other this is resisting (ding). Resisting (ding) is solid jing (Kang Jing), it is the exact opposite of using soft to overcome hardness. We can see that peng jing is not hard jing (ying jing).

From the above analysis, it is clearly explained that pushing hands only uses soft jing (rou jing). If both parties use soft jing (rou jing), then who overcomes who? In comparison, whose sticking jing (nien jing) level is higher, listening jing (ting jing) ability is higher, sung and soft more complete, is definitely the victor. Natural neutralising jing (hua jing), is nothing but the wonderful usage of a whole body that is extremely soft. Spectacular emitting jing (fa jing), also comes from softness transformed. The boxing classics tell us "from extreme softness comes extreme hardness"!

Therefore, peng jing is a agile, curved structured, can neutralise to nothingness the incoming force and can also bounce out, is soft and sticking type of jing only.

Many people, because they misunderstand peng jing, think that resisting (ding) is peng, and going against the opponent is peng, making this a matter of great importance, causing aspirations of the lovers of Taijiquan to come to nothing. Training hard in boxing for a lifetime, obtaining internal jing (nei jing) that is not soft (rou), sticking jing (nien jing) that is not good. The flavour of their boxing not correct as a consequence, this is something pitiful.

Here we have only analysed peng jing, the rest, the reader in reading it over will not find it hard to conceptualise.

How many types of emitting jing (fa jing) are there in pushing hands?

Looking from external form, emitting jing (fa jing) has many types and different kinds, but in actuality there is only long jing (chang jing) and short jing (duan jing) these two types.

Long and short denotes the time the strength remains acting on the opponent's body.

When beginning to learn emitting jing (fa jing), those who have not developed sinking jing (chen jing) will normally emit long jing. Those with higher levels of development and skill and who know sinking jing (chen jing) can emit both long and short types of jing.

Emitting jing (fa jing) it is important to be fast for emitting jing (fa jing) to obtain satisfactory results. You cannot let your opponent discover your intention before hand. Really spectacular, shocking emitting jing (fa jing), results only after obvious jing is totally gone, it's intent-transmission is very fast and very agile with quick responses. Only when skills reach a fairly high level can it be manifest. Definitely not a normal obvious jing using grasping to prevent his movement, then pushing out the so called 'emitting jing', you can make a comparison.

If obvious jing is not complete gotten rid of, emitting jing will not be as quick, and the opponent can easily neutralise it away; even if the opponent's skill is inferior and cannot neutralise it, he knows its coming and he will not let you have your way.

Long jing (chang jing) is from the back foot directing to the front a thrust to the ground as being the primary source of power, requires all the joints coordinated, from bottom going to the top, following the structure to express out the jing. Because the duration of the execution of strength is long, it is possible to cause the opponent to be thrown a great distance away. The advantage is that it won't injure the opponent. For those who power attainment (kung li) is not deep such as

beginning students whose waist (yao) and inguinal region (kua) are not limber, they should use more long jing (chang jing).

Short jing (duan jing) is a very high speed bouncing out strength, like compressing a spring and it suddenly springs (bounces) out. Because the duration is short, the speed fast, internal jing (nei jing) complete, it creates a very great pressure and sudden intentional strength. If we can penetrate into this, we can cause the opponent to panic and make mistakes, hitting him down more often, even scare him till he sweats cold sweat, even fainting, this is a good means of completely defeating the opponent. Those whose power attainment is not deep, or physique is not strong, its best not to lightly emit short jing. If it causes internal injury, doctoring it will waste time and effort and is quite a bother. Experts emitting short jing (duan jing) are able to understand heavy and light application, testing the opponent's ability to take it, and do not exceed it, but for normal practitioners it is very hard to attain this.

Cold jing (leng jing), cold (leng) as in cold without defence in meaning, is an even faster spectacular short jing (duan jing).

Intercepting jing (jie jing) is to receive the opponent's strength and turn around its direction back against him and emit jing (fa jing), or when the opponent's jing has not been fully emitted, I use a even faster jing to suffocate his jing back against him. This requires quite a high level of skill then it can be done.

As for hard jing (ying jing), hard soft jing (jiang rou jing), sung and sinking jing (sung chen jing), light and agile jing (ching ling jing), empty without jing (xu wu jing), is what teacher Ya Xuan, in the process of teaching Taijiquan, separated out into five types of jing flow. Its a pity that understanding teachers are always few, boxing theory is obscure and hard to understand. Normally what learners are familiar with may not be the real thing, their real skill is still not enough, most stop between the first two types of jing flow. Those able to enter into the third type of jing flow are already considered quite well skilled. Those able to get to the fourth type of jing flow is even harder to find. If we want to get to the empty without level, it is like refined through fire, a big achievement. In this world it is not easy to get many.

On Internal Strength And Internal/External Martial Arts

In Chinese martial arts strength and power is divided into two distinct groups: External and Internal. This should be distinguished from the other division in martial arts which divides them into Internal and External martial arts. This second definition divides the martial arts according to their approach to combat whilst the first distinguishes the method by which strength and power is utilised and generated. The two definitions are related but one does not determine the other.

The common Chinese term to refer to strength is Jing or Li, in common usage both terms are interchangeable. It was only more recently that the word Jing was used to distinguish a refined focused, efficient strength as opposed to Li which is used to denote brute strength. This understanding of the terms is only in the context of martial arts, the common usage of these two terms remains interchangeable.

Jing

Jing, as referred to in Chinese martial arts, is a coordinated, rooted, efficiently focused strength. A clear definition of this kind of strength is found in Li I Yu's Five Word Formula. At this point, Jing still has not been defined into Internal or External types. This definition of Jing applies both to Internal and External types of martial arts.

There are several pre-requisites for the proper generation of Jing. They are:

Rooting

For strength to be properly generated, it needs to have a base to provide the resistance to form a base for it to push against. The emphasis on pile standing in many martial arts is to build up this base by lowering the centre of gravity of the body to enhance stability and the efficient transfer of force from the centre of gravity to the ground. This means that the centre of gravity should first be identified by the practitioner and isolated so that it can be distinguished clearly. The stress is on strong support with the minimum of effort utilising the efficient structure. Lowering the qi to the Dan Tien which roughly corresponds to the body's centre of mass helps achieve this.

Coordination

The different joints and muscles in the body must be coordinated to work together to produce a strength born of the whole body working efficiently together. When antagonistic groups of muscles do not work in a coordinated fashion, tension is created which lessens the resultant force. The coordination is also with breathing which affects the state of the body. Coordination using the centre of mass as a base which is supported by efficient structure allows an efficient path for strength to flow. Hence the importance of the Dan Tien not only as a origin point of the root and the exertion of strength but also as a region where qi is stored and emitted from.

Alignment

The proper alignment of the bones in the body provides the structure by which the force is transmitted and provides a clear path for strength to flow from the point of focus to the ground. With the bones efficiently bearing the stress of the reaction force, the musculature can work efficiently without unnecessary exertion.

Focus

The above three characteristics are dependent on the focus of the strength which determines its efficiency. Focus denotes a point where all the body's potential is directed at and also to the task to be accomplished by the resultant force.

With the above four factors in place, one is capable of generating Jing which means that one can properly Fa-Jing or emit Jing. Fa-Jing is present in both internal and external martial arts and simply denotes an emission of strength. It should be noted that in Taiquan, the aim is not great strength but beating a great force with a smaller one. The ability to Fa-Jing does not denote ability in Taijiquan or other martial arts since no art is based on Fa-Jing alone. Knowing when and where to appropriately Fa-Jing is far more important. Fa-Jing inappropriately can be disastrous.

External Jing

External Jing is where the Jing is derived from the three external elements of musculature (jin), bones (gu) and skin (pi). This kind of jing is delivered through the exertion of the muscles, hardness of the bones and the toughness of the skin. It relies on hard physical impact and physical exertion to bring its effects to bear.

Internal Jing

Internal Jing is where Jing is derived from the three internal elements of essence (jing), vital energy (qi), and spirit (shen). This kind of jing is effected through the strengthening of the essence to provide the generation of qi which nourishes both the musculature, bones, organs and the mind which is the seat of the spirit.

The body's essence (jing) is built up to ensure a plenteous supply, this is transformed into qi which nourishes and provides the vitality to the musculature, bones, organs and also the mind. Qi in traditional Chinese medicinal theory is the basis of life in the body and its presence and relative volume determines the health and vitality of the body. Qi itself is directed by the Mind/Spirit which is itself dependent on qi for its mental capability.

The Spirit is an expression of the thought, knowledge, feelings and intent (mental focus) of the mind. A strong spirit makes for clear thought, enhanced perception, better intent (Yi) which are assets to all situations, including martial ones. Intent brings about the physiological changes which opens the blood and qi flow along the path and at the point of focus. Hence the theory the mind leads and the blood and qi follows.

With increase circulation and qi flow, the musculature attains better tonus which results in the 'filled' feeling that is experienced by those who do some form of internal work (nei gong). It is this increased tonus and tenacity that serves as the origin of Internal Jing. It gives Internal Jing its 'propelled' and 'hydraulic' characteristics. This increase qi flow is directed by the mind which results in the creation of Internal Jing. The musculature remains relaxed with no undue tension. Internal Jing transfers the strength smoothly into the opponent, not relying on hard impact to damage. This transfer of energy/force into the opponent's body and structure can cause injuries that are not obvious externally.

Visible Jing

Visible Jing is also called Ming Jing. It denotes Jing (internal or external) that is obviously visible when it is utilised. The motion of the limbs and the point of focus is exhibited physically. One can also discern if the jing is hard (ying jing or gang jing) or soft (rou jing).

Hidden Jing

The opposite of Visible Jing is Hidden Jing which is also called An Jing. Whereas Visible Jing is easily observed, Hidden Jing is hard to discern. It is based on the internal flow of strength within the body rather than the external manifestation. Like the flow of air inside a beach ball, it is certainly present but it is not obvious when observing it externally yet it provides a reaction upon contact. Contact with someone using Hidden Jing often shows that his external movements may not correspond to his internal flow of strength and its focus.

Hard Jing

This is jing manifested rigidly to the point of focus. Its path is fixed and exhibits hardness and stiff resistance.

Soft Jing

This is jing which has a pliable path which shifts to to accommodate changes in the structure which is in contact without losing the point of focus.

External Martial Arts And Internal Martial Arts

Does it mean that a martial art that uses Internal Jing is automatically classified as an internal martial art? Or that a martial art that uses External Jing is automatically an External martial art? It does not. The distinction between the two classes of martial arts has historically always been rather arbitrary but in general its classification is based on the art's approaches to combat.

The earliest distinction between the two is recorded in the 'Inscription For Wang Zhen Nan' (written in the early Qing Dynasty <1644-1911>) where the Shaolin school of martial arts was called the External system because of its techniques focus on attacking the opponent. The Wudang school of martial arts founded by Chang San Feng is called the Internal school because it overcomes its opponents by neutralising his force instantaneously in a tranquil manner.

Later, schools which attribute their origin to the Shaolin school were generally classified as External martial arts and those who are said to have their origins in the Wudang school were generally classified as Internal martial arts. Also, those whose characteristics matched the above description for the External system and emphasized physical exertion were also classified under the External system and those whose characteristics corresponded with the above description of the Internal system and stressed relaxed tranquillity were classified under the Internal system.

These are broad classifications, it does not mean that within schools considered in general as external there are no internal elements or vice versa.

Martial arts classified under the external system sometimes also have Internal Jing training and vice versa so classifying them by their Jing usage is inappropriate.

Jing Nomenclature

Now that we have defined what is Jing and its basic types. It can be noted that the characteristics of the Jing and its usage determine its name. This has resulted in myriad different definitions of an arbitrary nature. There is no standard system that is used across the board to all martial arts.

For example, Lu Jing (Rollback Jing) is so named because it is the primary type of Jing used in the technique of Rollback. It is considered a Internal Jing because of its mode of generation and also a Hidden Jing at higher levels of accomplishment where its application is not physically obvious.

In the above example it can also be seen that the term Lu can refer to both the technique and the Jing usage in the technique so one must be careful when using such terms and distinguish between the technique and the Jing.

The Importance Of Breathing

In all internal practices, correct breathing is of paramount importance. It ensures that the body receives an adequate supply of oxygen and sufficient ventilation of carbon dioxide created during respiration. This creates an internal body environment that is suitable for training the

mind which takes up much of the oxygen in the body. Deep breathing also massages the internal organs, ensuring that there is smooth flow of blood and lymph through them, this aids in the creation of essence (Jing).

Breath itself is intricately tied to the exertion of strength. The body exhales when exerting strength, bringing into play the musculature in the torso in its exertion, allowing the full body to be used.

Some Practices Used To Train Internal Strength

Standing (Zhan Zhuang)

Standing is a fundamental practice in both internal and external martial arts and is an excellent way to build up the pre-requisites of Jing generation. Still standing allows the practitioner to adjust his body so that the centre of mass and hence the weight of the body is efficiently transferred to the ground. This forms the root and so the base for techniques to act from. It allows the body to relax and find its most efficient structure. This adjustments occur within the body and are not always visible externally.

Stillness is conducive to relaxation and the removal of tension to allow musculature to work in a coordinated fashion. It also allows the mind to be still and to train a relaxed focus without mental distractions, the relaxed body with efficient structure also frees the mind from bodily discomfort which can interfere with its efficient function. Breathing is trained to be smooth, efficient and with increased capacity through a relaxed body rather than one in physical tension which can constrict the torso, decreasing capacity and costing more in terms of energy consumption and increase muscular fatigue. This relaxed breathing is carried on into the moving postures of Taijiquan. A relaxed body without tension is also conducive to good circulation as there is no tension to restrict blood flow.

Some standing practices also focus the mind on the flow of qi in the meridians, leading first along the main loop in the body formed by the Ren and Du meridians. This is called the small microcosmic orbit (xiao zhou tian). Later it is extended to the limbs forming what is called the large microcosmic orbit (da zhou tian). There are many types of postures which can be assumed during standing practice, each school usually has its own preferred practice. These postures allow the focus of the mind to bring about the proper jing flow and path in them.

Still sitting (Jing Zuo) is akin to this and shares the same principles except that one is not standing. Still lying is similar except that a horizontal posture is taken.

Moving Exercises (Dong Gong/Xing Gong)

These have the same principles as standing except that instead of still standing, the body is in motion but without losing any of the requirements of the standing. Taijiquan's boxing set is an example of such moving internal strength exercises. These can be trained on their own but full benefit is derived from first attaining the necessary attributes from still standing and then transferring them into moving exercises as it is much easier to cultivate them in standing.

The physical movements themselves can help increase the flow of qi in the body by the points of focus in the movement. Stretching the musculature also brings about increase qi and blood flow. It can also help in training efficient focus which aids in the proper generation of Jing within a moving posture.

A Proper Understanding Of The Term Peng And Its Relation To Taijiquan And Martial Arts

There is a current movement that uses the term Peng to denote Jing and who regard Peng Jing as the core Jing in internal martial arts. This emphasis on Peng Jing did not come into being until the 1963 work by Gu Liu Xin and Shen Jia Ren on Chen style Taijiquan. This emphasis is absent from all works on Taijiquan and internal martial arts prior to that and so it is a new innovation and not a traditional one.

Traditionally, in Chen Taijiquan, Chan Si Jing (silk coiling jing) was considered the Internal Jing in Chen style Taijiquan. The Yang related lineages placed emphasis on correct Jing generation and the usage of the 8 Jings which were in the basic 8 postures of Peng (ward off), Lu (rollback), Ji (press), An (push), Cai (pluck), Lieh (split), Chou (elbow), Kao (shoulder).

Peng Jing in the Yang related lineages refers to a expansive, blending, upward and outward moving type of Jing. The Peng that this movement refers to is actually just simple Jing which has the four pre-requisites. This wrong usage of the term leads to wrong interpretation of the classic writings and the words of the masters. This changes the art and should be curbed.

The Peng Jing used by this movement uses the resistance of a incoming force by alignment to the floor which is at variance with what Master Mah Yueh Liang says should be the correct application of Peng in which one should never hold up against a person's force. This is in line with the Taijiquan Classics which says one should not resist nor should one let go. Their test does show proper body alignment in which the path of the strength goes from the floor to the point of focus but it is certainly not the classical definition or understanding of Peng. It is also present in other martial arts but is certainly not called by that name. The misconception stems from the use of the Peng posture to show rooting by resisting the push of several men. This is not the correct way to use the posture though it does show good rooting.

It should be noted that the understanding of Peng by the Chinese differs from that which is currently expounded by some in the West as can be seen in the above example. So in interpreting the words of masters from China and the East, it is important to take that into account.

Peng Jing is distinctively Taijiquan and it is not a term present or can be correctly applied to other forms of internal martial arts. Though the term Jing applies across the board since it does not denote technique but simply the efficient application of strength. Each of these internal martial arts has its own characteristics and theories which make it distinct from each other. The insertion of Taijiquan theories and terms into their terminology assumes that these internal arts are all the same which is not the case. Whilst they may share some common characteristics, their expression of the is distinctly unique. That is why they are separate arts and not one and the same one.

The Basis And Methodology Of Internal Martial Arts

The internal martial arts have often been shrouded by much mysticism and some have come to consider the theorems contained therein as being superstitious and even superfluous to these martial arts. The effect has been much like throwing the baby out with the bath water and what remains only has the outward semblance of the original art but its essence has been lost.

To understand the underlying theoretical foundations we must first understand the Chinese world view which is at the heart of Chinese culture and its philosophies. The history of Chinese thought is a long one, stretching back thousands of years. Much of it came through empirical

observations made by the Chinese people and distilled to its essential logic. Some of it may not be so alien to the West as it may initially seem.

The Philosophical Basis - Understanding The Point Of Perception

The Yin and The Yang

This is probably the most fundamental of the theories that contribute to the Chinese world view. Philosophically speaking this is the theory of duality which is also known in classical western philosophy except that is not used as a basis to explain the nature and composition of the perceived universe. It represents the positive and negative in the perceivable universe. In the martial arts the represent stillness and motion, hardness and softness and other opposites.

The Trigrams And Hexagrams

The 8 trigrams (Ba Gua) and the 64 hexagrams are all derived from the interaction of Yin and Yang. They form the fundamental changes that are possible through these interactions. It was in the Jesuit Priest Father Joachin Bouvet, who did missionary work in China, who showed the sequence of 64 hexagrams to German mathematician Gottfried Wilhelm Leibnitz, the father of calculus. Leibnitz discovered the binary notation system in the hexagrams by taking 0 for each solid line and 1 for each broken line. This system is the fundamental building block of today's computer systems which all work on the binary system. These computers, through the use of the binary system (aka western Yin-Yang notation) are now able to simulate the real world which lends credence to the Chinese theory that the perceivable universe can be explained using the interaction of Yin and Yang. For martial arts these changes represent the possible situations and counters in a combat situation.

The Five Elements

The five elements derived from the ancient Hou Tu diagram which groups the Yin and Yang interactions into five distinct groups is a representation of the 5 material types which the Chinese were able to classify the perceivable universe. Similar to the Western classification of Animal, Vegetable and Mineral, the Chinese classified them into Metal, Water, Fire, Wood and Earth. The five elements also represent the five motions since the interactions of these elements which forms the cycle of matter in the perceived universe have their innate motions. Their creative and destructive cycles and their motions have lent their principles to the martial arts.

The Internal Approach To Combat

For all martial arts there is a common set of requirements that need to be addressed when it comes to success in combat. They can be broadly classified into 4 categories:

1. Power
2. Speed
3. Placement
4. Technique

These 4 categories are fundamental combat and the different internal martial arts have different emphasis on each but all strive for efficiency in combat with minimum effort to achieve maximum effect. We will deal with them individually.

In addition, in the case of Taijiquan, there is the requirement for sensitivity. In this modern age, information is power and in the world of Taijiquan it is no different. Information about the opponent is instrumental in being effective in combat against him. As the Art Of War states 'know the opponent as you know yourself, a hundred battles a hundred victories'.

The Internal Training Methodology

The Internal martial arts place their main emphasis on training the internal factors of a person as a means of preparing the body to be effective in combat. The three internal elements trained are Jing (essence), Qi (vital energy - akin to life force) and Shen (spirit). The body needs to be strengthened and healthy before it can engage in combat. The internal methods train the body for the improved generation of Jing (essence) through keeping the body at the optimum stress level for its healthy functioning which means also the removal or dealing with destructive stress. This returns the body to its natural relaxed state which encourages the proper smooth circulation. This forms the basis for a regulated and healthy endocrine system which leads to the improved generation of Jing.

This in turn leads to the improved output of Qi which is a result of the improved metabolism through the abundance of Jing. Qi is derived from the nutrients we eat and the air that we breath. Qi itself flows with the blood and both can be controlled through mental focus. Proper mental focus leads the qi round the body improving vitality through improved blood flow and sufficient supply of nutrients, gaseous exchange and vital energy. The breath is very important in qi generation and deep breathing efficiently utilising the capacity of the lungs is important but never to the point where it becomes unnatural. This leads to an improved tonus in the musculature and ultimately leads to a healthy body.

The mind which leads the qi also benefits from this optimum supply of its nutritional and respirational requirements and allows it to function at its best. Coupled with a destressed body and controlled emotions, it is able to develop a relaxed concentration with deep calm. This is used in mental training which supplements physical training resulting in better results in shorter time. It also improves confidence, increased awareness and deliberateness in dealing with situations as well as greater ability to concentrate and be able to maintain it. The Shen (spirit) which is a manifestation of consciousness is thus trained and is an indispensable part of this cyclic system. The West has only just begun to realise the benefits of mental training as a supplement to physical training.

Power

In martial arts, its not how great the power is but how efficiently it is generated and how appropriately it is used that is the key to success. Great power without control, focus and a clear mind having sufficient information to apply it appropriately is quite useless.

The frame work for power generation is a good root born of a lowered centre of gravity for stability and the efficient structure for force to flow from it to the ground to form a base of resistance for the power generated to push against. Also important is proper body alignment so that the force is efficiently transmitted through the structure. We should note that these two factors do not constitute internal strength and are present in most martial arts, both internal and external.

Internal strength is a result of training the Jing, Qi and Shen and is a combination of efficient physical power (Jing - not the same as essence, its a different Chinese character) generated through muscular tonus, appropriate application through mental focus and stability, and a healthy body capable of handling the stress of combat which forms a basis for both of the former. Mental

focus determines how efficient this is since it is the focus that defines whether the the action is efficient or not. The resultant motion is smooth because it does not have any retained power in the form of tension and rounded because of the nature of motion of the joints and their efficient usage. Because of its mode of generation Internal Strength (Nei Jing) can flow even without apparent outwardly visible motion.

Speed

The speed striven for is effective speed. In internal martial arts, the faster technique may not be the victorious one. Efficient motion is essential for speed, as is a structure that is conducive to quick motion (i.e. no double weighting). There are two main points on speed when it comes to combat. The first is to get out of the way of the attack, the second is to counter the attack with the minimum speed requirement. The speed trained in the internal martial arts is the speed of the whole body which is a co-ordinated whole. In Taijiquan, the speed of training is mainly slow, this allows one to train the body to move in an efficient fashion with no tension. It also allows obstructions to the flow of movement due to structure or tension to be detected and removed.

