

Combat & Healing

Lead Story

Double Weightedness
Death & Hesitation

Questions & Answers

Peter Smith Over
Folkestone

New Videos from
Moontagu Books

Vincenzo Over Italy

Searching For Excitement

PLUS

WTBA NEWS



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the Martial Arts

John Wingert, USA

When you hesitate, the only thing to miss out on is your life...

When you are weighted double, seems like you weigh a billion pounds, because your weight, energy, and intent are not congruent. This not only results in ineffective "movement" but can also result in hesitation.

Hesitation results, because the body / mind / spirit may want to move in opposing directions at once. This even can be noticed when attempting to make a decision, when you have a part that wants to do something, like write an article, and a part that says oh you're not good enough, or why bother him.

Which is why I personally didn't write much before. If you appreciate how this makes me feel, then keep in mind I'm applying it to the rest of my life with this single thought, What have I hesitated on before, that I will passionately embrace and enjoy now?

You can notice the feelings that you get, when you read that paragraph, and see how it can apply to you. Or when you apply it to you, you can notice a language based "double Weightedness".

Remember how you feel when you are doing your forms, the flow, the connectedness, the inspiration.

It don't feel good, plus it limits you to "rational brain". Bad English here very intentional. Chop words, chop feeling.

Leaving that behind,

Remember how you feel when you are doing your forms, the flow, the connectedness, the inspiration. Watching what they call a "big man" do their form, like Erle can also be very life changing and inspiring. Because we all share states.

Walk down the street. When getting close to people, you can observe when one person is uncomfortable, and when someone approaches them they often can seem to catch it. Or when you approach

someone who is relaxed and comfortable, you can become more comfortable. With me, because of these wonderful arts, there is a third alternative too, begin considering this.

If you are "moving from the center", then if at the center you are comfortable, then that will truly radiate, and be felt, and effect everyone. In other words, he who moves congruently from the center, will influence more....

John Wingert is a registered Instructor with the World Taiji Boxing Association in the USA.

Questions & Answers

By Paul Brecher: London UK

Questions and Answers by Paul Brecher For most of my life I have immersed myself in the martial arts. I still have my first martial arts comic from December 1971 its called The Hands of Shang-Chi Master Of Kung Fu. On television when I was a kid I used to watch programs like The Water Margin, Kung Fu and Monkey.

In the cinema and on video I watched Kung Fu movies and when I was in Asia I trained with teachers who appeared to have inexplicable abilities. The end result of all of this was that I mixed up the truth about the martial arts with fantasy and wishful thinking and a romantic idea about ancient China.

The martial arts magazines, books and movies that I see today perpetuate this confusion. And I can imagine that many people who are interested in the martial arts are getting as mixed up as I did and believing that all manner of mystical and magical things are possible through martial arts training. I began training with Erle in 1989 and

as a result of his down to earth approach and excellent system I have slowly begun to understand what is real, practical and useful and what is not.

Over the years my students have asked me questions about the martial arts and I have tried to answer in a simple and practical way. The answers I have given are an attempt to clarify what is and what is not real in the martial arts.

Question. Which is the best martial art?

Answer Depends what aspects of yourself you want to develop, physical fitness, health, external power, internal power, striking, punching, kicking, throwing, locking, breaking, grappling/wrestling. Different styles emphasize different things. So no style is the best, it is just personal preference.

Question. But which style will make me the best fighter?

Answer. Fighting and martial arts training are similar but different. To be a good martial artist you have to spend a lot of time training in

the martial arts. To be a good fighter you have to go on to the street and fight. The difference is that a good fighter is a good fighter because of his state of being not because of how many martial arts techniques he knows.

For example if I was in a fight and I had a certain intention, if I decided I was going to kill the opponent, without any concern about the consequences of my actions, whether I go to jail for murder or whether I die in the fight. If I decided to use all the rest of my life's available energy in this one confrontation, to have no rules, no fair fight, just to beat the opponent to death with my fists and feet or any weapon nearby, a bottle, a glass, a knife or an iron bar.

Fighting and martial arts training are similar but different.

If this was my state of being I would win every fight whether I knew martial arts or not. And if the opponent did or did not know martial arts is also not as relevant as his state of being. If he was looking for a fair fight and had some self

imposed limitations about what he was and was not prepared to do because of his concern about the consequences of his actions or because of a certain code of honour then he would lose.

Question. Who would win if a practitioner of (name of one martial art) fought a practitioner of (name of another martial art)?

Answer. Its not the style which wins, its the man, in that moment, depending on his state of being. A good fighter can make their martial art work amazingly well even if they are only a beginner in that style. And a person who is not in the right state of being even if they have trained to highest level of their martial art will still lose.

It's the person who in that moment has the victory or the defeat not the style.

Question. Is The Old Yang Style of Taiji good for self defense? or for security staff? or for police forces or for the army?

