

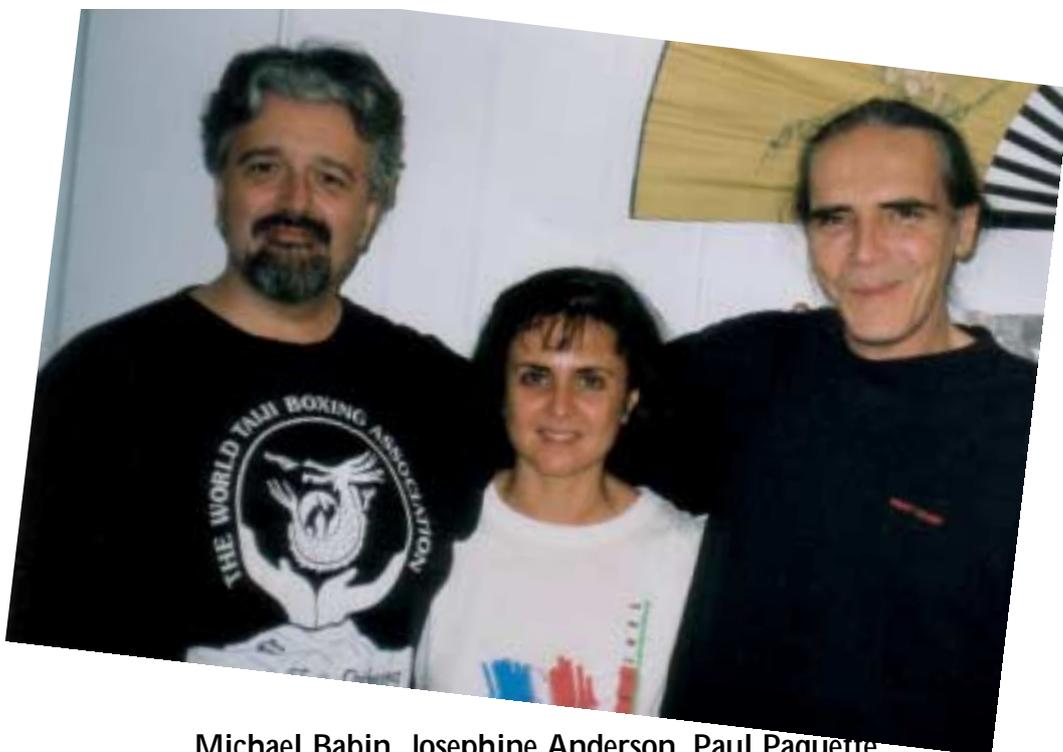


Combat & Healing

WTBA Canada

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Please don't shat on my 67
Gibson!

The Yang-style Taiji Sword/Jian

by Michael Babin

There is a fair bit of controversy about the origins of sword usage in the Yang-style. It seems fairly certain, for a variety of reasons, that it didn't come from the Chen-style. The founder of Yang-style, Yang Lu-ch'an, reportedly did not teach sword but was famous for his skill with the spear. However, his son, Ban-hou, learned the use of the sword, apparently from a Taoist monk of the Wudang Mountain (whose monks were famous for their sword skills) and became almost as well-known for his swordsmanship as for his legendary harsh and taciturn nature. He apparently taught some, if not all, of his art to his nephew, Yang Shao-hou.

Only a few variations of Ban-hou's sword form have survived into modern times; Erle's solo form is one as is that taught by Yang Jwing-ming in the USA. The only other version that I have seen was that on a demonstration video by the late York Why-loo. None of these forms are identical, by any means, however, they all share a structure and certain postures that don't appear in the mainstream Yang-style sword forms that descend from the Ch'eng-fu lineage.

Over the years I have seen and/or learned other versions of the solo sword set attributed to Cheng-fu's lineage. All these forms share structure and postures that are common to them although none were identical by any means. Incidentally, I have been told more than once over the years by experts that I trust that there is considerable evidence that the form taught by Cheng-fu as the Yang-family solo set was actually created by one of his earlier senior students, Chen

Wei-ming.

It can be frustrating for the serious student of taiji to do a little research into what is available in the Yang-style as there is little agreement on history or details of practise among even the few real experts. As in all forms of research, "caveat emptor" {"let the buyer beware"} is a good motto and you need more than a little experience at the basic postural and martial body mechanics of taiji to make any headway in terms of sword training. In any case, the study of the sword is an interesting way of varying your practice and trying to add a new dimension to your understanding of taiji.

The jian is often compared to a Chinese dragon: fast and frightening in terms of the grace and sinuous rapidity of its movement and the twisting ease with which it can "bite". Where you would block with the broadsword, you dodge with the straight sword; where you would slam, you flick; where you would charge, you circle or side-step. I like to think of the jian as a scalpel with a three-foot reach; although this is not quite accurate as a traditional weapon would have a relatively thick and blunt blade for the rear third, sometimes last half, of its length and be razor-sharp nearer the tip only.

Having two edges, the jian cuts both ways: and is as effective on the backstroke as on the advance. The footwork needed is nimble and developing skill with a jian is partly a matter of learning to shift, sidestep and evade attacks as much as you parry or block them (the last tactic being reserved for martial "emergencies").

To be effective, you must connect the flat of your blade (not the edge) to the opponent's and then use the weight and movement of your body to simultaneously deflect his blade and affect his balance. This should create an immediate opportunity to slice the wrist/arm that holds the sword to, literally, "disarm" him or her prior to a finishing stroke,

if such is necessary. Conversely, while it is sometimes okay to trade blows with an unarmed opponent, if you have a better target -- it is never so with edged weapons. You must evade, parry or block every attack and your opponent like-wise.

The left hand is usually held in the "Sword-Charms" ("jianque") position -- first two fingers straight; thumb, ring and little fingers making a loose circle. This is symbolic of the magic sword used by Buddhist/Taoist priests to slay evil spirits. The empty hand can also be used for empty-hand strikes to vulnerable points on your opponent. In addition, Erle adds that it is symbolic of the small dagger that could be hidden in the left hand and used if the opportunity presented itself for blocks or surprise attacks.

Solo Training Tips

When gripping the sword handle, do so gently but firmly with the first two fingers and the thumb -- not the entire hand and hold it as close to the guard as possible. Using a tight grip is the mark of a beginner and is usually the reason that students of this weapon get sore elbows and/or shoulders when they first start training with the sword. Of course, finding the right amount of pressure is not easy and many students also fall prey to using so loose a grip that they have no real control of the weapon. I would recommend that you start your training with a wooden sword as the weight is less likely to strain your wrist or challenge your shoulders in the way that even a metal weapon can.

Assuming that you enjoy your solo practise; you should consider buying the best quality sword that you can find and afford. Now, this is not easy as buying a sword by mail or over the internet is not a good idea -- you really need to handle any weapon before buying it to get a "feel" for its weight and balance. While it is always dangerous to hand out advice from a modern perspective (I haven't been on a battlefield armed with a sword, not too many of us have ...) A study of of the

history of arms and armour will quickly reveal that function follows form (and vice-versa) and weapons that were used for fighting were normally "plain and simple" and the expense went into the making of the blade and not in ornamenting the hilt and scabbard.

Ornamental and expensively gilded, carved or inlaid weapons were for "parade" functions or for officers/nobles/royalty who did not actually get close to the fighting.

In other words, don't buy a sword that looks like it should be displayed on your mantelpiece--that's probably all that it is good for!

It may be a shock for those used to practising with the swords that are available through martial arts stores that a good sword will have a relatively firm blade that is at least 30" in length (many experts say that you should use the longest blade that you can wield comfortably) weigh one and a half to three pounds, and have an over-all balance point as close to the guard/handle as possible. My own opinion is to avoid the Longquan swords that are now being imported from China, especially if ordering by mail. The quality control in the production of these weapons seems non-existent. Although affordable, the blades rust easily and are usually of light weight and overly flexible. Again caveat emptor!