Placement

The placement and position of the body and body structure in relation to the opponents is very important in martial arts. It allows one to be in the optimum position to counter or to attack with minimum effort with maximum effect and to be difficult for the opponent to counter. This minimises the danger to the exponent whilst giving him a good vantage point to initiate his counter or attack.

Proper placement is a result of knowing the opponent(s) centre and structure. It also requires knowledge of effective attacking angles and inherent flaws in body structures in each type of posture. Placement changes in relation to the opponent and so there is more or less constant change in a combat situation.

Technique

The technique of the art is how the body is used effectively in combat. A technique is only good if it is applied appropriately. Each martial art has its own set of techniques to deal with the different combat situations. Each conforming to the principles governing and defining each individual martial art style.

In the internal martial arts, the techniques are grounded in efficient structure and motion. The movements are naturally rounded, this turns aside incoming force from reaching and affecting the centre of mass of the body and the body itself to cause damage. The incoming force is either redirected out of its intended focus or turned against itself or to the attacker's disadvantage. This also entails intimate knowledge of the opponent's centre and structure. Most internal martial arts have a set of core techniques from which the rest of the techniques in the system are derived from. In Taijiquan it is the 13 Postures, in Ba Gua Zhang it is the 8 Mother Palms, in Xing-I it is the Five Element Fists. These fundamental techniques embody the principles on which the art is based. Whilst there are common elements in these techniques in all 3 arts, they are distinct in flavour and their application.

The techniques are taught individually and then usually strung up into a pattern for them to be practiced sequentially, the sequence itself showing the flow techniques in combination. Two man practice refines the technique by putting it into action with a live opponent and bringing all the principles and technique together.

Sensitivity

Sensitivity is key to Taijiquan as a martial art. The ability to stick and adhere to the opponent allows the Taijiquan exponent to 'listen' to the opponent's structure and to detect its flaws, to locate and effectively control his centre of mass from which all his body motion ultimately relies on. Sensitivity is trained in the form when it is done slowly. This teaches sensitivity to one's own structure and centre as well as sensitivity to the environment as one does 'push hands' with the air, being so relaxed that it can even react and neutralise air. In push hands, one trains sensitivity with a reactive opponent able to take over the initiative. This is knowledge of self and knowledge of opponent from which victory will come.

Health Benefits

The training of Taijiquan as a martial art complete with its inherent mental focus which is essential to it trains a healthy, strong and efficient body and mind. While one need not train with the intention of going into combat, the combat focus in the art provides a focus for the postures and the internal flow of energy which brings about the full benefits of the art. Without this focus, one will not fully realise the benefits of Taijiquan.

Internal Strength Definitions And Elaborations

Below are some definitions from Chinese sources concerning Internal Strength. Whilst important, Internal Strength is not the sole purpose of Internal martial arts.

General References

Neigong is more properly translated as Internal Work and internal strength refers to nei li or nei jing. The term neigong is defined as follows by the following sources (translations my own):

1) Refers to martial arts' specialised techniques and methods to train the human body's internals to attain the goal of a strong internal and robust external. It is martial arts basic skill but also martial arts highest attainment. In the book 'Taijiquan Methods Truth', it states: "This specifically trains the hollow and solid organs (zhang fu), the nervous system (shen jing), sensitivity/feelings (gan jue), the so referred to Essence (jing), vital energy (qi) and spirit (shen) is called internal work (neigong)'. 'The Encyclopedia of Chinese Martial Arts' (zhong hua wu shu shi yong bai ke), ISBN 7-81003-403-0

2) Martial arts, qigong term. Refers to activities that focus on the internal aspects of the human body (intent [yi nian], breath [qi xi], hollow and solid organs [zhang fu], meridians [jing luo], blood flow [xue mai]) in training, in the bid to attain a robust internal (nei zhuang). For example, silent work (ching gong), sinew changing internal robust work (yi jin jing nei zhuang gong), pile standing (zhan zhuang), eight trigram turning revolving work (ba gua zuan xuan gong), etc, are all forms of neigong. 'The Big Dictionary Of Chinese Martial Arts' (zhong guo wu shu da ci dian) ISBN 7-5009-9463-0

3) Refers to the specialised system of training of a martial artist to increase Essence (jing), vital energy (qi) and spirit (shen) beyond normal quantities to attain internal robustness. 'Chinese Martial Arts Dictionary' (zhong hua wu shu ci dian), ISBN 7-212-00042-6

4) Nei Jing - Martial arts jing method term. Refers to the kind of strength obtained after martial arts training that is able to change direction in accordance to the mind's intent, able to be great or little. Because its movement is within and not external it is called Internal Jing (Neijing). This

kind of Jing gathers the whole strength of the body to a single point of power and is called Coordinated/Neat Jing (Zheng Jing). 'The Big Dictionary Of Chinese Martial Arts' (zhong guo wu shu da ci dian) ISBN 7-5009-9463-0

Some Taijiquan References

'When the breath is concentrated in the Tan tien, it may bring the vital fluid everywhere. The vital fluid is the well known "biotin", which consists of air and other nutrients including dissolved food. According to Taoism, it may be sublimated into Essence (Jing), Vitality (Qi) and Spirit (Shen), in sequence. That is to say, the physical "ingredients" are transformed into psychical "beings" or energies. When one's body is full of it, one will not only be strong and alive but also attain longevity, even immortality.' Primordial Pugilism (Tai Chi Chuan) by Dr Tseng Ju-Pai, 1975, Paul H. Crompton Ltd (Dr Tseng was a disciple of YCF)

The same process is mentioned in 'The Principles Of Taijiquan' by Yue Tan (his father Yue Huan Zhi was famous for his Kong Jing in his Taijiquan), 1991, Shanghai Translation & Publishing Centre, Inc, ISBN 7-80514-779-5/G.222

Chen Wei Ming mentions the same process in his Taijiquan Da Wen (Questions & Answers On Taijiquan) which unfortunately is not completely translated by Ben Lo, I have the original book which has this statement and will fax the relevant section to anybody who wishes to verify it (its in Chinese unfortunately).

Cheng Man Qing mentioned the process in his 13 Chapters (last part of treatise 2). English translation: Cheng Tzu's Thirteen Treatises on T'ai Chi Ch'uan, North Atlantic Books, 1985, ISBN 0-938190-45-8

Chen Xin refers extensively to TCM material that which has as its basis the 3 treasures in his book 'Chen Shi Taijiquan Tu Shuo'.

Chen Zhen Lei also refers to the same medical qi in a dissertation on it in the book 'Taijiquan Ming Jia Tan Zhen Di', 1992, China Television Broadcasting Publishing, ISBN 7-5043-2032-3/G.757 I translate this portion: 'The Qi mentioned in Chen style Taijiquan...It does not refer to the oxygen we breathe into the chest and the human body's different kinds of strength (li), but refers to the widely known in Chinese Medicine's Correct Qi (Zhen Qi), Original Qi (Yuan Qi), Meridian Qi (Jing Luo Zi Qi), Refined Qi (Zhen Qi), etc kinds of Qi; also includes martial arts and qigong study's Internal Jing (neijing), Internal Work (neigong), etc kinds of Qi.

Hao Yue Ru (Wu Yu Xiang style) mentions it in his 'Wu style Taijiquan Important Points', his first point was 'hand, eye, body, step, Jing, Qi, Shen'. This reference is found in Hao Shao Ru's book 'Wu shi Taijiquan', 1992, Peoples Physical Education Press, ISBN 7-5009-0756-7/G.725

Elaborations

Firstly, TCC in terms of combat relies on a robust body and mind that is capable of being efficient in combat. That comes from training the internal 3 elements with Jing and Qi building up the body's robustness and also consciousness (Shen) so that a higher level of consciousness and perception is attained through both a healthy body supporting the neural activity as well as quietness to get the mind to a state of deep relaxed calm (I think some call it the 'Alpha state') which brings forth more fully the capabilities of the mind. Being able to perceive better in a combat situation is always an asset, more so since it does increase sensitivity to external stimuli which is required when 'touching' and 'listening' to an opponent's strength, structure, centre and root. Sounds complicated but when one comes to an understanding of what one is detecting, its only a matter of a touch to know what's going on. This is of course additional information one

can glean on the external structural and spatial relationship between oneself and the opponent by visual and even sometimes auditive sensitivity. Combine this with mental training to supplement physical training and one gets a pretty good scheme for improving skills and developing capabilities not to mention probably being one or two steps ahead of your opponent perceptually and mentally.

Jing (Essence) is said to come from the kidneys and if we equate that to the Western adrenal hormones, some of which regulate metabolism as well as blood flow within the body, we get an idea of how this might energise the body for health and further development. Deep abdominal breathing not only brings in air to the body for good gaseous exchange but also messages the organs in the abdominal cavity and the kidneys.

Promotion of good circulation in the internal organs (zhang fu) forms a good basis for bodily development. Such bodily development is usually attributed to Qi which is, for the Chinese at least, the life force of the body. It consists of the jing of the kidney, refined food transported and digested by the spleen and the stomach and clear air taken in by the lungs. In other words it is the vehicle for bringing nutrients and energetic elements (the result of good organ function) to the body, including the bones and musculature. Good circulation means a healthier body and mind. The deep breathing and mental focus to bring physiological changes to improve circulation are a result of the mind which is a part of the consciousness (Shen).

Raised levels of consciousness also means raised levels of perception and awareness which in a combat situation is certainly relevant. Differences in levels of perception is crucial in combat and is a major determining factor in the outcome of any encounter. The efficient structure of the body reduces internal 'noise' in the nervous system and the increased metabolism and efficient functioning of the organs in the body all form a good basis for developing the brain's capabilities. With a more efficient and effective mental process and focus linked intimate with physical control of the body the cycle repeats and forms of basis of even greater development. The Jing, Qi and Shen paradigm is therefore cyclic in nature and the robust body and mind formed by this process is a result of such internal work and strength.

Even removing the terms and concepts that are regarded as esoteric by some, it still forms a good method to build up a foundation through good aerobic respiration, good circulation, proper/enhanced organ function to form a basis for mental and physical development.

With a robust body and mind formed, then comes the question of how to efficiently use it, or in the case of Taijiquan, how to efficiently use it in combat.

Paramount is the consciousness (Shen) which forms the intent which leads the body. The generation of physical power via mental intent brings together both the mind and the body in combination with the physiological changes in the musculature caused by mental focus being the foundation. To support efficient transfer of such power, a good efficient structure is needed. For such power to be transmitted out the centre of mass should be isolated and a good root (line of force transmission from the centre of mass to the point of resistance, usually gravity) is required.

In combat, here is where method, strategy, technique and positioning come in. Techniques and body usage in a martial art can be based on internal or external generation of the movements.

This determines the place internal work has in the martial arts system and its usage.

The training sequence, principles and practices behind it, etc, for Taijiquan can be found on the other pages on this website. Each stage in the training sequence builds up and trains the art in a progressive manner. The form training trains the body and mind's focus and structure as well as the efficient execution of the techniques. It also enables the practitioner to be more aware of his body and what its doing, this eventually helps him understand what the opponent is doing in his

body. Push hands is more than just merely training sensitivity, it also teaches how the 13 techniques work technically, how they feel like and how they are countered. The 8 techniques and 5 directions which form the thirteen techniques represent the 8 was which a attacking force and structure is dealt with and turned to one's own advantage and the 5 directions direct the positioning and spatial awareness to be in the right place at the right time to execute it (I believe the Aikido people call it Ma-ai).

In addition to the combative elements delineated in some pages on this website, I think I'll elaborate a little on the mechanism of push hands here. Contact is the means by which sensitivity to the opponent is cultivated, maintaining that contact through continuous sticking, adhering and following is achieved by cultivating zhan nian jing (adhering sticking jing) which is distinct from peng jing (ward off jing) which is an outward and upward type of jing. This kind of jing maintains contact even when the structure is 'disconnected' from the centre of mass to prevent the opponent from detecting it and controlling it via contact (a very possible case when in contact with another Taijiquan exponent). The structure only connected to the centre when using jing in any of the techniques to blend, redirect, take initiative, counter, strike, etc. The centre and root always being kept out of harms way through information gleaned through this sensitivity. This allows the centre to 'suddenly appear and disappear'. It also conforms to the principles of 'not resisting and not losing contact' and the opponent ends up entering into emptiness, finding no purchase for his techniques. This sticking and following without resisting brings forth the characteristic of softness in Taijiquan. There aim is to beat a greater force with a lesser one appropriately applied and to beat a faster one with a slower more effective one and of course not getting hit in the process. All the while keeping good structure and not exposing one's weaknesses to the opponent.

Its not just the opponent's structure, centre, root and strength that can be sensed but also his intent and his 'reading pressure'. This allows one to actually present a false centre, one that can be moved out of focus quickly, or an illusion of a centre by emulating it via structure and so 'entice' him into emptiness. This is a form of trap. Neutralisation need not be linear, one can actually flow around the structure to get behind it and the strength in it to add to it and so take over control of it though control of the centre is paramount since in controlling that you effectively control the whole body.

Efficient power and its flow should be smooth and unimpeded by structure and generation. This brings out the Taijiquan characteristic of 'sung' which can is both 'relaxed' and 'without tension'. It also brings out the fluidity and multidirectional capability of the flow of power in a technique. In my view this mode of traditional training can bring results in both combat, health, even mental and spiritual (due to elevated awareness/conciousness) development.

The Form

The Ten Essentials of Taijiquan

1. Straightening The Head

Stand straight and hold the head and neck naturally erect, with the mind concentrated on the top. Do not strain or be tense; otherwise, the blood and vital energy cannot circulate smoothly.

2. Correct Position Of Chest And Back

Keep the chest slightly inward, which will enable you to sink your breath to the dan tian (lower belly). Do not protrude your chest, otherwise you will feel uneasy in breathing and somewhat "top heavy".

Great force can be launched only when you keep the vital energy in your lower belly.

3. Relaxation Of Waist

For the human body, the waist is the dominant part. When you relax the waist, your two feet will be strong enough to form a firm base. All the movements depend on the action of the waist, as the saying goes: "Vital force comes from the waist". Inaccurate movements in taijiquan stem from erroneous actions of the waist.

4. Solid And Empty Stance

It is of primary importance in taijiquan to distinguish between "Xu" (Empty) and "Shi" (Solid). If you shift the weight of the body on to the right leg, then the right leg is solidly planted on the ground and the left leg is in an empty stance. When your weight is on the left leg, then the left leg is firmly planted on the ground and the right leg is in an empty stance. Only in this way can you turn and move your body adroitly and without effort, otherwise you will be slow and clumsy in your movements and not able to remain stable and firm on your feet.

5. Sinking Of Shoulders And Elbows

Keep your shoulder in a natural, relaxed position. If you lift your shoulders, the qi will rise with them and the whole body will be without strength. You should also keep the elbows down, otherwise you will not be able to keep your shoulders relaxed and move your body with ease.

6. Using The Mind Instead Of Force

Among the people who practise taijiquan, it is quite common to hear this comment: "That is entirely using the mind, not force". In practising taijiquan, the whole body is relaxed, and there is not an iota of stiff or clumsy strength in the veins or joints to hinder the movement of the body. People may ask: How can one increase his strength without exercising force? According to traditional Chinese medicine, there is in the human body a system of pathways called jingluo (or meridian) which link the viscera with different parts of the body, making the human body an integrated whole. If the jingluo is not impeded, then the vital energy will circulate in the body unobstructed. But if the jingluo is filled with stiff strength, the vital energy will not be able to circulate and consequently the body cannot move with ease. One should therefore use the mind instead of force, so that vital energy will follow in the wake of the mind or consciousness and circulate all over the body. Through persistent practice one will be able to have genuine internal force. This is what taijiquan experts call "Lithe in appearance, but powerful in essence".

A master of Taijiquan has arms which are as strong as steel rods wrapped in cotton with immense power concealed therein. Boxers of the "Outer School" (a branch of wushu with emphasis on attack, as opposed to the "Inner School" which places the emphasis on defence) look powerful when they exert force but when they cease to do so, the power no longer exists. So it is merely a kind of superficial force.

7. Coordination Of Upper And Lower Parts

According to the theory of taijiquan, the root is in the feet, the force is launched through the legs, controlled by the waist and expressed by the fingers; the feet, the legs and the waist form a harmonious whole. When the hands, the waist and the legs move, the eyes should follow their movements. This is meant by coordination of the upper and lower parts. If any part should cease to move, then the movements will be disconnected and fall into disarray.

8. Harmony Between The Internal And External Parts

In practising taijiquan, the focus is on the mind and consciousness. Hence the saying: "The mind is the commander, the body is subservient to it". With the tranquility of the mind, the movements will be gentle and graceful. As far as the "frame" is concerned, there are only the Xu (empty), shi (solid), kai (open) and he (close). Kai not only means opening the four limbs but the mind as well, he means closing the mind along with the four limbs. Perfection is achieved when one unifies the two and harmonizes the internal and external parts into a complete whole.

9. Importance Of Continuity

In the case of the "Outer School" (which emphasizes attack) of boxing, the strength one exerts is still and the movements are not continuous, but are sometimes made off and on, which leaves opening the opponent may take advantage of. In taijiquan, one focuses the attention on the mind instead of force, and the movements from the beginning to the end are continuous and in an endless circle, just "like a river which flows on and on without end" or "like reeling the silk thread off cocoons".

10. Tranquility In Movement

In the case of the "Outer School" of boxing, the emphasis is on leaping, bouncing, punching and the exertion of force, and so one often gasps for breath after practising. But in taijiquan, the movement is blended with tranquility, and while performing the movements, one maintains tranquility of mind. In practising the "frame", the slower the movement the better the results. This is because when the movements are slow, one can take deep breath and sink it to the dan tian. It has a soothing effect on the body and the mind.

Learners of taijiquan will get a better understanding of all this through careful study and persistent practice.

Talks On The Practice Of Taijiquan

There are many schools of Chinese wushu (martial arts), all with technical skills based on philosophy. Since ancient times, many people have devoted their lifetime and energy to probing the nature and essence of wushu and mastering the maximum skills, but few have succeeded. However, a learner can improve his skill if he keeps on practising and someday he will become an expert. As the saying goes: Drops falling, if they fall constantly, will bore through a stone. Taijiquan is a part of the rich cultural heritage of China. It is an art in whose slow and gentle movements are embodied vigour and force. As a Chinese saying aptly puts it, "Inside the cotton is hidden a needle". Its technical, physiological and mechanical qualities all have a philosophical basis. For learners, the guidance of a good teacher and discussions of the skills and techniques with friends are necessary, but the most important thing is persistent and untiring practice. Indeed, there is nothing like practice, and learners of taijiquan, men and women, young and old, will get the best possible results if they keep at it all the year round.

In recent years, the number of people studying taijiquan in various parts of China has been increasing. This is an indication of the bright prospects of wushu. Many learners are conscientious and persistent in training, which will enable them to attain a high level of achievement. It should be pointed out that two wrong tendencies should be guarded against. The first is that some people who are young and talented acquired a quicker understanding than most other people and so become complacent and stop half way. These people can never achieve great success. The second wrong tendency is that some learners are too anxious to achieve quick success and get instant benefits. They want to learn everything in a short time, from shadow boxing to wielding the sword, broadsword, spear and other weapons. They know a smattering of

each, but do not grasp the essence and their movements and postures are full of flaws to the expert eye. It is difficult to correct their movements, for a thorough "overhaul" is needed and, as often as not, they might change in the morning and return to the old habits in the evening. Hence the saying in Chinese boxing circles: "Learning taijiquan is easy but to correct a wrong style is difficult". In other words, more haste less speed. And if these people pass on their mistakes to others, they will be doing a great harm.

In learning taijiquan, one should first of all start from the quan jia or frame of boxing; he should practise according to the routines and follow the master's every movement carefully, and keep each action in mind. Meanwhile, he should pay attention to the nei, wai, shang and xia. Nei means using the mind rather than force. Wai means the relaxation of the limbs, shoulders and elbows, making the movements from the foot to the leg to the waist gentle and continuous.

Shang means straightening the head, and xia means sinking the breath to the lower belly.

For a beginner, the most important thing is to remember these points, grasp their essence and practise each basic movement correctly over and over again, never seeking quick success and instant benefit. It is advisable to make slow and steady progress, for this will pay in the long run. In practising taijiquan, it is necessary to keep all the joints in the body relaxed, so that the movements will be natural and unrestrained. Do not hold your breath (that may lead to puff and blow), and do not use stiff strength in moving the arms, legs and waist and body, but try to make your movements gentle and continuous. These two points are well-known among the wushu experts, but many trainees have difficulty putting them into practice.

The learners should bear in mind the following points:

1. Keep your head erect and do not incline it forward or backward. As the saying goes, "Its like there is something on your head, and you should take care not to let it fall". But you should not hold your head in a stiff manner, and though your eyes look straight ahead, they should follow the movements of the limbs and body. Although your eyes look into vacancy, they are an important component of the movements of the body as whole. Your mouth should remain half open and half closed, with the nose breathing in and mouth breathing out naturally. If saliva is produced in the mouth swallow it.
2. Hold the torso straight and the backbone and free end of the sacrum vertical. When moving, always keep the chest slightly inward and the back upright. The beginners should keep these key points in mind, otherwise their movements will become mere formality or dull-looking, and they will not be able to make much progress in spite of long years of practice.
3. Relax the joints of both arms, letting the shoulders droop and the elbows curve naturally; the palms should be slightly extended and the fingers slightly bent. Move the arms by consciousness and send qi (breath or vital energy) to the fingers. Remember these key points and success will be yours.
4. Take note of the difference in stance between the two legs which move as gently as those of a cat. When one foot is planted firmly on the ground, the other is in an empty stance. When you shift the weight on to the left leg, then the left foot is firmly on the ground, while the right foot is in an empty stance, and vice versa. Though the foot is in an empty stance it is always ready to move. When the foot is firmly on the ground, it does not mean that you should exert too much force on that leg, for if you do so, your body will incline forward and you will lose your balance.
5. The action of the feet is divided into kicking upward and kicking downward. When you kick upward, pay attention to your toes, and when you kick downward, pay attention to the sole; consciousness of the action will be followed by vital energy, and vital energy will be followed by strength. When you do all this, you should relax the joints and avoid stiffness.

In practising taijiquan, one should first master and practise the "frame" as above mentioned (bare-handed forms), such as Taiji shadow boxing and changquan (long shadow boxing); then one can proceed to single-hand pushing, one-site pushing, pushing with feet moving and free-hand fighting, and after a period one can take exercises with weapons such as taiji sword, taiji scimitar and taiji spear.

Learners should practise regularly every morning or before going to bed. It is preferable to practise seven or eight times during the daytime; if one is hard pressed for time, then at least once in the morning and once in the evening. Do not practise immediately after meals or after drinking. The best place is in the gardens or parks where the air is fresh and the environment conducive to health. Do not practise on windy days or in a filthy place. For when you do exercise, you might breathe in too much dust or dirt which is harmful to your lungs. It is advisable to put on sportswear and comfortable cloth or rubber shoes. When you sweat, don't take off your clothes or wipe with cold towels, lest you catch cold and fall ill.