Answer. The Old Yang Style of Taiji was developed to kill the opponent so it would be good for the army but not appropriate for security staff or

for the police force. If your life was in danger it could be used for self defense. The reality of self defence is that we do not actually try and defend ourselves, if this is what we did then the attacker would continue to be the attacker and we would continue to be the victim, both physically and mentally.

Its not the style which wins, its the man, in that moment, depending on his state of being. A good fighter can make their martial art work amazingly well even if they are only a beginner in that style.

The inevitable outcome of this is that eventually one of his attacks gets through we are weakened, he exploits this weakness and grinds us into the ground, where we are then kicked to death.

So the only way to stop this is to turn the tables, we must become the attacker, as soon as we are attacked or even as soon as we are threatened with attack we should not hesitate but go on the offensive, the only way to win is to reverse the rolls.

They attack you and you don't defend yourself, you get out of the way of their attack and concentrate on attacking them. The Old Yang Style of Taiji is not a self defense system it is a defeat the opponent system. The system could be altered so that it becomes non lethal so that it could be used by the police and security staff.

The problem is that altering it makes it less effective.

Question. So would you win a full contact competition

Answer. First of all I would never enter a taiji competition nor would I recommend any of my students to because I don't train or teach anything that is relevant for competitions.

The emphasis in The Old Yang Style is to kill the opponent, we first disable them by striking their eyes to blind them and then we punch and elbow them in the throat and neck repeatedly with fa jin and dim mak. The main target areas eyes, neck and throat that we are trained to attack are always forbidden target areas in competitions so we would not be able to use our taiji.

In the Old Yang Style there is no such thing as scoring points or getting the opponent to tap out, all we do is go for the kill. When the system is applied this way it is very effective but as soon as you alter the style to make it suitable for a competition its effectiveness is significantly reduced. If there was a competition in which strikes to the eyes, neck and throat were allowed then people would be permanently blinded and others would die.

Any one who would want to enter a competition in which they knew that they would possibly kill an opponent is not someone who I would teach.

In taiji there are only two areas, training with our training partners, or the real life fight to the death situation where there is no mercy and no runner up prize.

We do not have anything in between, there are no taiji competitions nor do we encourage our students to fight with other martial arts schools. It is very enjoyable to discuss with practitioners of other's Styles the similarities and differences of our martial arts but this is in the spirit of friendship not aggressive competition.

We demonstrate moves, methods and principles but this is different from a fight. We cannot have tests of fighting skill with other martial artists because all the moves in taiji are so extreme and the strategy that we apply them with is cold hearted and ruthless.

The Old Yang Style of Taiji is an Internal Martial Art, the forms contain internal energy work, qi gong and internal power training methods that can not be seen and the use of mental intention that can not be seen.

As soon as a person becomes an opponent we launch an unrelenting preemptive attack with punches to the throat, spear fingers to the eyes and repetitive elbow strikes to their neck and throat. In a fight winning is the purpose not the taking part. In our training with our martial arts training partners who we are trying to help to develop their abilities there is great emphasis on skill and it is an art. If challenged by an other martial artist or by a thug on the street there is no skill, there is no art we are just brutal and ruthless in the extreme, we have to be to survive.

The fighting side of taiji is interesting and the training helps to improve our health. I am an however an Acupuncturist and practitioner of Chinese Herbal Medicine, I spend my days healing people of illness and injury, so to enter a competition to intentionally cause possibly fatal internal injury and permanent mutilation to someone else for a trophy or prize money goes against my medical training.

Question. Would you win a competition in which people were awarded points for performing their forms?

Answer. The Old Yang Style of Taiji is an Internal Martial Art, the forms contain internal energy work, qi gong and internal power training methods that cannot be seen and the use of mental intention that cannot be seen. So how can points be awarded? Also when done correctly all the Old Yang Style forms have every move as a fa jin, it is nothing like the slow flowing taiji that every one else practices. Some other styles do there forms fast but that is not the same as fa jin.

When we do the Old Yang forms its like an angry snake striking or a shark in a feeding frenzy and looks nothing like

what people imagine taiji should be like.

The judges, if they were from other styles would say it was not taiji and if they were from the Old Yang style, they would not be judges at a competition.

Question. Would you win a pushing hands competition?

Answer. The pushing hands of The Old Yang Style of Taiji is different from the other styles, they push, we strike with fa jin. In fact the Old Yang Pushing Hands should really be called Striking Hands.

So it just could not be used in a competition, the other competitors would be trying to push and pull each other over or lock and throw each other or wrestle. In the Old Yang style as soon as you make contact you hit them. For example, Tiger Paw Punch them in the side of the throat and then follow up with an Elbow Strike to the neck and Tiger Claws to the eyes pulling their head back hitting them with a Penetration Punch to the other side of the throat and then hit their descending head with your rising knee to finishing them off.

So when we practice our pushing hands it has nothing to do with competitions, it is a training method in which we work very carefully with a partner to develop fa jin and dim mak.

