

NEW CHAPTER OF YIQUAN

AKA "New chapter of fist science"



YIQUAN ACADEMY

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Wang Xiangzhai's teachings recorded by **Qi Zhidu** in 1939

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GENERAL THEORY

The martial art started at the time of Warring States. Later Bodhidharma mixed the methods of „washing bone marrow” and „changing tendons” with the method of five animals exercises of Hua Tuo, thus giving start to our method. Although there are many schools presently, all of them come from one source. No matter how divided the schools are, there is always quan – fist in their name. Each action should be appropriate and efficient – this is the meaning of quan. There should be a balance between movement and non-movement, you should be able both to defend yourself and to attack. This is the way of instinctive use of your own abilities, and not of practicing fixed forms and discussing fixed techniques.

The way of martial art should not be seen as something very difficult. You need to know, that so called unusual skills are in fact result of something quite easy and simple. You can practice in any place and at any time – walking, standing, sitting or lying on your back. The body position should be proper, mind empty, spirit focused, breath calm. This way both internal and external are being cultivated, wrong and dirty is eliminated, muscles, bones and blood are exercised without exercise, cultivated without cultivating, the natural potential is becoming developed gradually.

At the beginning, no matter which position, it is enough to notice if all joints are cooperating, if there appears some elastic strength, which is result of mind leading the flow of blood and breath. Generally we can say that this is about achieving the state of comfort and strength. You are observing your mind, your body is as a giant tree reaching the sky, as if supported from all sides and as if swimming, as if floating on the waves of the air, the hair on your body is if extending and moving, blood is as a sea or ocean with ceaseless waves and whirls, spirit is as a big furnace melting everything, heart is as a balloon floating on the surface of the sea, which could be pierced by a needle at any moment. Those are the main ideas of training mind and body. It is difficult to achieve without cleansing the mind and becoming one with nature. But most important is to avoid using force, when you use force, the energy is blocked, mind is stopped, spirit is broken, everything is wrong. You should not forget about homogeneity of strength in shi li, about structure, about using relations of forces in fa li, about triangles and spirals – all the elements which are part of one strength. You should take care about relax and tension, about bending the surfaces, and you must use everything when fighting with an opponent. It is difficult to describe this in words. Those who want to learn, need to study this persistently.

EXPLAINING MARTIAL ART

Presently martial arts are divided into schools and styles. There exist various methods, but all of their names contain quan – fist. Usually this concept is not studied in depth. People focus on the literary meaning of fist – palm being clenched into fist, or they explain it as courage and force necessary when fighting an opponent. But this is very superficial explanation, not the deep meaning.

The deep meaning is that the action at the moment needs to be appropriate and efficient. There should be a balance between movement and non-movement, you should be able both to defend yourself and to attack. This is the way of instinctive use of your own abilities, and not of practicing fixed forms and discussing fixed techniques. Balance between movement and stillness, ability of defending yourself and attacking – those are the principles. Stillness – defense, movement – use (movement is stillness, stillness is movement), it is about using one. It must be always appropriate and efficient. This is the way of instinctive using your own abilities, not of practicing forms and techniques, which would lead you astray.

This is not about the form of movement, but about using the changes between relax and tension, about how the mind is leading movement. If you focus on form in the training of fighting, it will be a mistake. That would be putting attention to things which are less important and neglecting the basis – this way you will never achieve the goal. Without the basis, it is not possible to talk about practical use, about issuing power according to situation, about changes according to the situation changing unexpectedly. You will not achieve this by practicing forms and fixed techniques.

YIQUAN

Meaning of the name of Yiquan

Human body is a unity of outside and inside, yi and movement should be one. Only the truth is important in training methods and theories, and there should be no division for internal and external. So I oppose using the terms internal family and external family. I also oppose using concepts, techniques and forms which are not coherent with practical use. With idea of explaining the meaning of martial art principles and developing a martial science, I proposed the name Yiquan in 1926. I used the term yi (mind, idea, intent, will), to express the main principle of martial art. As for training methods, I stressed zhan zhuang, because of seeking practical use and not of appearances of form. No matter if in movement or stillness, everything should be led by intent. Intent, energy and strength become one. This is about skillful use of arguing forces. So I named this Yiquan with thought of getting rid of fights between internal and external factions, and maintaining the true principle of martial science.

Yiquan zhan zhuang

In zhan zhuang yin and yang, movement and non-movement, opening and closing, inhaling and exhaling with chest and belly and feeling of pulsating should not be seen separately each from the other, as they are rooted in each other. Not being confused by many impressions, but reacting with one mind – this is Yiquan.

Explaining of yi and movement

Yi exists in you, it is a movement of your deeper mind (heart). Students should clearly understand that one's yi undoubtedly exists in him and it's the reflection of his heart. Only by knowing so, can students reasonably harmonize movement with stillness and then benefit their bodies. Healthy bodies help to make healthy hearts, while most unhealthy bodies are due to unhealthy hearts, therefore the body's movement and heart's movement should be united as one. In order to unite body and heart, students should know that the heart's movement is yi. Therefore when body moves as yi is leading it, the movement will make the body strong without damage, because this movement fits the natural needs, and it is a reasonable movement. yi is the heart's movement, while the brain orders the body to fulfill the yi.

The brain is to the body like the commander in chief to the military, it is the most important organ of the body. To study quan shu (the art of fist) one has to keep head straight. yi is coming from your mind without any other forced feelings. If one's movement is natural and really needed, then it is a movement by yi. It is one's self decision and instinctive function. Body movements can be classified as beneficial movements and harmful movements. Obviously, beneficial movement is the movement in harmony with yi; on the contrary harmful movement is the one against yi. Movement against yi is the movement which is caused by desire. It's so called unnatural movement, movement which is not coming from self-decision, it is reckless movement. This type of movement is related to effort, it will disturb blood flow, will damage nerves. This will create reckless movement, which the nerves will fight against by reflective movement. The nerves will be excited and damaged. Therefore movement against yi is not beneficial but harmful. Students must be careful to avoid reckless movements and unnatural movements.

Movement in harmony with yi

Movement in harmony with yi is called natural ability movement by psychologists. This is movement in which mind (nervous system's ability of perceiving movement) is observing needs of whole body, which become fulfilled in accordance with yi. This is action resulting from own decision and in harmony with nature. So with the natural ability movement mind and body become one. This movement is satisfying needs and is beneficial, not harmful. Natural ability movement can be conscious or automatic. Conscious movement is based on conscious mind. After developing it to a fluent level, it can become automatic, without being conscious of commanding it, but it is in harmony with yi. Martial art training is about developing natural ability movement. Without developing the level of automatic movement you will not achieve the stage of getting power, energy and spirit, the stage of „dissolving” - the highest stage in martial art.

SIX DEMANDS OF MARTIAL TRAINING

1. You need to understand the benefits of practicing martial art.

„Those who don't learn martial art are fools who don't care about their own lives” - this explains how important is practicing martial art – it exercises body and cultivates health. Everybody should know this and should practice martial art. When I learned the joy of practicing martial art, understood the benefits of practicing it, I would not ever stop it. If the training is exhausting, it is wrong, it shouldn't be the case in martial art.

When you achieve high level, other people don't see it, they perceive it as looking ugly. So you should know, that you practice for yourself, not for others, you practice for self defense and for health. You should practice martial art all the time, cultivating energy, there should be no moment when you don't practice martial art. Skills developed in limited time will never be as high as those developed in unlimited time. So there is no need for some fixed time and fixed place of training.

2. You need to understand the principles of martial art

In the martial art there are principles, methods, yi. Only when you learn all of them, you could say you know martial art. There are no methods without principles, there are no principles without yi. The movement in the martial art is based on some principles. The changes between movement and non movement, adapting to situation, no fixed direction, this is natural, is expressed as unusual skill which is lead by one yi. After principles and methods are mastered, you can use this. So when you practice martial art, those principles are most important.

First by following some rules you learn the principles. When you understand principles, you can achieve success yourself. When you understand the principles, you can use energy and strength. If what you do is not based on the principles, you will not develop the useful strength. But if you know principles, and you cannot use energy and strength anyway, those are not true principles. Principles in harmony with energy, energy working together with strength, movement and stillness in harmony with principles – then energy and strength can be used and the unusual skill becomes obvious. So when you train strength, you must understand the principles. Only then there will be something you can follow.

3. You should appreciate the basic principles of zhan zhuang

People see martial art as a technique. But this is not really worth training. Martial art is the beginning of movement. The principles are simple and clear. Then unusual is the result of subtlety. So if we talk about the deep principles of martial art, it is based on subtlety. On a bit more shallow level it is about basic principles. The basic principles are the simplest methods of movement. When you master the basic principles, unlimited changes become possible. But those are not the forms and techniques which are usually practiced nowadays. This is the zhan zhuang method. Because it is so simple, it is being neglected. The most unusual abilities are born from this standing practice.