You need lots of space for indoor practice -- an important consideration as with any of the more traditional Chinese forms. There's literally no point in going to the effort of learning the weapon set if you can't practice it for lack of indoor training space. Practising in a park is one option but, in many western countries, pedestrians aren't used to the sight of flailing swords

the way they are in your local Chinatown or Beijing. If you are planning to practice in the park or your backyard you'll need a fair bit of



Michael Babin

privacy. Over the years, several of my students have had the police arrive to question them while they were practising in public when someone phoned in a report that "some crazy guy is waving a sword in the park".

Applications Training Tips

Training martial function with the sword is essential in really understanding the solo aspect of your training, but even rudimentary

understanding of martial usage is hard to come by in modern times.

Warm-up exercises, practising applications with a partner and two-person sword sparring sets are essential aspects of developing even rudimentary swordsmanship. Solo form practise is not enough unless you already have a long-term experience with applications training. To put it bluntly, you can maintain some level of fighting skill by solo practise only if you already know how to fight with a sword. You can't learn to fight with a sword if you only do solo form work!

Most modern taiji teachers either don't understand the sword as a combat weapon or have adapted Chinese hard-style sword tactics to teach combat basics. The latter is better than nothing in martial terms; but you are as likely to be learning Hung Gar or Choy Li Fut tactics as anything else.

There are ways of telling if your teacher has some skill in swordsmanship: For example, in tactical terms, unlike the taiji sabre, a jian is never allowed to move above the crown of the head for a variety of reasons -- the practical (it might be

struck down into you so that you cut yourself with the edge facing your body) and the esoteric (you wouldn't want to sever your connection with the Yang energy of Heaven entering the Bai-hui point on the top of your head, would you?)

Another indication of taiji-usage is the emphasis on sensitivity and using "sticky" circling methods as a way of learning how to suddenly disengage your weapon while cutting the hand or wrist of the opponent's hand to (somewhat literally) disarm him. Conversely, you also need to develop skill at counter-circling to avoid those wrist cuts!

As to the long tassels that are often seen hanging from the end of the sword handle, people whose opinion I respect have said that the tassels are useful when training solo forms as they will wrap around your wrist, impeding your movement, if you do some of the postures incorrectly so that the use of tassels can be thought of as a "feedback" mechanism for proper mechanics.

However, for the same reasons on a battlefield, I would suspect that a tassel is as likely to cause your death as improve your technique. Today when taiji sword experts (a few that I have met include Yang Jwing-ming, Sam Masich and Liang Shou-yu) demonstrate two-person applications, tassels are rarely in evidence.

Finally, practice applications with care and use only wooden weapons unless you are an expert! Be aware though that long-term training will usually mulch the edge of the wooden swords available through martial arts stores and catalogues and result in you having to stop your practice while you hop about, cursing, while trying to pull an inch-long splinter out of your wrist or forearm!

The science behind Reaction

How it influences our training

Gary Romel

Learning to turn your art into true self-defense requires many things; a main factor is training our reactions. Erle teaches us a concept of the "reptilian brain" which after doing some research is a sound principle. I have done some searching on the factors that will affect our reactions, types of reactions, stimulus, mean reaction times, etc. First I will list my conclusions on how this research can have an effect on our training.

1. Self-defense, or self-offense? For example as the reaction research shows toe to toe even the most trained guy is most likely to get hit or stabbed. This should be of great concern, both legally, and in how we approach situations. This is basically the reason I strike first if I cannot keep the person from entering that range, he persists in closing the gap and I cannot safely retreat.

But to a judge this type of pre-emptive strike could be perceived not as self-defense, especially in the case of a well-trained individual. But knowing a bit about probable reaction time may save us legally by giving us good enough reason to fear and react accordingly in defense of our lives.

After learning the pre-emptive attacks from Erle this past year it got me thinking of why such a thing would be needed. The more I looked into it, the better I feel about practicing such techniques.

2. How many techniques we memorize and practice- "as the number of items in the memory set increases, the reaction time rises proportionately (that is, proportional to N, not to log N). Reaction times ranged from 420 msec for 1 valid stimulus (such as one letter in symbol recognition) to 630 msec for 6 valid stimuli, increasing by about 40 msec every time another item was added to the memory set."

I may be misunderstanding, but I think the more things we introduce into our mental library directly affects the reaction time. Now perhaps time and repetition can counter act this. But it should make someone think twice about being a "technique collector" and just find good variables that work for anything without going overboard.

I find that even if you learn 1000 different techniques, they may all share a core principle/movement, why vary on that principle 975 more times than you need to and clutter that mental library? Perhaps you need that number of variations to extract the right principle? But once you do -I think less is more.

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less is more.

3. How we learn- "but that trained reactions will perform quickest when executed in similar 'mental states' as they were trained in. This certainly speaks directly to the notion of people's training collapsing under pressure" Simply what mind frame we are in, what scenarios we practice, how we spar, as Quoted above from a Bagua practitioner hinted about state-induced learning.

All of these things affect how to best learn and train in our arts so that we may best handle ourselves in a real encounter. If we play spar perhaps those techniques were stored in the mental state of "play" mode, and will not be manifested well under duress?

4. What we learn- Fine motor movements along with gross motor movements that works without the fine ones? This could produce a more foolproof, or perhaps better stated, reaction proof, or duress proof technique. Some adhere to the theory that if you train complex reactions and can perform them well in training; the simple ones will be easier to pull off. I personally like to do both, I prefer the more fool proof methods, but enjoy, and of course teaching have to learn them all regardless of simplicity. I only have a handful of techniques I really like and train the crap out of them, but doing the more complex things gives me more insight on the simple stuff. Also jin refinement, and structure in simple movement is a big player for all you Neijia players.

5. Where we look- it definitely is a main factor in the reaction we are able to produce.

It may also be a player of how

our brain stores and access the information/techniques or reactions we use. Perhaps the peripheral vision bypasses certain cognitive processes and enables us to react more swiftly and with the correct technique without really "thinking" about it. Knowing exactly how we could process/learn and react in the most optimal fashion would obviously be of great benefit. The few existing data suggests that reaction time sharply increases as the rods become the primary photoreceptor, which means that the peripheral is better for reaction, it is widely accepted by neuroscientists that the peripheral vision is better for detecting motion; Erle calls this "eagle vision". I learned this from Erle long before I did any research, other teachers have attempted to steer me wrong, but after trying the other options it is clear that Erle has always been correct.

Notice the types of reaction times and stimuli, I can see that both "recognition"(should I block that?) and "choice" reactions (If he throws a high right I'm going to do X technique) would apply to many techniques, but getting to a "simple" reaction time would be best (if he moves hit him).

Reaction Time Experiments

In simple reaction time experiments; there is only one stimulus and one response. 'X at a known location,' 'spot the dot,' and 'reaction to sound' all measure simple reaction time.

In recognition reaction time experiments, there are some stimuli that should be responded to (the 'memory set'), and others that should get no

response (the 'distracter set'). There is still only one correct response. 'Symbol recognition' and 'tone recognition' are both recognition experiments.

In choice reaction time experiments, the user must give a response that corresponds to the stimulus, such as pressing a key corresponding to a letter if the letter appears on the screen. The Reaction Time program does not use this type of experiment because the response is always pressing the spacebar.

By the way, professional psychologists doing these experiments typically employ about 20 people doing 100-200 reaction times each...per treatment (Luce, 1986, Ch. 6)! Sanders (1998, p. 23) recommend an adequate period of practice, and then collection of 300 reaction times per person. Our experiments of 3 or 4 people doing 10 reaction times each are very small.

Mean Reaction Times

For about 120 years, the accepted figures for mean simple reaction times for college-age individuals have been about 190 ms (0.19 sec) for light stimuli and about 160 ms for sound stimuli (Galton, 1899; Fieandt et al., 1956; Welford, 1980; Brebner and Welford, 1980).