Question. All the other taiji teachers I have seen show how taiji can be used to push the opponent away or pull him over or put him in a lock or throw him to the ground, surely this is enough for self defense. Why do you teach the really extreme fa jin dim mak strikes as the applications of taiji.

Answer. If a girl is being kidnapped by a psychopathic serial killer rapist and no one is going to rescue her and she has to fight for her life. Do you really think that pushing or pulling or locking and throwing is going to be of any use what so ever or that these types of moves are going to be able to be used when she is being attacked with continuous full power punches to her face?

For her to survive and not become a rape and murder victim she has to fight for her life, there is no other way to do this than try and kill the opponent with fa jin and dim mak, anything less and he will achieve his objective.

So it would be wrong for me to teach my students things which wouldn't work when they needed something real.

Question. But what if it was not an extreme situation would you still hit the opponent?

Answer. How do you know in advance whether it is going to be an extreme situation or not? What do you mean by not extreme? Are you suggesting that you wouldn't mind being beaten up as long as you are not going to be killed, maybe the attacker only meant to beat you up and not kill you but you die because he accidentally hits you in the throat not the face.

It is clear to me that if I am attacked I should defend myself and not let myself get hit, I consider being physically attacked an extreme situation and would hit the opponent. You can not duck and weave to avoid their punches indefinitely, eventually you will be hit and then hit again. And if he is close enough to hit or stab you then turning to run away is madness, he will just hit or stab you in the back of the head. If you push or pull or throw the opponent they will just get more angry and re-attack with even more aggression.

And if you put them into a lock or hold they will go berserk and thrash out trying to strike you with their free hand, head, feet etc.

If a person is fired up it is impossible to put a lock on them. Locks and controlling holds should only be used after the opponent has been hit hard to drain their energy and their will to fight.

If there was a situation which could be seen clearly as not an extreme situation then we do have several fa jin - dim mak knock out strikes which we would use, they are all very quick and effective and only need a very small amount of power in the strike for it to work and cause full knock out but not death. If the situation is even less extreme then these strikes can also be used in a special way to cause what is known in western boxing terms as a technical knock out, this means that the person is still standing but totally stunned and unable to control their body effectively.

This way the opponent is unable to attack you and you have not had to cause him any major harm.

Question. Can you prove that Zhang san feng created The Twelve Qi Disruption

Forms or that he even existed? and can you prove that Yang lu chan created Taiji from them?

Answer. I can't prove these things and no one else can disprove them. It is not possible to reach back that far in time and be one hundred percent certain. However from the documentary information now available to the general public I think it very possible that he did exist and was the originator of The Twelve Qi Disruption Forms.

The whole argument about Zhang san feng is in my opinion not so important. Did Zhang san feng exist and did he create The Twelve Qi Disruption Forms or was it several generations of the inhabitants of the Liang village in the Wu dang mountain range who created the The Twelve Qi Disruption Forms? Did Yang lu chan create the whole of The Old Yang Style Taiji system himself based on the Wu dang system or did he just create the Long Form and Pushing Hands and the rest was created by his sons and grandson?

These questions can never have definitive answers so it is best to concentrate instead on ones training. The Wu dang System and Old Yang Style

are both outstanding whoever it was that created them.

Question. Is Qi Disruption the same as hitting someone from a distance without touching them?

Answer. No these are different things, Qi disruption is something we do to the opponent whilst we are already physically hitting them or just before we physically hit them. The Qi disruption works on people from a very close range to unbalance and drain their energy so that they are easier to defeat with fa jin and dim mak but by itself Qi disruption is not enough to defeat them.

Something completely different to Qi disruption is the belief that you can hit someone from a distance without touching them, this is an idea that people would like to believe is true but unfortunately it is just a dream and not a reality.

The truth is that a fight involves blood and bones with bruises and breaks, the idea that you can fight without touching is a fantasy. The people who demonstrate hitting someone without touching them always use one of their own students or a member of the public who is first hypno-

tised into believing that it will work and then subconsciously plays along with the show. There has never been a demonstration of the ability to hit without touching used on a person who is really filled with the fury of combat who has the intent to really smash and crush the person demonstrating their skill of hitting without touching.

It is important to remember that the martial arts are often misrepresented to the public in books, films and theatrical performances.

So unfortunately many people believe that certain fantastic abilities are possible when in reality they are not. Or people say that genuine feats of great strength or endurance are due to mystical powers or special incantations when in reality they are the result of many years of hard and dedicated training and a deep understanding of body mechanics.

Question. Do I have to study acupuncture to be able to practice dim mak?

Answer. No you do not have to but it does help explain what you are doing. Also it is an excellent healing system which can be used to cure a

very wide range of injuries and illnesses.

We should also remember that Zhang san fen (Chang san feng) was an acupuncturist and so was Chang yui chun.

Question. Does dim mak really work?