Yang Style Eye Usage

Yang style Taijiquan is very particular about the method of using the eyes. Tradition has it that when Yang Cheng Fu pushed hands or engaged in combat, when emitting jing would look at the opponent and the opponent on receiving the strength would fall in the direction which he looked. Looking at Yang Shao Hou's precious image, his eyes appears to have brightness shooting forth, this is a result of long term training fully concentrating on the eyes as well as the internal qi. Yang Cheng Fu said: " The eyes though should look forward levelly, sometimes following the body and so shift, the line of sight though may be fixed on emptiness is an essential movement in the change, this compensates the body method's inadequacies."

Yang style Taijiquan's requirements regarding the eyes are:

1. The eyes should look forward levelly. In normal circumstances, the eyes look levelly forward, looking through the hand in front towards the front, caring for the hand, but not fixed dead on the hand. The eyes can also look downward to the front, it must follow the boxing posture's main hand movement and so determine the direction to look.
2. The expression of the eyes is in accordance to the movements, the principle of the eyes's turning follows the body's movements. The body moves the eyes follow, the body faces what direction, the eyes gaze towards that direction. Taijiquan's practice has continuous forward advancing backward retreating left and right turns, when forward advancing backward retreating, left turn right rotate depends on the waist and body turning, the eyes in left looking right glancing must follow the waist and body's turning to turn.
3. The eyes and the intent are consistent. The eyes are the mind's focal point, what the mind is considering, the eyes is concentrated upon, if the eyes and the movements are not in accordance the internal and external are also not in agreement, the usage of the eyes have an important use in push hands, necessary to observe the opponent's upper and lower portions, closely observing the direction of movement of the opponent's back, in the course of movement catching hold of the opportune time to cause the opponent to be in a predicament.
4. The method of the eyes must be natural. When utilising the eyes, do not stare, do not close the eyes, keep the spirit held within. The correct use of the expression of the eyes has a relationship with the energy at the top is light and sensitive (xu ling ding jing), the

energy at the top is light and sensitive, then the spirit can be raised, then the eyes will naturally have expression.

Tung Ying Jieh's Taijiquan Basic Instructions

5. Relax
6. Use slow, continuous Movements
7. In learning, do not apply any force in the movements. In practicing the exercise, one will gradually gain strength and know how to apply it.
8. In learning, use natural breathing through the nose, but keep the breathing slow and gentle. With practice, breathing will be gradually matched with the movements. Intentional matching of breathing with movements for beginners may, however, be harmful. After about one year's practice of Tai Chi Chuan when the movements become correct, smooth and effortless, the teacher may be requested to give instructions on the method of breathing during the exercise.
9. In the various movements, pay special attention to the shifting of the body weight between the two feet. This is accomplished by shifting the position of the torso, whether forward, backward or sidewise. This torso should be maintained in a vertical posture.
10. Pay attention also to the change in the direction the body is facing, through the twisting of the waist.
11. During the exercise, knees and elbows are always bent, although the extent that they are bent is different and keeps changing.
12. The knees, when bent, should not be further forward than the toes. This helps to keep the balance.
13. Whenever the hands are raised, keep the elbows slightly lower than the hands. This helps to relax the shoulders.
14. In making steps, lower the heel first. Try to step in the way of a cat or a crane.
15. Always use the mind to lead the movements. Hence the eyes should lead the movements, although in appearance, it may look as if the eyes follow the movements.
16. Tai Chi Chuan may be played any time of the day, but the best time is in the early morning before breakfast and one hour before bed time. Avoid doing it immediately after a heavy meal, and do not sit down or take a cold water bath immediately after the exercise.

Dr Tseng Ju Pai's Taijiquan Principles And Techniques

The principles and techniques of Tai Chi Chuan are somewhat unusual. All however are contained in the Golden Maxims handed down by Wu Ho-Ching. For beginners it is necessary to give here a summary.

17. The vertebral column, especially the neck, should be kept upright, so that the vital fluid (qi) can easily rise to the top and the spirit can constantly rise as well. But in making movements, the chest must be slightly concave and the back slightly convex, so that the breath can sink to the Tan Tien.

18. The shoulder should be lowered, and the elbow down. If the shoulders are raised they may cause the breath to "float" and the body become feeble. When the elbow rises horizontally, it makes the arm feeble, giving the opponent an opportunity to dislocate it.
19. The stances and the movements of the hands should be alternated with Yang (the real or exerted strength) and with Yin (the unreal or lesser strength).
20. The vital fluid (qi) must always be sinking to the Tan Tien, so that it makes the body not only full of vigour but also tireless.
21. The whole body, especially the abdomen, must be completely relaxed, thus freeing it from nervous tension to ensure smooth flowing of the vital fluid (qi). On this account, the actions in practice must be in accord with respiration, and taken in a relaxed manner, slowly and smoothly. It is advisable to let the body sweat to accelerate the metabolism and to turn out many internal complaints, since sweating is a cleansing as well as a cooling process.
22. The mind must be fixed and calm, then the sense is sober and unafraid. Thus it can freely apply the techniques of the art.
23. The actions of the body must be co-ordinated with the mind. In emergency the mind works swiftly, and when psychical and physical forces join together they give rise to super-strength (unusual) immediately.
24. One must keep one's mind on the waist, at all times, loosening it, so that it revolves like a wheel. It must be in harmony with the limbs as an integrated whole, so that the technique is flawless and efficient in application. Do not forget that while putting forth strength the waist must be utilised and keep it unmoved, simply loosen and concentrated only in one direction.
25. Never use strength against strength. An opponent's force should be yielded to. When the left side is pushed (when force is applied to it) it should become unreal (empty, yielding). Same with the right. The rest can be treated in a similar way. These are negative ways. The positive way is to use the opponent's force, even to throw him, pound or subdue him. The technical term here is "borrowing strength". The techniques of Tai Chi Chuan are the most useful in general to attain this end.
26. A quick action is received with a quick action. Likewise a slow action with slow. How can one act in response more quickly than the opponent? Attention should be paid to the triangle of his upper body. The top and two shoulders. When the top moves, his leg would be lifted. When his right shoulder moves his right hand would be out. Same with the left. As soon as it moves, action should be taken immediately.

Principles And Practices In Taijiquan

Taijiquan is both a martial art and a health art. Its correct practice brings benefits in both areas. To practice correctly, a proper understanding of the theories behind the practice is required. Here is a short discussion on some of the more important ones pertaining to both health and combat.

Principles

Loose, No Tension (Sung)

Relax and loosen all the joints and sink them so that they are flexible, connected and are able to integrate into proper structure. Proper structure is held with the minimum of muscular exertion

with gravity providing the downward stacking providing power from the root into ground. Proper relaxation of the musculature provides more efficient use of it resulting in a pliable strength rather than tensed strength.

I prefer translation 'no tension' than the word relaxation which can imply limpness. Why is there a need to sunk? Very simply because if you don't the muscles are not able to work efficiently. Tensed muscles occur when the antagonistic muscle groups have in some way impeded the motion of each other, as such tension is the retained energy (inefficiency) of the move. This results in reduced mobility, promotes fatigue and reduced power. Jing travels through a strike much like a wave or pulse with relaxed musculature conducting it with no retained tension, much like a whip which has no tension but is able to deliver a telling strike.

Stability By Sinking (Wen, Chen)

Stability is a result of coordinated body structure in relation to the downward pull of gravity resulting in a net force against the earth from both body weight and downward projection of mass through a singular point identified as the root. Lowering the centre of gravity is essential to stability, we should lower it to the centre of the sphere of influence of our physical body.

Agility (Ling)

Agility is a result of non-double weighting and non-dead rooting. By only maintaining one point of substantial contact with the ground you gain the ability to move quickly, much like a ball which moves easily across the ground because it only has one point of contact with it.

The key is the word "centre". We should avoid "dead rooting". The idea is to lower your centre of gravity to your proper centre which is at the Tan Tien, there it should have a net downward force but is "hung" from the torso in the correct location. This would give you a centred but light feeling. If you are trying to get your centre to the foot of your feet, that is not centredness. Ask yourself where the centre of your body should be and there is where the mass of the centre should be. Some information on the external and internal methodologies adopted to train this. The external way of training is to force the centre down as far as it can go and then slowly the reaction force from the ground would build up the musculature to support the downward force back up to where it should be centred. The internal method would be to centre the centre of gravity first, get a proper structure to support it and when that is done then slowly lower the stance through time to foster proper development without sacrificing efficient structure and alignment.

Sensitivity (Ming Gan)

One of the keys in TCC combat, trained by bringing the mind (Yi) along each point of the motion and each point on the body. Use the conscious mind to bring the focus but train the subconscious to respond and become more aware. We need Sensitivity to detect where the centre is and where there are flaws in the structure that can be exploited., also to detect where his energy is and its movement.

Yuan (Roundness)

The roundness of the structure denotes a smooth connection and efficient transfer of force and energy. Hence in your postures, seek roundness. Roundness also helps in the dissipation of incoming energy like an egg or a sphere.

Not Losing Contact, Not Resisting (Bu Tiu Bu Ting)

This means literally "not losing contact, not resisting" and is perhaps one of the most descriptive terms of Taiji combat. Peng and its characteristics is what enables this to occur. Peng is expansive in nature, it has the qualities of sticking and bouyancy and stability. If your opponent retreats, it follows, if he advances its sticks and redirects.

In cultivating this principle, we need to understand that sticking is necessary in order to "listen" to your opponent's strength and understand it in order to counter it by turning it against himself. It makes it possible for you to detect gaps and flaws in his structure and balance and turn them to your advantage. At the same time the bouyant quality makes it hard for your opponent to detect your centre.

Breathing

Breathing initially should be natural and into the abdomen but as you learn how to "swim in air" and air attains a heavy quality not unlike water, you will find that it takes relaxed "effort" to generate the movement. As a result of this the breathing pattern will naturally change to your abdomen expanding when you push out, much like the way it does when you are pushing a car. This is the point where reverse breathing becomes natural. It should be a natural transition and should not be forced. Practicing reverse breathing by itself to isolate the tan tien and its movements in qigong should also not be forced. (Reverse breathing is to pull in the abdomen on inhaling and extend it on exhaling)

Practices

The Three Heights And Four Frames (San Pan Si Jia)

The three heights and four frames. The three heights are high, middle and low, the four frames are slow, fast, large, small. These denote the different ways of doing the form, each for a specific purpose.

The Three Heights

Middle

This is the normal way we practice with the knees bent and the body lowered. Here is where we learn the movements, their coordination, transition and focus.

Low

At this level, our thighs should be at least parallel to the ground. It gets to this level progressively from the middle frame. It adds to the difficulty of the form and aids in further development in regards to endurance, body connection and coordination, stability and strength.

High

At this level, we refine the connection and coordinations so that the techniques can be effected with minimal movement.

The Four Frames

Slow

This is where we learn the coordination and transitions, focus and putting the many factors that make good boxing together.

Large

This facilitates stretching and developing resiliency, good circulation and proper muscular development through large movements. It also allows the movement in the technique to be savoured and fully understood. It is usually done slowly as well.

Fast

This is where the techniques are executed quickly but without losing the qualities obtained by training it slow and large.

Small

This is to refine the techniques to their essentials so that they can be effected with minimum effort and movement.

Normally in training, after the learning the set in the middle height and slow frame, we go on to fast at a slightly lower height whilst retaining the same relaxedness, sinking and connection as the before. Then we go to low height at a lower speed with a large movements. And finally to a high height with small movements. This was the way Yang Pan Hou trained his students.

Form And Training

The form teaches us the content of the art, allows us to know ourselves and how we function. Tui Shou and other two man exercises expand on this knowledge and teach us also how to know others. In knowing ourselves and knowing others we can conquer them a hundred times out of a hundred. The form teaches us how our body can function efficiently and how it moves, what makes it live and and what makes it effective. We learn here how to experience and control what we loosely refer to as "energy", "vitality principle", "vector energy", "jing" or "qi". The form is a means to experience, cultivate and learn how to effectively use this energy.

This energy is manifested through opening and closing and has its origins in breath. This energy movement denotes the internal form (nei xing) and the physical movement denotes the external form (wai xing). In the beginning the internal form comes from and is molded by the external form but later the external form follows the dictates of the internal form. In the beginning the mind directs the movements and is distinct from it, later the mind and the movement are one.

The mind and body, internally and externally, fused to become one entity, one reality. This is necessary for quick reactions and for the body and mind to act together to make the most of the situation. This mind-body coordination and synthesis should become instinctive.

As one becomes more dependent on the internal form, or flow of energy, the external form becomes less focused upon as the energy is manifested through it and it acts in accord. Till both internal and external fuse and become one with the internal form determining the external form and one reaches the level where mind and energy are the only considerations. Here is where the mind-energy being one acts as the mind dictates and the body acts as the energy that powers it

dictates. Ego has no place, nor thoughts as one reacts accordingly, to the principles of the energy, to blend, nullify and balance (read direct back to origin) with the incoming flow of energy from your opponent's attack. The physical weapon is driven by the force within it, the force is an energy that is distinct from the weapon, it is upon this that we act. This is internal boxing and its internal strategies in combat.

Push Hands (Tui Shou) and Sparring Hands (San Shou)

In Taijiquan, Tui Shou is a practice to achieve several major goals:

- (1) Develop sensitivity to your opponent's motion and its origin
- (2) Develop the ability to effortlessly redirect your opponent's motion by detecting and utilising the weak vector of his motion
- (3) Apply and practice a flexible rooting with fixed and moving steps whilst responding to your opponent's strength and motion.

Tui shou was also called Rou Shou (soft hands) to emphasize non-resistance. It is not a combat practice. San shou which is the application of the sensitivity and effortlessness developed through tui shou in a combat situation (blows, kicks, locks, grabs, etc) is the actual combative training in Taijiquan.

Free fighting is free form san shou and is as close as you can get to combat without being actually having someone out to hurt you. The Yang school has an 88 posture (44 per person) fixed form san shou which is akin to fixed form sparring to slowly guide the person into free form fighting or sparring. Ting jing is paramount in Taijiquan as only in being sensitive enough to detect your opponent's motion, its qualities and its origin (this is the most important) that you can control him.

The two man Taijiquan set have specific training methodologies and goals. Fixed steps trains the sensitivity, stability and power within a limited range of motion. Moving steps expands this to a simple back and forth motion with transference of centre and control of it in motion whilst keeping it from being under control of your opponent. Ta Lu adds the corner movements so that the it the repertoire is not limited to back and forth and teaches that retreat is also a form of attack, plus the use of the remaining four fundamental techniques. Free form push hands combines all the elements but still limiting it to basic push hands parameters.

The goals:

- (1) To achieve sensitivity through contact
- (2) To use that sensitivity to find the flaws through "not resisting and not letting go" which should be proactive in that you don't resist his motion but redirect it using its flaws in a motion that not only neutralises it but in turn is an attack on his centre
- (3) To apply the principles cultivated in the form (correct posture, rooting, sensing energy, knowledge of your own centre, etc) in a reactive situation with a partner
- (4) To learn the basics of attack and defense through the use and neutralisation of effortless power born of proper rooting, posture and motion.

Attracting to emptiness simply means presenting the opponent a target which is actually a trap to lead him into emptiness (neutralising and causing his force and momentum to act against himself), when done properly your opponent's thousand pound force can be deflected and used against himself by the simple application of four ounces on the weakest vector of the incoming force to alter its trajectory back to the origin. One of the keys of Taijiquan is to never use more than four ounces and never receive more than 4 ounces (not exactly four ounces mind you, it simply indicates a light force). Space creation and destruction is necessary knowledge.

Is pushing hands a win or lose competition? No, it isn't. It is a form of training in which both parties benefit. Oft times you will get good teachers who will let one party do the pushing and the other do the countering to teach one to detect the centre and the other to avoid detection and to counter. Winning or losing should not be important at this level of training as the goal is for the partners to train each other in knowing themselves and each other.

Beating Big with Small, Fast with Slow

Beating Big with Small usually means overcoming a big force with a lesser one. This is attained by not directly opposing the big force but redirecting to our advantage by adding a smaller force to change the trajectory of the larger force.

Beating fast with slow means beating a fast opponent with a slower technique. How is this achieved? No matter how fast an attacking limb is, it is always slower than the body behind it or the last joint between it and the body. By affecting the body directly via the centre, by avoiding the fast moving end and attacking the middle or last joint of the limb, we need not move as fast as we would normally need to meet the fast end of the limb and stop it. It is also easier to change its ultimate trajectory by affecting it closer to the trajectory's origin.

Ultimately by focusing in on the origins of his strength which is his centre and his root, we need not move as fast as his attacking limb since that is not our focus.

Training the Mind's Eye (Perception)

The Mind's Eye is the way we perceive the outside world in relation to ourselves. In Taijiquan we alter the normal perception via the way we practice. In doing the set slowly and with full intent, we become aware of the transition of the movement through time and creates a internal division of time according to the stages of movement. When doing the movement quickly this internal division still applies but because it was previously set at a slower pace, the movement though quick to others still has the same quantity of time internally which allows us to function at speed without losing perception due to it.

Much of how we perceive time, space and movement is determined by how fast that information reaches the seat of our consciousness. If our attention is divided by many internal messages coming in, an external stimuli, even if slow, will appear quick and catch us by surprise. Fear and discomfort are two major causes of such internal 'noise' that clouds our ability to perceive "real time". Hence the requirement for most martial arts to develop a clear mind. By calming ourselves, sinking and relaxing to reduce tension and discomfort, losing our ego to put aside the fear of loss we can see what is coming much more clearly and the quick is no longer that quick because you know where its coming from and going to, and when it will arrive.

Point Focus In Jing Generation

An example of point focus using the An (Push) posture:

Taijiquan technique is manifestation of having qi in your meridians powering the musculature. Qi is what gives the musculature the tenacity or tonus to manifest the technique using the bones as a base (at least according to the chinese). The qi would travel through the meridians originating at Yung Chuan (Bubbling Well, K1, wonder why its called that, now you know) causing the musculature to be "qi-filled" to exhibit tenacity directed to a focal point denoted by mental focus at Lao Gong (Hard Work, P8, now you know why its named like that). Which is why there is the saying that the mind leads the qi. This tenacity is what gives the five bows of the body (i.e. the back which is the main bow, and the four limbs which are the secondary bows) the stored potential energy which can be released or 'shot' into your opponent. The back needs to be

loose but straightened to allow the unrestricted use of tenacity from the muscles connected to it and to provide a clear 'signal' with as little peripheral stimulus to the nerves emanating from the spinal cord to the muscles.

The connection path and the manifest energy is referred to as jing (sometimes transliterated as chin). Hence Taijiquan movements are often described as 'propelled'. Qi is present in the body all the time but it is its specific gathering, focus and transmission that makes it relevant in terms of martial arts.

Yang Style Tai Chi Long Boxing -Yang Cheng Fu's Advanced Set

Most people think of Yang Tai Chi Chuan as transmitted by the standardiser of the style Yang Cheng Fu as consisting only of one routine. And that Yang Cheng Fu taught the art only as a health art rather than as a combat one. This is a wrong perception. Yang Cheng Fu viewed his art as a combat art that was also a means of gaining good health. His two books on Tai Chi Chuan all focused on it as a martial art and provided martial explanations for the postures, martial theorems and he taught his art not as a form of moving calisthenics but as a combat art. So great was Yang Cheng Fu's combat skills that he was never known to have been defeated. And he did teach a second advanced set: Tai Chi Long Boxing.

So where did the misconception that Yang Tai Chi Chuan was mainly health oriented come from? Mainly from those who cannot understand how a soft appropriate response to an attack is more effective than a reposit with great power which may not necessarily be efficient or appropriate. And those who cannot see the how the slow can beat the fast and how a lesser force can conquer a larger one.

Yang Lu Chan and his son Yang Ban Hou both were known for their combat skills, earning the title 'Yang the invincible'. Their teaching in the imperial court, rather than lowering the combat standard of their art, made it all the more imperative that they turned out exceptional students with high attainment. Their lives and status depended on it. Yang Cheng Fu, likewise, was mainly noted as a martial artist, not as a health expert. Tai Chi Chuan's curative capabilities was also promoted but that was not the main thrust of Yang Cheng Fu's teachings. Those who learnt from him learnt the art as a combat art and in time gained the health benefits of practicing the art as a combat art.

Historical Background

Before going to Shanghai in the 1925, Yang Cheng Fu taught not only the now well known large frame (also known as the 'Six Routines' since it was normally broken up into six sections and practiced one section at a time when learning and eventually linking all six together to form one long routine) but to his advanced students he also taught a set of Tai Chi Long Boxing.

After he went to Shanghai at the invitation of Chen Wei Ming to popularise Tai Chi Chuan, he dropped Tai Chi Long Boxing from the public syllabus he taught. This was because all the elements needed for success were present in the large frame, the Tai Chi Long Boxing being a refinement of the principles within the large frame. Another reason being that in his teaching tours to the major cities in China, he did not have much time to teach the students gathered there and so the large frame alone was taught.

The early large frame of Yang Cheng Fu included Fa-Chin (explosive emission of strength) with slow and fast movements. Later the explosive strength emissions were replaced with

extending the limb with qi which is a basic method of practice. It must be noted that not all the movements were practiced with Fa-Chin and that even with the changes in speed the requirements for smoothness, continuity, relaxation and rootedness remain.

Till today, it is still only taught as an advanced set (by only a handful of teachers) after one has attained a sufficiently high level of practice in the large frame. Normally, only when one has learnt the large frame and does it with Fa-Chin in it does one progress to the Tai Chi Long Boxing. It is relatively unknown but remains the advanced set of Yang Cheng Fu's Tai Chi Boxing.

The Form

Tai Chi Long Boxing consists of 59 postures, less than the large frame but most of its postures are derived from the large frame. It is an agile form, much more mobile than the large frame and is even more combat oriented than the large frame.

In order to practice this form effectively, one should have already attained all the aspects of the large frame. All the joints should be 'open', supple and relaxed. The root should be sunk and clearly single weighted, the five bows of the body utilised coordinatively, the spirit and head raised and musculature relaxed. Energy is generated from the feet, directed by the waist and functions through the hands and fingers.

The speed of practice is faster than the large frame. Fa-Chin is present so there are fast movements during explosions of strength. It is also relatively higher standing than the large frame. Proper rooting isn't just standing low and one should already have gained an understanding of that before learning this form. It is a lively form and imbued with much spiritedness and intense focus. It is similar in many ways to Yang Shao Hou's small frame combat set.

At advanced levels both the large frame and the Long Boxing forms are practiced. Because it is so combat oriented, some have referred to it as Yang Cheng Fu's fighting form. Others, because of its faster speed its often called the Fast Form as well. Tung Ying Jieh's fast form is derived in part from Tai Chi Long Boxing and still retains some of its postures.

Because it is a relatively short form, some masters have added postures to the original to lengthen it. This has resulted in versions of Tai Chi Long Boxing with as many as 150 postures in the form. Fortunately, the original form was recorded down by Chen Wei Ming and Yang Shou Chung, Yang Cheng Fu's eldest son, taught it (there were some additional posture names given to the interim movements but upon close examination, the form is almost exactly the same).