Learning something, you need to start from something basic to enter the gate of solid skills. In martial art it is zhan zhuang. Long time standing is the gate to the achieving solid skills. Without it it is not possible to enter this path, I'm afraid. Students should learn this, should be willing going this path, then they will finally achieve success. This is the path to learning martial art.

4. You need to experience

When learning martial art, you should know that „heart is transmitting, yi is leading”. This is the key to achieving strength. This is related to experiencing. Experiencing is kind of practicing. You use the yi leading to develop natural abilities and wisdom of your own body. Nervous system is receiving and body is performing. Using your own body you are checking what it knows and looking for what it doesn't know. You need to know that what is expressed in words is not the true knowledge. You need to practice yourself, only then it will be true learning, true knowledge. This is why personal experiencing is stressed in the martial art. Otherwise you could take a product of your imagination for reality. All the changes of strength will not be natural and spontaneous, if they will not be a result of personal experiencing.

Experiencing includes internal observation, external observation and testing. You cannot omit any of them. Internal observation means observing yourself. External observation means other person observing you. Testing means checking the practical results of what you achieved by internal and external observation.

In learning martial art there are some things which you get due to your teacher, and some things you get by yourself. You receive the principles from your teacher. Then you practice, experience and

achieve results by yourself. If you don't work by yourself, the method will not be useful.

When we talk about experiencing, there are three stages: strength, energy, spirit. When you talk about them separately, this is low level. In fact you cannot separate them, this is one energy. Nervous system and body are trained simultaneously, blood flow is regulated. Zhan zhuang cultivates this energy and is basis for health.

5. You need to get rid of three problems

When you practice martial art, there appear three problems: forced breathing, clumsy effort, sticking the chest out and raising abdomen. Because of those problems your actions are not conforming with the natural principles and it is difficult to use natural strength. Clumsy effort is a very big problem in martial art. Nowadays people teaching martial art focus on rapid use of force, and this is a mistake when teaching beginners. You need to know that when you are using force, the true natural strength is blocked. If you continue practicing like this, this will become extremely harmful. Those who practice martial art should know this and avoid this, this way avoiding moving astray.

Today those who practice martial art learn forms, use violent movements, want to achieve speed and external beauty of movements. In result the pores on the surface of their bodies are blocked, blood flow is disturbed. Those who use violent force, open eyes wide and squint them, stomp hard with feet and shout loudly, exhaust their energy and gasp for air after their training. It harms energy. In result after several dozens years of practicing martial art many people are still like laymen.

6. The exercise should be realistic

If a practitioner wants to achieve high level very soon, he will not be able to make it, I'm afraid. One student asked me to demonstrate fa li. I said: you can already get some taste of the skill, you are confident, but as for the demands of fa li, you will not be able to understand it yet. As there are many kinds of fa li, if you don't have any experience of using it, it is difficult to understand. I hope that you will keep practicing carefully, and then I will explain this to you. If I talk about it now, you will not understand it anyway, or even if you understand, you will not be able to perform it. If you want to achieve too much at once, you will not achieve much at all. You must practice persistently for long time, and there will come progress. It is said: only if you are patient and persistent, you will

be able to achieve the ability of countless changes. When you feel that blood is flowing in your body, spirit is focused and at ease, there is no stagnation in the body – this is the basic level. If you can hear a crackling sound in all parts of your body and you are able to throw someone away no matter if you are standing or sitting – this is intermediate level. When you feel energy around your body, as if your body was radiating, and when you look at your opponent and he feels lost immediately, you can gradually move toward the highest level.

THE STAGES OF MARTIAL ART TRAINING

Basics

Strength is born from qi and blood, is moving naturally, from inside outside, this is why removing blockages in the flow of blood, exercising tendons and bones are the basis of martial art training. Zhan zhuang is the method. When you practice zhan zhuang, you need to assume proper posture, so in stillness the nervous system can work in order, breathing can be properly adjusted, qi and blood can be nourished, tendons and bones can be trained, internal and external can be unified, clumsy changed into agile, weak into strong.

Shi li – testing strength

When you become skillful in basics, you need to continue learning about using strength. The preliminary stage is testing strength. Through testing strength you get to know it and can develop it to higher level. The ability of natural issuing of power is based on knowing the possibilities of using it. This is why testing strength is the most crucial element in learning martial art.

Practical skills

When there are no blockages in the body, only feeling of comfort, there is strength and ability of changing it – then you could start thinking about using strength according to situation. You need to master the issues of slow and fast, light and solid, using mind, acting according to situation, until relax and tension, movement and stillness will become basis for each other. You need to learn the relation between strength and mind. You must be serious in learning martial art. When you practice zhan zhuang, the form is not changing, but tendons and muscles, qi and blood and all body cells are working. As if a rotating wheel, when the rotation speed is high, it seems as if it is not moving. This is movement in stillness. You should put attention to this. Because of a small deficiency it could happen that you don't move beyond the basics all your life.

When fighting with an opponent you need to be like a monkey, like a hare, a snake. Physical and mental strengths must be focused, being calm you recognize the opponent, whole body strength must be collected, so you can act according to opponent's action, issuing power in the right moment. Although you need to be able to move with the highest speed, high and low, left and right,

to the side and straight, body and mind must be calm, relaxed. Stillness is a practical skill. Those are the basics.

Testing strength is too much complex to be described. We need to say that there should not be absolute force. You should check if the strength in whole body is round and full, if there is a feeling as the hair on your body was standing up, whether you are able to issue power at any moment, if there is a feeling as if body was moving in the air, feeling its resistance, if there is idea that you can affect opponent with any part of body, if spirit and mind are moving, although body has not moved yet. If you don't practice this way, this is no proper testing strength. You should not neglect it.

INTRODUCTION TO ZHAN ZHUANG

Zhan zhuang is a whole body exercise.

Although we divide body for torso, arms, legs, neck, internal organs, they all make one whole unit, so we cannot talk about any part as not related to all other parts, and we should not focus on separate parts. This is crucial to achieve the essence. Whether the concepts are right or not depends on this.

In zhan zhuang practice we unite mind, will, movement, strength, energy. This is the basis of the martial art. This is the method of unifying and strengthening all abilities of body and mind. Martial art is based on whole body movement. Internal organs, limbs, fingers and even small hair on the body – all of them play their roles. If one of them is not moving, there is no whole body movement. Body is guided, yi passing the orders, heart linking it, qi moving it, spirit feeling, reaction is natural. So when we practice, we train body, heart, legs – whole body is trained simultaneously – it should not be divided, you should not focus too much on one part. This way the full potential can be revealed – the whole will become unified. If each part acts separately, it is as if body was dissected, then it is impossible to develop martial art skills.

You need to be aware of body position

When practicing martial art you must be aware of your body position. You are standing between the sky and earth, in the middle between high and low, front and back, left and right. Everybody knows this, so it doesn't need to be explained. Martial art practitioner should take care about body position, being in the center, commanding the center, using the center. The possibilities which are result of this are unlimited.

You need to be aware of movement and stillness, arches and straight lines.

Martial art practitioner should realize that the possibility of life is based on the possibility of movement. Movement starts from stillness. Stillness is straight, movement is arched. All the time there are changes between straight and arched (form arched, force straight) . This is the essence of martial art. So martial art practitioner is practicing stillness to put energy in order, and is practicing movement to use energy. Qi is moving blood, increases strength, is moving whole body. Movement

and stillness are the origin of each other, they bring each other to life. This is why we practice both movement and stillness. When you practice movement and stillness, you need to observe the beginning of it, how the arched appears from the straight, how movement is born from stillness. Form arched, strength straight, movement is the start of stillness. In stillness there is movement, in movement there is stillness. The method of learning and mastering this is zhan zhuang.

Zhan zhuang is the basis of learning martial art

When practicing zhan zhuang, you are observing movement and stillness in your whole body. When you develop the real skill, you will realize that all methods, all skills are contained in zhan zhuang. So if you want to become proficient in the martial art, you need first focus on zhan zhuang training. All forms of movement start from this. This is not just some theory which I made up. The ancients already achieved this through practice, discovering this exquisite method. In the martial art zhan zhuang is the basis, but actual use is based on movement. If the basis is not solid, there will be no foundation for further development. So when learning martial art you cannot ommit zhan zhuang practice. Without it you will deceive yourself. The skills can be real only if they have solid basis.