Answer. Yes it really works because if you hit a person with the extreme force of fa jin on the acupuncture points that are on the most weak and vulnerable areas of the body you are going to get a big effect.

The acupuncture points that we use for dim mak are over major nerves and blood vessels and the most vulnerable parts of the neck and skull. Many of them are also right over major internal organs. Even if you do not hit the point exactly but are in roughly the right area it will still work.

Question. Will you teach me Dim Mak?

Answer. I could list for you which are the acupuncture points that we use for Dim mak but this is not enough. You need to have a system that teaches you how to hit these points in the right way

with fa jin whilst fighting. The Old Yang Style Taiji System and The Twelve Qi Disruption Forms and Twelve Hand Weapons are some of the best methods for teaching these things.

Question. Can you teach me to strike as powerfully and as fast as I possibly can and to move with subconscious reflex actions?

Answer. Fa jin contains all these things and much more. Learn fa jin and all the healing and martial benefits of taiji can be yours. If a person says that they are practicing taiji but do not have fa jin then it is not taiji, remember TAIJI IS FA JIN.

Question. What move would you use if I attacked you with a hook punch or a straight jab or a front kick etc?

Answer. If we were in a warm blooded training situation then there are many responses that we train to counter each of these types of attack but when we fight for real it is cold blooded and we do not know what we are going to do.

This is because it is not our conscious minds that think about what the opponent has done and then what we

should respond with, this is far to slow. Rather we let our subconscious mind have a spontaneous instant reaction with whatever is appropriate at the time with no conscious thought.

If taiji is applied correctly we only consciously know what we have done after our subconscious mind has already done it. It is not really us that defeats the opponent, by this I mean our conscious mind, our personality, the person who you are that socializes and talks with other people. What defeats the opponent is a reflex survival mechanism controlled by the reptile brain. It is a part of us that most people never access and are unaware of.

Taiji for fighting is a method of reactivating this often dormant part of ourselves and getting it to work for our benefit. All the moves that we have in taiji are designed to be the ones that are easiest for this part of us to express itself through.

The way taiji works is that people who all too easily slip into their reptile mode and are unable to control their rage find through the training control and understanding about who they are and how they work.

So they become more civilized and mature people. And for people who are not aware of it and are too timid and weak the discovery of their reptile mind and the power, confidence and strength that it brings them enables them to walk tall in their lives and achieve their objectives.

I do taiji for all these reasons they complement and balance one another very well. When I teach taiji I explain all three aspects to the students.

Question. Do you train and teach taiji as a martial art for fighting or as a type of qi gong (chi kung) for healing or as a type of moving meditation for spiritual development? and is it better than any other system?

Answer. I do taiji for all these reasons they complement and balance one another very well. When I teach taiji I explain all three aspects to the students.

If a student wants to concentrate on certain areas more than others then I will explain in greater detail that aspect of the art.

Some people think that dim mak is the most important thing, others that fajing is the priority.

Also there are many who don't want any martial component to their training and just want to learn the Long Form as a slow moving Qi gong meditation. It is normal that different people want different things, I don't try to turn fighters into healers or healers into fighters. I just teach the system and see that quite naturally people choose to eventually develop both aspects because they want to be balanced within themselves.

There are many martial arts which are good for fighting, there are many exercise systems for maintaining good health and there are many meditation methods to aid people's development.

What makes Taiji special is that it has the martial, healing and spiritual all happening at the same time. We do not need to learn three different systems, all three aspects are within our Taiji. Throughout my life I would like to retain the ability to defend myself, to maintain my health and to have a spiritual component to my life.

So I train taiji for all three reasons, to me they are all as equally as important as each other.

Question. Does Taiji have a belt and grading system?

Answer. Different schools have their own ideas and there is no universally agreed belt and grading system. Personally I prefer not to have belts and grades but just to have five levels, beginners, intermediates and advanced students, instructors and masters.

A beginner would be a person who has learnt The Old Yang Style Long Form The Large San Sau Two Person Fighting Form The Small San Sau Two Person Fighting Form The Pauchui Cannon Fist Form The basic Single and Double Pushing Hands and applications

An intermediate level student would be one who knew all the above plus Da Lu stepping/striking method The 12 Mother applications of the Small San Sau Lung Har Chuan Dragon Prawn Boxing The Twelve Circular Tai Chi Dim Mak Palms Advanced Single Pushing Hands and applications with Fa jing and Dim mak Advanced Double Pushing Hands and applica-

tions with Fa jing and Dim mak An advanced level student would be one who knew all the above plus The Nine Pre-emptive Attacking Methods The Hidden applications of the Pauchui Form The Twelve Chi Disruption forms of Wu Dang The Twelve Hand Weapons Forms of Wu Dang The most Advanced Double Pushing Hands applications The Taiji Weapons Forms

An instructor should know all the above and understand all of the above. Also an instructor should have got to the level where the system had started to teach them its deeper aspects. Plus of course an instructor should be able to teach all of the above in a clear effective way and be a relatively balanced easily approachable person.