Combat Characteristics

The main type of attacking chin used in Tai Chi Long Boxing is Leng Chin or Cold Chin as in Cold Without Defense, it is a spectacular very fast and short Chin that so shocks the enemy that he breaks out in a cold sweat.

The closing of distance to the opponent is done quickly, sometimes in a leaping fashion. The movements, though fast, are neat and succinct, relaxed and sunk. In postures like 'Detecting Root' which is similar to 'Apparent Closure', the fingers are used to detect the root of the opponent as a prelude to a Fa-Chin attack. Very important for an effective attack. There are quick changes in direction, deliberate avoiding of incoming attacks and smaller circular movements. High, middle and low level attacks are accounted for and are present in the form. Foot stomping, slaps and whipping attacks are present as are limb breaking and dislocating techniques.

There are chin na techniques as well as releases from chin na techniques in the form, most of these are targeted at anatomically vulnerable locations like accupoints. Specific accupoints are also attacked by a variety of different methods and 'illegal' applications are present as well, since in a real fight there are no rules. Like the large frame, each part of every technique has an inherent application and the form, though fast, is subtle as well. All this while still conforming to the principles set out in the Tai Chi Chuan Classics.

Because the movements of the form are relatively high standing and small, they are very practical to use either in rather restrictive work clothing and in small places. Control and usage of the opponent's centre and momentum play a part in all the techniques and in every technique there are inherently 4 techniques of neutralising (Hua), holding (Na), hitting (Da) and emitting (Fa). Listening to Chin or Ting Chin is a crucial element in combat Tai Chi Chuan and this sensitivity is present throughout the form.

Tai Chi Long Boxing Today

Yang Cheng Fu's Tai Chi Long Boxing is seldom taught today. It is practiced by relatively few Tai Chi Chuan exponents even in China. Only those who trained in the earlier period with Yang Cheng Fu or his close disciples got to learn the form. It was kept quite secret and in Chen Wei Ming's lineage, its sometimes referred to as Tai Chi Kept Boxing (kept or keep in Chinese is pronounced 'chang' which is phonetically the same as the Chinese term for long, so this is a Chinese pun), meaning that it was kept within doors and not transmitted outside.

Yang Shou Chung, Yang Cheng Fu's son, taught this form to his three daughters and some of his close disciples like Mr Yip Tai Tuck and Mr Chu Gin Soon. They continue the family tradition of teaching this rare form to advanced students. There are also other teachers who continue to teach this advanced set. It is fortunate that this rare form is not lost and continues to guide serious Tai Chi exponents on the intricacies of Tai Chi combat.

The Practice of Tai Chi Long Boxing

Foreword

I'd like to share some of the aspects pertaining to the practice of Taiji Long Boxing. It was an advanced form taught by Yang Cheng Fu to supplement the main form. It must be noted though that to achieve combat capability and health results, practice in the main form is all that is necessary, the Taiji Long Boxing is simply a more active method of practice. There are six characteristics to note when practicing Taiji Long Boxing:

1) Loosen And Open All The Joints, Loosen All The Way To The Bottom

Loosen all the joints and extend them to enable ease of motion, this should be done from the head to foot. At no point should a joint be tightly unextended.

2) Chin Comes From The Foot, The Whole Body Acts As One In Coordination

Chin comes in two forms, grounded chin which makes use of the ground or objects attached to the ground as a base and ungrounded chin which makes use of the centre of mass of the body as a base. In TCC, for the most part uses grounded chin. It is generated from the ground and passes

through the body like pulse, the body's joints transmit and amplify it with coordinative usage of musculature. The chin is thus focused and efficient strength refined thus to achieve the purpose of the move.

3) Use Internal Chin, Don't Use Brute Strength

Chin which is not obvious from external observation is denoted as being internal, for example if you push a rod against the wall, the rod can have strength which push it upwards instead of straight perpendicularly to the wall but that upwards strength vector is not obvious. So in TCC the internal flow of directed, efficient strength is more important than the external appearance. Don't use inefficient, unrefined, loosely focused strength.

4) In Looking Backwards Don't Break Or Lose, Continuous And Soft Without Breaks

In turning of the head to look backwards in some postures, use a small circle to turn the head without using the upper torso to effect it or you will break and lose the chin connection and coordination of the rest of the body, the turning of the body should be done with the feet and waist in conjunction, any defect in the posture can ultimately be traced to this. Movement should be continuous to retain efficient usage of momentum and soft without hard muscular tension. Tension occurs when muscles fight against one another and this reduces the efficient usage of the musculature which should be used coordinatively for maximum efficiency.

5) Testing Chin

Here is where the teacher lightly holds or attaches his hands to that of the student to detect any mistakes like not generating the chin from the legs, any postural defects which would cause a weakening of the structure, that the strength is not brutally used, that it is continuous and relaxed, etc.

6) Seek Insubstantiality And Calm, Use The Mind And Not Use Strength

One must seek calmness and emptiness in practice, to be one with the posture and unagitated so as to respond appropriately to any situation. Use the mind to focus the body and its actions and not just use brute strength to crash through.

Use the mind along each point of the movement, you'll be surprised how many 'dead spots' there are when you try doing that.

The Yang TC Long Boxing is an agile form with movements done quite fast and there is fa-jing inside.

Yang Shao Hou's Small Frame

Yang Tai Chi Chuan first became well known through the prowess of its founder Yang Lu Chan. So skilled was Yang Lu Chan that he gained the prestigious title "Yang The Invincible". The art that Yang Lu Chan taught and was practiced by his sons and students is quite different from the Chen style of Tai Chi Chuan as popularised by Chen Fa Ke.

The art Yang practiced was supposed to have been the modified Chen form of Chen Chang Xin who studied under Jiang Fa. According to Wu Tu Nan, one of the most respected masters of the art, in his conversations with Chen Xin, learnt that Jiang Fa had taught Chen Chang Xin resulting in a modified art. It was because of that that Chen Chang Xin was forbidden to teach the family art of Pao Chui which the Chen family was famous for several generations, gaining the name

"Pao Chui Chen Family". This could explain why Chen Chang Xin taught his classes in the back courtyard and only at night. The very place where Yang Lu Chan spied on his lessons and began to learn the art.

The old Yang form as taught by Yang Lu Chan and his sons in Yung Nien, before he left for the capital to teach at the imperial court still exists and it is quite similar to the modern Yang form and is quite distinct from the Chen style of Tai Chi Chuan. So the art taught by Yang Lu Chan was not Chen style Tai Chi Chuan, even from the very beginning. It retains the characteristics of the modern form and even though it retains the strength explosions (fa-chin), it is still quite different posturally from the modern Chen style of Tai Chi Chuan.

Yang Pan Hou also earned the name "Yang the Invincible" and his skill was second only to his father, Yang Lu Chan. He did not have many disciples because he was bellicose by nature. His brother's son, Yang Shao Hou, was given to him as a foster son and gained both his uncle's skill and his nature. Of the third generation of the Yang family, we are only certain that Yang Shao Hou had seen and probably was also personally taught by his grandfather, Yang Lu Chan. His skill was superior but because he spared no one, not even his students and attacked viciously during training, he had very few students. He shared the same prestige as his more well known younger brother Yang Cheng Fu and was well known to be very combat capable. Like his younger brother he was also never known to have been defeated.

Yang Shao Hou's Art

When Yang Shao Hou first taught the art publicly, his form was the same as that of his younger brother Yang Chen Fu. That is to say he taught the large frame. Later in his life, he taught only advanced students who had already become accomplished in the large form. To these he taught a 'small frame' which was done very quickly but without losing the qualities of the large frame such as relaxation, sinking, calmness and continuity. The 200 over movements in the form was done very quickly, aiming to do the whole form in 2 or 3 minutes.

It was known as the 'small frame' because of its compact movements and should be distinguished from the 'small frame' taught by Yang Lu Chan and Yang Pan Hou in the Imperial Court. That form comes down to us today in the Wu Chien Chuan lineage. But there are common elements in both small frames. Yang Shao Hou's small frame is essentially a combination of the elements of the large frame and the small frame and done at speed. According to Wu Tu Nan, Yang Shao Hou's small frame was also known as the 'usage frame'. The form was supposed to have been created by Yang Lu Chan by distilling the essence of Tai Chi Chuan into this advanced combat set.

This set can only be learnt after attaining a high enough level in the large frame and is not the large frame done fast. It is also quite different from the Tai Chi Long Boxing taught by Yang Cheng Fu though again there are similar elements and common training theories.

Yang Shao Hou's Tai Chi Chuan exhibited the little known advanced level skills that an extension of the basic combat skills of sensitivity, control of centre and positional advantage to overcome a stronger force. These skills included attacking accupoints, bone locking, bone hitting, sinew splitting, blocking and controlling pressure points relating to blood flow, spectacular fa-chin at great speed and continuous motion with one technique flowing into another so that there were no breaks for counters. Without first gaining the basic skills, the advanced skills cannot be properly learnt and applied.

When he did his form, his eyes led the way, blazing and looking in all directions, he often had a grim smile on his face and would shout and roar to distract during a bout. Though his movements

were relaxed, sunk and continuous, his form was so swift that he appeared to be darting all over the place. Those who saw him do his form were in awe of him and many aspired to gain his skill but few could take his harsh training.

Though he had only a few students, we are fortunate that the form still exists today though it is known and practiced only by a very limited number of exponents. It is in danger of becoming extinct. The advanced skills are present in the form but proper understanding of it is required before they can be gained. Just learning the form by rote without this understanding gains only the shell and not the marrow of the art. In doing so one does not gain the art at all.

The Small Frame-Usage Frame Form

Yang Shao Hou's small frame consisted of 73 postures making up a total of over 200 movements. In postural arrangement it follows the large frame and retains some postures from the old Yang form like 'Turn Body Double Lift Legs'. The postures are a mix of the large frame and the Yang Small Frame as taught by Yang Lu Chan and Yang Pan Hou in the Imperial Court. In the early days before the art was taught publicly, only a few learnt the large form, those in the Imperial Court only learnt the small frame which was more suited for combat in the long Imperial Robes. It thus has some postures more similar to the Yang Small Frame as handed down by Quan Yu to his son Wu Chien Chuan. The 'Fist Under Elbow', 'Repulse Monkey' and the first 'Downward Posture' all resemble the Wu Chien Chuan form.

When the postures are first learnt, they are practiced in a low, tiring manner at a speed that is faster than the large frame though not quite at the full speed of the form yet. The form is learnt one posture at a time and in short sequences until the student's endurance and power attainment allows him to link up all the short sequences together and form the whole form. In teaching the form, Yang Shao Hou would often make his students practice under a kind of high table to ensure that they took a low tiring stance.

The form makes frequent use of the Single Empty Stance which has the legs together and the knees bent with the weight and root only on one leg. It is frequently used as a quick closing of distance from a Bow Step or Empty Step. The entire form is performed in an agile rooted manner and the upper body should not weave and bob back and forth. The power behind each technique is the power of the whole body working in coordination.

The Yang Style Combat Skills

The forms of Yang Tai Chi Chuan are the vehicles in which the combat skills are carried. All the Yang forms have the advanced skills innate in them but each of the different forms and the way that they are done imparts different yet significant aspects to these skills.

The basic combat requirements are stability, efficiency, unity of mind and body, sensitivity, controlling the centre, positional advantage and agility. It is from these that the advanced skills develop. Controlling the centre is the most important aspect of Yang Tai Chi combat, once you control your opponent's centre you control his whole body. Contrary to what most people think, uprooting - that causing both your opponent's feet to leave the ground as you bounce him out, is not the only technique used in Tai Chi combat though it is used quite often when there is no intent to cause harm or serious injury.

For opponents that require more serious discouragement the advanced level skills come in very handy. These skills all stem from the sensitivity and control of centre to efficiently defeat the opponent. There are several type of advanced skills employed. All of which can only be properly learnt directly from a competent teacher.

One of the most esoteric of these skills, which should not actually be considered esoteric since it is simply the attacking of the body's vital points is accupoint striking or 'Dian Xue'. Accupoint striking involves striking or grasping accupoints to cause injury, incapacitation or death. Unlike external accupoint striking, the opponent's own momentum and body mass is utilised to contribute to the power of the strike with minimum exertion from the exponent.

Bone Locking is also found in external martial arts. The idea is to restrain the opponent with joint locks. In Yang Tai Chi Bone Locking the opponent's body mass and momentum are the major motive forces, once so restrained, the opponent can be dealt with in an appropriate manner.

Bone Hitting is a quite different, this involves actually breaking of the bones. No matter how soft and supple a person is, the bones will always be hard and substantial. Bone Hitting utilises knowledge of the range of motion of the joints, the connection between the different bones in the body to break them and so incapacitate the opponent. Once again the opponent's mass and momentum are used to get them into the appropriate position where this skill can then be applied.

Sinew Splitting is akin to causing sprains and muscle tears deliberately. The mass and momentum of the opponent again being the main motive forces. The musculature is specifically targeted and a good knowledge of the musculature, origins and insertions of muscles and tendons is necessary to apply this skill effectively.

Blocking and controlling blood flow pressure points can cause incapacitation by causing the opponent to faint or loose the use of one of his limbs due to inadequate blood flow. This is different from accupoint striking. Here the junctures of major and important blood vessels are targeted. As in typical fashion, the opponent's own mass and momentum are the primary motive forces causing him to be his own undoing.

Psychological attacks are also an advanced skills, playing on the emotions and psyche of the opponent. Both Yang Pan Hou and Yang Shao Hou were recorded to have changes in facial expression and emotion when doing the form as well as shouting and roaring at the appropriate moments. These serve to cause fear, shock and indecision in the opponent.

The Yang Shao Hou Small Frame Today

Unfortunately, because Yang Shao Hou only taught this form to a handful of disciples. There are very few people who know this form and practice it. Like Yang Tai Chi Long Boxing, this form was an advanced form taught only after the large form was learnt. And due to the rapid spreading of the art, only the closed door disciples and early students got to learn these advanced forms.

This was due primarily to the lack of time on the part of the Yang masters since their travelling tours only permitted them a short time in each city.

This form represents a facet of Yang Tai Chi Chuan that few know about and realise exists.

Though the Yang Shao Hou Small Frame is done differently from the large frame, its principles and theories remain the same. It is a clear representation of Yang Tai Chi Chuan at its finest: a deadly combat art and a wonderful health art. Providing long life by both preserving it in combat and building up fitness and efficiency of the body.

Taijiquan Training Speed

While the main method of practicing Taijiquan has always been the slow method. And this, despite all variants, remains the basic method of training which is indispensable for forming a

firm foundation for the art. There is, however, evidence that indicates that Taijiquan was practiced at other speeds as well.

Some Records Of Other Speeds Of Taijiquan

From early writings of those who recorded the art of Taijiquan we have some descriptions of how these sets were done. We begin with Gu Liu Xin, a noted Taijiquan historian who was responsible for organising the publication of much of the published material on the different styles of the art during the 1960s. He writes in his introduction to the book 'Yang Shi Taijiquan' (Yang Style Taijiquan) by Fu Zhong Wen in 1963 and also in Yang Zhen Duo's English book the following about how Yang Shao Hou, Yang Cheng Fu's older brother, practiced his form:

"His taijiquan 'frame' style was originally similar to his brother's, but later it gradually changed to the style of high 'frame' with lively footwork and well-knit small movements, alternating quick with slow actions. He was swift and powerful in delivering his blows and, with eyes blazing like torches, a grim smile on his face and roaring and howling as he darted back and forth, he was held in awe by others" (Gu Liu Xin, his introduction to 'Yang Style Taijiquan' by Yang Zhen Duo, 1988, page 7)

Fu Zhong Wen later wrote in his last book that Yang Shao Hou's

"movements swift, boxing frame sunk". (Fu Zhong Wen, 'Yang Shi Taijiquan Jiao Fa Lian Fa, 1989, page 5)

Years earlier, Chen Yen Ling, who wrote what is still considered a standard text for Taijiquan, had this to write about Yang Shao Hou's form:

"Boxing set small and strong. Movements fast and sunk." (Chen Yen Ling, Taijiquan Diao Jian Kan San Shou He Pian, 1943, page 6)

In a later chapter, he writes the following about the small frame of Yang Taijiquan as transmitted by Yang Shao Hou:

"The small frame strives for each posture to be compact. Movements agile and swift. This was transmitted by Yang Shao Hou." (Chen Yen Ling, Taijiquan Dao Jian Kan San Shou He Pian, 1943, page 24)

In his last chapter, this is found in one of his 23 fundamentally important points concerning the practice of the form in Taijiquan:

"neither fast nor slow" (Chen Yen Ling, Taijiquan Dao Jian Kan San Shou He Pian, page 295)

Tung Ying Jieh noted 3 ways of practicing the form in the Yang family:

"Seeing Mr. Feng Hou's son Chao Ling's boxing. He was personally trained by Mr Yang Ban Hou. His compact frame. Practiced neither fast nor slow. Mr Cheng Fu his is great softness and gradual. Mr Shao Hou his compact and swift." (Tung Ying Jieh, Taijiquan Shi Yi, 1948, page 33)

Chen Long Xiang and Li Min Di who studied with Li Ya Xuan, who trained directly under Yang Cheng Fu had this to write about Yang Shao Hou in their book 'Yang Shi Taijiquan Jing Jie' (Yang Style Taijiquan Essential Explanation):

"movements fast and sunk, boxing frame small and strong, everywhere seeking compactness". (Chen Long Xiang and Li Min Di, Yang Shi Taijiquan Jing Jie, 1992, page 34)

Yang Zhen Ji, the second son of Yang Cheng Fu has this to say of his uncle Yang Shao Hou's boxing:

"frame high movements small and alternating quick and slow." (Yang Zhen Ji, Yang Cheng Fu Shi Taijiquan, 1993, page 4)

Yang Shou Hou had few disciples, one of them was the famous master Wu Tu Nan who lived to be 105. Before Wu Tu Nan died, he published a book in which he recorded Yang Shao Hou's boxing set and the only known photographs of the set being performed by Wu himself. He writes this concerning how the form is performed:

"This set of small frames has two hundred over movements, these must be performed and completed within a time of around three minutes." (Wu Tu Nan, Taijiquan Zhi Yan Jiu, 1984, page 100)

Wu lists the small frame set as consisting of 73 postures in total. According to Wu, Yang Shao Hou told him that this set was passed down to him by his grandfather Yang Lu Chan. (Wu Tu Nan, Taijiquan Zhi Yan Jiu, 1984, page 97-98)

Wu Tu Nan's student Xu Zhi Jun wrote a book on the small frame In it he states the set should be performed within 2 minutes. (Xu Zhi Jun, Yang Shi Taijiquan – Xiao Jia Yi Qi Ji Ji Ying Yung, 1991, page 36)

Yang Cheng Fu himself is known to have taught a set called Taiji Chang Quan (Taiji Long Boxing) which consisted of both fast and slow movements. As Gu Liu Xin records this was the case with Yang Cheng Fu's early form:

"When he gave demonstrations in the 'Zhirou Wushu Association' during his early days in Shanghai, which was setup by his disciple Chen Weiming, an editor working in the 'Qing Dynasty History Institute', he performed the movements of kicking with speed and force. Later, however, to suit the needs of treating chronic disease, he changed them into slow movements with inner exertion of force. And in such movements as punching downward and punching the opponent's pubic region, he only made imitations instead of manifest exertions of force, thus making the set of movements continuous and evenly paced." (Gu Liu Xin, in his introduction to 'Yang style Taijiquan' by Yang Zhen Duo, 1988, page 7)

This quick kicking is present when we view the film of Tung Ying Jieh doing his long Yang form in Thailand in the 1940s and serves as a visual record of such a method of doing these postures. A film of his son Tung Fu Ling doing the form also shows this. (A video containing the above footage is available from Master Alex Dong)

Taiji Long Boxing was taught by Yang Cheng Fu and the set he taught was recorded by Chen Wei Ming .(Chen Wei Ming, Taiji Jian, n.d., page 32) Chen Wei Ming also expanded the set as the original set consisted of only 59 postures. Others who have studied under Yang Cheng Fu also expanded their sets to include over 100 postures. Yang Shou Chung, Yang Cheng Fu's oldest son who assisted his father in teaching his classes, taught a variant of the set recorded by Chen Wei Ming but the set in remains essentially the same. (Xie Bing Zhong, Zhong Guo Taijiquan De Xue Yue Shu, 1992, page 157-160)

Taiji Long Boxing is also described in the Encyclopedia Of Zhejiang Martial Arts where several sets of it are listed. The description of the practice of states that the movements in the set 'have both fast and slow' (Various, Zhejiang Shen Wushu Quan Ji Lu, 1988, page 291) that 'this fist's unique characteristic is sometimes fast sometimes slow, alternating between fast and slow' (Various, Zhejiang Shen Wushu Quan Ji Lu, 1988, page 292)

Mah Yueh Liang, the son-in-law of Wu Jian Quan is recorded as having seen Yang Cheng Fu practice a set of fast Taiji when he came over to push hands with Wu Jian Quan at his home. The Wu Jian Quan style itself has a set of fast Taijiquan which is being transmitted by Mah. Mah and his wife Wu Ying Hua, the daughter of Wu Jian Quan, and their student Shi Mei Lin authored a book in 1987 titled 'Wu Shi Taiji Quai Quan' (Wu Style Taiji Fast Boxing). It is also interesting to note that the Wu Yu Xiang style also has record of a fast set though information on this set is scarce.

Master Yang Yu Ting who was the primary promoter of the Wu Jian Quan style in Beijing has this to write about training speeds in his works which are recorded in Master Wang Pei Sheng on the third stage of practice:

"Vary the speed of practice from time to time: the normal; the slower than normal; the faster than normal; as slow as you can without showing any discontinuity of movement and wavering of attention; and as fast as you can without exhibiting any rash and incorrect movement or a hasty and careless attitude. However, most of your practice should be done at normal speed or slower than normal speed." (Yang Yu Ting, recorded by Wang Pei Sheng in 'Wu style Taijiquan', 1983, page 213)

The Wu Yu Xiang Style also has a fast set that is sometimes also called 'Feng Quan' or Wind Boxing. Information on this is scarce and the set very rare, we are fortunate that the set itself has been recorded down by conscientious catalogers of the martial arts. Consisting of 96 postures, it emphasizes both neutralising energy and emitting energy. (Various, Sichuan Wushu Da Quan, 1989, page 1663-1664)

Zhao Bao style also records a fast method of doing the set which is practiced after proficiency in doing the set slowly. Zhao Bao has a secretly transmitted short advanced form that can be appended to or can precede the large form or practiced entirely on its own, called Quan Mao or Boxing Cap because it can be capped at the end or at the beginning of the normal form though it is usually practiced at the end. Consisting of 22 postures, it includes jumping kicks and vigorous toe slapping. (Zhao Zheng Fu, Zhao Zao Chao, Wudang Zhao Bao Da Jia Taijiquan, 1995, page 159-164)

The Existence Of Other Frames Of Practice

The Taijiquan Classics state, in Li I Yu's 'Notes on Push Hands and Form Practice' (literally translated 'Walking Frame Hitting Hands Practice Important Words') that:

'Daily practice of the form is training to know oneself. While moving, first ask yourself if your whole body meets the requirements mentioned here. If not, then immediately correct yourself. To do this you must practice the form slowly, not fast.' (translation taken from 'On Tai Chi Chuan' by TY Pang, 1987, page 169)

What Li I Yu writes on is the Walking Frame or Jou Jia method of doing the form. In this initial and most important method, the emphasis is on not doing the form fast to build up a good foundation in the art. This mode of practice remains the most important in Taijiquan but the art is not confined to just the Walking Frame. That it is specifically categorised as such implies the

existence of other frames of practice not recorded in the limited number of works that comprise the Classics.