Simple vs. Recognition vs. Choice Reaction Times

The pioneer reaction time study was that of Donders He showed that a simple reaction time is

shorter than a choice reaction time, and that the recognition reaction time is longest of all. Laming (1965) concluded that simple reaction times averaged 220 msec but recognition reaction times averaged 384 msec. This is in line with many studies concluding that a complex stimulus (e.g., several letters in symbol recognition vs. one letter) elicits a slower reaction time (Brebner and Welford, 1980; Teichner and Krebs, 1974; Luce, 1986). An example very much like our experiment was reported by Surwillo (1973), in which reaction was faster when a single tone sounded than when either a high or a low tone sounded and the subject was supposed to react only when the high tone sounded.

Miller and Low (2001) determined that the time for motor preparation (e.g., tensing muscles) and motor response (in this case, pressing the spacebar) was the same in all three types of reaction time test, implying that the differences in reaction time are due to processing time.

Numbers of possible valid stimuli- several investigators have looked at the effect of increasing the number of possible stimuli in recognition and choice experiments. Hick (1952) found that in choice reaction time experiments, response was proportional to $\log(N)$, where N is the number of different possible stimuli. In other words, reaction time raises with N , but once N gets large, reaction time no longer increases so much as when N was small. Sternberg (1969) maintained that in recognition experiments, as the number of items in the memory set increases, the reaction time rises proportionately (that is, proportional to N , not to $\log N$). Reaction times ranged from 420 msec for 1 valid stimulus (such

as one letter in symbol recognition) to 630 msec for 6 valid stimuli, increasing by about 40 msec every time another item was added to the memory set. Nickerson (1972) reviewed several recognition studies and agreed with these results..

Type of Stimulus

Many researchers have confirmed that reaction to sound is faster than reaction to light, with mean auditory reaction times being 140-160 msec and visual reaction times being 180-200 msec (Galton, 1899; Woodworth and Schlosberg, 1954; Fieandt et al., 1956; Welford, 1980; Brebner and Welford, 1980). Perhaps this is because an auditory stimulus only takes 8-10 msec to reach the brain (Kemp et al., 1973), but a visual stimulus takes 20-40 msec (Marshall et al., 1943). Reaction time to touch is intermediate, at 155 msec (Robinson, 1934). Differences in reaction time between these types of stimuli persist whether the subject is asked to make a simple response or a complex response (Sanders, 1998, p. 114).

Stimulus Intensity

Froeberg (1907) found that visual stimuli that are longer in duration elicit faster reaction times, and Wells (1913) got the same result for auditory stimuli.

Piéron (1920) and Luce (1986) reported that the weaker the stimulus (such as a very faint light) is, the longer the reaction time is. However, after the stimulus gets to certain strength, reaction time becomes constant.

Kohfeld (1971) found that the difference between reaction time to light and sound could be eliminated if sufficiently high stimulus intensity was used.

Other Factors Influencing Reaction Time

If variation caused by the type of reaction time experiment, type of stimulus, and stimulus intensity are ignored, there are still many factors affecting reaction time.

Arousal. One of the most investigated factors affecting reaction time is 'arousal' or state of attention, including muscular tension. Reaction time is fastest with an intermediate level of arousal, and deteriorates when the subject is either too relaxed or too tense.

Age. Reaction time shortens from childhood into the late 20s, then increases slowly until the 50s and 60s, and then lengthens faster as the person gets into his 70s and beyond (Welford, 1977; Jervas and Yan, 2001). An early study (Galton, 1899) reported that for teenagers (15-19) mean reaction times were 187 msec for light stimuli and 158 ms for sound stimuli. Welford (1980) speculates on the reason for slowing reaction time with age. It is not just simple mechanical factors like the speed of nervous conduction. It may be the tendency of older people to be more careful and monitor their responses more thoroughly (Botwinick, 1966).

Gender. At the risk of being politically incorrect, in almost every age group, males have faster reaction times than females, and female disadvantage is not reduced by practice (Noble et al., 1964; Welford,

1980; Adam et al., 1999). Bellis (1933) reported that mean time to press a key in response to a light was 220 msec for males and 260 msec for females; for sound the difference was 190 msec (males) to 200 msec (females). In comparison, Engel (1972) reported a reaction time to sound of 227 msec (male) to 242 msec (female). Botwinick and Thompson (1966) found that almost all of the male-female difference was accounted for by the lag between the presentation of the stimulus and the beginning of muscle contraction. Muscle contraction times were the same for males and females. Adam et al. (1999) reported that males use a more complex strategy than females. Jervas and Yan (2001) reported that age-related deterioration in reaction time was the same in men and women.

Sanders (1998, p. 21) cited studies showing that when subjects are new to a reaction time task, their reaction times are less consistent than when they've had an adequate amount of practice.

Fatigue. Welford (1968, 1980) found that reaction time gets slower when the subject is fatigued. Singleton (1953) observed that this deterioration due to fatigue is more marked when the reaction time task is complicated than when it is simple. Mental fatigue, especially sleepiness, has the greatest effect.

Distraction. Welford (1980) and Broadbent (1971) reviewed studies showing that distractions decrease reaction time.

Warnings. Brebner and Welford (1980) report that reaction times are faster when the subject has been warned that a stimulus will arrive soon. In the Reaction Time program, the

delay is never more than about 3 sec, but these authors report that even giving 5 minutes of warning helps. Bertelson (1967) found that as long as the warning was longer than about 0.2 sec., the shorter the warning was, the faster reaction time was. This effect probably occurs because attention and muscular tension cannot be maintained at a high level for more than a few seconds (Gottsdanker, 1975).

Intelligence. Serious mental retardation produces slower and more variable reaction times. Among people of normal intelligence, there is a slight tendency for more intelligent people to have faster reaction times, but there is much variation between people of similar intelligence (Nettelbeck, 1980). The speed advantage of more intelligent people is greatest on tests requiring complex responses (Schweitzer, 2001).

Breathing Cycle. Buchsbaum and Calloway (1965) found that reaction time was faster when the stimulus occurred during expiration than during inspiration.

Personality Type- Brebner (1980) found that extroverted personality types had faster reaction times, and Welford (1980) and Nettelbeck (1973) said that anxious personality types had faster reaction times.

Exercise. Exercise can affect reaction time. Welford (1980) found that physically fit subjects had faster reaction times, and both Levitt and Gutin (1971) and Sjoberg (1975) showed that subjects had the fastest reaction times when they were exercising sufficiently to produce a heart rate of 115 beats per minute. On the other hand, McMorris et al. (2000) found no effect of exercise on reaction time in a test of soccer skill.

Stimulant Drugs. Kleemeier et al. (1956) found that administering an amphetamine-like drug to a group of elderly men did not make their reaction times faster, although it did make their physical responses more vigorous.

Transformation and Real Tai Ji.

John Wingert

Once you have started learning about tai ji, the grand ultimate, you begin to notice changes. Changes that happen to you, and changes that you begin to make happen, by experiencing your unconscious routines, interrupted. Just begin to think about it, there is a reason why, learning Tai Ji as it's true martial art, will enhance it's benefits, substantially.

If you are a student of real Tai Ji, perhaps you have noticed the effectiveness of one of the basic self defense methods, called slip blocking. Slip blocking works incredibly well because it works on the level of a pattern interrupt. A pattern interrupt is, keep in mind that this is a method of healing, persuasion, and results in programming of the mind, often unconsciously. Inside your mind, your unconscious, will coordinate and direct, anything that occurs as a single unit, is coordinated by your unconscious, remember? Interrupting something perceived as a single unit, right in the middle, before it ends, will result in your mind opening suddenly, where influence can occur, very effectively.

Like me, you'll begin to notice this, there is a special type of feeling here, when, for example when you are asked a question, and the person who asks you, gives you an answer, or changes the subject while you are "looking" for the answer inside your mind. Have you noticed this before, it happens all the time. You'll begin noticing this more, once you have begun to think about how this occurs naturally, you have experienced this before, have not you, unconsciously, many many times. Notice how some people will use this method, and notice how you react to this statement, (is it positive?), for control, "Don't you think this is a good idea, don't you, right", and this control can be something beneficial too. Others, will benefit from this, notice that if you use it to, just think about how many people you know

abused their own minds by having worried too much, use it too to set them in a very useful new direction, just by learning how to use this, by training with someone who can do this well.