HUNYUAN ZHUANG – 1

The first hunyuan zhuang posture is a simple standing posture, which is also simply called standing posture – li shi – you are standing in the basic exercise position, with you arms hanging down, heels together, the angle between both feet about 60 degrees. You should be calm and stand stably. Breathing should be calm, spirit cheerful. As if you were united with the heaven and earth. You should take care about following points:

- head is the highest placed part of your body, it is commanding whole body, it should not incline, there should be some force as if top of head was supporting something („as if supporting, as if not supporting”), a bit as if head was suspended on a thread coming from above, with chin slightly withdrawn, neck straight, head leading the yi of whole body,
- feet put evenly on the ground, big toe stretched, small toe bent, center of foot empty, heel slightly lifted, knees slightly bent and as if being pulled up, tendons and muscles comfortably stretched, there shouldn't be uncomfortable effort, if there is effort in legs, there is no stability. You need to know that if you feel uncomfortable effort in your feet, the center will move up, you will lose the feeling of comfort in your whole body, strength will be blocked, body will lose agility. How can you then seek stability in zhan zhuang? When it is said that feet should be heavy, it doesn't mean uncomfortable effort,
- vertebral column is in the center of body, is a cover for nervous system which commands upper and lower limbs. Spine should be straight, shoulders even, chin withdrawn, neck straight, solar plexus slightly concave, so the chest feels free and lower abdomen relaxed and rounded, so naturally there will be no bent waist, unnaturally protruded chest, compressed back,
- hands hanging, as if you intended to stick fingers into the ground and at the same time as if you tried to pull them up, out from the ground. This way elbows will be slightly bent, tendons-muscles meridians unblocked. There is also na idea of expanding outward and wrapping inward, even shoulders, properly positioned arms, armpits relaxed, empty, as if lightly keeping small balls there,
- upper and lower teeth are touching, but are not pressing against each other, clenching teeth and goggling eyes are big mistakes,
- tip of the tongue slightly curved, touching upper palate, as if pressing, as if not pressing, you should feel as if there was some magnetic field,

- nose is managing the air, the breath should be even and voiceless, qi should not raise, but should also not sink - even and natural is the principle. You should treat breathing with respect, only then you will be able to develop the skills related to it. In any case you should not breath through mouth, because breathing will lose its principle then, nose will stop commanding, you could become ill. You need to remember this,
- eyes looking forward, they should not be attracted by various things (don't look at various things, don't turn your eyeballs), then you will stay calm,
- ears as if hearing some subtle sounds coming from all directions, spirit must be focused.

HUNYUAN ZHUANG – 2

Start from the first posture, standing stably, move your feet apart in left and right direction (moving foot to the side), bent knees, sitting down in the horse riding position, raise your hands high, whole body will become comfortable stretched, qi and blood will flow freely. This exercise will improve the flow of qi and will increase strength. Tendons and muscles are gently cultivated, nervous system is exercised, all cells in the body are working. While practicing you should take care about following points:

- when you move your foot to the side, assuming the posture, you put them in one line, one foot should not be more to the front than the other, the distance between feet is decided depending on the length of foot, about one foot and seven or eight inches, open hips, bend knees and stand calmly. If the steps are too long, they are not agile. When making step, first front foot is moving forward, and then the other is following – the biggest distance between feet 1 foot and 2 or 3 inches. When we talk about movement, usually it is not more than 7-8 inches. If both feet are in one line, it is difficult to maintain stability, they should be separated to the left and right. The proper distance is shoulder-width,
- hands are not moving to the other side of the body, protecting the central line, not higher than eyebrows, not lower than navel, not stretched forward further than toes, not touching body – those are most important rules which should not be broken. And there should not be flat surfaces, but arches everywhere. You learn the principle of „blades pointing in all directions”. When palm is changing into fist, fingers one after another are as if twisting mahua (fried dough twist), strength as if that of a baby which is grabbing something (this way of making fist helps in issuing power), you should not clench fist in a stiff way, there should not be uncomfortable effort. This way roundness of arms and freedom of movement will be maintained, strength will arrive at target. Hands and feet are cooperating. Elbows bent, as if you embrace a round drum. No matter what changes, the force of elbows pointing outside should be maintained, they should not suddenly change position – once close to body, once far away from body, not moving outside appropriate space, so you don't lose opportunity in a fight,
- whether there will be strength in your arms while making steps depends on your shoulders. The principle is relaxing shoulders. When shoulders are relaxed, arms are sinking, there is open space under armpits, as if you were keeping small balls there. When your arms have this space, actions can be free. Solar plexus slightly concave, chest empty, back slightly

- rounded, shoulders even, body is filled up with strength which is transmitted to palms,
- strength is born in the bones, is transmitted to tendons. When tendons are long, strength is big, bones are heavy, tendons alive. When tendons are stretching, bones are shrinking, strength is solid. When you are stretching tendons, you are stretching wrists (wrist here means also ankles and neck), tendons-muscles meridians are stretched, arms are raising and there is force of expanding outward – there are forces of embracing, opening and closing, stretching and shrinking. In legs there are forces of lifting, squeezing, grasping ground, shrinking, wading, crushing, twisting and coiling. Shoulders as if supporting something, hips sinking, tail bone centered. You shouldn't neglect anything. Bones as a bow, tendons tensing like a bowstring, movement like bending a bow, hands attacking like arrows shot from a bow, using force like pulling a thread from silkworm cocoon, hands as if breaking pieces of cotton-wool. When you are standing in this posture, all parts of your body are reacting for what is happening in other parts – up and down, left-right and all other directions. Head and feet, head and hands, hands and hips, shoulders and knees, elbows and hips – all of them as if connected with some strings. Or there might be idea that someone wants to push you, but cannot move you. In fact there are no strings, or a person who wants to push you, but there is such an idea - yi. But you should not behave as if someone was pushing you hard, or the strings pulled with big force – that would be a mistake, it would be based on a desire, would lead to uncomfortable effort, you would lose naturalness. If you start experiencing this way, it will be easy to achieve coordination of the whole. If you practice for long time, you will develop multi directional yi. The strength changes into the centered, unified strength of yi, qi, li. When body is moving within the natural space, head, legs, torso, hands assume their natural positions and planes. As the functions of head, legs and hands are different, their spaces and planes are also different. As for the „contradictory forces” and mutual connection of all parts, there are differences, because of many complex reasons. If you want to understand this, you need to seek this in the three hunyuan positions. All movements have their basis.

HUNYUAN ZHUANG – 3

After mastering two exercises described above, you can start learning next one. Start from the first position, standing stable, shift one of your feet forward, bend knees, sit down a bit, both arms as if embracing something. There is expanding outward, twisting, wrapping and stretching forward, tendons and muscles are as if twisted, there are arches and obtuse angles everywhere (over 90 degrees, there should be no acute angles), there are no flat planes and there is no absolute force. Everything is bent, and everything together makes a natural whole unit. The functions of two previous postures are contained also in this one too. You are able to use your skills when opportunity arises, uncountable changes are possible, you can comfortably use it in fighting, you can be skillful both in attack and defense. When practicing this posture, you should observe the principles explained for the two previous postures, the principles related to the waist and navel and also following principles:

- spirit relaxed and clear – whole body relaxed and light – it is impossible to describe it. Li Shugu wrote: „to get rid of evil influences, move blood in the arteries, relax spirit, cultivate the virtue of middle harmony, correct the tendencies of temperament”. Those are also the effects of practicing zhan zhuang,
- when you start learning zhan zhuang, qi and blood are not flowing freely yet, when they meet a blockage some trembling appears. You should know that such trembling is not a mistake, when you just start this kind of practice. But if after some longer time such phenomena still persists, qi and blood flow cannot become calm, then the goal of the exercise will not be achieved, So when trembling appears you can use mind activity to diminish it. If it still doesn't disappear, you can try to change position. You could also use some mind activity and changing position simultaneously. You need to remove this trembling,
- when you practice some special methods of martial art, sometimes it is difficult to avoid various illusory sensations appearing. This can happen also when zhan zhuang is not properly mastered. When you practice, you need to calm down, you must be calm, but brave at the same time. When the heart is calm , spirit is clear. If you observe this, you will not lose harmony. If you don't practice martial art this way, you will go astray,
- someone who starts learning zhan zhuang can feel weak and can feel pain in whole body, but even when a weak person will start learning, qi and blood circulation will gradually

improve, true strength will appear (the naturally appearing strength of bones, tendons, qi and blood, commanded by yi), then both in stillness and in movement body will be full of strength. It is even difficult to imagine how big is this strength. This comes naturally. Practitioner should seek this,

- you can practice in the everyday life, if only spirit is focused as during zhan zhuang practice, there is no chaotic movement, qi is not raising, spirit is not wandering, there is no zhan zhuang posture, but in fact you will achieve the effect of practicing zhan zhuang,
- the practitioner might not realize this, but his spirit might be focused on hands, instead being focused mostly on waist and whole body. When during practice one's yi moves but body doesn't move, it is useless. But when body moves and yi doesn't move, this is also useless. There is no other method which unifies mind and body so well as zhan zhuang. Mind is moving, body is moving – tendons, bones, joints, qi and blood are moving in harmony with this. So learning martial art, you must start from zhan zhuang. Otherwise you will give waste your time on useless things,
- zhan zhuang makes the internal movement clear, natural, conforming with physiology. So in the case of a perfect martial art, adept is filled with strength, his spirit is full, skin soft and elastic, bones and tendons strong, for sure you will not see hardened skin and bulging muscles, hard as iron or stone,
- zhan zhuang is the basis for learning martial art. One posture can change into thousand postures, and hundreds or thousands of postures can become one posture. You should learn diligently and test everything in practice (to know theory and practice), only then it will become the true martial art science.