Master Yang Cheng Fu himself writes:

'Only when the height of our stance and the speed of our hands is guided by the proper measure can we be free of the necessity for fixed rules of height and speed.' (translation of the introduction to Yang Cheng Fu's Taijiquan Ti Yung Quan Shu taken from Douglas Wile's Tai-Chi Touchstones – Yang Family Secret Transmissions, 1983, page 157)

This makes clear that there does come a point where such rules no longer apply, hence the existence of a set like Taiji Long Boxing which Master Yang Cheng Fu taught to those who had attained the proper measure from training in the normal Taijiquan set.

In Master Yang Cheng Fu's 'Talks On The Practice Of Taijiquan', the sequence of training is first to learn Taijiquan, then Taiji Long Boxing before going on to Push Hands, Sparring Hands and Weapons. Taiji Long Boxing can then be viewed as a mode of practice to ready the student for the practice of Push Hands which is not always slow. (Yang Cheng Fu, recorded by Chen Wei Ming, found in Yang Style Taijiquan by Yang Zhen Duo, 1988, page 10-12)

Chen Yen Ling also records multiple frame methods to practice a single set. He records that for many people only know one method and not others and that for a single set, it can be done in three heights of high, level and low and for each height, the set can again be done in three ways of large, medium and small, each height and method constituting a different frame of practice. He then goes on to give examples of Master Yang Cheng Fu's set as being a large frame method, Master Yang Jian Hou's set as being a medium frame method and Master Yang Shao Hou's frame being a small frame method. (Chen Yen Ling, Taijiquan Dao Jian Kan San Shou He Pian, 1943, page 24)

The Place Of Fast Sets In Taijiquan

The main mode of practice in Taijiquan is to do it slowly. This ensures that good fundamentals are built, the Classics themselves exhort us to do the same. None of the sets described in the previous section which contain faster movements is a set that is done first and none of them is the main set in the system.

Yang Shao Hou only taught the small frame to those who had achieved a high enough proficiency in the slow form. Yang Cheng Fu and his son Yang Shou Chung only taught Taiji Long Boxing to students who had attained a good level of skill in the slow form. This was the same for his disciples who taught the form. The Tung family fast form is also an advanced set only taught to advanced students as is the Wu style fast form taught by Mah Yueh Liang and Wu Ying Hua.

These sets never superceded the slow set as the main mode of practice and represent only another way of doing a set after proficiency in the slow set has been achieved. None of the fundamentals and principles trained in the slow set is lost in these faster sets, in fact the stress is that these are retained. These sets, though fast, are not done in the same way as external boxing, and this is stressed also as a taboo.

Conclusion

Though the main mode of practice for Taijiquan is slow and rightfully so. There are other frames other than the 'walking frame' described in Li I Yu's work and one of them is a method of doing the postures in a speedier way while yet retaining all the fundamentals, principles and

requirements of Taijiquan as trained in the slow method. To ready the body to retain these essentials in a more combative context.

Yet even with this speedier mode of practice, it is not fast beating slow or big beating small. Beating fast with slow and big with small is still primary but the ability to call forth speed to counter great speed without losing all the qualities and without losing the principles of Taijiquan is important. As the Taijiquan Classic of Wang Tsung Yueh states:

'You respond quickly to a fast action, slowly to slow action. Although the changes are numerous, the principle remains the same.' (translation taken from T'ai Chi by Cheng Man-Ch'ing and Robert W. Smith, 1967, page 109)

The Importance Of Yi And Chi In Tai Chi Chuan

Yi (mind) and chi (breath) are found inside the human body without form or colour. The eyes are unable to view but the chi has a very important role. Our bodies are full of chi circulating and cultivating the body. The chi is formed with fire from the 'ming men'. The fire refines the 'jieng' to become chi. The Taoists describe it as 'water and fire already present or the 'nei dan'. It is stored in the area of the dan tien. The Taoists value chi very much. Usually, people think the blood is the most important essence in the body, they do not know that chi is even more important than blood. Chi is the chief while blood is the assistant. We need blood that contains the essentials (vitamins, minerals, etc.) but chi is the transportation, making it more important. Chi is heavy while blood is light. If we do not have enough blood, we can still temporarily survive. Without enough chi, we die immediately. Therefore to cultivate chi is very important. The importance of Tai Chi Chuan is to concentrate in order to cultivate the chi. We always say, "External to exercise are the tendons, bones and skin. Internal is the breath." For those who practice Tai Chi Chuan, after practising the forms, push hands, roll back or two-man forms, the breathing is still smooth and natural, the face colour does not change and the internal chi flows through the entire body. The feeling is more comfortable than before the exercise. This is the result of cultivating the chi. After exercise, they never are short of breath or feel tired. When the chi fills up the body, the blood is healthy. As the blood flows through the body, the body is strong. A healthy body strengthens the mind. A strong mind leads to a great spirit. A great spirit is able to prolong our life.

What about yi? Yi is the heart (mind) and heart is yi. In definition, there is a slight difference between heart and yi. The heart is the chief and the yi, the assistant. When the heart moves (intentions), the yi starts to work. The yi leads and the chi follows. Therefore, the heart, yi and chi are all interconnected. If the heart is troubled then the yi is diffused. If the yi is diffused, the chi floats. On the other hand, when chi sinks, the yi will be concentrated. When the yi is concentrated, the heart is stable. Therefore the three are melded together and cannot be separated from each other. The chi moves and can motivate the blood and the spirit. Then we can use the chi in practice. Chi is the principle and Tai Chi Chuan is the method. If we have a principle without the method, we cannot transfer it to the practical. If we have a method without principle, we give up the major and look for the minor. Therefore, yi, chi and Tai Chi Chuan have a interconnected relationship as well.

In Tai Chi Chuan, the use of yi and chi for the beginner is very difficult but not without a way to get to the entrance. When we first practice the Thirteen Postures, or even a single movement, we have to use our imagination. For example, if we use both hands to perform a push movement, we imagine there is an opponent in front of us. Actually, at the time, there is no chi in the palms to

release. But when we start to imagine. Our chi rises up the spine to the shoulder, arm, wrists and palms, finally being released to the opponent's body. This kind of imagination, for the beginner is very dull. After practising for a long time, you will know how to use imagination.

The chi has two kinds circulating in the body. There is an upper level chi (post-birth) and lower level chi (pre-birth). When you exhale, the upper level chi exits from the nose while the lower level chi sinks to the dan tien. When you inhale, the upper level chi enters from the nose while the lower level chi rises up the spine from the dan tien to the hands and legs. When the yi moves, the chi follows to any part of the body. Practising Tai Chi Chuan, closing and opening while breathing in and out, is to exercise the chi to fill the entire body, to create the sensitive from the body, tendons, touch and even spirit. This is why "An Internal Explanation Of Training" by Wang Dsung Yueh says, "The mind should be concentrated on the spirit and not the chi. If focused only on the chi, one will be clumsy and not agile. If focused on the chi, one will become powerless. If one does not concentrate on the chi, one will be strong as steel."

Some believe that chi is useless. However, there is a misunderstanding. Such a belief pertains only to certain kinds of chi such as stiff chi, impetuous chi or brutish chi that arises with anger. This type of stiff, impetuous, brutal chi causes both feet to float and the body to become unstable, indicating that both are without li. But the chi in Tai Chi Chuan is the chi from the dan tien. This chi is clear and calm. Because it is calm, the chi is fluid. Because it is fluid, the chi circulates without interruption. There is no relationship with the undesired stiff, impetuous and brutal chi. In "An Internal Explanation of Tai Chi Chuan", many points can be found that describe chi. It says 'Use the mind to direct the movement of chi. The mind must be calm so that the chi can condense deep into the bones. When the chi circulates around the body, the chi must flow like a fluid and smoothly, then it is able to follow the mind easily,...The mind and chi must interchange and coordinate between substantial and insubstantial such that there will be no harm...The mind is the commander, the chi the flag...The abdomen is completely relaxed and the chi condenses into the bones.' It is also written, "The yi and chi are the rulers and the body the subject." These words all talk about the importance of chi. The learner must discriminate between the clear, calm chi and the stiff, brutal chi. To cultivate the clear, calm chi and giving away the stiff, brutal chi. Generally, the relationship between yi and chi is like the relationship between the driver and the engine in a car. The yi is the driver, the chi the engine. We cannot forget either of them.

Tai Chi Chuan Method Of Breathing And Chi Direction

Some people call Tai Chi Chuan an "inside family fist". There are three reasons for doing so. First of all, Confucianism discriminates against foreign influences. Secondly, the Tai Chi Chuan technique concentrates upon grabbing the joints of the opponent's body so that whatever bodily harm that is inflicted is internal and invisible to the opponent. Third of all, Tai Chi Chuan concentrates upon directing the chi to circulate inside the body (to cultivate vigour, chi and spirit).

The basic breathing of Tai Chi Chuan uses the nose only, not the mouth. This differs from the common people who use the nose to inhale and exhale through the mouth. After mastering Tai Chi Chuan to a higher level, the chi inside the chest can be separate into two levels (usually people call this "pre-birth chi" and "post-birth chi"). When exhaling the upper level chi (post-birth chi) is breathed out from the nose and, at the same time, the lower level chi (pre-birth chi) sinks to the dan tien. When inhaling, the upper level chi is breathed in from the nose and, at the

same time, the lower level chi rises from the dan tien, along the spinal cord, to the area between the shoulder blades. When a person can achieve this technique, we call it "unobstructed chi" (the chi is able to circulate through the body freely). Everyone who practises the correct form of Tai Chi Chuan for a certain period of time and to a certain level may achieve this "unobstructed chi". However, the beginner does not have to concentrate upon this breathing technique, but concentrate instead on the forms for the correct movement and postures. The only requirements for the beginners are slow movements, natural breathing, and a relaxation of the entire body. If there is too much pressure to push the chi to sink into the dan tien, it will head in the wrong direction. This may cause intestinal diseases or haemorrhoids may flare up.

After practising to a certain level, we have to know how to breathe. If we do not understand the breathing theory then we cannot strive to attain the highest level of Tai Chi Chuan. The Tai Chi Chuan classic, "Thirteen Postures: Comprehending External and Internal Training", states: "Able to breathe, one may be agile and alive." Meaning that the breathing and movements must be coordinated. When one should exhale, then one must exhale; when one should inhale, one must inhale since inhalation is insubstantial whereas exhalation is substantial. If performed correctly, the body will be agile and alive. Otherwise, one cannot discriminate the substantial and insubstantial, and the meaning of practising Tai Chi Chuan is lost since Tai Chi Chuan emphasizes the substantial and insubstantial.

Usually a teacher teaches the students to learn Tai Chi Chuan in two parts: the internal and the external. The internal is breathing while the external is the forms. If both parts are taught simultaneously and the student is unable to get it right, then there will be difficulties. Therefore, the beginner should let the breathing be natural and not emphasize the breathing technique. In this chapter, we study the breathing knowledge. Therefore we cannot avoid discussing the breathing technique in detail simply due to the above problem.

The details of the method are: when practising the forms, one exhales when extending the arm and inhales when withdrawing the arm; one inhales when rising and exhales when sinking; to lift is to inhale, to lower is to exhale; when opening up, one inhales, when closing, one exhales. When turning the body and in between movements, there should be a "little breathing". A "little breathing" means taking short breaths quickly and has the quality of relaxation and stoppage. Generally, breathing is used to lead the movement. The movement must be coordinated with the breathing. The body opens up and the chi closes. The chi opens up and the body closes. In push hands, to push is to exhale; to roll back is to inhale; to ward off is to exhale; to neutralize is to inhale. If one is rolled back by an opponent, there should be a natural "little breathing". This "little breathing" should direct the mind to calmness. When the mind is calm, then one is able to see and hear the opponent's movements and void being caught off guard. If one is pressed or pushed by an opponent, one should inhale. However, if one is unable to inhale, then one should exhale because the chi from inhaling circulates to the hands and legs. Therefore when one exhales to the extreme, there should be conversion to inhalation; and when one inhales to the extreme, there should be conversion to exhalation. Inhalation and exhalation can be converted alternately.

In big roll back, to strike the face is to exhale; to push is to exhale; to shoulder strike is to exhale; to roll back is to inhale. If one is shoulder struck by an opponent, one should inhale. If one is rolled back by an opponent, there should be "little breathing". When turning the body and just before pushing, a "little breathing" should occur. When performing other footwork and before striking, there should be a "little breathing" as well so that one is calm and able to see and listen as

well as have a sticking power. The method in which the breathing is performed in the use of knives, swords, spears, and sparring is the same as that when practising the forms.

The method to circulate the inner chi is separated into two types: from pre-birth to post-birth and from post-birth to pre-birth. The first is from the front to the back, meaning that the dan tien chi travels down to the hai ti and reverses to the tailbone, travels along the spine to yu zhen up to tian ling, down the forehead and the nose to ren zhong, to the throat, chest, navel and finally back to the dan tien. The second is from the back to the front, meaning that the dan tien chi heads up from the navel to the chest, throat, ren zhong, forehead, reaching tian ling, down to yu zhen and continues along the spine to the tailbone, and finally reaches hai ti and returns to the dan tien.

Note, the second is the opposite of the first.

This type of "chi moving method" may seem very vague at the beginning but after a long period of time, one will be able to fully understand and achieve it. These two types of inner chi circulation must be used during solo practice as well as in sparring practice with an opponent and in striking practice. Otherwise, even if the strike is made with much power, it is still not good enough. Tai Chi Chuan masters not only use the inner chi circulation method but can even listen and know the opponent's inner chi: when it rises or lowers, moves to the front or back, move left, right, up and down. This kind of supreme technique is never achieved until after a few decades of good training. Of course, for the beginner, this is difficult to understand.

There are two sounds "Heng" and "Haah" produced when inhaling and exhaling (the great masters can also use mouth or nasal to do their inhaling and exhaling). The masters, when they practice, whether in solo or with an opponent, their mouths produce these two sounds naturally for three reasons. Firstly, it makes the internal chi smooth and comfortable; the internal organs will not get hurt by the pressure. Secondly, the internal power can be released completely; none of it remains inside. Thirdly, it scares the opponent (if an opponent experiences fear, their movements become loose or scattered, their mind gets lost, their footwork becomes undisciplined and therefore is unable to defend themselves and one has a chance to win). Therefore, the two sounds of "Heng and Haah" are very useful and the learner must pay close attention to them. One makes the sound "Heng" when one is neutralizing and the inner chi is inhaled. The sound "Haah" is usually produced when one grabs or strikes and the inner chi is exhaled. The Old Tai Chi Chuan Classic of Ching Chyan Long Dynasty states: "Hold the dan tien to practice internal kung fu. The two chis of Heng Haah are wonderful. Move open, quite close, bend and extend to follow your opponent. Slow or fast, respond, follow the theory and understand thoroughly." Another Tai Chi Chuan Classic states: "To apply (push hands) on forth and back earlier or later, to close or to strike is like an arrow. It cultivates a lot. One chi "Haah" then push far away. It needs to be taught by mouth and secretly then open the door and see the sky." From that we can understand the two sounds of "Heng Haah" are marvellous and infinite.

Push Hands

A Slow Discourse On Push Hands (Part I) (Partial)

Push Hands is the way of learning combative methods in Taijiquan, the way to practice defensive skills, but it is not the goal of learning Taijiquan. What is the goal then? One is the goal of strengthening the body - ridding illness and adding years; one is the goal of combat - sparring hands (two people engaging in combative exchanges without fixed forms).

Push Hands is the ingenious method to practice 'understanding energy' (Dong Jing). It is also the ladder connecting form learning to sparring hands.

Those who learn external boxing, have an old saying, it goes 'to learn hitting first learn to suffer'. Therefore when learning boxing, you need to learn qigong, to make yourself able to bear heavy blows. Taijiquan's theory is different, it emphasizes 'attracting into emptiness, using softness to defeat hardness' (Yin Jin Ru Kong, Yi Rou Zhi Kang). That is to learn how not to be on the receiving end of your enemy's strength, which means having 'to learn boxing first learn not to suffer'. That's why only after learning sticking jing (nian jing), neutralising jing (hua jing), after being able to stick and able to neutralise then taking the next step to learn holding jing (na jing) and emitting jing (fa jing).

In researching the usage of Taijiquan, the methods left to us by our forebears who created the method of Push Hands, in interactions between two people of Ward-off (peng), rollback (lu), press (ji) and push (an), to study the rationale behind the usage of Taijiquan. Both seeking out the opponent's weak points, initiating the attack, watchful namely of emitting jing and neutralising jing. In order for oneself to be undefeated, it is necessary to learn neutralising jing, attracting strength into emptiness, causing one self not to be on the receiving end of your enemy's strength. Through not letting go and not resisting of the two hands in contact, learning continuous sticking, learning how to 'understand jing'. First learning how to neutralise energy, being undefeatable, what remains then is learning the method of learning achieving victory over your enemy (that is holding jing and emitting jing).

That is why, when beginning to learn Push Hands, it is very important not to have a heart set on winning. One must concentrate the heart and mind solely on 'listening' to the enemy's strength and neutralise it. Only through a relatively long period of Push Hands (of course needing instruction from a teacher who understands), causing oneself to be able to understand jing, able to neutralise jing, then proceeding to learning holding jing and emitting jing would then be easy. It can also be said, that being able to neutralise jing, emitting jing is also from there.

But because in Push Hands there can be victory and defeat, the matter concerns what we Chinese regard with special importance of face value, those beginning to learn Push Hands, all only think of winning and am not willing to lose when pushing hands, what overcoming hardness with softness, attracting into emptiness, is completely forgotten; the rationale being first learning how to neutralise jing is also not bothered with; concentrating the heart and mind solely on winning. Therefore even the strength for nursing milk is also completely taken out, seeking to use great strength to create a situation of pressing to topple, attempting to win over the opponent, this is abandoning reason in the eagerness to gain victory, committing the mishap of 'resisting' This is definitely a common problem with most who are learning Push Hands, what is being learnt is Taijiquan, what is talked about is overcoming hardness with softness, but when its put into use its great leaning strength, using strength to gain victory over the opponent. Its really laughable and something to sigh about!

Those who are mainly observers, careless people, the self-opinionated and those who have too great a desire to win, as well as those who have attained a good standard in external martial arts, all cannot learn well Taijiquan Push Hands. Only those who do not possess the above mentioned dispositions and conditions have hope of fathoming Push Hands Skill's essence and wonders. Hsu Chen in his 'Profundity of Taijiquan' says "rather follow reason to seek the essence, don't abandon reason in the eagerness to gain victory". This is certainly a great insight, precisely the good medicine to cure this illness. On the basis of these two admonishments, the have caused me

to remain constantly cautioned and alert in my studies, making less mistakes during Push Hands, benefiting much.

Push Hands is the mutual probing of the internal jing, its dependent on the sense of touch, seeking out the opponent's centre of mass and flaws, definitely not the same as the methods of external martial arts, even more unlike what is called "horizontal defeating the straight". At the start is the study of fixed stance Push Hands, which must emphasize 'ward off, rollback, press, push must be dilligent', must not simply go through the motions, cultivate careful listening to jing, completely neutralising, not messily moving, etc, the above good habits. Then proceeding to study Big Rollback (Ta Lu), using pluck, split, elbow stroke, shoulder stroke, also equally emphasizing on listening to jing. When highly skilled people Push Hands, they mutually seek out each other's jing, not conforming to any fixed forms, this is also known as Sparring Push (San Tui).

Push Hands can be considered as a type of cultured combat, the form being more refined, content abundant, striving for meticulousness, opposing coarseness, therefore focused on fighting with intellect and skill, disdaining fighting with strength. Even though emitting jing's results are relatively shocking, hitting a person over 3 and half metres is a common thing, but this is not normally like external martial art's bumping hand, hitting until the nose is green and the face is red. Not only can we from it raise our skills in attack and defense, as well as a friendly competition, not only moving and lively, also winding and lingering, if being emitted jing by an expert, also can be deeply feel shock till it moves the soul, the attack being the same as being electrocuted. Many of those studying Taijiquan, once they meet they love to Push Hands, to the point to becoming Push Hands addicts, this is because within there is some kind of interest, outsiders are not aware of this. The pleasure during Push Hands advances friendship, improves health, increases the skill and thought. A single thing with many benefits, why would one not be glad to do it!

In Wu Zhi Qing's book "Traditional Taijiquan", there is a record of Mr Xiang Qi Ran's experience in practicing Taijiquan, there is a part which discusses the usage of Push Hands, it is discussed carefully, it is repeated here:

"We martial artists, whether its Taijiquan or some other martial arts, all should know the meaning of the word 'fast', not in the two hands, the speed of extending and retracting, also not th speed of the feet in advancing and retreating, possessing the same kind of hands and feet, the speed of extending, retracting, advancing, retreating, other than the amputated, the aged and the senile, as well as the frail, fatigued and deformed, mostly are about the same. It is necessary to know the difference of fast and slow, the importance is in the eyes. But possessing the same two eyes, what then is the difference, it is in the speed in seeing opportunities. If the enemy does not expose a viable opportunity, even if the hands and feet strike his body, it does not have the desired effect, rather every time it presents the enemy opportunities to penetrate. When two are in combat, where are the opportunities? The instant the opponent loses control of his centre of mass, that is the opportunity. The two eyes see the opportunity, taking this precious opportunity to attack, is it certain to hit down the enemy? It is not certain. It is still necessary not to lose position, not to lose direction, then it is effective. Because the enemy's control over his centre of mass is lost, having ascertained where the flaw is, from that place attacking, from which direction to attack from, then can using less strength gain greater success. If the direction, position is not measured and settled, though the opponent originally has already lost control over his centre of mass, sometimes in being attacked can regain it. It

is the occasion of two people in combat, opportunities appropriate for attack consistently occur for each other, the only difficulty is in the two eyes not discovering them, sometimes discovering it too late, the opportunity is past, sometimes because the attacking position and direction is wrong, even attacking cannot bring results, this is also missing the opportunity. Practicing Push Hands listening to jing, the emphasis is on seeking opportunities, also learning what kind of opportunity requires which position, which direction to attack. Two eyes not losing the opportunity, attack not losing position and direction, this is the excellence of martial skill, completely not on what is the speed of the hands and legs. Differentiating the depth and shallowness of the art, the martial skill's high or low, completely depends on this. If not waiting for opportunity, not knowing direction and position, this is only brutish hitting, brutish seizing...".