When the other person attempts to strike you, and you just sort of touch them, their arm, right about in the middle, the movement results in you striking them, when they were supposed to be striking you, in their mind. Confusion and a slight trance always results when, just think about this once you take the time to properly learn this training method, you interrupt their movement, and insert your technique

Let's return to this simple example I use when training clients. Ok, so back to slip blocking. When the other person attempts to strike you, and you just sort of touch them, their arm, right about in the middle, the movement results in you striking them, when they were supposed to be striking you, in their mind. Confusion and a slight trance always results when, just think about this once you take the time to properly learn this training method, you interrupt their movement, and insert your technique. For the lowest level of Tai Ji, self defense, this is wonderful, and may result in the chap seeking out more useful methods of interaction, since the old way, of hitting, is reprogrammed.

This can happen when doing your solo forms as well, if you learn real Tai Ji. From my experience, if you start learning the good stuff, like me, you noticed when you started getting some of the more useful stuff in Tai Ji, when training with your teacher. Like me, you began to notice, or you will begin to noticing more of the useful separations in the form. For example, remember the first movement, which contains and is contained in all movement, that is, the separa-

tion of yin and yang, where you notice at the more useful levels, how many more levels of separation there are, both when you notice your instructor doing this, and when you start doing this as a result. When doing your solo forms, just doing your solo forms, is a form of separation as well, from the rest of society, life, routine, where you have intentionally created a time to create separations usefully, and interrupt and install new more useful things into your internal programming.

Just notice, and think about it, that this article, though grammatically incorrect at times, to start making this obvious, you'll begin to notice more, while rereading it many times, how many pattern interrupts are within, and how they are being used, just think about it, it's no use reading about it, when we could be doing it, and just like tai ji, you learn from experiencing it, by having proper instruction, to help you experience what this feels like, and how to use it, usefully. How many ways will this enhance your life more, once you have started learning and doing it?

Could this be another reason why, and have you noticed this, that it's important to be with, and to have around you, just begin to think about this, a teacher who not only talks about it, not only demonstrates it, but lives it. Like me, you are enjoying the process of self exploration, why not share some time, and some thankfulness, to me this is very useful, with someone who is enriching your life. Thank you for enriching my world.

Contact John by calling him at (724) 628-9001, or Toll Free in the US at (866) WINGERT. John Wingert is a teacher of Wisdom and Warrior traditions in SW Pennsylvania, USA. John coaches clients, as well, over the phone, and is helping people, like him, who have an open mind, and heart to enhance their feelings of curiosity and love to help enhance the world. Email john at: <mailto:john@wingertgroup.com?subject=patterns>, or why not visit his web site too at, <http://www.johnwingert.com/>.

HOMELESS

John Scott Petty

I had been attending some seminar days with Taoist Lineage Master Bruce Kumar Frantzis and was on my way back across London to where I was staying for the nights during those dates. On the last evening waiting at Charing Cross railway station, I found a seat and sat down in a thoughtful mood, accepting the fate of most commuters in London; the long haul home with a wait and the possibility of no train. As I sat musing over the events of past day with this profoundly qualified man from America, an obviously distressed, cold and dejected figure caught my eye as he slid out slyly from the surrounding crowd of waiting passengers.

Like a slightly menacing bored teenager the man homed in, waddled over and mumbling in a heavy accent 'its f.....cold pal' and 'we should kick em all out' sat down with a thud next to me.

I turned and smiled uninvitingly and listened as a story of misery stuttered out from his

cracked dry lips as he hunched forward wringing his hands staring at the anonymous figures on the station concourse.

"So bleedin' hungry mate -haven't eaten all day-'cup-of-tea and a sandwich is...."

I handed him the rest of the chips I had been eating, which somewhat surprised he gratefully accepted stating how nobody ever gave him any of their food. I smiled again, dug into my coat pocket and handed him a quid, and apologised that I didn't smoke when he asked for a cigarette. He told me of the death of his mum, how he had to bury her and then leave his native Wales and come to England when he was kicked out of the house he had shared with her. The

man looked to be in his late 30s or 40s but he could have been ten years older or younger; his 'jing' virtually destroyed by the trauma, cold and living rough that he was more an empty shell than a man. He was ageless but ancient, crumbling like a badly built house that had never looked right.

He told me of the 'bright lights' and the stories of easy money that had lured him east with the hope of something better. It was like a story from Dickens; a fable of streets paved with gold and every corner would bring some new grand pleasure and opportunity. Now the need for basic shelter and a hot bath and a clean warm bed was his only concern. Of course also how much it cost { £45 } and whether I could help him out. He looked past my eyes to some unknown spot behind me as I said if I had the money it was his-but I didn't. As the story unfolded again with new pleading but hollow emphasis I realised something about him was beginning to raise my old armoured London defences. Now don't get me wrong I'll listen to any ones version of events or their life's story especially the homeless, but there was something so rehearsed about his banter, his appearance, which would be compounded what was about to follow.

Firstly he was not dressed for the cold [this was a sharp miserable wet November evening] You cant be on the streets for long and not get something even a blanket to help keep, out the cold. Maybe he had redressed himself last in the summer from donations or hand outs from a shelter but the overly tight jeans he wore too young for his years, his bright casual black leather shoes shinning like new and virtually unscuffed all seemed to say something else. His clean thin jacket wasn't going to keep out anything even a cool summers evening and the tea shirt underneath even less. It was if he had left in a hurry some night for the pub with 'the boys' and had never really arrived. However his face was another far less polished and more horrific story. From another life entirely. He bore the brunt of what looked like countless brutal street fights and the ravages of alcohol. Deep long zig zagging scars, dents,

and weather beaten skin like cracked fed leather wrapped round a misshapen skull, its facial bones crooked and misshapen sprouted out from a gnarled neck. His cropped thinning hair seemed to be even older than his face and looked badly plucked almost burnt off in places. With his hard eyes pained red and shrivelled, with respect to the man he wouldn't have looked out of place on a cartoon poster of a photo fit of a skin head murderer. Clothes don't maketh the man was never more true. "Chuck em out" he cackled grimly as two asians walked past.

A young women sat down to the other side of me and asked with a nice twanging European accent whether I had a light for her cigarette. I said sorry I didn't smoke and she smiled and looked away. My acquaintance to my right shuffled and lent over brightly and offered a light in an impressively almost gallant way, which she accepted while slightly alarmed by his appearance, looked at me for reassurance. I was taken aback and impressed and thought how I maybe I was wrong about him, and wondered if I had judged him ignorantly and arrogantly feeling a little embarrassed about all my assumptions.

Then as if just to confirm my previous concern it all went predictably mad cap London crazy.

'You got a cigarette for me love?' he plighed openly still leaning across me.

She said sorry she didn't, she only had the one left .

With this he just flipped .Dr Jekyll wasn't my companion it was Mr Hyde.

Huffing growling and spitting out his words ,with his arms thrusting out at who knows what he ranted in broken welsh english;

"immigra-tion pah ! -foreigners- tarts - stupid foreign bint women- give 'em everything don't give anything back - he'd been brought up right not like these lot -we should send em all back - greedy cow - stupid bitch! give her light wont give me a f.....g cigarette...." his diatribe fried our ears like a badly tuned radio.

"That's enough mate-easy now, she said no sorry she doesn't!" I cut in,

feeling my back

raise and my posture shift in case I became the next brunt of his unfortunate life and had to perhaps be the cause of another bash to his abused noggin. I put some space between me and Mr Hyde from wales and relaxed with my eyes on his clenched face and fists.

"Just because youse gave me a quid and your chips mate don't mean youse own me" he

complained growling violently staring me down. Then as if to make sure the real culprit

knew what this was what leant back over me....