To be a master means you have really mastered the whole system both the fighting and healing. This is only possible if you have been practicing the whole system for a very very long time. This idea I have about five levels is not a fixed unchangeable structure, it is just a rough outline so that people can see how far they are on their own path of development.

Also the order is not fixed and unchangeable, a beginner might do a few intermediate and advanced things as well. People should not get fixated on belts or levels, just train every day and gradually make progress.

NOTE : I hope that these questions and answers are helpful and beneficial in some way to all the Taiji people out there. I love being part of the WTBA and would like to wish all readers and especially the great bunch of people who I met when I was last out in OZ a Merry Xmas and a Happy New Year.

Paul Brecher can be contacted at www.taiji.net

Peter Smith's Folkestone Workshop

Ron Beier (Germany)

I just thought you might like to hear of the workshop Peter Smith held at the beginning of the month; a student of mine and I took it upon us to travel all the way to Folkestone only to be shown that we were doing everything all wrong and had to start from the beginning again. Well, not quite as drastic as that, but both Falko, my student, and I learned a great deal. Thanks again to Peter for a really wonderful workshop.

It all began a few months ago. I had spoken to Falko in glowing terms of Peter's teaching, having had my first taste of it in August of last year, and when I discovered that he'd be holding a workshop on the first and second of March, Falko spontaneously said he wanted to go. Once he had convinced his wife to give him the weekend off and free up the funds, it was easy for me to convince my stronger half to do the same: "Falko's wife is letting him go to Folkestone. Why can't I go?" So off we went, a two hour car drive at four in the Friday morning to the Lübeck airport, then a short flight to London Stanstead where we rented a car and drove

to Folkestone, only getting lost once. We had Friday afternoon to recover and buy souvenirs for the children. This was a requirement imposed by the funding partners. On Saturday morning we got up at our usual time and walked to a secluded spot overlooking the sea and did our forms together. Then showers and breakfast and finally at ten we headed to Hunter's only to find Peter and some of the prospective workshop victims sitting in the café drinking tea (as expected).

Peter was kind enough to cut his pre-teaching tea short and helped us work on our large San Sau in the entrance foyer (the gym wasn't free until eleven). Poor Peter, you could fairly hear his muttered thoughts: "crazy over-eager Germans. What have I got myself into?!" Well, Peter was kind enough not to let it show too much and he helped us navigate through the first turns and showed us how to use what he called a "coat-hanger", thrusting the inside of his elbow into my neck in demonstration. Hmmm, I thought, this puts a whole new light on the terminology for striking techniques. Next thing will be a move called a shoejack, or

maybe a massive frontal attack called a wardrobe?

During the actual workshop, once we had reluctantly chased the sweating taе-bo beauties in their skin-tight spandex out of the gym, Peter showed us his jiggling warm-ups and then began correcting our Yang Lu-Chan form. He emphasized that he was doing "advanced beginners" form, which seemed to me an oxymoron of sorts but was nevertheless enlightening. Keep the knees open, keep the hands in front of the center, move from the waist, actually all of the things that we know are basic principles but never really applied to the form in as concrete and integrated a way as Peter showed us.

Under Peter's skilled instructions I came to realize how simple and thereby how difficult this whole business was: in the interplay of all of the key elements of bodily movement from a truly centered, rooted and "sung" position I began to feel the form take over, as if I no longer had to "do" anything, I just had to think quietly of where I wanted to go and slightly relax or give a slight impulse, inside of my hips as initiated from the foot and the move-

ment executed itself. At the moment it is still a rare occurrence, this synchronized, effortless wavelike inner movement, but hope springs eternal that I will be able to develop the experience, even without Peter's coaxing.

On Sunday afternoon we got down to brass tacks so to speak. Peter had us form a chorus line and the whole group went through the motions of large San Sau in unison. It was tempting to break out into song and to dance, but our costumes were too varied for it to have the right effect, so we simply did as Peter told us. It's one thing to go through the San Sau solo, and a whole different ball game with a partner. By the end of the day there was steam coming out of my ears from all of the fevered activity involved in trying to coordinate my uncoordinated movements in Side B with my partner's Side A. Heroic patience is certainly a virtue possessed by Peter and we were all grateful for it. The afternoon saw us pounding away at each other, trying out various techniques designed, I suppose, to separate the wheat from the chaff. It's one thing to

try to apply principles during the form and quite another to apply them when a tight-fisted partner with that gleam in his (or worse, her!) eye comes barreling towards you.

Both Falko and I highly recommend Peter's workshops; everything from the open atmosphere and like-minded training partners to the excellent teaching and the wonderful venue simply "fits" and makes it a worthwhile experience, even if you have to travel a bit to be able to take part. We're certainly looking forward to the next workshop and have already started buttering up the financial consultants in our respective families.