In this portion, Xian Qi Ran emphasizes the usage of the two eyes (sense of sight) in Push Hands, this is naturally important. But it should be supplemented clearly, during Push Hands, listening to jing (sense of touch) is even more important, definitely not less so than the sense of sight. During Sparring Hands, it is also necessary to add the sense of hearing and the sense of reasoning (intellectual judgement), the usage of four senses. Teacher Ya Xuan likewise strongly emphasized this "four senses to face the opponent" in sporting usage.

Other than training the boxing set, Push Hands is Taijiquan's other content, it is with the boxing set, mutually promoting, mutually complementary, mutually completing.

Push Hands has different natures, it can be divided into the Study type Push Hands and the Sport type Push Hands types. These two types of Push Hands in form do not have any difference, but the guiding idea is completely different. Study type Push Hands is researching how boxing theory can be applied in actuality, the goal is to raise one's skill level, winning or losing should be outside its context. Sport type Push Hands, its goal is on gaining victory, two soldiers in conflict, there can never be too much deception in war, insubstantial insubstantial substantial, there are myriad changes, fighting on intelligence, fighting on skill content, is therefore even more.

If only for training the body to be healthy, if only practicing the boxing set, not learning Push Hands, it does not make much difference. If one seeks to fathom the marvelous combative skills of Taijiquan, then it is imperative to study Push Hands. When pushing hands with an expert, one can discover one's non-conformity and shortcomings, learning the opponent's good points. When pushing hands with someone of inferior skill, one can also understand one's own good points and the opponent's flaws. From there we can correct the inaccuracies in the boxing form, whilst continuing to promote one's good points. Flaws in the boxing form, in Push Hands will definitely show up, it is not possible to hide them even if one wanted to. Therefore, if one does not practice Push Hands, one can only think that one's form is correct, not being able to get an objective assessment; not practicing Push Hands, one cannot also know the meaning of the two words 'Taiji' in the boxing, the content of the boxing theory, also cannot be understood. Only practicing the boxing set, at most one has only learnt half of Taijiquan. In actual fact, not studying Push Hands, one cannot learn well Taijiquan.

Push Hands has the form as its basic exercise, it is the usage of relaxed and soft skill, but within has also some other methods that definitely require a teacher to transmit. Especially when first learning Push Hands, there are certain rules, these must be observed. If one does not meet a teacher who understands, always blindly stirring things up, beginning with fighting with strength first, gambling to conclude, there is no way to enter into correctness.

After understanding Push Hands, both hands conduct a sense of touch in a lively manner, without transmission other than the two eyes, gaining another two eyes. When pushing hands with others, if the opponent's skill is relatively inferior, I can sense from the hand's touch and know my opponent's entire situation, like the magnitude of his strength, direction, map of his intentions, etc. Feeling that the opponent has flaws and weaknesses everywhere, being able to attack him at anytime from anywhere. As to the opponent's incoming strength, in a state of proper and natural relaxed lightness, attract it into emptiness, neutralising without form. Those who have not gone through long periods of Push Hands training, their hands will never be able to have this kind of ability. This then is what the boxing manual says 'from familiarity gradually realising understanding jing', the meaning of 'understanding jing'.
(translation still on going and not yet complete, to be continued....)

Discourse On Taiji Pushing Hands

Those in the world who have heard about Taijiquan, are not few in number. They know how to differentiate between the pure and the sundry, that their flavours are different. Pure Taiji, is such that arms are like cotton wrapping iron, soft and heavy. When pushing hands, one can distinguish. When holding a person, the hands are extremely light but one cannot pass. When emitting a person, its like discarding an elastic ball, rapidly crisp, not receiving any strength. Those tumbled out, only feel a single move, but don't feel any pain, and are already tumbled out more than three and a half metres. When adhering to a person, there is no grabbing or seizing, lightly sticking, like being stuck to glue and not being able to discard it, causing the person's arms to be unbearably sore and numb. This then is real Taiji. If one uses strength to press and push a person, although one can control a person and hit him out. But it will definitely entail great effort, the one receiving will feel pain, although hit out it cannot be crisp. In reverse, if one uses strength to seize and control one capable in Taijiquan, its like catching the wind and clutching at shadows, everywhere entering into emptiness. Also like being on water and plucking a bottle gourd, one just cannot seem to exert the strength.

San Shou (Sparring Hands)

San Shou means free fighting. There is no definite method to it. Both T'ui shou [Push Hands] and Ta Lu issue from familiarity with the correct touch. From familiarity with the correct touch you will learn to t'ing jing [listen to strength]. After learning t'ing jing, you will gradually comprehend tung jing [understanding strength]. After comprehending tung jing, nothing any longer seems touched or not touched, scattered or not scattered, adhered to or not adhered to, followed or not followed. All are unnecessary explanations. They do not touch on the main point. The way of San Shou is located in the Five Elements and called chin, t'ui, ku, pan, ding. If you can tung jing and know the technique, then the application is complete. I followed Professor Yang for seven years and only one jing was difficult to learn. It was chieh jing [receiving jing]. If your achievement reaches this level then you do not have to worry about the other kinds of jing. The explanation of chieh jing found through the analogy of someone throwing a ball to hit me. If I resist the ball or hit it, it will bounce out. This is the jing of colliding and is not chieh jing. If the ball is light, it will be easy to bounce it out. However, if the ball's weight is several hundred pounds, how can I bounce it out? Hence, colliding is not correct. You must attract it and then

toss it out. This is chieh jing. If the ball is moving slow or fast, or is light or heavy it is still the same. Chan [adhere], t'ing [listen], t'i [raise], fang [discharge] are all in it. Combine attraction and discharge almost simultaneously. The power is intensified in a very small space. This almost attains the highest wisdom in which San Shou becomes meaningless. Therefore, I say nothing can replace T'ai Chi Ch'uan. It is the supreme. Besides chieh jing there is nothing else.

Taijiquan Combat

The Combative Elements of Yang Taijiquan

Other than the fact that its name can be translated as 'The Supreme Ultimate Fist', Taijiquan has always been noted as a highly effective combat art. It first became widely noted as a combat art when the art was brought to the capital of China, Beijing, by Yang Lu Chan when he taught at the imperial court. Yang was challenged many times but no one ever came close to defeating him. So great was his skill that the martial artists bestowed on him the title 'Yang The Invincible'.

More recently Yang Lu Chan's grandson, Yang Cheng Fu, promoted the art until it spread far and wide. Yang Cheng Fu taught his art as a combat art which can be used to strengthen the body, his three books attest to this fact. There is no substance to the commonly believed assumption that Yang Taijiquan is solely health oriented and not combat effective. By practicing Taijiquan as a martial art, one can gain the health benefits.

Yang Cheng Fu, in his book "The Practical Application of Taijiquan" wrote:

"In Taijiquan, the ability to cultivate oneself physically and spiritually, but not to defend oneself, is civil accomplishment. The ability to defend oneself, but not to cultivate oneself, is martial accomplishment. The soft Taiji method is the true Taiji method. The ability to teach the art of self-cultivation and self-defense, both cultivation and application, is complete civil and martial Taiji." (translation adapted from Douglas Wile's translation)

In these modern times, with the advent of modern weapons of both individual and mass destruction, the civil or health giving aspects have been emphasized more. The full art, however, as the above words explain, consists of both civil and martial portions. One without the other is incomplete. The civil aspects of Taijiquan have been much written about but the martial or combat aspects which are combat principles, applications, etc, are little known and in danger of being lost. As a martial art, Taijiquan is very different from the hard hitting external forms of martial arts.

What is combat Taijiquan like then? It is certainly not about great power even though Taijiquan is capable of generating great power. The Classics state clearly that the art is not based on great power. Once, when Yang Pan Hou had bested an opponent and was proud of himself because of it, Yang Lu Chan, his illustrious father pointed to Pan Hou's torn sleeve and said that he was happy that Pan Hou had won but did he use Taijiquan to win? The implication is of course that a torn sleeve is a sign of inappropriately used great power. Yang Lu Chan's own boxing was so soft that it was nicknamed 'cotton fist' or 'neutralising fist' and was once berated as not being combat effective because of its softness, a point which Yang refuted by promptly defeating the antagonist. More on this later on...

The following are some of the key elements used by Taijiquan exponents in combat.

Combat Principles

A Word About Anatomical Weapons

The anatomical weapons in Taijiquan are not rigorously hardened like in external styles of martial arts. This is because it is not hardness of the weapon but the energy within it that is the effecting component. If the correct structure of the anatomical weapon is maintained, then structurally it will be substantial and able to deliver telling blows with much power without recourse to hardening. The appropriate efficient use of strength usually does not entail vast quantities of it to obtain the desired effect. The principles behind the adage of deflecting a thousand pounds with four ounces hold true in Taijiquan.

Bu Tiu Bu Ding

"Not Letting Go, Not Resisting"

This combat principle is first cultivated in Push Hands practice and later refined in San Shou practice. The key element in this principle is nian or sticking and it operates through nian jing or 'sticking jing'. This is because without sticking, one cannot 'hear' the opponent's energy and its qualities and so be able to control them effectively. And if we resist then we give the attacker a base for which to effect his attack.

That is why instead of deflecting, resisting and absorbing an opponent's attacking force, Taijiquan exponents evade, redirect and blend with it. Evade means simply to move out of his way. In any attack, there are only limited points of attack, so simply removing yourself out of his attacking focus by a change of position negates it. Upon contact, it is not a hard block but a blending with the attacking part by yeilding, sticking and following his momentum, joining his energy and redirecting it to your advantage.

Through Nian Jing or 'sticking energy' we can then develop Ting Jing or 'listening to energy' which is the sensitivity to detect the opponent's strength, its origin, trajectory, magnitude and component vectors. Once we are able to detect his energy movement and his centre of mass, we can effectively know his intent and control it by affecting the energy flow and centre of mass efficiently.

Sui Ren Zhi Shi, Jie Ren Zhi Li

"Following His Posture, Borrowing His Strength"

This simply means to follow your opponent's structure and adapt to it so that it is ineffective. This is practical application of the principle of Bu Tiu Bu Ding by yeilding and following him. Rather than a rigid application of postures learnt, the postures occur spontaneously in response to the opponent's structure.

Borrowing his strength is essentially utilising his own strength against himself, either by causing it to over extend or to channel it through your own body structure back to him. He is literally then hitting himself and there is little expenditure by way of energy for the Taijiquan exponent. This following of the opponent's structure is first learnt from Push Hands, which is why it is important that it not degrade it to a choreographed exercise. Sensing the movements and responding to them is correct rather than just going through the motions and not sensing them. If he does not move, you should not move, but even static, there will be structural flaws that can be detected by the touch and one can attack them by moving first. But be always aware of a possible

trap, even during an attack, sensing plays a very important role in avoiding traps by responding in mid-attack and countering the trap.

Yin Jing Ru Kong

"Attract Into Emptiness"

Literally it means 'attract into emptiness'. It is one of the most common tactic used in Taijiquan and is exemplified by the posture 'Roll Back' which implements the opponent's entry into emptiness. The tactic essentially is presenting a false target for the opponent to attack and when he does, you spring the trap of letting his own momentum and mass be his own undoing by overextending it. Finding no target, he is naturally unbalanced and is easy to counter.

Fa-Jing

"Emitting Energy"

This is when the Taijiquan exponent attacks, it refers to the emission/transmission of energy out of the exponent's body and into the enemy or target. The whole process is of an explosive nature but at no point in it is the body or limbs rigid. Taijiquan exponents are noted for their great power when it comes to uprooting or bouncing an opponent out. This power, however, is applied appropriately and efficiently. Having a lot of power but not knowing where to use it is quite useless, hence the importance of sensitivity. Sensitivity allows one to not only know the opponent and avoid his power but also know where to apply yours to greatest effect.

So is the appropriate use of great power then the key? No it isn't. Power in excess of what is required to achieve the neutralisation and control is inherently unstable. Refining the process till it becomes so efficient that minimum power can produce maximum effect. Then even an old man can best a young and strong one, not with more power but with the intelligent and efficient application of the body.

That is why masters like Zheng Man Qing can send a 200 pound man flying across the room but can find a bowling ball too heavy for him to carry on with the sport (example taken from Mr Lowenthal's book on Master Zheng). The seeming paradox is no paradox at all once one understands it.

Chang Jing

"Long Energy"

This is the most common type of energy emission used in Taijiquan. It develops from the feet and because the energy path is long, through all the joints and ending at the fingers, it is called 'Long Energy'. It is commonly seen when Taijiquan exponents 'bounce' out their push hands partners. The whole body of the opponent is physically pushed away by moving his centre of mass. If it is done correctly, both his feet should leave the ground when he is propelled away. This is why the technique is called 'uprooting'.

The energy can be developed from the rear foot, the front foot or from one to the other. All the joints in the body work coordinatively and smoothly without tension to transfer, amplify and focus the generated energy to the point of attack. This type of energy is usually the first to be manifested by the exponent and though it can be spectacular, it does not cause very serious injury.

Duan Jing

"Short Energy"

This type of energy emission is less common and is considered a rather advanced method. The energy transmission path is shorter than that of Long Energy and originates at the centre of mass which is supported via the rooting leg. The energy emission begins at the centre of mass and propagates outwards. Down the root and out through the limbs. It is targeted on and acts upon the centre of mass of the opponent directly, using it as a base for a crushing attack that ruptures organs, rends musculature and breaks bones.

The fastest application of such energy is called Leng Jing or Cold Energy. The reason it is called this is that the emission was so sudden that it catches the opponent by great surprise, so great it became fright, causing him to break out in cold sweat.

Jie Jing

"Intercepting Energy" or "Receiving Energy"

This skill has always been associated with the great masters and we know that Yang Lu Chan and more recently Yang Cheng Fu and his disciple Zheng Man Qing possessed this skill. It has been said to border on the mysterious and is hard to attain such skill. This skill can only be attained after one is learned in the feet, inches, tenths, hundredth parts and thousandths parts in Taijiquan. At lower levels of attainment, jie jing is expressed mainly through the hands, at higher levels where the entire body is responsive then it can be expressed from almost any part of the body.

What this skill really means is that with an incoming object at speed, the body or contact point, by sticking and yielding attains almost the same speed as the object. This means that since the acceleration of the object and the contact point is nearly the same, their relative speed to each other is small. By 'listening' to the object's centre and vectors, an appropriate minimum vector can be applied to change the object's trajectory. If it is a balanced object, it can be easily pushed, if it is not it can be easily redirected. This is what Zheng Man Qing meant that in Jie Jing one must first attract the object first then throw it away.

Feet, Tenths, Hundredths Parts And Thousandths Parts

This means the division of each movement in Taijiquan into ever finer gradations of movement, technique and jing flow. Each part is then meaningful and has an application in a combative context. The refinement of movements to efficiency is but the beginning, later each part of the movement itself has meaning and later each part of every part and so on.

This practice also ensures that the mind is conscious of every part of the movement and every tiny movement of the body. Sensitivity is thus trained to a very fine degree as is the response to such minute stimuli. As the Classics state the goal quite clearly, to be so light and sensitive that a feather cannot be added nor a fly alight.

The Four Advanced Yang Taijiquan Combat Skills

There are situations where the skills and principles above require some augmentation to make them even more effective. This is usually where the opponent's skill level is high enough so that an effective counter is not possible using less injurious means. With such situations stronger discouragement is required and to cater for such eventualities, Yang Taijiquan has four advanced

combat skills. These four skills can only be learned and applied effectively after one is able to understand each individual portion of any technique. In other words, one must be able to comprehend and put into practice the feet, tenths, hundredth parts and thousandth parts in Taijiquan. These four skills are recorded in the handwritten manual handed down from Yang Lu Chan. It must be noted that the four skills are not used entirely on their own but are integrated to form a comprehensive system of attack and defence built upon the basics of stability, sensitivity, agility and efficient use of the body and energy.

Bi Xue

"Sealing Accupoints"

This is also known as 'Hitting Accupoints' and is more commonly known among Chinese martial artists as Dian Xue or 'Dotting Accupoints' because the majority of these kinds of attack make use of the fingertips. Attacking accupoints is by no means unique to Taijiquan but the way it is done is certainly quite unique. Whilst other martial arts often make use of serious conditioning of the anatomical weapons and vigorous body conditioning to develop the strength and resistance required to hit accupoints, Taijiquan uses positional and structural advantage to let the opponent provide the power to hit himself with his own power and mass.

Accupoints are divided into fatal and non-fatal accupoints. Fatal accupoints are only used in a life and death situation as they cause death very quickly and should not be used indiscriminately. Non-fatal accupoints are used to simply disable or incapacitate the opponent without causing too much harm. There are also accupoints that are more effective at different times of the day depending on the qi flow in the body. These timed strikes are of a more insidious nature as they are used for delayed killing or assassinations.

A short list of some of the accupoints used in Taijiquan is provided but readers are advised against using them unless absolutely necessary and to refrain from experimentation as the recovery techniques should be properly understood before one should practice with accupoints. Even then it is advisable not to practice them with any sort of impact since any accupoint strike on the body is a severe disruption of the body's systems and will have an affect on health of the body, both in the long term and in the short term. In most cases, even after remedial massage and accupoint treatment is carried out, herbs are taken to strengthen and stabilise the body in order to eliminate any after effects.

Grasp Sparrow's Tail :

Peng (Ward-Off)- Wrist and forearm points (LI 4/5/7/10/11, SI 6/7, Lu 5/6/7/8, H 2/3/6, P 6, TW 5)

Lu (Rollback) - wrist and upper arm points (TW 11/12, LI 13, P 2)

Ji (Press)- centre of chest (Ren 15/17, K 23, and flank, Liv 13/14, Sp 21, GB 24)

An (Push)- ribs (K 23, St 19) and floating ribs (Li 13/14)

Zhua Jing

"Grasping Muscles"

Grasping musculature in Taijiquan is akin to the specialisation of Chin-Na (Grasping and Holding) which is an advanced skill in many forms of Chinese martial arts. The difference is that in Taijiquan, the use of positional advantage, momentum and structural advantage is of more importance than super strong fingers. The sensitivity of combat Taijiquan permits the use of the

opponent's structure, position, mass and momentum against himself causing him to literally lock and tie himself up with his structure with the Taijiquan exponent simply 'helping' him do it. The result of this is that his body is unstable, rendering him vulnerable to serious injury should the the Taijiquan exponent chooses to do so. The locks and holds also cause sprains, tears of the musculature and dislocations of bones at the joints which further disable the opponent.

Jie Mo

"Sectioning Fascia"

This skill is directed at restricting blood flow so as to render the body ineffectual in the execution of attacks. This is done primarily by structural control so that the position and state of the musculature and soft tissues of the opponent are such that the blood flow to certain parts of the body is restricted. Blood flow pressure points or gate points as they are referred to in Chinese are also used to effect this. This can cause the limb to 'go to sleep' or cause a knock out. Also part of this skill is the restriction of air flow by attacking the respiratory system and the musculature that powers it. Strikes are sometimes used to effect this.

Positional and structural advantage and use is essential to restrict and control his body. This is possible to a fine degree through the tactile sensitivity attained through dilligent practice in pushing hands and sparring hands.

Na Mai

"Holding Vessels"

This refers to the grasping, holding and pushing of the qi meridians and accupoints with the purpose of disrupting and controlling the qi flow in the body. This makes the body impaired in terms of function and movement rendering the opponent vulnerable. Where Grasping Muscles attacks the physical structure of the body and Sectioning Fascia attacks the circulatory system, Holding Vessels attacks the internal vital energy flow which is distinct from the accupoints and the striking of them.

A good knowledge of the body's qi meridians is necessary as is the results of their disruption and blockage. As with the above skills, the opponent own body and energy is used against himself through superior information via tactile sensitivity and appropriate efficient application to obtain the desired result.

Healing And Harming

When one can destroy a thing, one controls a thing. The knowledge and skill to cause destruction and death of the body can also be used to restore health and prolong life. The four advanced skills mentioned briefly above all require a thorough and intimate knowledge of the body and its functions. This knowledge can be used to heal injuries and illnesses by opening blockages to qi and blood circulation, restoring proper musculature position and function.

Often, this healing function is learned first before the harming function is taught. This ensures a proper disposition and respect for the skill as well a firm grounding in the theoretical base and its practical application. It is because these skills are so destructive that they are seldom taught and a large proportion of exponents in the art are not aware of their existance. They are passed on only to the most trusted of disciples who will not abuse them but use them for the benefit of all mankind.

The Taijiquan Martial Artist

Above all, Taijiquan exponents are encouraged to be moral people. A sense of righteousness, chivalry, kindness, compassion, nobility and being a benefit to society should always be the code of conduct for a Taijiquan practitioner. A good example of a moral Taijiquan exponent will be the great master Sun Lu Tang who was not only a great martial artist but also a great man. A practitioner should embody the principles of his art and apply its strategems and philosophies in their dealings with all things.

The aim of Taijiquan as a martial art is to stop violence conclusively without recourse to more violence, most of the time the violence is redirected against itself or rendered ineffectual. Hence Taijiquan exponents usually just overpower their opponents by turning their own violence against themselves, educating them rather than hurting them. Violence begets violence but by making violence not an option by rendering it pointless, since in Taijiquan it acts against itself, the destructive cycle is broken and a more rational, less confrontational solution becomes the most effective.

Can Taijiquan be used as an attacking art? Yes, but violence should only be the last recourse, never the first. Ego has no place in Taijiquan as it gets in the way of efficient practice and usage of the art. Violence is seldom the solution to a problem and all life is precious and should be treasured. Taijiquan itself is an art to prolong life, in peace and in combat. In practicing Taijiquan as a combat art, peace is learnt and cherished. We learn the art that we may never have to use it. That with the knowledge of violence and its consequences, we choose to avoid it.

The Taijiquan Classics In Li I Yu's Handwritten Manuals

The Taijiquan Classics are a collection of early writings on the art that are regarded by Taijiquan practitioners as containing the essence of the art. The majority of listings of these classical works contain the writings recorded in Li I Yu's handwritten manuals. The contents of these manuals are regarded as the core writings in the Classics and hold a special place in literary tradition of Taijiquan. They are also probably the oldest writings available on the art of Taijiquan.

In addition to the translation into English for these classic works, I will be adding my own commentaries to them to further expand upon the meanings contained in them and their context and historicity. Some of the translations are taken from earlier translations, I have felt that there was no need to redo their fine work, others which have never been translated before have been translated by myself. Where the translations are not my own, they have been credited to the original translators.

The Li I Yu Collection Of Taijiquan Classics

Wang Tsung Yueh's Taijiquan Classic

Taiji comes from infinity; from it spring yin and yang. In movement the two act independently; in stillness they fuse into one. There should be no excess and no insufficiency.

You yield at your opponent's slightest pressure and adhere to him at his slightest retreat. To conquer the strong by yielding is termed "withdraw" (*tsou*). To improve your position to the

detriment of your opponent is called "adherence" (*chan*). You respond quickly to a fast action, slowly to a slow action. Although the changes are numerous, the principle remains the same. Dilligent practice brings the skill of "interpreting strength". Beyond this achievement lies the ultimate goal: complete mastery of an opponent without recourse to detecting his energy. This, however, requires arduous practice.