SUMMARIZING ZHAN ZHUANG

The longer you practice zhan zhuang, the more unusual abilities and skills will emerge. What is happening in your body depends on your level. A beginner starts sweating after only a few minutes of standing, after a few more minutes starts feeling movement in his belly or his whole body starts moving. Someone who has been practicing for long time can feel as if some light sounds were produced in all parts of body, as if silk threads were moving and touching each other, blood flowing like water in a stream. In the case of a beginner qi and blood are not flowing freely, and he can feel numbness in his legs and become tired very soon – so he could have some rest before continuing zhan zhuang practice, this way avoiding uncomfortable effort. The effects are results of long time accumulation. Most important is practicing regularly. And time of practice session should be increased gradually. After the raining session the mind, body and breath should be stable.

Hips are open, knees are bent. In the horse riding posture the crotch wants to be low, you are sitting down, pulling hips back a bit, as if wrapping something in front, and at the same time hips are as if expanding sideways, knees as if embracing something, pressing lightly inward, but at the same time there is idea of force directed outward. You should carefully observe the forces in the area of knees. From knee to foot, from foot to knee, there is expanding force. At the same time there is idea of straightening leg and as if knee was tied to foot, so straightening is not possible. The part of leg above knee as if wanted to move up, but at the same time there is idea of sitting down. Knees as if wanted to bend inward, but at the same time as if there was a force in opposite direction, trying to bend them outward. Such forces are naturally born from each other, are dependent on each other, they are called „contradictory forces” or „arguing forces”. When you achieve some level of skill, all this will become easy to understand. But describing it is difficult.

Waist is the pivot, the center of the movement of limbs, and of the movement of upper and lower part of body. The central line is there, the center of mass is there. You should not bend the waist, head should be straight, shoulders relaxed, hips sitting down (should not move forward), the waist will be straight then, upper and lower parts connected.

The posture of raised hands. Arms raised in order to stretch tendons and muscles. They are expanding left and right along the direction of shoulders and as if embrace lightly something in front. Elbows bent, wrists as if pressing something. This is the basic zhan zhuang posture. Various postures, when tendons and muscles are stretched, but there is no twisting and wrapping, are

related to this posture.

Pressing down posture. Palms are raised in front of body at the navel level. Thumbs pointing toward navel, insides of palms turned downward, fingers of both palms directed toward each other, arms rounded and hanging down.

Lifting up posture. Hands lifted to the level of solar plexus. Insides of palms facing upward, fingers of both palms directed toward each other, arms rounded and hanging down.

In both above postures, in the case of lifting posture small finger and in the case of pressing down posture the thumb are some 4 inches apart from body. The distance between fingers of both palms is about 3 inches – they should not come too close to each other..

Pushing posture. Raise arms. After stretching them in front of your body, direct fingers of both palms toward each other. Insides of palms directed outward (forward). Wrists and elbows at one level, form bent like a bow.

Embracing posture. Stretch both arms in front of your body, insides of palms directed toward body, fingers of both palms directed toward each other, wrists and elbows at the same level, shape as if embracing something.

Lifting posture. Arms hanging, elbows lightly bent, fingers slightly curved, as if lifting something.

Lifting above head posture. Hands lifted above head, elbows slightly bent (should not come too close to the head), fingers of both palms directed toward each other, insides of palms directed upward. Fingers should be separated and stretched, so the feeling of alive force can appear. At the same time they should be slightly curved, as if keeping something, the „tiger mouth” (the place between thumb and index finger) round. Fingers slightly bent, center of palm concave. The idea is as if you want to keep something in your palm and you want to let it fall down at the same time. As if there was some sucking-in force in the center of your palm, and fingers straightening and stretching, but as if they were not able to straighten, as if tied with some soft threads. You achieve high level when such a state (this is the skillful use of „contradictory forces”) appears naturally.

CULTIVATING QI

People who practice martial arts talk a lot about cultivating qi. There are many opinions. Generally we should talk about the terms yi, qi and li together or use the term qi-li. But if the term qi and the principles of cultivating qi are stressed, there is no harm in this. The method is simple and natural. You are breathing through nose, very gently, silently. The key is being calm and natural. When we are talking about qi, you need to know that it is about breathing. We also need to explain the principle of linking movement and breathing, cultivating qi through martial arts training, of adjusting breath in order to use the elastic power created by it, so you can achieve the greatest skill level in martial art. It is different from popular opinion that big belly is a sign of mastery of qi.

Qi full, force strong, this is the result of practicing martial art. This is related to strength or weakness, being brave or cowardly. Also the movement of limbs, bones and tendons is based on this. If there is lack of qi, there is nothing you could use. The source of qi in body is limitless. The strength is born from it. If you want to achieve great strength, you must start from cultivating qi. This doesn't need explanation.

Cultivating qi can be also called governing qi. Qi is related to breathing. We already explained that due to breathing qi can flow in abundance inside and outside. This improves the flow of blood in whole body. So we can notice the changes of qi inside and outside. There is almost no form, almost no sound, gathered from outside fills inside. When a master is performing martial art, his movements are agile and unpredictable, and when is not moving is solemn, and no one can move him. This all has source in qi. If you don't cultivate it, how could you achieve such a level? So cultivating qi should not be neglected.

There are many concepts of cultivating qi. Some are talking about working with their chest, so their lungs are pulsating. Other about qi sinking to lower abdomen, achieving fullness there. But qi stagnates this way and is not permeating through whole body. This is the result of lack of understanding of cultivating qi. The principle of cultivating qi is natural breathing. You should not force the pulsating. You should not exert your mind, trying too much, being in a hurry. This all should progress slowly, naturally. So you will not be aware of breathing while breathing. Then blood in whole body is pulsating, it becomes coordinated with breathing, you develop the real skill, achieving the states about which the ancients talked.

People often use the sitting practices of chan (zen in Japanese). They think that they achieve the highest level this way. But in fact they only talk about natural, not realizing that the posture which they use is unnatural. Even if it is not harmful, there is also not much benefit from doing this. You can achieve empty mind and calm breath, but this is not the training of the whole. The key to cultivating qi is making qi permeating whole body, it cannot be made properly, if qi cannot flow freely through the joints. The breath makes blood pulsating and all cells of the body are pulsating together. This kind of movement related to breathing is the basis of martial art. The resulting movement is spontaneous, free, and then qi is born ceaselessly and you can recognize the true taste of what I'm talking about.

The pores of the skin are opening, whole body is breathing in harmony with the breathing through nose. Breathing through skin is a function of body, and is bigger than breathing through nose, but you are not aware of it. So when talking about cultivating qi, people usually talk about breathing through nose, not so often about breathing through skin. The key is gentleness. You should avoid forcing, haste, making breath short. The lungs work increases and is in harmony with breathing through skin. So it is said that breathing through nose is calm, breathing through skin is even. If you take care only about breathing through nose, not knowing about breathing through skin, it will be hard to achieve high skill of using qi and li, or to understand cultivating qi inside and outside.

Increasing the work of lungs is related to sinking shoulders and making chest empty. Forcing and tensing chest is a mistake. Try it and you will understand yourself. In martial art you should seek qi in emptiness. Qi is the solid which fills empty. While moving it moves outside. You should always have some spare energy. Hair on whole body is standing up, as sharp blades (when qi reaches the extreme points, it is said that qi is full), you don't see where the force is, but it is there, you are breathing without breathing consciously. This way you will continue developing your skill.

We are using yi, not force, this way cultivating qi and regulating breathing, the flow is not ceasing, mind is in harmony with qi. This is how you achieve the true governing and mastery of its use. In cultivating qi you should not force using yi. But when talking about using shen – spirit and yi – intent, stress is put on yi. There is no contradiction in this. Not forcing yi means that you should not focus on moving qi, in order to avoid stagnation and losing the natural state. The proper use of yi is about checking if everything is going naturally. Although the expressions are similar, the meaning is different. In one case it is too much involvement, disturbing qi, in the other there is nothing neglected, there is natural state, calm qi. You must know this.