*L to R
Ron Beier; Peter Smith, Falko*

Ron Beier is the German representative for the WTBA.

NEW VIDEOS FROM Erle Montaigue

MTG237 **Bagua Deer Horn Knives** **Vol. 1**

Teaches this most deadly but beautiful and health giving weapons form from Baguazhang.

MTG238 **Bagua Deer Horn Knives** **Vol 2**

MTG239 **Bagua Deer Horn Knives V.** **3**

MTG240 **Bagua Deer Horn Knives V.** **4**

MTG241 **Bagua Deer Horn Knives V.** **5: Notes and Corrections.**

MTG242: **Advance Knife Fighting**

Teaches Advanced methods of using the knife in attack and defence as well as empty hand against knife attack. Chang Yiu-chun's Training methods for Knife Fighting.

Vincenzo Over Italy

Silvio Renesto

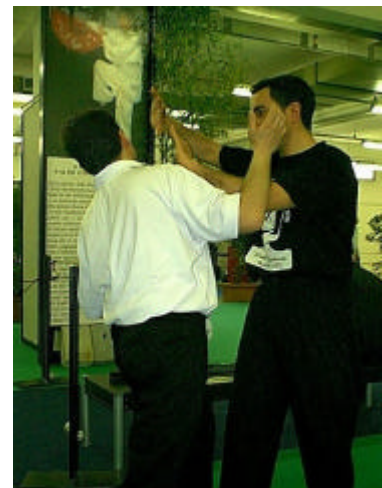
On March 15-16, 2003, a great exhibit took place in Milano, one of the main cities of Italy. The convention was called "Expobenessere" and was focused on natural healing methods, TCM, natural food, shiatsu, Chinese mas-

sage and the like. There was also a section devoted exclusively to Qi Gong and Chinese internal martial and healing arts. Most schools from the entire Italian country attended the meeting. Tai Ji Quan was the main performed art with its different styles, mainly Yang and Chen

Staltari and his students; They performed a demonstration of the Old Yang Style form with applications, gaining a lot of interest both from other participants and, mainly, from people visiting the exhibit, who rarely, if ever, had the chance to see the martial side of Taiji.

Vincenzo and his students demonstrated also the three circle Qi Gong and some Bagua techniques along with bits of the Bagua solo form. The WTBA representative gained wide consensus and appreciation due also to the different approach to the method, in comparison with other, all slow/soft and no martial application of other performers of modern Yang and Chen styles. The WTBA Italy owes part of his success also to the friendly and "easy" way of leading and practicing. No Chinese pajamas or other silly outfits, neither self-conceived or guru-like attitude. Instead simple and straightforward practice in a happy and "sound" way.

Milano Italy



WTBA was also present with the WTBA Italian representa-

Searching For Excitement

By James Readman
UK

I've been doing martial arts on and off, well, on more than off, since I was 15. I'm a small person, about 133lbs (9.5 stone) soaking wet I always have been, and (family genetics being what they are) I think I always will be. It

was then I decided maybe I should learn to beat people up like Bruce Lee (ahh the mind of a 15 year old).

My first point of call was obvious (to me at least) Ninjutsu. I e-mailed a guy who had a club close to me but his reply was that he didn't take anyone under 16. Its probably about this point in time I should tell you that I have a quitters attitude. My body enjoys being at rest, in fact it enjoys being at rest so much that it really has to have a strong incentive (or a bucket of cold water and a verbal threat) before it consents to no longer being at rest, now don't think I'm boasting, this is n't a good thing, far from it! but I digress.

I left the idea of martial arts for a bit until I had played one too many computer games and seen one too many movies to carry on through life being a spectator to this wonderful world. However, despite my love for the action movies and classic Bruce flicks, I'm not really like that on the inside.

Which I believe is what led me to walk the opposite path to my friend (who also started martial arts at the same time as me) when he walked into a Thai boxing gym and I into an Aikido Dojo. I liked it. I trained in Aikido for about a year and a bit. It was fun to start with, all the new techniques, body movement etc etc but I could n't help but feel that, deep down, this would never work. We had this one guy in our club, an ex Judo and JuJutsu Dan grade, about 6 foot and maybe 266lbs (19 stone) huge man. Anyway, whenever I practiced with him (and I always made a bee line for him) I would n't move him. He came in fast and heavy with the 'pre arranged'

attacking techniques of traditional Aikido and I crumbled. Or if I managed to move correctly, when it came to the throw I couldn't move him. Now you can easily put this down to experience, I was only a beginner, and I would never, ever even dream of 'putting down' a martial art which I had not had extensive training in.

What I will say is that some arts suit some people, and Aikido did not suit me. Maybe O-Sensei was a tiny Japanese man who could throw men twice his size but he trained his entire life

What I will say is that some arts suit some people, and Aikido did not suit me. Maybe O-Sensei was a tiny Japanese man who could throw men twice his size but he trained his entire life, both physically and spiritually, and, as much as some people might turn their noses up at it, I didn't have that long. And on top of that the lessons became boring, every week the same

techniques, over and over again, too complicated to fight with and no emphasis by the instructors ever places on how you would actually fight using the system in the real world.