The spirit of vitality reaches to the top of the head and the qi sinks to the navel. The body is held erect without leaning in any direction. Your opponent should not be able to detect your change from substantial to insubstantial or vice versa, because of your speed in effecting this change.

When your opponent brings pressure on your left side, that side should be empty. The same holds for the right side. When he pushes upward or downward against you, he feels as if there is no end to the emptiness he encounters. When he advances against you, he feels the distance incredibly long; when he retreats, he feels it exasperatingly short.

The entire body is so light that a feather will be felt and so pliable that a fly cannot alight on it without setting it in motion. Your opponent cannot detect your moves but you can anticipate his. If you can master all these techniques you will become a peerless boxer.

In boxing there are myriad schools. Although they differ in form and scale, they can never go beyond reliance on the strong defeating the weak or the swift conquering the slow. Yet these are the result of physical endowments and not practical application and experience. The strong and the quick, however, cannot explain and have no part in the deflection of a thousand pound momentum with a trigger force of four ounces or of an old man defeating a great number of men. Stand like a balance and move actively like a cart wheel. Keep your weight sunk on one side. If it is spread on two feet you will be pushed over easily. Coordinating the substantial is the key here. If that is achieved, then you can interpret strength. After this, by practicing vigorously, studying and remembering, one can reach the stage of total reliance on the mind. Forget yourself and yield to others. Go gradually, according to the right method. Above all, learn these techniques correctly; the slightest divergence will take you far off the path.

The Eight Body Methods

1. Hollow The Chest
2. Raise The Back
3. Bind/Wrap The Lower Abdomen
4. Protect The Abdomen
5. Lift and Prop Up (head)
6. Lift Lower Abdomen (tail bone)
7. Loosen Shoulders
8. Sink Elbows

The Thirteen Posture Form

1. Grasp Sparrow's Tail
2. Single Whip
3. Lift Hands Upwards Posture
4. White Crane Reveals Wings
5. Brush Knee Bend Step
6. Hand Play The Lute Posture
7. Brush Knee Bend Step
8. Hand Play The Lute Posture

9. Deflect, Parry And Punch
10. Apparent Closure
11. Embrace Tiger Push Mountain
12. Single Whip
13. Under Elbow See Fist
14. Repulse Monkey
15. White Crane Reveals Wings
16. Brush Knee Bend Step
17. Three Through Back
18. Single Whip
19. View Hands (Yun Shou - same pronunciation as Cloud Hands)
20. High Pat Horse
21. Left Right Lift Legs
22. Turn Body And Kick With Leg
23. Treading Step Hit With Fist
24. Turn Over Body Double Lift (Double Lift Legs)
25. Drape Body (Chop With Fist)
26. Kick With Leg
27. Kick With Sole
28. Step Forward, Deflect, Parry And Punch
29. Apparent Closure
30. Embrace Tiger Push Mountain
31. Slanting Single Whip
32. Part Wild Horse's Mane
33. Single Whip
34. Fair Lady Threads Shuttle
35. Single Whip
36. View Hands
37. Downward Posture
38. Change Chicken Standing On One Leg
39. Repulse Monkey
40. White Crane Reveals Wings
41. Brush Knee Bend Step
42. Three Through Back
43. Single Whip
44. View Hands
45. High Pat Horse
46. Cross Sweep Lotus (Cross Figure Single Sweep Lotus)
47. Step Forward Point Fist At Pubic
48. Step Forward Grasp Sparrow's Tail
49. Single Whip
50. Downward Posture
51. Step Forward Seven Stars
52. Step Down Ride Tiger
53. Turn Leg Sweep Lotus
54. Bend Bow Shoot Tiger
55. Double Draping Fist

Plain Sayings On Each Posture Song by Li I Yu

Raise and prop (the head), lift the pubic, conceive in the mind,
Loosen the shoulders, sink elbows, qi at the tan tien;
Wrap the pubic, protect the abdomen must downward posture,
Hollow chest, raise back, return to natural.
First posture left right Lazily Arranging Clothes,
Two hands pushing out pulling single whip.
Lift Hands Up Posture looking towards space,
White Crane Reveals Wing fly up to the sky.
Brush Knee Bend Step hit to the front,
Hand Playing The Lute hides and draws close to the side.
Brush Knee Bend Step repeat the Downward Posture,
Hand Playing The Lute again once more.
Step forward first hit with Palm To The Face,
Deflect, Parry, Punch hits the front of the chest.
Apparent Closure pushes to the front,
Draw Body Embrace Tiger go push the mountain.
Return body pull to form Single Whip,
Fist Under Elbow hits the centre of the waist.
Repulse Monkey repeats the posture 4 times,
White Crane Reveals Wings until the cloud top.
Brush Knee Bend Step must Downward Posture,
Withdraw Body Lute at front of chest.
Press Posture overturn body Three Through Back,
Twist neck turn the head back pull Single Whip.
View Hands three times then High Pat Horse,
Left Right Lift Legs who dares stand in the way.
Turn Body One Leg (kick) Then Plant Fist,
Overturn Body Double Lift kick to break the sky.
Hold body retreat step Subdue Tiger Posture,
Kick With Leg Turn Body is tightly continuous.
Kick With Sole step forward deflect, parry, hit,
Apparent Closure hands face the front.
Embrace Tiger Push Mountain repeat Downward Posture,
Turn head back and again pull Single Whip.
Part Wild Horse's Mane advances towards the front,
Lazily Arranging Clothes is indeed fresh.
Turn Body again pull Single Whip,
Fair Lady Threads Shuttles complete the four corners.
Change pull Single Whip is really ingenious,
View Hands Downward Posture probes the pure spring.
Change Chicken Stands On One Leg is divided into left and right,
Repulse Monkey is again repeated.

White Crane Reveals Wing extends the body,
Brush Knee forward hand is down at the side.
Press Posture Green Dragon again emerges from the water,
Turn body again and again pull Single Whip.
View Hands High Pat palm against heart,
Cross Figure Sweep Lotus overturns to the back.
Point Fist To Pubic hits downwards,
Lazily Arranging Clothes in tight continuity.
Again pull Single Whip again Downward Posture,
Step up begin discharge Seven Star Fist.
Withdraw body step backwards pull Riding Tiger,
Turn leg out hit Double Sweep Lotus.
Scoop Up The Moon At The Sea Bottom must have Downward Posture,
Bend Bow Shoot Tiger neck faces forward.
Embrace Twin Fists who dares advance,
Walk the whole earth no one dares stand in the way.
This song this song 60 verses,
If don't meet an intimate friend don't transmit lightly.

Thirteen Posture Long Boxing

Long Boxing, which denotes the serial forms, is like the flow of water in a great river or sea, running without end. The thirteen kinetic movements are: *peng* (warding), *lu* (diverting), *ji* (pressing), *an* (pushing), *tsai* (plucking), *lieh* (twisting), *chou* (elbowing) and *Kao* (leaning) which are connected with the eight trigrams, and *jin* (stepping forward), *tui* (stepping backward), *ku* (look to the left), *pan* (look to the right), and *zhong ding* (central equilibrium) which coincide with the five elements, namely, metal, wood, water, fire and earth. *Peng*, *lu*, *ji* and *an* are called the four straight direction manipulations which are toward the south, west, east and north respectively. *Tsai*, *lieh*, *chou* and *kao* are the four diagonal manipulations toward the four corners of northwest, southeast, northeast and southwest respectively.

(Original annotation: This is the work of the late Chang San-feng of Mt. Wu-Dang, who wanted the "heros" in the world to prolong life and not solely for martial arts).

Song Of The Thirteen Postures

The thirteen postures should not be taken lightly;
The source of the postures lies in the waist.
Be mindful of the insubstantial and substantial changes;
The qi (breath) spreads throughout without hinderance.
Being still, when attacked by the opponent, be tranquil and move in stillness;
(My) changes caused by the opponent fill him with wonder.
Study the function of each posture carefully and with deliberation;
To achieve the goal is very easy.
Pay attention to the waist at all times;
Completely relax the abdomen and the qi (breath) will raise up.
When the coccyx is straight,
The shen (spirit) goes through the headtop.

To make the whole body light and agile suspend the headtop.

Carefully study.

Extension and contraction, opening and closing, should be natural.

To enter the door and be shown the way, you must be orally taught.

The practice is uninterrupted, and the technique (achieved) by self study.

Speaking of the body and its function, what is the standard?

The i (mind) and qi (breath) are king, and the bones and muscles are the court.

Think over carefully what the final purpose is: to lengthen life and maintain youth.

The Song consists of 140 characters; each character is true and the meaning is complete.

If you do not study in this manner, then you will waste your time and sigh.

Hitting Hands Essential Sayings

Explanation:

Use the mind to move the qi, exerting sunk one, then can the qi gather in the bones, that is what is called 'the source of the postures lies in the waist'. The intent and qi should change actively, it should be round and lively, that is what is called 'be mindful of the insubstantial and substantial changes'. The upright body is erect, peaceful and comfortable, able to support 8 sides; move qi like 9 curved pearls, there is nowhere it does not reach, that is what is called 'the qi spreads throughout without hindrance'.

Emitting strength (fajing) should be sunk, relaxed and quite, in one direction only, this is what is called 'be still, when attacked by the opponent, be tranquil and move in stillness'. In moving back and forth one must fold repeatedly, advancing and retreating must have turns and changes, this is what is called '(my) changes caused by the opponent fill him with wonder'. In curves seek the straight, store then emit, this is what is called 'study the function of each posture carefully and with deliberation, pay attention to the waist at all times'. Lift the consciousness, then can one be without worry about being slow and heavy, this is what is called 'completely relax the abdomen and the qi will raise up'. Empty the neck and prop up (the head) with strength, sink the qi to the Tan Tien, not slanting not leaning, this is what is called 'when the coccyx is straight, the shen (spirit) goes to the headtop, to make the whole body light agile suspend the headtop'. Move the body using qi, exert on this to succeed, then can one facilitate the mind, this is what is called 'extension and contraction, opening and closing, should be natural'. The mind is the command, the qi the flag, the consciousness the commander and the body the one ordered about, this is what is called 'the i (mind) and ch'i (breath) are king, and the bones and muscles are the court.

Explanation:

Though the body moves, the mind holds preciously to quietness, qi must accumulate, the consciousness comfortable. The mind is the command, qi is the flag, the consciousness the commander and the body the one ordered about. Always keep this in mind, the method will yield benefits. The mind is the first, the body comes after. The body only does not know the hand and its movements, the foot and its stepping. This is what is called a single breath completion, abandoning oneself and following others, attracting into emptiness, four ounces drawing out a thousand catties. You must know that in moving, everything moves, when quiet everything is quite, see movement but still quiet, see quiet but still moving, inside is resolute consciousness, outside when seen is easy and comfortable. One must follow along with others, going along with others is lively, following self is stagnating. Those that esteem breath have no strength, those that cultivate the qi have pure hardness. If the other does not move, I do not move; the other moves

slightly, I then move first. Labour to know yourself, only then can you turn and receive at will; for oneself to stick to others, one must know others, only then can one be not too late or too early. One must be able to raise the consciousness, then you don't have the worry about being slow and heavy; sticking and following gives agility, then one can see the ingeniousness of 'into emptiness'. One must divide Yin and Yang when moving back and forth, advancing and retreating has turning and closing. Opportunity comes from oneself, strength is borrowed from others. In emitting strength (fajing), the upper and lower must be coordinated, then in going one is invincible; the erect body must be upright without leaning, able to support 8 sides. Quiet like a mountain, moving like a river. Stepping forward like standing on the edge of a pond, move strength (jing) like drawing silk, store strength (jing) like stretching a bow, emit strength (fajing) like shooting an arrow. Move qi like 9 curved pearls, there is nowhere it does not reach; propel qi like steel refined a hundred times over, there is nothing hard that it cannot destroy. Form like targeting when catching a mouse, the consciousness like a cat catching a mouse. Seek the straight in the curved, store then emit. To take in is the same as to emit, joining without breaks. From extreme softness then can it be extremely strong and hard; can stick and follow then can be agile. Qi is cultivated directly without harm, strength (jing) is stored in the curved and with surplus. Compliance comes gradually, only knowing can one achieve it.

Also said:

In any action the entire body should be light and agile and all of its parts connected like pearls on a thread. The qi should be cultivated; the spirit of vitality should be retained internally and not exposed externally.

Sound boxing is rooted in the feet, develops in the legs, is directed by the waist, and functions through the fingers. The feet, legs, and waist must act as one. There should be no hollows and projections and no severance, so that when advancing and retreating you can use both your opponent's defects and your own superior position. If you fail to gain these advantages, your body will be disordered and confused. To correct this fault you must adjust your legs and waist. The same principle applies irrespective of direction or attitude.

Taiji hinges entirely upon the player's consciousness (i) rather than upon his external muscular force (li). When attacking above, you must not forget below; when striking left, you must pay attention to the right; and when advancing, you must have regard for retreating. This principle applies for both the attacker and defender. If you want to pull something upward, you must first push it down, causing the root to be severed and the object to be immediately toppled. The substantial and the insubstantial must be clearly differentiated. Every part of the body has both a substantial and an insubstantial aspect at any given time. The entire body also has this feature if considered as one unit. All parts of the body must be threaded together, not allowing the slightest severance.

Sparring Releasing Secret Formula

Lift his body, using his power--
be flexible;

Draw his body, storing your
strength--be able to gather;

Relax, don't lock your strength--
be tranquil;

Release, pay attention to your
waist and legs--be integrated.

Hitting Hands Song

In Ward-off, Rollback, Press and Push,
You must find the real technique-
If he goes up, you follow;
If he goes down, you follow;
Then he cannot attack.
Let him attack you with great force,
And use four ounces to deflect a thousand pounds,
Neutralizing him until he becomes powerless,
And then use withdraw-attack.
Also adhere and lift, support from below,
Stick horizontally, and attach from the rear-
Without letting go and with no resistance.

Sparring Hands And Walking Frame Essentials By Li I Yu

Formerly people said: being able to attract into emptiness, you can use four ounces to deflect a thousand pounds. Not being able to attract into emptiness, you cannot deflect a thousand pounds. The words are simple, but the meaning complete. The beginner cannot understand it. Here I add some words to explain it. If someone is ambitious to learn this art, he can find some way to enter it and every day he will have improvement.

Desiring to attract into emptiness and use four ounces to deflect a thousand pounds, first you must have the correct timing and position. To obtain the correct timing and position, you must first make the body one unit. Desiring to make the body one unit, you must first eliminate hollows and protruberances. To make the whole body without hbreaks or holes, you must first have the shen (spirit) and qi (breath) excited and expanded. If you want the shen and qi activated and expanded, you must first raise the spirit (pay attention) and the shen should not be unfocussed. To have your shen not unfocussed, you must first have the shen and qi gather and penetrate the bones. Desiring the shen and qi to penetrate the bones, you must first strengthen the two thighs and loosen the two shoulders and let the qi sink down.

The jing (internal force) raises from the feet, changes into the legs, is stored in the chest, moved in the shoulders and commanded in the waist. The upper part connects to the two arms and the lower part follows the legs. It changes inside. To gather is to close and to release is to open. If it is quiet, it is completely still. Still means to close. In closing there is opening. If it is moving, everything moves. Moving is open. In opening there is closing. When the body is touched it revolves freely. There is nowhere that does not obtain power. Then you can attract to emptiness and use four ounces to deflect a thousand pounds.

Practicing the form every day is the kung fu (way of practicing) of knowing yourself. When you start to practice, first ask yourself, "Did my whole body follow the previous principles or not?" If one little place didn't follow (them), then correct it immediately. Therefore, in practicing the form we want slowness not speed.

Push hands is the kung fu of knowing others. As for movement and stillness, although it is to know others, you must still ask yourself. If you arrange yourself well, when others touch you, you don't move a hair. Follow the opportunity and meet his jing (internal force) and let him naturally fall outward. If you feel someplace (in your body) is powerless, it is double weighted and unchanging. You must first seek (the defect) in yin and yang, opening and closing. Know yourself and know others: in one hundred battles you will win one hundred times.

Five Word Formula By Li I Yu

CALM

The mind should be calm. If it is not, one cannot concentrate, and when the arm is raised, (whether) forward or back, left or right, it is completely without certain direction. Therefore it is necessary to maintain a calm mind. In beginning to move, you cannot control (it) by yourself. The entire mind must (also) experience and comprehend the movements of the opponent. Accordingly, when (the movement) bends, it then straightens, without disconnecting or resisting. Do not extend or retreat by yourself. If my opponent has li (strength), I also have li, but my li is previous (in exact anticipation of his). If the opponent does not have li, I am also without it (li), but my mind is still previous. It is necessary to be continually mindful; to whatever part (of the body) is touched the mind should go. You must discover the information by non-discrimination and non-resistance. Follow this method, and in one year, or a half-year, you will instinctively find it in your body. All of this means use i (mind), not jing (internal force). After a long time the opponent will be controlled by me and I will not be controlled by him.

AGILITY

If the body is clumsy, then in advancing or retreating it cannot be free; therefore it must be agile. Once you raise your arm, you cannot appear clumsy. The moment the force of the opponent touches my skin and hair, my mind is already penetrating his bones. When holding up the arms the qi (breath) is threaded together continuously. When the left side is heavy, it then empties, and the right side is already countering. When the right is heavy, it empties, and the left is already countering. The qi is like a wheel, and the whole body must mutually coordinate. If there is any uncoordinated place, the body becomes disordered and weak. The defect is to be found in the waist and legs. First the mind is used to order the body. Follow the opponent and not yourself (your own inclination). Later your body can follow your mind, and you can control yourself and still follow the opponent. When you only follow yourself, you are clumsy, but when you follow (coordinate with) the opponent, you are lively. When you can follow your opponent, then your hands can distinguish and weigh accurately the amount of his force, and measure the distance of his approach with no mistake. Advancing and retreating everywhere (the coordination) is perfect. After studying for a long time, your technique will become skillful.

BREATH

To Gather the Qi

If the qi is dispersed, then it is not stored (accumulated) and is easy to scatter. Let the qi penetrate the spine and the inhalation and exhalation be smooth and unimpeded throughout the entire body. The inhalation closes and gathers, the exhalation opens and discharges. Because the inhalation can naturally raise and also uproot the opponent, the exhalation can naturally sink down and also discharge (fa fang) him. This is by means of the i (mind), not the li (strength) mobilizing the qi (breath).

The Complete Jing

The jing of the (whole) body, through practice becomes one unit. Distinguish clearly between substantial and insubstantial. To fa jing (discharge) it is necessary to have root. The jing starts from the foot, is commanded by the waist, and manifested in the fingers, and discharge through the spine and back. One must completely raise the spirit (pay attention) at the moment when the opponent's jing is just about to manifest, but has not yet been released. My jing has then already met his (jing), not late not early. It is like using a leather (tinder) to start a fire, or like a fountain

gushing forth. (In) going forward or stepping back, there is not even the slightest disorder. In the curve seek the straight, store, then discharge; then you are able to follow your hands and achieve a beneficial result. This is called borrowing force to strike the opponent or using four ounces to deflect thousand pounds.

SPIRIT

Shen Concentrated

Having the above four, then you can return to concentrated spirit: if the spirit is concentrated, then it is (continuous and) uninterrupted, and the practice of qi (breath) returns to the shen (spirit). The manifestation of qi moves with agility. (When) the spirit is concentrated opening and closing occur appropriately and the differentiation of substantial and insubstantial is clear. If left is insubstantial, the right is substantial, and vice versa. Insubstantial does not mean completely without strength. The manifestation of the qi must be agile. Substantial does not mean completely limited. The spirit must be completely concentrated. It is important to be completely in the mind (heart) and waist, and not outside.

Not being outside or separated, force is borrowed from the opponent, and the ch'i is released from the spine. How can the qi discharge from the spine? It sinks downward from the two shoulders, gathers to the spine, and pours to the waist. This is qi from up to down and is called "closed". From the waist the qi mobilizes the spine, spreads to the two arms and flows to fingers. This is qi from down to up and is called "opened". Closed is gathering, and opened is discharging. When you know opening and closing, then you know yin and yang. Reaching this level your skill will progress with the days and you can do as you wish.

Four Word Secret Formula By Wu Yu Xiang

To **Spread** is to circulate the Qi in my body, to spread it upon his strength so he cannot move freely.

To **Cover** is to use my Qi to cover the point of his attack.

To **Confront** is to use my Qi to match his approach precisely.

To **Swallow** is to use my Qi to receive and transform his power completely.

These four words are formless and soundless. Only one who understands strength and achieves the finest stages can know the meaning of what has been said here about Qi. Only one who cultivates his Qi correctly so that it spreads to the body's four limbs will be able to respond to the soundlessness and formlessness of these four words.

Tai Chi Chuan Classic

The Tai Chi Chuan Lun (Discourse)

**Once you move, the whole body must be light and agile,
In particular, it must be linked together**

If you are tense or move in an uncoordinated manner, the balance, speed and smoothness of technique will be adversely affected. This applies to self defence and to forms equally.

**The Chi (Vital Energy) should be aroused and agitated,
While the Shen (Spirit) must be internally hoarded.**

Chi and Shen together with Jing comprised the three interactive treasures of the Taoist alchemists. I've rendered "Chi" as Vital Energy in the present context, but this is very far from being an adequate explanation of the concept. The character itself represents rice being cooked in a pot and giving off vapour, so there is the concept of alchemical change so beloved by the Taoists. In fact Chi is many different things. There is Chi all around us; the air is Chi. The oxygen that we extract from the air is Chi. The oxygen transported by the haemoglobin which is delivered from the lungs to the tissues of the body is Chi. The carbon dioxide and methane gas discharged from various orifices are also examples of Chi. Vital Energy seems the best choice of translation, despite its limitations. The character "Shen" represents on the left the sky and the various heavenly bodies and on the right two hands extending a rope, so there is the concept of expansion. The combination has man reaching for the stars, so perhaps Spirit is the best translation in the present context. The third treasure "Jing" means the Essence; semen. Again the character on the left depicts the rice plant while on the right the upper part means to give birth and the lower represents the colour of plants. Without a good supply of Chi the Essence would be lacking and the Shen would not be at ease. If the Shen was not tranquil, the breathing would be adversely affected and the ability to produce or retain Jing would be adversely affected. Many people particularly those with sedentary life styles and the elderly suffer from poor respiration and circulation therefore it is necessary to stimulate the respiration and thereby the circulation by exercise. This requires full movements involving sinking and raising, contracting and expanding in this way the Chi can be said to be "aroused and agitated". Because the movements are smooth and co-ordinated the Shen (Spirit) is calm and therefore the concentration is good.