Cultivating qi is focused on calm breath, not on seeking outside. This way qi doesn't need to be regulated, but is regulated. The method is following: eyes are as if looking at some distant object. Spirit, mind and eyesight are in harmony. When you move, the object is also moving. You can imagine it becoming bigger and smaller, and your eyes are following this. It is at some 10 zhang distance from you (1 zhang is 10 feet), at the level of your eyes. After you practice for some longer time, you can start working with idea of pulling it closer, or pushing it further away, lifting it up and moving down. When you practice this way, qi is trained without special training, is cultivated without special cultivating.

Nowadays martial arts practitioners often talk about qi penetrating dantian or sinking qi to dantian. You need to know that raising qi is a mistake, but sinking qi is also a mistake. If you aim at sinking qi, it becomes unnatural. It is better to follow natural, not focusing on sinking qi. So moving qi is not good method. The ancient philosophers used to say: „If not cultivating qi, how would it fill body?“ It's different from present days martial arts practitioners talking only about qi. So if we are talking about the way of cultivating, when you achieve the state of natural, qi will fill and permeate whole body. Only in the lower abdomen there is difference between relaxed round and solid round, which is related to issuing power.

Relaxed round: when qi is calm, permeating whole body, everything is one unity, this is normal state.

Solid round: when qi starts moving, chest is broad, lower abdomen is solid. This happens at the moment of issuing power. Top of head is as if supporting something, feet pressing ground, palms stretching, waist as if sitting down, qi concentrates in lower abdomen, to support strength, this is changed state.

ON YI

The essence of martial art is best explained by the use of the spirit and the energy of body. When limbs are moving, body is stretching and shrinking, blood is flowing freely, health improves and body becomes stronger – this is related to the aspect of the energy of body. And as for the source of body movement, this belongs to the aspect of spirit, mind. The movement of body is directed by yi – mind, intent. Yi is considering everything. The term yi is a general description of all aspects of mental processes. Where yi is directed, shen is following. This is the basis for the whole body movement and issuing of power, which is naturally expressed outside body. You can see that the source of movement is in yi, yi is unifying the whole movement. Knowledge, observing, reacting, movement and stillness, are a basis for each other. All of this have the source in the yi. To become skillful, you need to understand how opposite forces are born, and what is the meaning of mental guiding. To use mind, energy, force outside of your body, you need some space, you need to take care about balance and unity. Without working in this space, you will not achieve those incredible skills. So in a martial art training you need to use the space outside your body to achieve the full skill. You practice as if swimming in the air, awareness is reaching outside your body, but there is a balance, body is in a natural order. It is said, that practicing martial art, you need to practice with awareness. When mind is detached from your body, it is not reasonable, but if it concentrates too much on your body, it is even worse.

When you practice a martial art, the spirit should be in harmony with energy. Cultivating and training must become one. Only then it will be a true martial art. To achieve this, you need to practice consciously. When talking about this, we need to mention a typical problem – being too impatient to achieve the goal. In such a case there appears excessive effort in your mind and your body, the flow of blood becomes disturbed and the true strength cannot be expressed. If you are trying with too much effort and in haste, you will not achieve the goal. So the first important thing is giving up using force. The method is practicing consciously. Mind is checking the states of your body – if you feel just a bit too much effort, you should go back to the state before starting the action. When you start a movement, try to feel what's happening, and make changes accordingly. If you practice like this for a longer time, you will move back to natural, in your whole body there will be a feeling of comfort, as if you didn't use any force. But then there will be a strength in your whole body, and it will be expressed outside. So you should not try to use force, as this would be

harmful. The practitioners should understand this. The principle is that mind is before movement. The ancients were expressing this in many various ways.

You need to know, that force is born with a movement. The basis is the opposite forces, and the main thing is using the energy of movement. From stillness the movement is born, and movement changes again into stillness. The energy is born. When you are using this, that will be movement which is following mind, the force will be everywhere. This is practicing consciously, without unnecessary effort. This is described as: „when hands react being guided by mind, you will achieve the goal”. If you want to use force to the left, your mind should first be directed to the right, if you want to use force to the right, first take care of the left. If the force should be directed upward, first should be sinking, if downwards, then lifting should precede it. You should not think only about one direction. The old treatise says: „Use force as a silkworm creating a thread”. Also: „Strength as if using a carrying pole”, „steps as the movement of huai worm”. Take fullness from emptiness, use the energy of movement, let the changes be united. First following, then opposite. This is the explanation of using energy. Following and opposite are based on each other and are used simultaneously.

When you learn martial art, you should understand the arriving energy and departing energy. Those concepts of arriving energy and departing energy have a deep meaning. Practicing consciously is related to this arriving and departing. If you are using force all the time, this is wrong (yi is before movement, even if movement is stopped, yi is still there. This is an instruction for a beginner. You need to learn this, experience this, use this).

You need to master the art to such a level that you can act spontaneously. Mind is not coming from outside to inside, but from inside is expressed outside. You must be aware of outside, but you also need to be aware of your body. The practitioners should understand this well.

When learning a martial art, you need to learn principles, the use of mind and the form. When mind is observing the space around your body, this should achieve the same level as when observing your own body. If you focus only on learning the outside form, not knowing about principles and the way of using awareness, your mind will be under too much burden and your thoughts will be in chaos. Not only will this not be beneficial, but it can be harmful to your body and mind.

The fullness of yi, and not resemblance of form. When yi is full, there will be unity and efficiency in movement. Without thinking about unity, the unity will appear naturally. When you practice a martial art, you should think frequently: „why such a movement?“, „what is the purpose of this movement?“. If you practice diligently, you will achieve the goal.

In the martial art practicing consciously is stressed. Those who achieve this, can reach the highest levels. You need to master the ability of practicing consciously. When you don't learn this, how can you use this? What does it mean to master the ability of practicing consciously? I talked about this before, so I will not repeat it here. You need to seek this in the changes between stillness and movement. If a movement is going to happen, you need to ask: „why such a movement“. You need to ask if the movement is conforming the demands, what is the function of bending and straightening, position of planes, where is the point of applying force? Most important is if this movement is appropriate in this moment, in this situation? Especially you need to check, if after completing the movement body is still in the state of comfort, just like in stillness.

If you practice like this, you will achieve the ability of practicing consciously. Until you achieve the level when awareness is everywhere, when you feel comfort in your body in stillness and movement. Those who are not practicing consciously will not achieve this. Mind is checking body, body is subordinated. This should be happening naturally, spontaneously. Only when practicing consciously is not based on trying with effort, you will be able to achieve the subtle levels. Those who are thinking about practicing consciously, are not able to practice consciously. So if you think about it, it is the wrong use of mind. The practitioner first gets to know the way of practicing consciously, achieving this ability and then is maintaining it. Finally there is maintaining without consciously trying to maintain. Only then we can talk about the true understanding of practicing consciously and maintaining awareness in practice. When there is trying, it is fake conscious practice. Only when conscious practice will achieve the level of unconscious, the incredible starts happening.

The ancient philosophers used to say: „guard the unity of spirit“. This is describing the state after achieving the ability of practicing consciously. If you don't achieve this stage, there is no talk about natural. Body movement and awareness will neglect each other. You need to achieve the level when nothing is neglected, when there is no harmful trying.

When talking about practicing consciously, some people might misunderstand this, thinking that it is about some kind of desire. So you need to know, that the mistake of trying too hard is result of a desire. You need to calm down, achieve the state without desire, so you can avoid trying too hard. „No thoughts, no desires” - this expresses the deep meaning. So you need to get rid of desires, if you want to achieve the level of incredible abilities. When you regulate breathing, mind becomes calm, spirit becomes clear, mind becomes stable. When mind is stable, there is energy in movement, there is feeling as if in being in stillness. Then in the movement you heart is not galloping, you are not thinking about too many matters, spirit is not wandering astray, there is no nonsense movement. When you start from practicing consciously, eventually you will achieve great skill.

SHI LI – TESTING STRENGTH

After you master zhan zhuang exercises, you should start learning using strength. The basis is testing strength – shi li. Through shi li you will get to know the strength which is born by itself. If you know it, you can use it efficiently. This is why testing strength is the most crucial element in learning martial art.

First you need to make sure that your whole body is working evenly, with some order, coordination, that all joints can have some freedom of movement, that all bones create a structure of supporting forces, that tendons and bones can shrink and can stretch comfortably. This way the power can be naturally issued. Slow movement is better than fast movement, but most important is that yi should not be broken, that agility should not be lost, that any movement in any one place should be followed by movement of whole body. There is nothing which is not moving, but at the same time the movement is like non-movement. When you reach this stage, whole body strength is unified, there is a balance between movement and non-movement, you become skillful in testing strength.