Ai kido is of course a wonderful art, it was my first experience in martial arts life, it'll always have a place in my heart... I just wish the instructors had told us that which Erle is always preaching, 'there are hidden applications in the form' and 'you can't fight using technique'.

After I quit Aikido (which wasn't easy, the other members had become something of a family to me, we were a small club, maybe 5 or 6 regular members. I'd like to hope that they're still going each week, and that maybe the teaching has become a little more geared toward 'real life') I wondered aimlessly for a while. I tried my friend Thai boxing club but it didn't grab me (no pun intended :)) I practiced with a friend who was a 2nd Dan in Jujutsu but I didn't like it, I even thought about taking Wing Chun and following the original Bruce Lee plan but then I found Wado Ryu Karate.

Now that I enjoyed, and would have kept it up for much longer except that the

club was too far for regular travel, that combined with the quitters attitude I mentioned earlier left me martial art less for a while.

Then I saw Tai Chi. This was perfect for me. What I always wanted from a martial art was something that was 'stylish' to look at and beautiful to watch being done, something with excellent combat potential and something exciting and different.

Then I saw Tai Chi. This was perfect for me. What I always wanted from a martial art was something that was 'stylish' to look at and beautiful to watch being done, something with excellent combat potential and something exciting and different. I had heard the rumors (as we all did) of the incredible power of Tai Chi the 'secret' and 'mysterious' nature and of course the incredible power to throw people from a distance which comes from moving very ver-r-ry slowly!

After some Internet searching, I found Erle and the WTBA and I lived happily

ever after... well nearly. Erle (as he has done to all of you) completely change my thinking on Tai Chi and the martial arts, biggest of all I started to write it 'Taiji'! Seriously though, I don't need to go into how taijiworld.com made us see things differently.

I was half way through the Yang Chen Fu Form when I found a local Taiji club.

I decided that it would be good to get into the 'club atmosphere' again and e-mailed them telling them I was half way through the Yang Chen Fu form and wondering which one they taught. Their reply was that neither existed and that they couldn't comment on what Erle taught but they could proudly show me their lineage. I told him I'd stick with video tapes. He told me I couldn't learn from a tape. a few months later he sent me a one line e-mail "decided to stick to the tapes then?" to which I replied "yes".

Taiji gripped me for a long time but there was something missing. Not in the art itself obviously but within me. I and Taijiquan didn't seem to gel together if that makes any sense at all! I enjoyed it but I was never excited by it. That's when I decided on

Baguazhang. Now that excited me. The twisting and turning of the circular form and the devastating fighting method which is the linear form. I often left school early to go home and practice! now when you think about my quitter's attitude, and how it stopped me from sticking things out before you can see how finding Baguazhang put an end to my search for excitement.

I am defiantly at the beginning of this journey (having finally found a place to start!) but the magic hasn't gone from my relationship with Bagua yet, I still miss lessons at college to conduct my own Bagua lessons at home (again I'm not boasting, don't think I make a habit of this!) its just to illustrate how this wonderful art has grabbed me in a way none other could.

I think I'll finish this with a comparison with a famous novel (to ensure that I haven't missed too much school!) In Mary Shelley's novel Frankenstein the young doctor is always searching, searching a great power, of life and death, from the outset of the book. He is never happy, because he is always searching. I believe (bearing in mind that I'm still young myself and so not exactly 'wise') that when we are really happy, we don't

search anymore, not that we stop learning you understand, but that we stop... wanting to always be learning... I think that makes sense! I was searching for 3 years just to find a martial art I wanted to learn! I was never satisfied. Now that I have finally found what it is that I want to do I can begin to do it! Without having to worry about always searching for something better!

I hope that people like me can read this article and relate to it. That when you find that something which you've been searching for for so long, when you are really happy with what you've got, you stop searching completely. In fact, it seems that this way, you find a lot more! Without 'the search' getting in your way what you have found seems to open up to you and you begin learning without trying!

Zen Shiatsu, Acupuncture and Injuries in the Martial Arts

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In his book "Roots of the Dance Fight Game," Nestor Capoeira, the Brazilian Martial Artist refers to a study done by Dr. Maria Ines Pereira. Dr Ines Pereira notes that the physical demands of this art (and all Martial Arts) are very high risk in terms of bodily injury. Her survey confirmed the high incidence of injuries sustained by Capoeiristas. Significantly, Dr. Ines Pereira observes that the responsibility for the injury lies not in the Martial Art but rather in one or more than one of the following:

Poor teaching of the Martial Art

-Poor application and practice of the Martial Art by the Martial Artist

-Inherent weakness in the constitution of the Martial Artist which predisposes or renders him/her susceptible to injury.