"silly cow she cant even give me a fag-foreign tart!- send them back- not like me lse

brought up proper I was....'.

Now its a fair comment and I've heard it before no we don't own someone or should expect anything back for any moment of charity, but abusing women for the price of a coffee isn't in any equation I can justify. This was Mr Oliver Twisted 2002 and I was in the front seats.

I began to smile at the tragic comedy of it all.

The distressed but calm Foreign Girl whispered to me if this drowning man was with me

which I politely, and unfortunately gladly I said, no.

He began to blow himself up again like a washed up puffer fish so I asked him 'politely' to hold it down and back off.

He gradually calmed down muttering profanities as he deflated like he had missed out on

the last plate of cake, jelly and trifle at a kids party.

Three travellers in different life's journeys and different directions, sat in a few moments of strained silence and mused privately as the stations human traffic droned absently around us..

She smoked, I sat poised for a possible kick off with our Man from Wales as he sulked

muttered and clenched his hands.

The girl finished her cigarette and perhaps seeing her train come up on the huge timetable

display above our heads, took the opportunity ,picked up her bag and stepped away quickly obviously keen not to look back. No doubt relieved to get away from another dose of inner city madness.

Our Man from Wales shifted in his seat grumbled, sniffed, sat up and deftly pulled out from his jacket a packet, lifted the lid, pulled out a cigarette and cocked his chin lit up looking proud of himself. Dr Jekll I presume.

I sat and looked at it like he'd really pulled a rabbit wearing a tux singing opera from his

coat.

'So you had a cigarette' I asked bemused almost laughing.

"Yes chum!- but y' see its my last one... that silly greedy cow send em back foreign bint she could have given me one" exclaimed our friend blind to the irony and his crazy logic of a tirade against an innocent bystander.

His life story reared up again, almost seemingly automatic, perhaps programmed to go off when ever it might get the desired result. It seemed so well rehearsed now I didn't know what to think but I knew there was more than one voice talking here. Everything he'd heard and suffered he was spewing right back out. He asked where I was going, where I had been, who I was staying with, in between the cost of a bath, the death of his mother, how he was going back to wales in two weeks but how expensive it was. His cigarette burned down inching its way to his yellowed fingers. Together they seemed to burn away a little more with each puff of blue grey acrid smoke.

My train came up and I said it was time to go. So cold he said, gearing up again ready for

another go, I quickly interrupted and suggested he should get himself some thing warmer

to wear perhaps a hat too. He apologised for kicking off against me and asked if I had a

jumper in my bag he could have. As I

said afraid not I wished him good luck, patted him

affectionately on the shoulder and walked away. "Ta" he said. "God Bless." For a split

second I imagined it was the voice of a dead mother not her anger grieving son that I heard.

Looking back I saw how small he had become staring into the distance at nothing but some familiar vacuum, as he merged into the sordid space around him, the rubbish metal seat and the dirty station floor. It was obvious now as I looked back at one of the sources of his hatred. An african ancestry seemed to lie fused with some other, tormented genetics somewhere beneath the pale white mask. Here was a fight between himself both utterly unwinnable and unrelievable. All the hurt this man felt, all the grievances he had held from who knows what and for who, etched out a face that as I looked back seemed to collapse and shatter deeper into some lonely personal hell. I walked away and put away my own defences. I boarded the train sat down and felt the mans queasy presence gradually 'dissolve' away. Outside the bright lights across london shone phosphorous yellow and white through the cold evening rain but didn't glitter for me either.

Often like any compassionate human being I wish I had some magic wand to wave across

the lives of people like this, even sometimes my own students. Or even a fat wallet to hand out wads of cash that would somehow turn around the life of every trapped mind behind a pair of out stretched open hands.

I've known a number of Homeless people in the time I used to live in London; once I even found a man collapsed and huddled up in a human ball of old rotting clothes on my

doorstep. He was wet,cold and hungry, reduced to barely a life beyond a stray dog. He

became a regular acquaintance with a pitiful story of his own now surviving each day and

each night as best he could. Another time I offered each time we met, to teach one wise

homeless interested lad chi kung to keep him warm [in China there used to be a 'beggars

style chi kung which was practiced by the unfortunates of the times to off set the

unbearable ravages of weather, inadequate food and profoundly dangerous living conditions }as I would stop and talk to him at London Bridge Station on the way to a class. Even the offer of free classes wasn't an incentive enough and it seemed his own drama was far to explosive to release him . He was trapped in a cycle of abuse and abuser that was impossible for him alone to fathom but needed the help of others to understand. I recounted the story to a friend who had worked with the homeless and he told me it was virtually impossible to really help them how ever well meaning you were. Months past and I never saw the lad again his pitch was taken over by some other. I hoped he found away out and something less retched.

Mine is not a criticism of their lives but a insight into how when things have got so bad its virtually impossible to escape any life that has become a cage. Its for those of us in the

comfort of our guilded golden cages in what is nothing short of luxury , good fortune and

privilege we need to look around and see that for many a bed or a home is as unattainable as a hollywood life-style is for us. We need to really see what all the things we clamour for from others or the world in general to increase our happiness are. The price we pay may be too high. When often or not we don't get what we want and become bitter, angry, hurt or worse we are no different than our man from wales, no different from a simple request for cigarette that we already have. Whether its about love, money, success, fame, power, a bigger better TV, a bigger house, a flash car to impress our mates, the list is truly endless and increasing with every new consumer product or ideal we feel we need to have to make ourselves happier. In the process in supporting this incessant self industry of craving we support the creation of more and more people alone and dejected, feeling left out of the loop. The merry go

round of desire constantly turning until its so bad, a bed and a shower are like a lost treasure or the cliché pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. In Zen Buddhism it is suggested that you 'Stop the World' or 'Stop the Ship sailing on the Horizon'. This is directing us towards halting incessant desire for external stimulation of the senses. To happy with the simplest of necessities and to realise our good fortune if we don't have spin a yarn just to get a few pounds. Our minds and simplicity are the key to happiness not the latest gadget or mobile phone. Or a cigarette.

At some time in our lives we will all experience and tread 'hells' of various degrees, inhabited by 'demons' of various guises ready to strike out at ourselves and others close at hand Dark thoughts can waste years of our lives tugging relentlessly at delicate emotional strings without reason. Being able to leave this behind and start moving on to a more mature and reasonable level of existence and experience isn't easy. Some journeys are easier than others, some are more extreme and require great strength of purpose.

Any existence that drags from one day to another, the next meal or next cigarette can

becomes meaningless. Even the a day in, day out at the office, shop, factory or school leaves little time or space for dreaming what life should be. TV or Multiplex Fantasies, the 'bright lights' of somewhere better, or the 'exciting' lives of the rich and famous; all the present 'better' alternatives dangled in front of us to satiate our apparently 'mediocre' lives. All the distractions we invest our scarce free time in, can drug us into a numb experience perhaps different but ultimately little better than that of our Man from Wales. Even the world of learning or practising an art like Tai chi or Meditation, Yoga, Martial arts -whatever, will often mirror and highlight the fabric of our conditions where perhaps left alone we might not be so aware of our and others ingrained behaviour. It requires great leaps of faith and consciousness, and a willingness to work and sacrifice much of what is seen as 'necessary' to move on.. There are no quick fixes only

quick detours. The Journey not the destination becomes 'the Way' as we move forward slowly little by little into a better tempo between our lives and reality. Its a hard road to travel and it is rarely 'paved with gold' . For the majority of us we need to abandon the 'easy' and seek the 'hard' or as the Chinese say 'learn to eat bitter. Many people cant even stomach the first step even if willing to try. In taoist thought it is said 'not to mistake the near for the far' and much of what we clamour for is far away and in most cases that's the best place for it.