**No place should be deficient or defective,
No place should have hollows or bumps.
No place should be cut off or extended.**

Deficient or defective moves occur where for example we raise the hand to defend but fail to make a complementary body movement or where we strike an opponent but fail to use the waist or get the weight behind the technique. The Chinese characters for hollows and bumps are actually pictographs:

If we fail to extend the arms sufficiently in say "Single Whip", then a hollow is created at the elbow joint. Techniques such as this should be extended so that the elbow joint is just short of being locked. This means that there is Yin within Yang and Yang within Yin in all techniques. This is a physical way of expressing the dot of Yang in Yin and the dot of Yin in Yang in the Tai Chi symbol. Bumps indicate the localised tension or locking of joints as where the shoulders or back are/is hunched when we perform an arm movement. Many practitioners either run techniques together by "cutting off" i.e. failing to finish one movement before starting the next or go to the other extreme and over extend their movements whether going forward or back. When going forward we go sufficiently far forward so that the front knee extends over, but not beyond the toes of the front foot and the weight is therefore mainly on this foot; only when we get this far forward do we start to move back. Going further forward will cause us to "uproot" ourselves. The key to all this lies in correct weight transference.

**The root is in the feet;
Discharging is done by the legs,
The controlling power is in the waist,
And the appearance is in the hand and fingers.**

Beginners following a teacher usually concentrate on what the teacher is doing with his hands and fingers and fail to see that the power is coming from the feet through the legs to the waist and finally to the hands and arms. Thus pushing off the rear foot, the rear leg is straightened pushing the weight forward onto the front leg while at the same time the waist turns as for example in "Step Up Parry and Punch". Beginners would tend to notice the punch, but fail to notice the other parts of the process. This problem can be remedied by Pushing Hands and Nei Kung training, where we are repeating the same movements many times, while discharging with the legs and turning the waist.

**From the feet to the legs to the waist,
All must be completely uniform and simultaneous,
Whether stepping forward or moving back.
This will result in good timing and correct movements.
If in certain places good timing and correct movement are not achieved,
Body movements become arbitrary and disordered.
This sickness must be sought in the waist and leg.**

In Tai Chi Chuan we have total body movement rather than localised or uncoordinated movement. All parts of the body should therefore start and finish a technique together. Again these skills can be trained in certain Pushing Hands drills. In Pushing Hands drills there should be complementary body movement; if your partner goes forward you go back and vice versa. Therefore in techniques such as Brush Knee Twist Step, the weight goes forward as the striking/pushing hand is extended while the defending/diverting hand comes down and across the body as we push from the rear leg and turn the hip and shoulder into the technique. Failure to do this is a "sickness".

**Above and below, forward and back, left and right are all like this.
In general this is controlled by the Yi (Intent) and not externally.
If there is up, immediately there is down;
If there is forward, immediately there is back;
If there is left, immediately there is right.
If the Yi is to go up,
The Yi to go down is there immediately.**

**Or, if you raise something up,
Then there is the Yi to smash it down with increased force.
In this way its roots will be severed
And destruction will be swift and beyond doubt.**

From a health point of view, the Tai Chi form involves constantly contrasting movements, first in one direction, then in another. This method is excellent for improving balance and coordination. The circulation and joint movement are also improved. For example by raising the hands above the head, the heart has to work harder to pump the blood through the arteries against gravity, but the blood flows easily through the veins in the other direction. Lowering the hands of course has the reverse effect. The principle of total body movement applies no matter what direction we are moving in. Now we are dealing with the practical application of Yin Yang theory as directed by the Yi, the intent. If we try to lift an opponent and he resists then we change the force to downward directed force; if we pull him forward and he resists we can throw him back; if we divert his attack with the left hand then it is natural to hit him simultaneously with the right. This can also be considered applied psychology. The opponent attacks us because he hates us and wants to hurt us, therefore whatever we do he will oppose it. If we exert force in one direction to provoke a reaction, he is likely to resist us. When we detect his resistance, we can use maximum force in the opposite reaction. This indirect method is much more devastating as we are exploiting the opponent's anger and adding our force to his. This ability is trained by repetitive drills and training in Pushing Hands until it becomes a natural reaction in self defence.

**Void and Substantial must be clearly distinguished.
Each place of course has its individual balance of void and substantial,
Every place consists of this, one Void and Substantial.**

Void means empty and is Yang. Substantial means full and is Yin. In a front stance the front foot is substantial/full/Yin and we can't step with it unless and until we shift the weight back. Effectively the foot is dead - this is what makes it Yin. Similarly, again when in a front stance, the rear foot is void/empty/Yang and can step easily in any direction. This potential for movement is what makes it Yang. In a back stance or cat stance the rear leg is full and the front leg is Yang for exactly the same reasons. When in a horse riding stance the void and substantiality exists in so far as the lower body is full or Yin while the upper body is Yang as it has the potential for movement. This division also applies to the hands. If one hand is striking the other hand should be ready to strike, also the force is concentrated on the striking hand at the moment of impact. However, it's not just the hands that strike, it's the whole body force. Mentally too there should be this division of void and substantial, intending to defend automatically implies intending to counter.

**Every part of the body in turn is strung together,
Without causing the least break.**

**This Tai Chi,
It's like the great river, the Chang Jiang,
Surging and flowing without interruption.**

An old name for Tai Chi Chuan was Long Boxing - Chang Chuan and the name was derived from this comparison to China's famous river, the Chang Jiang. This comparison implies that firstly that like a river our movements whether in self defence, forms or Pushing Hands should flow and be continuously using total body movement. Secondly, we need to spend time on long and continuous practice to get benefits from Tai Chi Chuan. Thirdly, there is no one way in which or one speed at which we should do the form. Some movements are more demanding than others, some require greater or lesser emphasis. The form can be done in a slower, softer and more internalised or in a more vigorous, more martial way. Fourthly, a river follows the quickest route to its destination.

**Of the Thirteen Tactics,
Peng, Lu, Ji, An, Cai, Lie, Zhou and Kao;
They are the Eight Trigrams.
Step Forward, Move Back, Face Left, Look Right and Centrally Fixed;
These are the Five Elements**

I have deliberately used the translation "Thirteen Tactics" rather than the more common "Thirteen Movements", because they are not just thirteen ways of moving, but eight ways of defending or striking combined with five ways of standing or stepping. They are not used in an arbitrary way, but are logical responses to an opponent's actions.

**Peng, Lu, Ji and An,
Are the trigrams Chien, Kun, Kan, Li, the four cardinal points.
Cai, Lie, Zhou and Kao
Are the trigrams Sun, Chen, Tui, Ken the four corners.
Step Forward, Move Back, Face Left, Look Right and Centrally Fixed;
Are Metal, Wood, Water, Fire and Earth.**

The arrangement of the Eight Trigrams associated with the Eight Powers was that attributed to the legendary Emperor Fu Hsi. The main reason for identifying a particular trigram with a particular way of using force would seem to be that this is usually the direction in which that type of force is used. For example, in using Peng our hand/s diverts the opponent's arm/s up from underneath, i.e. towards the trigram "Chien", which means Heaven; while in using Lu we divert the opponent's arm/s by placing our hand/s above his and diverting it/them to the side and behind us i.e. towards the trigram Kun, which means Earth. Likewise Ji, a straight push, usually

followed Peng and was therefore at right angles to Peng, while An, a downward thrust, was normally employed after Lu and therefore was also at right angles to it. Cai, to uproot, is normally used diagonally upwards, while Lie, spiralling force was normally used diagonally downwards. Kao, to lean or use the shoulder was also used diagonally downwards while Zhou, the use of the elbow or forearm was normally employed diagonally upward. The Five Steps are linked with the Five Elements because the Five Elements have Yin and Yang qualities and a positive or negative relationship to one another. For example Metal destroys Wood, and Water extinguishes Fire. Earth is the key element and so occupies the central position; on the one hand it produces Metal and Wood, on the other it can destroy both Fire and Water which shows the relationship of the Five Elements to one another. This configuration is, however, different from that proposed by the 1st century BC philosopher, Tung Chung-shu of the New Text school. Indeed various authors put the Five Elements in different orders sometimes with Earth coming third sometimes not. In any case there are two basic arrangements of the Five Elements. The first is a mutually generative cycle; the second is a mutually destructive cycle.

In the generative cycle :-

- Metal gives birth to Water
- Water gives birth to Wood
- Wood gives birth to Fire
- Fire gives birth to Earth
- Earth gives birth to Metal

In the destructive cycle :-

- Metal destroys Wood
- Wood destroys Earth
- Earth destroys Water
- Water destroys Fire
- Fire destroys Metal

Each element is also held to be stronger than the element which gave birth to it. Thus, as Metal gives birth to Water, Water is stronger than Metal. When any element is opposed by another quantity of the same element the stronger element will win. To sum up, any element is stronger than two of the other four elements and weaker than the other two. The interaction between the elements is eternal and continuous. Each element also has both Yin and Yang characteristics. Thus Metal could be sharp and shiny or rusty and dull, while Water could be a roaring waterfall or a muddy pool. To go back to the linking of the Five Steps and the Five Elements, if we use Metal (advance in a straight line) and the opponent also uses Metal (advances in a straight line), then the stronger force will prevail. It would make more sense to use Fire or Water and evade the attack or to use Centrally Fixed or Move Back in conjunction with a diversion to redirect the opponent to one side or the other. The Five steps are of key importance in using Tai Chi Chuan as a fighting art. They are trained to some extent in the hand and weapon forms and the Nei Kung, but more fundamentally in Pushing Hands training. Many Tai Chi stylists do not know fundamental Pushing Hands exercises such as Seven Stars Step, Nine Palace Step and Gathering the Wave. I believe that this is partly the fault of Yang Cheng-fu in so far as he is shown in Yang family books using self defence applications in a way that might have worked for him with his massive build, but which is absurd for a small person dealing with a larger opponent. Centrally Fixed is identified with the element Earth and just as Earth is the key element so Centrally Fixed is the position from which the other steps spring. Face Left and Look Right accordingly take their places as Water and Fire respectively and Step Forward is Metal while Move Back is

Wood. Tai Chi Chuan makes extensive use of evasion and counter attack as well as the Chinese military stratagem of retreating in order to advance. It should be well understood that the identification of the Eight Powers, each linked individually to one of the Eight Trigrams, and the Five Steps, each linked individually to one of the Five Elements is artificial and, while it helps us to analyse Tai Chi techniques, it is not a straightjacket which we must don prior to practising Tai Chi Chuan, though this has not stopped some practitioners from using it as such and insisting that everyone else does the same.

The Tai Chi Chuan Ching (Canon)

**Tai Chi (the Supreme Ultimate),
It was born from Wu Chi (No Ultimate).
It produces both movement and stillness,
It is the mother of Yin and Yang.**

Some definitions are in order here. The term "Wu Chi" means No Ultimate, as opposed to "Tai Chi", the Supreme Ultimate. It can be found in a passage of the Zuo Chuan, the commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals written by a disciple of Confucius around the beginning of the 3rd century BC, where women are described as being "wu chi" or "without limit" in their desires (24th year of Duke Xi).

In the Tao Te Ching (Canon of the Way and of Virtue), c. 4th century BC, the term also appears but with more of a cosmological connotation, saying that, "if one is a model for the kingdom, constant virtue will not be lacking and one may return to Wu Chi".

Tai Chi may have been a later concept as the first known reference to Tai Chi in Chinese literature is in Appendix III of the Book of Changes (I Ching) which dates from around the 2nd century BC It states:-

"The I (Book of Changes) has Tai Chi (the Great Ultimate),

It gives birth to the Two Forms (i.e. Yin and Yang).

The Two Forms give birth to the Four Emblems;

The Four Emblems give birth to the Eight Trigrams."

Essentially the author in the first two paragraphs of the Canon of Tai Chi Chuan is quoting directly from the Neo Confucian philosopher, Chou Tun-I.

Many Tai Chi Chuan hand forms put this philosophy into physical practice by starting from an at rest position which symbolises the state of Wu Chi which is then followed by a Tai Chi ready position which is then followed by the techniques of the form. Thus movement comes from stillness and Tai Chi gives birth to Yin and Yang - up and down, forward and back etc.

Once there is movement, there is separation.

Once there is stillness, there is unity.

There is nothing exaggerated, nor is there anything lacking.

Once we have movement, we immediately have a separation of Yin and Yang, as there will be front and back, up and down, left and right etc. Many hand forms conclude with the movement Tai Chi in Unity i.e. the individual components Yin and Yang revert to Tai Chi.

Nothing exaggerated or lacking just tells us that nothing we do should be either too big or too small this applies to both form and self-defence movements.

**Follow the bent and the straight,
When the opponent is hard and stiff and I am pliant and soft, this is called Zou (Moving);
When I am smooth and the opponent is not, this is called Nian (Adherence);
If the opponent's actions are swift, then my response is swift;
If his actions are slow then I slowly Sui (Follow) them;
Although there are multifarious changes,
The principles remain the same.**

I have translated the Chinese term "Sui" as follow rather than the more usual translation of yield because the process of "Sui" can involve moving in any direction and is not just a matter of giving way before an attack.

Firstly, the opponent's movements may be bent i.e. twisted or in a curve or may be in a straight line. Our response should be appropriate to the nature of the attack we face. us Secondly, in Tai Chi Chuan our movements, although circular, do have focus so although there is bend there is also the straight. This is precisely Tai Chi Chuan in action; circle and focus. The circle contains Yin and Yang in defence and counter and ends in focused power.

"Zou" means to run or to go. Here it indicates that one is ready to move swiftly in any direction in accordance with the opponent's movements. This can only be achieved by being both pliant and soft.

If we are stiff we will be unable to respond to our opponent's movements.

"Nian" means to adhere or stick and here indicates that we should intercept and smoothly redirect the opponent's force rather than blocking it using force against force. This can only be accomplished by total body movement, thus changing the angle and distance. While doing so we adhere to the opponent's attacking limb.

Finally our timing must match that of the opponent. We should not have a set plan, but respond in accordance with the changes of the opponent. If we move too soon our opponent may be able to counter our attempted counter, while if we are too slow we will be hit before we have started our counter.

**Through practice we gradually come to understand Jin (Trained Force).
From understanding Jin, we can aspire to the highest level of ability,
However, we must be diligent over a long period of time,
And cannot suddenly become expert.**

"Through practice" doesn't give the full flavour of the Chinese "Zhao Shu". The character for "Zhao" can also be pronounced "Zhuo" or "Zhe". One of its meanings is to play chess. Chinese chess requires two players here the phrase "Zhao Shu" means becoming familiar with techniques through practice with others.

"Jin" (Trained Force) can be used in defence or attack and is dealt with in more detail later.

Understanding Jin is something we can really only achieve through concentrating on total body movement when practising and by training with many different partners in Pushing Hands and self defence.

In understanding Jin there is a three step process. The first step is to be able to "Ting Jin". "Ting" literally means to listen or to hear, but in the present context can be taken to mean to detect where the opponent's Jin is coming from and where it is going to. At a distance from the opponent we can use our eyes to detect all this, but when we are at close quarters with an

opponent we should either be hitting him or have physical contact with his hands or arms so that we can "Ting". Failure to hit him or to have contact will give him the opportunity to hit us.

The second step is to be able to "Hua Jin". "Hua" means to change or influence; here it involves using defensive Jin after we have been able to "Ting" the opponent's Jin to redirect it away from him or back to him. In order to be able to do this we must be relaxed so that we can follow, adhere and move effectively.

The third step is to "Fa Jin" or to discharge Jin where we use Jin to counterattack the opponent. The ability to use Fa effectively does require the use of certain types of conditioning training part of which exists in the Nei Kung. This process of Ting, Hua and Fa should be instantaneous.

**Relax the neck and align the head correctly,
The Chi (Vital Energy) sinks to the bottom of the Tan Tian (Region of Vital Heat),
Don't lean to either side or forward or back,**

Aligning the head properly is essential; firstly for balance - hence the statement that we shouldn't lean, secondly for the effective functioning of the nervous system and thirdly to open the airways and take an optimal amount of oxygen into the lungs allowing them to extend downward.

The Taoists considered that there are in fact three Tan Tian. The first is between the eyebrows, the second just below the level of the heart and the third, which is the one referred to here, is a point about 2" below the navel. Each region consists of nine cavities. I do not propose to go into great detail on this topic as this is only a passing reference and such detail is not necessary for an understanding of the point made here.

Tan Tian is often literally translated as "Cinnabar Field", but a better translation used by the late Professor Joseph Needham among others is "Region of Vital Heat". It is a reference to one of the staging posts in the creation of an "Inner Elixir" or Nei Tan by the use of among other things respiratory exercises. In Taoist theory, attainment of this Inner Elixir would lead to longevity or even immortality.

This is one of the reasons for Tai Chi's popularity with the literati - both Western and Chinese. However, I don't yet know of any immortals created by this process.

For our purposes the Chi sinking to the Tan Tian means that when performing the movements of the form the relaxed state produced promotes abdominal breathing and we can see and feel the abdomen contract and expand in tune with the respiration. In addition as we constantly swallow saliva when doing the form, air is brought down into the stomach and this can cause a degree of flatulence. This is not something to worry about, but can be socially embarrassing.

The admonition to avoid leaning is often misunderstood. What we must avoid is leaning the head in any direction out of alignment with the neck; this does not require us to keep stiffly erect at all times and indeed in most styles of Tai Chi Chuan there are movements requiring us to lean the body in one direction or another. If you're not sure check out photos of famous masters such as Sun Lu-tang, Wu Jian-chuan and Yang Chen-fu.

**Suddenly conceal, suddenly reveal,
When the left feels heavy then make the left void,
When the right feels heavy then make the right distant,
When the opponent looks up, I am still higher;
When he looks down, I am lower still.**

**When he advances, the distance seems surpassingly long,
When he retreats, the distance seems surpassingly short.**

Tai Chi Chuan is essentially a counter attacking style, therefore we normally conceal our intention until the moment of the opponent's attack when it is revealed in our response. When he puts pressure on or attacks us in one direction, rather than resisting the pressure or the attack, we confront him with the Void by either diverting his force away from us or by removing ourselves from the path of his force and then attempt to counter attack him as he is unbalanced. Being still higher or lower than the opponent means that if his force is upward directed we direct it even further upward, likewise if it is downward directed we direct it yet further down. By timing our movements exactly in accordance with his we make it impossible for him to close the gap with us when he attempts an attack, but our counter attacks follow so quickly that he is unable to withdraw in time. In Chinese military strategy this is referred to as retreating in order to attack. Once the opponent's sting has been drawn he is vulnerable to a counter attack.

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**A feather cannot be added,
A fly cannot land,
Nobody knows me,
I alone know them,
A hero thus becomes invincible.**

Here the writer emphasises that we should be so alert and relaxed that we are responsive to even the slightest change, while making no unnecessary move ourselves. In this way the opponent finds it difficult to fathom our strategy as we are always responding to or pre-empting his attempted attacks.

**Other schools of martial arts are so numerous
Although there are external differences,
Without exception, they amount to nothing more than the strong bullying the weak;
The slow surrendering to the fast;
The powerful beating those without power;
Slow hands surrendering to fast hands.
This is entirely due to innate ability
It is not related to trained ability at all.**

I will only say that even as a practitioner of Tai Chi Chuan I find this a breathtakingly sweeping statement to which I can think of many exceptions. Indeed the vast majority of Tai Chi Chuan exponents are deservedly the butt of many jokes in the martial arts world, but their colossal arrogance seems to increase in inverse proportion to their fighting abilities.

**From the sentence, "Four taels (Chinese ounce) displaces a thousand catties (Chinese pound)."
It is evident we do not use force to get the upper hand.
When we observe an old man of eighty withstanding the assault of a group of people,
How can it be due to speed?**

This idea of using four taels to displace a thousand catties is a key concept in Tai Chi Chuan which we shall meet again in the Da Shou Ge (Fighter's Song) and is often misunderstood. We can only accomplish it if, instead of trying to block an opponent's attack, we move around it with body evasion or footwork, then intercept and redirect his force with a smooth diversion; this is using Yin to overcome Yang.

This is one of the reasons that Tai Chi Chuan emphasises Pushing Hands skills as these are designed to improve our ability to use the opponent's force against him to unbalance him and make him vulnerable to our counters.

As for the remarks about an old man of eighty, I'm afraid this is poetic licence. It may happen, but I wouldn't count on it.

**Stand like a level scale,
Move like a wheel.
When the weight is sunk deeply on one side then we can follow,
When there is Double Weightedness then our movements will be hindered.
You can often see people who have practised their skills for several years,
But who still cannot change and turn.
This leads to their being entirely regulated by others.
They are not aware of their sickness of Double Weightedness.
If we wish to be free from this sickness,
We must know Yin and Yang.**

Here again the writer emphasises being ready to move smoothly in response to any pressure, together with the concepts of turning and circular movement like a wheel. However, weight distribution is of fundamental importance.

Double weightedness is often misinterpreted as being where there is an even amount of weight on each leg. This is patently absurd as nearly every martial art I can think of has at least some movements where the weight is evenly distributed, rather it is the last line in this section that

gives the best definition of Double Weightedness; it is an absence of Yin and Yang. This arises when we are either unbalanced or tense and therefore cannot move easily. This is rightly referred to as a sickness.

As for people who have practised their skills for years being unable to turn and change; it depends what skills we are talking about and what we mean by practice. For example each application should be practised regularly at speed against an opponent who sometimes attacks on the left sometimes on the right. There should be a degree of spontaneity in the training rather than just going through preset routines and drills.

The weight doesn't have to be predominantly on one leg or the other, but we should be able to move easily at any instant in response to the movements of the opponent. If we know Yin and Yang we can easily effect this change.

**When Nian (Adherence) is simply Zou (Moving),
When Zou is simply Nian,
When Yin does not depart from Yang,
When Yang does not depart from Yin,
When Yin and Yang aid one another,
When we can say that we understand Jin (Trained Force).**

Adherence (Nian) refers to the idea that when at close quarters with an opponent we must have arm contact with him so we can feel what he is doing and counteract it by redirecting his force, while Moving (Zou) means that we move the feet or body forward, back or sideways in response to the movements of the opponent. It is not enough to have only Nian or only Zou; they go together like Yin and Yang. The key is to be able to be or to use Yin at the right time and to be able to use Yang at the right time and to be able to change from one to the other as required. The skills of Nian and Zou are trained in Pushing Hand drills, such as Four Directions and Da Lu.

**After we understand Jin,
The more we train, the more expert we become,
Silently memorise, study and imitate.
Gradually we reach the point where we can do all we wish,
Originally it is giving up yourself to follow the opponent,
Many err by forsaking what is near to pursue what is far.
It is said, "A minute discrepancy leads to an error of one thousand Li (Chinese mile)."
The student must carefully discriminate.**

I discussed earlier the three step process involved in understanding force. Jin can be hard or soft, Yin or Yang, long or short.

The writer here also emphasises memorising, studying and imitating. In other words don't just talk about it, do it!

".... Giving up yourself" means that rather than having preset notions or plans we should act in accordance with what the opponent actually does rather than what we expect him to do, so we must detect and immediately respond to his every change.

"Forsaking what is near to pursue what is far" would be where in defence, rather than using a quick and simple diversion, we attempt something overcomplicated or where, when counterattacking, we pick a target which is out of reach rather than what is nearest to hand. Small mistakes lead to big mistakes, especially where the person making them is himself a teacher, so it is important to pay attention to every detail.