Even, coordinated work of whole body, freedom of movement of joints, bones creating a structure of supporting forces, tendons and bones shrinking and stretching comfortably, all this is unified by the idea of unity of body, all those aspects cannot be separated. If you start from practical experiencing, you can develop the ability of basing the movement on one yi, so your whole body will move naturally, without blockages. At the higher stage there is no idea of practicing shi li at all, body is just moving slowly, and at the same time you are resting, yi is leading everything, nervous system is supporting the whole body movement. Small movement is better than big movement, slow movement is better than fast movement, the more subtle the movement, the fuller the spirit. When you achieve the stage of movement in stillness, it will be movement which is constantly born and never stops. Mind is observing and noticing everything, strength is unified, everything is in order and is “round”, nothing is omitted. Then the strength is unified by the circle (center), it is between movement and stillness, as there is no blind movement, wrong forces will not appear.

When force is unified through the center, there is no blind movement, all movements are appropriate. This is principle of stillness as a basis, and of movement for use. When there is no feeling of force (effort), there is hunyuan strength.

When you practice shi li, you should experience everything in slow movement, otherwise you will

not be able to fully perceive this strength and you will not be able to learn to use it.

If you are in a hurry, the unnecessary effort will appear. When such an effort is appearing, there is no naturalness, the hunyuan strength cannot be used. While using strength, various changes are possible – yin and yang, empty and full, opening and closing, following and opposite – they all are basis for each other, all is natural and everything is flowing without stop. The changes are various, you are using hands, shoulders, elbows, hips, joints, bones and tendons, and in whole body there is stretching and shrinking, qi and blood are pulsating, there appear edges of strength in all planes, all those aspects affect each other and are related to the center. Such forces are based on each other. We are talking about arguing forces or contradictory forces, forces which affect each other, this is hunyuan strength. There are forces in all directions in whole body, those forces are connected and depend on each other. At first you start from seeking two opposite forces. When your hand is moving forward, there should also be a backward action, when there is lifting up, there should be pressing down, expanding outward should be accompanied by embracing inward – everything is starting from one center, everything is connected. After mastering two opposite forces you can start seeking them in all parts of body and in all planes. All those forces should be in harmony, they should be part of the hunyuan unity, related to one center, there should not be any insufficiencies in the body. When you master those “arguing forces”, everything becomes truly connected, you could call this true mastering of the center, true mastering of the strength.

Force should not be one sided. If you neglect this principle, you will lose the possibilities which emerge from using the multi directional force, you will lose the basis for the mutually depended use of separating and connecting, empty and solid. When one moves, whole body moves. This should happen between conscious and unconscious. Only then you will have chance to achieve the highest level.

When you start learning shi li, you can use a little bit of force in the area from wrist to the tips of fingers. This way it will be easy to master the basics. You should not neglect anything, but you should not try too hard. Then everything will be proper, there will be the state of complete unity and connection of everything, and you will be able to start mastering skills which are beyond form, beyond body, beyond martial art. All this is result of shi li – testing strength. If you will achieve this through testing, we could talk about entering the way of martial art.

Using “arguing forces” should be natural. This is the true secret of martial art. I am revealing it here. Too many words are needed to explain it, but in fact the method is simple. But mastering it depends on the practitioner, on his own practice of experiencing.

USING STRENGTH

Only after you master the strength, you can talk about using it. Strength is moving inside body, is agile outside body, the use is based on spirit. Stillness is the basis of movement, movement is result of stillness. While learning, we focus on stillness, but in fact this is seeking the movement. When qi and strength are full, movement doesn't leave traces. Someone who mastered stillness is able to move. Stillness is the beginning of unlimited changes. We already talked about zhan zhuang. The movement of body and limbs must be based on using yi, so everything is connected by one qi. In use, the most important is abdomen. When we are talking about transforming body, it has this meaning. When hands issue power, whole body power is used, it is not just throwing hands and pulling them back, but is based on the waist movement and rotation. So when hands move forward and back, it is not just local movement. You should beware of "empty" moving your hands. When using, various changes are possible – you could use fist, open palm or fingers, but hands should not move too high or too low. It is said: not higher than eyebrows, not lower than navel, not wider than shoulders. If talking about steps, you need to know that long steps and positions are not agile, so when one foot moves forward, the other should be pulled closer. Empty and full in both feet depend on each other. The front foot is usually empty, back foot is usually full. Empty means agile, full means stable, like a mountain. Although we talk about front and back, empty and full, the strength is one. The area between navel and shoulders is place of unusual changes, it also contains the central nervous system which reaches hands and feet, creating the line of nerves, which we call central line. If you guard this line, you will avoid loss. As for hand, no matter if you use fist, palm or fingers, you should not make it too tense. Only when there is no excessive effort, the strength can be freely transmitted to limbs. Among the demands of martial art there is talk about steps light as those of a cat – it has a deep meaning. If there appears excessive effort in legs, steps will not be agile, it can harm nervous system and cause brain diseases, because irritation of the endings of nerves cause reaction in the central nervous system.

Practicing martial art you must master sheng – sound and shi – power. First we will not talk about sheng, only about shi. When we use strength, we talk about power or force. Power is born in use, is born from qi, is directed by yi, is expressed outside in changes between movement and non-movement. Although there are various shi, they come from one qi.

There are internal and external connections. Between xin (heart) and yi (intent), yi and qi, qi and li (force) – these are internal connections. Between hands and feet, elbows and knees, shoulders and

hips – those are external connections. And also between bones and tendons, skin and muscles, lungs and body, liver and kidneys – internal connections. Between head and hands, hands and torso, torso and legs – external connections. But those are not the highest demands of martial art. The true harmony is when everything is united - li, qi, shen, sheng, shi connected by one yi. If you seeking it solely in the form, there will be no true harmony.

It is said: Yiquan is based on the seeking the principles of life in the shape of a cross. This is true wisdom. Cross explains the use of “connected forces”, use of the center of circle. The possibilities of using the center of circle are limitless. What is the center? What is the circle? Circle is round, in the middle there is its center. When there is a circle, there is also a center. The strength of a circle is connected in the center and many crosses are created this way. In human body, the upper limbs have palms, wrists, elbows, arms, lower limbs have feet, ankles, knees and hips. Each part of the body has some circle and center, which need to be connected into one. In fighting you need to control opponent’s center and circle, not letting him control your center and circle. Center belongs to stillness, circle belongs to movement. The one who can master stillness will master movement and will be able to react in the right way in a right moment. How to master center and circle? You should try to master the circle through the center and to master center through the circle. When both become one you can talk about mastering center and circle. The method leading to this goal is zhan zhuang.

When it comes to the contact of your and opponent forces, it turns out who has higher skill. When contact appears, there appears force in a point. This is the strength of whole body transmitted to the point of contact. Both opponents are seeking the center, and the skill is based on rotation. When opponent’s force appears, I make rotation in such a way that his force disappears. This is rotation of hands, wrists, waist, arms, head. Whole body is moving, is rotating, you feel the opposites of relax and tension. Sometimes the strength assumes some form and sometimes is hidden. When one part of body moves, whole body is cooperating, all parts react. When all parts react, it is always related to the force in the point of contact, and has source in the force of foot pushing against the ground. Sometimes it seems than not all parts react, but it turns out that they move together. Sometimes no change in form can be seen, but there is very subtle skill inside. Usually people talk about hitting with fist, with elbow, but we are not interested in visible use of force, we avoid local action.

Strength should be expanding from inside outside, but first should be pulled to the center, then you will be able to issue it outside. So “when it comes to fighting, only if you don’t issue power directly

toward opponent, you can react in the right moment, according to situation”. So if we are talking about using force, the stress should be given to attention, awareness, and not effort. And you should not think about opponent. When you think about opponent, it will be difficult to avoid blockages of your own strength. Your mental attitude should be as if there was nobody around you – then opponent will not be able to intercept your strength, and you will be able to develop such big power, that he will not be able to resist. This way you will master the unusual skill of using strength.

Depending on the way of using strength, we can talk about three kinds of forces, which can be described as “empty center”, “full center” or “neutralizing center”. Depending on opponent’s action, we adapt to his use of force, form is changing in uncountable ways, body is moving in incredibly agile way. Using strength is based on the changes between hard and soft, straight and round, using diagonal planes and spiral movement, accumulating, using elastic strength and surprising strength. Although there might be many changes, all is based in adapting to various situations by using the circle and the center.