Now again as World events twist and unfurl towards the possibly unthinkable but

imaginable and terrible, perhaps a moment of insight that we cant always have what we want, but we might be involved in exactly what we need, may be the deciding moment to change our life's. Homelessness is not a choice people readily make. It may be a condition more of us might have to face if the fantasy of a secure western life style breaks down. Permantly

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publication '**The Vital Arts Journal**' on aspects of practical training in the Internal Arts.

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Asatar Bair

Dear Folks at Combat & Healing, I have a comment to make regarding the article by Kieren Nanasi "Is Taiji a Religion?" in the Sept 2002 issue. While I understand and appreciate the author's attempt to distance taiji from religious dogma, I disagree with the author's position that taiji does not contain moral teachings.

Consider the fact that taiji contains no attacks, according to Chang Yiu Chun. (See www.dotaichi.com, the articles section "Tai Chi San Shou" for an interview with Chun from the 1970's) Is this not a moral position, which implies that taiji is to be used exclusively for self-defense? Or consider the teaching of Yang Shou-hou, who taught his students that if someone challenged them to a fight, the student should pretend to be a coward to avoid conflict. Again, according to Chun, who was one of Yang's students, if students bragged about their abilities or initiated conflicts, they were deemed unworthy of learning the advanced forms.

Paul Brecher's book "Principles of Tai Chi" also contains some interesting teachings about the morality of taiji. Brecher dis-

cusses the various kinds of attacks and the possible responses to those attacks. The first is a yin attack - this would be an attack by someone who is in some way inhibited, perhaps drunk or otherwise impaired. Here a yin response is morally appropriate, meeting softness with softness, disabling and neutralizing your opponent while causing the least possible harm. To respond with yang - with hard, devastating strikes - to such an attack is unethical, according to Brecher. Next is a yang attack - here it is morally correct to respond with yang energy to defend oneself, but interestingly, Brecher argues that to respond with yin, though it requires greater mastery of technique and carries with it a higher chance of failure and injury, is morally superior to meeting yang with yang.

Finally, consider the final and highest ranking of the World Tai Chi Boxing Association, what might be considered the final goal of taiji chuan:

Level 8/8 MASTER DEGREE:

This is the highest level. This is where there is no longer technique. The student becomes the master and has forgotten everything that he has learnt... At this stage the master is no longer concerned with self defence because he/she has no self and is only concerned with helping and healing others. The healing aspects of taiji have

come to their highest level and in fact this is the highest level of taiji.

If this is the ultimate goal of taiji, the state of selfless devotion to the healing of others, then clearly, this is a moral position. It seems to me that in our practice we should maintain this goal in our minds, and seek to move towards it in every move we make in our lives.

Asatar Bair

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RUSHING FIST

Robert Israelsson

Hi there my name is Robert Israelsson. I'm 15 years old and I live in Sweden. When I was 12 years old I started to read some of Erle Montaigne's books and I was fascinated of the centrifugal forces that he described in his books. That's when I decided that I want to create my own fighting system built upon the centrifugal powers. So I was thinking for a long time about how I could do to teach my body to accept centrifugal motions. After a while I figured it out. I started to come up with a form totally built upon centrifugal motions. The form I built upon many difficult spins and acrobatics but all of the movements are very centrifugal. It has been three years since I started to invent this form and I still ain't finished with it. The form isn't very unlike the Baguazhang form which moves in a circle. The difference is that my form moves in a half circle as shown in the photo under here. The reason for this is that with this half circle you train your centrifugal walking both in a straight line (the bottom of the circle) and in a circular manner. (the half circle on top of the bottom line).

Here you walk and perform the centrifugal motions in the direction of the arrows.

I have given the system its name (Rushing fist) because in the system the fist rushes through the air in a rushing manner. The health benefits isn't like in the Taiji and Baguazhang for example. The health benefits you gain of the centrifugal movements in the form. They make your muscles soft and strong and after doing the form once, you can really sit down and relax. And it also causes your

body to accept centrifugal motions which is good to. And it's possible that there might be more to it but not that I know of right now anyway.

In this article I have included one of the training sets that I use in this system to gain the fighting reflexes and the interception skills. It teaches both you and your partner something. It gives you the fighting reflexes, and teaches you to move in to an attack. It also teaches you the most important lesson which is how we fight in Rushing fist. But you must not take the sets as specific techniques as this is not what they are supposed to teach. Even though they very well can be used as some wonderful and effective fighting techniques you mustn't think that they are while training. Think of them as a way of getting real good and fast movements.

So here is the method...(this is the first training method that I teach after learning the form.)

Method number one:

Face your opponent in a natural stance.

Your opponent throws a right punch to your face.

You block his punch by bringing your left hand up to strike the inside of his forearm at a point called Negiwan.

Your opponent throws another punch with his left arm to your lower rib area.

You also block this punch with your left hand but on the outside of his forearm.

After this you swing your right hand up and then down to strike the left side of his neck, your opponent blocks this attack by bringing his left forearm up to protect his neck.

And after that you take a step with your left leg out to his left side and strike his neck with your left elbow.

What is internal movement?

*Zamir Kimhi
Israel*

What is internal movement? Is it the mysteries of qi? Or emitting fa jing, movement of qi? Or emitting fa jing, in our strikes? Is it the whipping strikes that are so soft and so deadly? From my limited experience as a Taiji practitioner and instructor it is all this and something more and for my opinion this something is what makes this art so great not as a martial art but as art of life. I'll try to explain. When I started to fill the internal movement and I mean the filling that the movement is generated from the center, from your Tan Tien, like heavy metal ball, that rotates and changes from yin to yang from yang to yin affecting all the movements in our body while practicing the form or a qi gong and maybe also in fighting (I can not fill that yet) it was like discovering the Taiji for the first time I felt like a child that a big secret of life was revealed to him.

From that moment my movement started to change I was not concerned anymore with the meaning of the movement or the application but only with the internal wave that starts from the center of your body the center of your being and radiates to the peripheral parts of the body a wave that starts in the beginning of the form and rests in the end with no stops in the middle like one movement that takes different shapes. This kind of experience brought more harmony in me and slowly I started to feel that this internal movement is also in harmony with energy pulse of the earth.

I am just in the beginning of this experience but I feel it's a beginning of wonderful journey.

Yoyogi Tui Shou Circle

*Greg Johnson, WTBA Member,
Tokyo, August 2002*

Most people wouldn't associate Japan, the home of many great native martial arts like Aikido and Iaido and such "hard" arts like Karate as a "Taiji" country, yet there is Taiji to be found in Japan if you look hard enough.

One of the great things about Taijiquan is that all over the world you can find people willing to push you around! I guess this doesn't sound so great to the Taijiquan 'newbie', but most people will recognize that I am talking about Push Hands (Tui Shou in Mandarin), that fantastic two person exercise from the Taijiquan curriculum that teaches reflex, sensitivity, balance and timing and builds power at the same time.

In the last year I have had the good fortune to train with an open style "tui shou circle" in Tokyo's famous Yoyogi Park. The circle was founded by a Canadian, Michael Blackburn, who lives and works in Tokyo, as a way of both getting some training partners for himself

and also trying to bring together the Taiji community in Tokyo in an open environment. I thought this interesting group may be of interest to "Combat & Healing" readers.

The Circle meets under the cherry trees in Yoyogi Park on a Sunday afternoon. Yoyogi on Sunday is a fantastic sight, with joggers, African drummers, skaters, Frisbee players, Muay Thai boxers, Capoeiraists (is that the word?), and almost anything else you can think of going on. I have had the pleasure of training with similar groups in Brisbane, Australia and Atlanta, USA, but none with the multicultural excitement found in Yoyogi.

Michael is an excellent martial artist, also being a 4th Dan in Iaido and what follows is a very interesting interview with the man himself....(I was going to incorporate the interview into the article, but Michael's responses were so good, I didn't think I could do better than quote them directly).

Q. How long have you been doing Taiji? What styles?

A. I have been studying taijiquan for about 13 years. My first and primary

style is a traditional Yang style taught by Sam Slutsky of Montreal, Canada. Sam was a long-time student of Lee Su-Pak, stu-

dent of Chen

Wei-ming. I also train in Chen style, traditional taiji weapons, and of course tui shou (push hands). I have been fortunate over the years to train with many great teachers in a number of countries.

Q. Do you have a 'Taiji philosophy' ?

A. It is difficult (and perhaps inappropriate) to talk about my "Taiji philosophy;" suffice to say that I have always approached taiji as a philosophically and spiritually relevant aspect of my life. And "Those who know do not say; those who say do not know." So.

Q. What are you doing in Japan ? (Strange place for a Canadian :-)

A. It seemed better than Australia! Actually, I've lived in Japan on and off for six years, although (as with most of the big things in life) it's hard for me to say why. I've had great training opportunities here, I've enjoyed using it as a launching pad for my travels throughout Asia, and it's a great place for a guy with a Political Theory degree to pay off student loans.

Q. How long has the Yoyogi Circle been going ? What gave you the idea to start it ?

I started this tui shou group in the summer of 2001. I've been lucky to participate in great tui shou circles in other cities and countries; of particular impact was one organized by Dianne Kehoe and John Eastman in the lower mainland of British Columbia, Canada. Such communities offer exceptional opportunities to interact with people practicing a variety of styles, at a range of levels, and exchange ideas in a safe and friendly environment. Obviously, it's of paramount importance to study the full curriculum of a taijiquan system with a qualified teacher, but meeting with fellow students outside of class can help us see things from different perspectives, and to "test" the quality of our work outside of the atmosphere of well-intentioned mutual delusion which is sometimes fostered within a "closed" class. And, of course, it's a great way to meet nice people.

I'd been in this area of Japan for several months, and was frustrated with both the lack of such a community in Kanto, and also with the under-emphasis placed on tui shou in most Japanese taijiquan classes.

Basically, my motivation in starting the group was entirely self-serving--I wanted to maintain and develop my tui shou skills, so I needed to meet people to push with!

Q. What response did you initially get ? How did you 'advertise' in the

first place ?

The greater Tokyo area has a free weekly magazine, which is now called "Metropolis," that has free classified listings. I put in a simple ad encouraging taiji players to get together for push hands; the response from the first ad was strong enough to start a "circle" the next week.

Since then, I've tried to spread the word through people I know in the martial arts community here, while still placing ads in the weekly magazine. The response continues to be positive; a few new people join us every time, with participants coming from Japan, Canada, America, Australia, Germany, the U.K. and surely others I'm forgetting. ?

Q. What have you learnt from organising/participating in the Circle ?

(best and worst....)

A. My main source of learning comes from my work with the individual members of the group--I learn from everyone I do push hands with, and it's that continuing learning process that maintains my commitment to, and fascination with, the work.

I've also been reminded of how effective taiji practice is for bringing out the best in people,

and for helping people find their root and keep their centre when things get rough. Living as a foreigner in Japan has its challenges and frustrations, and I've been re-inspired to see how getting together to do some push hands in the park helps folks get their feet back on the ground when we'd otherwise be flailing.

There are lots of challenges and disappointments, of course. The response of the Japanese taiji community, for example, has been muted, largely due to distrust of a learning environment that lacks a clearly defined pedagogical figure, a general disinterest in the "touchy" requirements of tui shou work, and perhaps even certain assumptions about the worth of training with "foreigners" (despite the obvious fact that taiji is *not* a Japanese art).

The Japanese players who do join us, however, tend to have a great time and come back, so I'm confident that the group will continue to grow, and remain a friendly and challenging international community of good people who love the (perpetually frustrating/rewarding) art of taijiquan!

If anyone is interested in the Yoyogi Tui Shou circle, they can contact the author, Greg Johnson via e-mail at:

ozguorui@hotmail.com

BAGWAZHAN

G SHIYUN

XIFA

MIXYUE

SECRETS OF HTE APPLICATION OF BAGWAZHANG TECHNIQUES

Translated into English by Dragan
Milojevic Jugoslavia.
by Xin Xhenchi
commentary by Sun Baoyin

1. Secret of the methods of body actions

Methods of the hand actions and footwork methods must follow each other. If the hand gets there, but the step is not completed - the force is diminished. If the hands and feet work together, but the power of the waist is lacking -

Time is passing by, you hesitate, it is hard to turn around.

Comment: in bagwazhang serious attention is given to the entirety of the force. In order to achieve this, it is for the actions of the hands, eyes, body and footwork to be fully coordinated.

In a real fight, if the hand strikes, and the step is not completed yet, then there is no doubt that "the force is diminished", there is not enough power to push the wall or to pull out a pole (pillar). But if the hands and feet "work together" but the waist is not coordinated with them, then in attacking actions one hesitates, and in defensive ones "it is hard to turn around", and the opponent is not being defeated.

2. Secret of the methods of perception

If you have met the bunch of enemies - firstly you observe the methods, Never attack, back off accordingly.

Once backed off - understand the form, know the changes, Wait for good opportunity and stretch out the four straps.

Comment: when in fight one has met a large number of opponents, one should notice the full and the empty, the strong and the weak in them. In unclear situations it is recommended not to force the attacks, but the tactical retreat. This retreat is not passive, while doing it one is observing and searching for the moment and the opening in the opponent's defense. One waits for the appropriate opportunity, by long one controls the short, and defeats the enemy as if using the four straps to pull the thousand tsin (chin?).

3. Secret of the methods of moving

Before you move the tip - first move the root, The quickness of the hands can not substitute for the half-step.

To attack and to defend, to enter and to retreat - just by the half-step. You throw the hands out while evading the technique - and you're safe.

Comment: very important characteristic of bagwazhang is the mastery of performing the attacks and defenses while walking and turning with the use of the opening-closing step, which asks for very strict criteria for the footwork methods. In bagwazhang one should pay special attention to practising methods like "half-step". In attack and retreat, in opening and closing, in turning and transformational techniques - it is always necessary to pay attention

to half-step. One needs to be able to use the half-step, and then, in fight, one can dominate on all the levels, where one's heart goes - so do the hands.

4. Secret of the steps

The root of the mastery - is in walking the circle, Changing the palms follows the walking.

High rips, low grabs, cross blocks, enterings, Strikes, pulls and controls are not separated either.

Comment: being that the characteristic of bagwazhang is walking and turning, it is natural that the great attention is directed towards walking the circle using the opening-closing step. It is not just the mastery of footwork that grows from it, but the palm changes should also follow the twists and turns in order to realize their full power. Methods of the hand actions are transformed lightning fast, but whatever one may use - high rips, low grabs, cross blocks etc.—it needs to be tightly coordinated with footwork.

5. Secret of the flowing step

The flowing step - it is the mastery of the three losses, It enables the hands to make the emptiness quickly and naturally.

Crossing your hand with the enemy's you turn the body - that is empty hand. In the moment of the palm strike, you pull the enemy to the ground with a spring.

Comment: when you face the opponent with a higher level of expertise, one should use the walking method of bagwazhang to the maximum - in order to penetrate through the holes in the opponent's defense (in the language of fighting arts this is called "attacking inside the circle"), and here, while changing places, walking and turning, one uses the rule of the lever, forming the such

a feature as strikes with the moving of the point of focusing the power. For example, I crossed the hands with an opponent, and turn the body while moving in a circular fashion. My hand is - empty, it provokes the opponent to strike into emptiness. As he does it, his body will follow by inertia, and than I grab the opponent and "pull to the ground with a spring", thanks to him momentarily being unbalanced. Using the change of place by walking and turning, I hit him with my palm in the direction of his fall, winning easily and naturally.

6. Secret of the accumulative step

In the accumulative step feet should not be the same, It is better for the front to be empty, and the rear to be full. If they are equal, you rock forwards and backwards, And the waist is immovable.