Those forces can be divided like this:

- hard, straight force, like hammer hitting a nail, the hair on whole body is as if standing up, this force is sharp, clearly visible from outside,
- soft, short force, is agile, elastic, hair on the body is as if moving, force is hidden inside,
- diagonal force, means attacking straight at some angle, this is great skill, it is easy to use it while attacking,
- spiral force, arms are rotating while attacking, force can be soft or hard, you exploit an opening, it is easy to get strength this way, this force can pull in, throw away, twist, wrap,
- accumulated force, directed inward, not issued outward yet, hard outside, but soft inside, you receive movement with stillness and the change, it can create straight force, but also “sticking” force and pulling in force. The advantage is that you can guard center in subtle and agile way, it is easy to make changes, so it is described as „empty center”,
- springy force, also called straightening force, is like the strength of squeezed spring, which tends to straighten back, this force is born from vibration, is soft outside and hard inside, like iron wrapped in cotton, it is used in passive countering, it is described as “full center”,
- shocking force, is expressed in limbs, but the main movement is in the waist, like snake, like dragon, hard and soft supplement each other, yin and yang, empty and full are based on each

other, you are discovering opponent's mistakes, in close contact using rotating, wrapping, twisting, this is happening extremely fast, it is described as "neutralizing center".

The martial science is related to the "Book of changes". Use of force is based on qian (yang, heaven) and kun (yin, earth) trigrams. Qian is one force, kun another, but in fact they are one. Round comes from qian, square comes from kun. Kun is in qian. So square is encircled by round. When you know square and round, you will be able to perform innumerable changes when fighting. In movement there is separation, in stillness there is connection. Yin and yang permeate each other, the movement is between qian and kun.

Those who discuss martial art use to say that some technique is born from some other technique or that some technique is defeated by some other technique. It might seem that it makes sense, but it is based on using fixed techniques. During a fight, when contact between arms of opponents happens, how could you use fixed techniques. If you notice what technique your opponent is using, then make decision which technique to use against it, and then you actually use it, it is difficult to believe that you would be successful, especially as the opponent's movement can change after he starts his action. How can you think about using some fixed technique against opponent's technique? This is deceiving people. And when you can develop the contradictory forces, if you can guard center, you can control opponent naturally, spontaneously. Those who talk about choosing technique depending on which technique opponent is using have no idea about martial art.

The skill of using force is based on the strength being unified and on continuous unpredictable changes. As if you want to make movement, but you stop it, yin and yang, soft and hard, there is no clearly visible direction in form. So when you are learning martial art, you should not look for miracles, but you should focus on intent – using mind. Mind is limitless, you can use it, and it will not become used up. The beginners should know, that if you use effort, the strength is losing the center, but when there is no effort, strength is becoming full by itself.

The strength of whole body should be unified and homogeneous – hunyuan. Hunyuan strength is a complex unity of contradictory forces. There is a difference between movement and stillness. In stillness the strength is permeating the whole, this is stillness. In movement there should be contradictory forces in all joints, all parts of body, all directions. The strength is permeating everything, this is movement. The strength of stillness and movement, depending on the way of using it can be divided into five kinds: metal, wood, water, fire and earth, but actually it is just one

contradictory force.

1. Strength of metal: tendons and bones are strong, hard, there is idea of metal, stone, the strength of empty center is changing into the strength of full center, it enables hard attack, has character of metal, so it is called strength of metal. It is said that skin and muscles are soft, but tendons and bones like steel,
2. Strength of wood: there are parts straight and parts which are bent in whole body, like a tree, strength is full and contains movement, has character of wood, so it is called strength of wood,
3. Strength of water: body is moving like a divine dragon swimming in the sky, as a snake swimming in water, there is no fixed form, there is agility and changes, like flowing water, this is strength of empty center, has character of water, so it is called strength of water,
4. Strength of fire: hands attacking like an exploding bomb, body as on fire, there is incredible fierceness, strength is changing from empty center to full center and back to empty center, movements are extraordinary fast, this strength has character of fire, so it is called strength of fire,
5. Strength of earth: is full, solid, in the mind there is idea of a heavy mountain, there are blades hidden everywhere, this is the strength of neutralizing center, in contains skillful use of empty and full, it has character of earth, so it is called strength of earth.

In movement like flowing water, in stillness as if water stopped moving, body like dragon, energy like long rainbow. If you master skillful using, movement and stillness will naturally become basis for each other. And as for the strength of whole body, the center, the neutralizing – everything is in harmony with heaven and earth – when body is moving, it is like an echo of heaven and earth – this is using the principles of physics. There is also support of mind work. It is difficult to understand without deep experiencing.

The changes in movement are uncountable, yin and yang, empty and full, openings and closing, hard and soft, horizontal and vertical. In yin there is yang, in yang there is yin, yin and yang are changing into each other. Movement is a basis for stillness, from stillness movement is born. Full is using empty, empty is based on full. There are incredible possibilities in the changes between empty and full. How to close without opening? How to open without closing? Opening and closing are a spectrum. Hard must be contained in soft, soft can overcome hard, soft and hard are meeting like husband and wife. Horizontal cannot be separated from vertical, vertical cannot be detached from

horizontal. Horizontal and vertical are helping each other. There is also long and short, sinking and rising, soft on the left and hard on the right, or the last section of body can be hard, but middle section soft, or sometimes soft, sometimes hard, or half soft, half hard. Soft is retreating, hard is advancing, left hard, right soft, or first soft, and then hard. When you meet full, you react with hard, but first there is soft. What is too hard can break easily. What is too soft cannot advance firmly. Using soft and hard is mutually interdependent, changes depending on situation, everything is working together, there appear unexpected changes, as if you wanted to move, and at the same time as if you wanted to stop, there is no visible form in the changes, and in the mind there is emptiness. The skill of using is based on the principle of “not losing the center, the central line should not be broken”.

Heaven gives birth to ten thousand things, all of them have their characteristics and possibilities. In the martial art we are using some ideas, pictures of some phenomena, using the changes which are inside them, creating harmony between the form and properties of body. When you practice, you should take care about linking the movement with appropriate mental attitude – then you will be able to master the energy of changes between movement and stillness. Mastering energy means mastering the strength, the skillful use is based on this. For example if we are talking about the movement form of changquan (long fist), the meaning of phenomena has been long lost. It is said that training a form is a false way, training spirit is the true way. If the practitioner will find the proper method, he will be able to master this (dragon ready, tiger crouching, hawk looking at his prey, lively spirit of a monkey, cat walking softly, galloping horse, the cock raising legs, snake coiling its body).

Human body is moving in the air which encompasses it. When body is turning left, it is as if the air was whirling right. The perception of this force should be in harmony with the strength of body. It is said that strength is born in body and that outside there is strength too. Rotations and twists like a cobweb in the air. The movement light like dragon flying, without noticeable fixed patterns. When mind is unified, the strength can be big. The secret is how to make it that the strength is born from emptiness, from empty mind. You should practice as if you were fighting with the air around you, but at the same time as if your body and the air around you were one. This is like swimming in water. Someone good in swimming is forgetting about water. When you don't think about water while swimming, then your spirit can be full, and you can swim very well.

SKILL OF FIGHTING

One part of martial art is fighting training, which is preparing for actual fighting. You should realize that there is difference between empty forms and actual skill. One of classical sayings is: „When it comes to actual fight, people forget fighting techniques”. This reveals the problem about empty forms and flowery techniques, because if something is nice looking, it doesn't mean that it is practical, if something is practical, it doesn't need to be nice looking. In fighting important is to be free in the efficient response to opponents action, so you can achieve victory, when faced by enemy. Issuing power cannot come too early or too late. You need to use the right moment and apply uncountable changes.

Only when you achieve freedom in actions which are difficult to predict, we can say about ability of right reacting. You could know many flowery methods, ways of turning body, jumping and hitting, practice forms with partner, when one is attacking and the other neutralizing those actions by appropriate moving, but this not only doesn't bring profit, but is harmful and misleading. Those fixed forms cannot be used. If changes are not adapted to situation, this is not right movement.

Researching the problem of source of flowery techniques, we see that people started rehearsing fighting situations in order to learn practical use. But then it changed into practicing flowery techniques which can only please eyes of audience. The problem is that flowery techniques are valued, and right methods are not known. Flowery techniques, which have nothing to do with methods of developing actual skill, become increasingly popular. Empty forms are mostly discussed, so not many are able to achieve the true skill.

When you are practicing fighting skills, it is about possibility of practical use. Actual comparing skills is necessary. Training should be close to reality. This way you can avoid empty forms and useless flowery techniques, which can only impress viewers, and have no practical value.

When you practice, you should imagine as if there were opponents all around you. „When you make any movement, you should feel as if fighting with the air (opponent) for possibility of making that movement. When you practice this way long time, your movement can become unstoppable”. In your free time, when you are sitting, lying, playing, it all can become kind of training. Then when you practice at some determined time and place, this is called regular training.