Comment: "accumulative step" - it is standing in one place. In fight, bodyweight mustn't be equally distributed to both feet, otherwise it will lead to leaning of the body to the front or to the back, and to the immobility of the waist, which results in difficulties in both attack and defense, and the opponent will easily use the disturbing of the bodyweight center to throw you to the ground. If the front foot is "empty" and the rear one "full" - stepping is lively, the waist is mobile, attacks and retreats are natural, and it is easy to either attack or defend.

19. Secret of "liberating from body and scattering the shadow"

He is not coming - I provoke his coming, He is coming - I transform and evade.

Never should one hide behind his hands - one should rely on the methods of body actions,

Step after step without leaving the area between the hips.

Comment: if the opponent is a defensive one, one should use fake attacks which would provoke an attacking reaction out of the opponent, and than, in the very moment of the attack, step and evade. This movement with evasion is not a block with one's hands, it is necessary to rely on the changes of the body and the steps. Therefore, by moving away from the opponent in this manner, one looks for the best moment to attack.

20. Secret of getting behind the back and the body turn

The arms should be outstretched a little, the step should be big,

Step away by the half, close in to the hips and seize.

Step away and while grounding yourself, do a half-squat with a turn, If he turns - I have an eagle grab.

Comment: an important feature of bagwazhang technique is - attacking while walking around the opponenet, behind his back. While attacking, the hand should accumulate the force, and than "outstretch the arms a little". At the same time, in order to get behind the opponent, "the step should be big", i.e. long. In a close distance it is possible to get into a good position with only a half-step, and attack by the short outburst of force (*tsun chin*). If the opponent uses the close distance to grab me, I step to the side and at the very moment of putting my feet to the ground, I lower my weight with a turn, breaking his grab and pulling him around, at the same time using some chnin-na technique, if the situation allows it.

21. Secret of "striking, breaking, cutting, pushing"

If they're striking - strike yourself, trying to get there first,

They're breaking from the left - change the side and stick with your left arm.

They're cutting - put your elbows together and stand across,

They're pushing - wave your hand around the circle from "chan" to "kun".

Comment: when the opponent beats on my wrist, I also counterattack with a strike, it is just necessary to hit his frontal area. If he is trying to hit my right arm with a breaking strike, I perform a step which changes sides and with my left hand I stick to his, using my right to strike while changing the force (yin-yang). When an opponent tries to cut me from the top, I can put my elbows together and step across, dissipating his power, and also it possible to easily attack with an elbow. The opponent is doing a straight strike to the chest - I move my hand around the circle, inside-out or viceversa, which, simultaneously with a deflection is a moment for the counterattack.

22. Secret of halfcircling the opponent

In his hand actions there is a lot of straight lines— I step to the side for a half step, like when walking.

And even if he is pointing straight but strikes diagonally, I repeat the half-step to the side, not going head-to-head.

Comment: if the opponent uses a lot of straight line attacks in a fight, one just has to step a little bit diagonally, and it is possible to avoid the power of his attack. There are such opponents who point straight, but attack diagonally. After doing a diagonal half-step, one should repeat the same action, and opponent's attack will go into nothing. This method of "halfcircling the

Opponent", where footwork helps the actions of the hands, is a specific feature of bagwazhang.

23. Secret of fighting surrounded

The enemy is on four sides, and I - in the centre, I rack up the colors and hit the willows either in west or east.

For all eight directions I use the method of clouds driven by the wind, I don't defend standing in place and I don't go wherever.

Comment: another characteristic of bagwazhang is quickness of footwork, variety of palm changes, one penetrates through enemies like a hawk, flying through the forest, like a serpent, creeping through the grass, cycling the opponent. When hitting the opponent while moving around him, one should be completely calm, not defending in one place, not going wherever, and not running into the emptiness.

24. Secret of the heart and the eyes

The heart - a great general, the eyes - a method, Working together, according to the situation, it is possible to control the enemy.

More than anything, be afraid of absentmindedness of the heart, and deconcentration of the look in the eyes, Because then the hands interfere with each other, and the legs are in disorder, only bringing unnecessary worries.

Comment: in the fight, the role of the heart and the eyes is of primal importance. When speaking of hands, eyes, methods of body actions and stepping, one should bear in mind that the heart and the eyes are tightly connected to the actions of hands, feet, body, footwork, and that nothing is

removed from them. Thus, if the look in the eyes is stoned, the spirit is slow, the heart is dumb and the mind is rigid, and neither the good body nor the good hands can help.

Think - Act - Do

By Kenny Johnson, 11th November 2001

Many of us have become misaligned from our true nature. What our inner self talk says is rarely acted out. We have become restricted by fear - ridiculed for being unlike others, fear of being different. We are all unique.

The exercise that follows will help you regain your natural state of harmony.

This exercise will help you to express how you think and feel.

It also increases our awareness as we become receptive and open to others. Opening the door for telepathy to begin, use our concentration to catapult our thoughts - powered by the will (willpower).

The exercise

Do not speak for a predetermined time.

You can only “mime”, and **act** out your thoughts. Rather than thinking something, but not actually doing it, for fear of failure. Only act and do!

Do not use your computer, or any written way of communicating (i.e. pens, pencils, or sign language).

You shouldn't use any kind of sound either (i.e. grunts or groans), which would indicate yes or no. By not speaking the

door to your heart opens wider.

Do it now until you act out how you think. And only then add the voice.

Speak the truth. It sounds easy!

“Things don't just happen - we make them happen”

Act Your Age

By Erle Montaigne

Why is it that as we get older in years, we believe all that others tell us about what should happen as we age? Like, that we should become slower, or our joints should seize up, or that we should have heart disease through old age etc., etc.

No-one ever died of a disease called 'Old Age'! We die because of the damage that we inflict upon our bodies as we get older and that accumulative effect causes diseases to creep in plus body states that are directly attributed to body abuse.

People die of obesity, they die of eating sugar and salt and animal products and refined food, they do not die of old age!

When I talk to older people, they always say the same thing, that they do not feel any different in their mind than they did at age 18. They have not noticed any difference, only that perhaps they cannot walk as fast or run etc. But their mind has not changed, they are still young until they die. Most people's early death can be prevented by simply looking after the body.

But you have to begin now, not when you have a disease and your body is on the way out. You can fix it of course but it just takes longer, often years to get the body back to that well

oiled machine that it was when you were younger. It takes time for gunk to build up in the body and in the beginning, we are able to get rid of that gunk.

However, it slowly builds up until the body has so much garbage that it will just stop working, the garbage men have gone on strike!

We know scientifically that people who go to bed feeling slightly hungry live much longer than those who are overfed. And that includes most people living in Western society.

The reason that people who eat less (of anything) live longer is that the Body's waste management system has a chance to do its work during periods of not eating and digesting. It's like capturing some film footage on the computer and trying to edit that film at the same time! Something has to not work.

Even if we eat only the very best of food, that which is supposed to be good for us, we can become ill eventually through over-eating. Eating too much good food is the same as eating too much junk food, the only difference is that it takes longer to become ill eating too much good food.

Give your body a rest from eating! Every machine needs a time of rest and recuperation. So we must stop eating for a period of time each week.

A 36 hour fast each week will do wonders for your rejuvena-

tion. It is really the every best of all longevity methods. Forget about all of the latest pills that come onto the market in order to make some huge Western business rich, just fast!

Your body is more powerful than any new drug or natural medicine. IT will rejuvenate itself so that it can actually BE its age and not an age that is ten years more than it should be.

The natural herbs will help of course, especially the anti-oxidants. However, in order to get all of the anti-oxidants you need, you simply have to eat fruit!

Mix with younger people, children. Play games with them, watch a few cartoons etc. Act young and you will be so.

I personally have experienced and have seen some amazing things happen to the human body simply by not eating. Doing something that you would not normally do each day.

We have become slaves of our taste buds. We rely upon food as a crutch to get us through the day in much the same way that alcohol or cigarettes do.

Put onto the list of dangerous things along with cigarettes and alcohol, food! Eat only when you are actually hungry and now because you are depressed. Depression can be cured by fasting!

Get some extra exercise in every day, like a brisk walk or even 50 push ups to begin the day.