In martial art we are using center. Using center, guarding center, spirit protecting center, not losing energy of center, not losing strength of center, not losing spirit of center, focusing on center. When fighting you need to take care about protecting your own center, so opponent cannot affect it. At the same time you need to try to defeat him by affecting his center. At beginning you can see opponent and his central line as one thing. Attack in such a way as to affect center. Don't attack blindly. If you move, it should affect opponent's heart and will. There is a saying: „no technique, no position, just move”. This is explaining the principle. To achieve „just move”, you need to know that ten thousands come to one.

Central line is where is nose. Remove the attack some 7-8 inches to the side from this line, and it will not reach body. It is said: „proficiency is in space of one inch”. When you understand this, you don't need to make big movements. There is saying: „it's not about how nice it looks from far distance, but about subtle changes just in front of your eyes”. There is also saying: „It doesn't matter if position is good or bad, important is the actual meaning of movement and changes between empty and full”. It doesn't matter if movement is complex or simple, but if it is free and with strength. Those who aim at making movements nice looking, are not able to use them in practice. Learning martial art you can master using circles. This saying has deep meaning. You should know that small circle is better than just a circle. A circle such small that you don't see its form is better than just small circle. Unified movement of whole body is better than circles which form you don't see. Whole spirit, whole energy, whole strength – this is the way of seeking center, using center.

Rou shou is a method of getting to know your own and opponent's center. It can also be used as a way of comparing skill with opponent. You need to avoid empty postures and movements, you need to seek practical and true. Both opponents are looking for each other's weak points and are trying to use them. When attacking try not to miss right opportunity. When training, you should not be discouraged when you are defeated, and you should not become too complacent when you win. You should try to notice reason for winning or losing, so you can draw conclusions and make changes in your training, so you can gradually become proficient. Then your courage will grow, you will achieve the state of not being afraid of opponent. If you practice empty, fixedly arranged sets, there is no benefit, why practice this?

It is said: „If you are not at the level of your opponent, you will not be able to defeat him”. If fear or doubt comes or if you are cheating in your training, you will not achieve victory. After starting fight, when hands make movements, legs make steps, waist is turning, if all this has its reason and

its goal, it is beneficial. If you can master using body, hands, steps, why to look for something aside?

„Rotation and body movements as if swimming in the air” - this is expression of the principle of swiftness and aliveness. Movement and stillness become one, issuing power comes accordingly to situation, movements are agile, forces are interchanging. Movement to the left is not detached from the right. Movement to the right starts from the left. Awareness should embrace all sides: left, right, up, down. You shouldn't focus on one and forget about something else. This is use of „arguing forces”. „Arguing forces” are related to the center, are basis for reacting for uncountable possibilities.

In movement there should not be straight attack and straight coming back. Seek for the strength in circles and curves. At the same time seek curves in straight. Straight and bent are interdependent, their changes are formless, and strength is inside. Form bent, strength straight – this expresses this principle. You need to work on improving your perception, personally experiencing all of this, then mastering „arguing forces” will not be difficult.

While training fighting, you should realize that hitting head, ribs, chest, underbelly, solar plexus could even cause death or internal injuries. So when practicing movements of attack to vital areas, you need to take care not to injure training partner. This is extremely important.

REACTING TO OPPONENT'S ACTION

No matter how much are we talking about fighting, it is based on the principle: to control opponent, not being controlled by him. You need to be alert in front of an opponent. How? Attention is needed. Nowadays, when people talk about it, they think about how to react to opponent's action, not realizing that it is about guarding balance (center). Mind and body should observe the principle of balancing, this must be maintained while hands are moving, steps are made, waist is turning. When there is stability, as if there was no movement. Issuing power starts from the state when everything is balanced, when everything is advantageous. When you become skillful, this will be natural.

When there is awareness of all sides, the agility appears naturally, there is no need to discuss this. If you are alert only to something, it is only a part of this skill. Putting attention only to something is a mistake. The masters say, that when you see opponent, you can make hand movement, when you have opponent in your mind, you can make step. This is the ability of being alert. Then any movement will have reason, there will not be a careless movement.

Reacting to opponent's action, you need to understand opponent and understand yourself, following opponent's energy, using his force. Using his force means redirecting it and using it against him, this is so called redirecting one thousand pounds with one finger. You need to react swiftly to the present situation. You need to be able to change from advancing to retreating, you should not just attack hastily. In and out, observing situation, observing opponent, separating his strength and using it, also retreating as preparation to advance. This is the way to become invincible. Using of force should be adopted to situation. You start later, but arrive earlier. Your action should not be started too early, but should not be done too late. And no matter if opponent is attacking with palm or fist, you should observe his whole body and use the right moment. You should not put effort into your action, you should react to his movement in calm and subtle way. Reacting in the right moment, according to the situation is based on using yi – mind. Yi is perceiving, yi is reacting, there is no clumsiness then, but there is possibility of changeable use. The one who is able to recognize opportunity and to use it, has unusual skill.

If you will feel fear, you will be humiliated. If in front of an opponent you will behave like a coward, you will lose. Martial art practitioners want to become skilled, but when it comes to fighting their legs become soft and their bodies start trembling, they are not sure about their skills

anymore and are not able to use it. Lack of courage leads to losing the skill. But if your skill is really solid and you have confidence in it, then you will maintain courage while fighting.

In fighting we are using voice to affect opponent mind and arise our own power. It must happen in the right moment, without effort, not disturbing the strength which is used. In result your opponent might become frightened and disheartened. The ancient used to call this “hitting with sound”. But if you do this before actually fighting, it is result of fear and symptom of weakness. You should avoid this, as it can lead to being defeated.

During a fight you must be alert and confident. You should have such ideas: head wants to hit, hands want to hit, body wants to crush, hands want to pass over opponent, feet want to stomp him, spirit wants to overwhelm him, energy wants to attack him. You must be ready to issue power in the right moment, being sure that it is you who decides about the result, that you will win, without doubt. It is said: you cannot think during a fight, the one who is thinking is not able to make even a small step in reasonable way. There should not be visible form in your movements. If you exhibit form, you will not win. You must be like a tiger, like a dragon, and your movement should not have obvious form, you must move according to situation, even if strength is broken, intent should not be broken, and even when intent is broken, the spirit should still express continuity. When spirit is full, body is safe, how could you not win then! If you understand opportunity, you can control opponent, you will not lose opportunity, you will notice advantages and disadvantages of your opponent. All this between conscious and unconscious. When you don't move, you are ready to move. When you move, there is stillness inside. Retreating becomes advancing, advancing changing into retreating, retreating straight, but advancing from the side, advancing at some angle, but hitting straight, soft movement and sudden shock, hard movement changing into soft circle, inside as if shrinking bones, and power issued outside, condensing is emitting. While emitting, the force reaching bones and bone marrow. Awareness embracing area several feet outside of body, opponent's body is as if inside a net of your awareness, how could he escape? Think about it.

What is the reason if the one who didn't practice martial art wins, and the one who practiced martial art loses? Because the one who practiced is not able to use his skill according to situation. In a fight you must act without hesitation and be ruthless (you must be calm, but at the same time ruthless, and your movements must be precise). Li Guang shot an arrow into a stone, when he thought that it was a tiger. Victory or defeat are decided in a split of second, and during this split of second there might occur various and complex changes.

You need deep understanding and big technical power. But if there is understanding and power, but there is not enough experience, that will not be enough. If you have experience, but you are not able to react according to the unexpected changes, it means that the spirit is not full, so this is not enough too. So you cannot estimate the level of art only on the basis of a single victory or defeat.

In reacting to opponent's action the most important is "guarding center, using center". Mind and body must be united. Hands, elbows, shoulders, wrists and all joints – as if there were sharp blades everywhere. Head, tail bone and foot in one line. Everywhere, in all directions, front-back, left-right, up-down, there are opposite forces, triangles and spirals. Whole body is united and you don't lose center. You can unexpectedly get control over opponent's center, receiving victory with one movement. This is uniting bones, muscles, strength, energy of whole body. When you achieve this, you are naturally ready for uncountable changes. There are changes all the time, movement is born and is changing. This is the one whole which cannot be defeated. It is important that your action is right, no matter what opponent will do.

SMALL CONCEPTS

1. Promoting the martial art science, opposing forms training, propagating principles and methods,
2. Efficient use of martial art is based on using the whole, on cultivating energy, on uniting heart and will,
3. The arts of fist and the art of sword are different, but the basis is the same. When you practice, you need to have united strength of whole body. On the other hand, body can be divided into sections, but everything should work together. Generally speaking the ending sections are stretching and attacking, middle section is turning, the strength of lower section and of whole body is used. As for various methods of use, it is difficult to describe, demonstration is needed,
4. Those practicing martial art should get rid of sectarian views and study the true essence of the art together, making theories clear, this way the chinese martial art will survive and will develop. My task is to be honest about it and not move away from this path, not trying to convince people that I'm invincible.

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