It is this focus on removing the "blame" for injury away from the Martial Art and shifting responsibility to the Martial Artist which opens the possibilities, explored in this article, of examining what the Martial Artist can do to increase his/her strength and competence in the art and thereby reduce vulnerability to injury and promote more effective healing of injuries and conditions which may happen.

This approach is in direct accordance with the treatment practices of Zen Shiatsu and Acupuncture: if you wish to be healthy – look after yourself to prevent disease; if you are in pain – make use of systems to address it. In both instances the assistance of a practitioner supports you to make the necessary adjustments to your lifestyle so as to prepare your body as best as possible to lessen exposure to mis hap, and to help facilitate your return to wellness when you do become injured.

When a Martial Artist with a knee injury who consulted me recently expressed surprise, asking: "Shiatsu can help my knee injury? I thought it was just for relaxation," I was given the inspiration to write this article. There is a fairly general lack of understanding of the powerful results which these forms of medicine produce in the healing of such injuries

(Please note: words that are specific to Zen Shiatsu or Acupuncture are in **bold** type. I have done my best to give accurate accompanying translations).

Acute or Chronic?

There are 2 main types of injuries that Martial Artists sustain:

(1) Acute Injury - Martial Artists who have recently sustained an injury through being struck or landing incorrectly or "something just going wrong" in class or practice.

Here, many an injury could be prevented if the Martial Artist approaches their practice in the correct manner. Mental focus must be culti-

vated before entering the place of training. A scattered mind will lead to injury through lack of concentration. Thereafter, doing a warm up routine is one of the fundamentals for the prevention of injury. Strength and flexibility need to be built up consciously through time. Stiff people will be more easily injured than flexible, warm individuals. In certain schools, if you do not participate in the warm up, you are not allowed to train.

(2) Chronic Injury – here there are 3 sub-categories:

(a) Martial Artists who were injured some time ago and who never received appropriate treatment. The cause of injury is clear but the injury has never properly healed and is now constantly affecting the practice and occasionally flaring up causing training to cease altogether.

(b) Practitioners who have developed an injury over a period of time with no apparent traumatic incident. Their training is of a high standard and hence the injury is more likely due to internal weaknesses inherent within the

martial artist's constitution. The injury affects their practice and they are aware of which techniques are difficult or painful to perform, although the exact cause seems to be indeterminate.

(c) Injury that develops over time through consistent mispractice. The injury itself is never acute but rather builds up and develops into a chronic injury. This often happens where body-conditioning techniques are involved. These techniques involve the deliberate striking of the body (for example punching sand in kung fu with one's fists or breaking bricks in karate or performing head stands in capoeira) with the purpose of building up the bone and muscle strength and condition so that the body can withstand these "blows" in the sparring arena or elsewhere. If these techniques are administered incorrectly, over time they will cause the part of the body that is being conditioned to become malformed. Bones may accumulate excess calcification. This will lead to stagnation of the essential body substances (**Ki** – energy, **Xue** – Blood and **Jin Ye** – Body Fluids) in the area as

the excessive compression impedes their flow. This may in turn lead to conditions such as arthritis in later life.

What can Zen Shiatsu and Acupuncture offer the Martial Artist?

There is always the risk of injury in the Martial Arts. There are 3 things Zen Shiatsu and Acupuncture offer the Martial Artist to enhance their activity and to diminish risks.

(1) Facilitating and accelerating healing time for acute injuries.

(1) Bringing new **ki (vital energy)** to the affected area, for chronic injuries. With this fresh **ki** comes relief from pain and a return to wellness and mobility as not only is the specific condition treated, but the Martial Artist's lifestyle is assessed so that the cause of the injury can be discovered.

(2) Preventative action through raising overall strength and wellbeing. Eastern Medicine is about preventing crisis before it occurs in the body. However, in Martial Arts, as already mentioned, the risk of injury is in-

creased. Thus treatment aims to empower the body by imbuing it with fresh vital energy and constantly returning it to a state of balance. The Martial Artist who has undergone regular treatments will be in a position to recover more effectively should an injury be sustained as his/her constitution is strengthened and maintained through the holistic therapy.

Injury and Treatment

Each category of injury and the approach to it will now be examined in more detail:

(1) Acute or recently sustained injuries in the Martial Arts:

Strikes, twists, sprains, breaks and bruises. Ankles, knees, hips, shoulders, necks, elbows, wrists, fingers, upper back, lower back, tendon and ligament strains.

The entire body becomes a playground for injury in the martial arts world. Injury can be sustained through improper movement, incorrect

falling and physical hits from applications and sparring and is usually easily treated so long as it is addressed immediately. Often, however, the Martial Artist does not recognize or act timeously when injured. If the injury is addressed promptly recovery will be faster and further treatment may sometimes not be necessary.

So long as there is no bleeding or breaking, Shiatsu and Acupuncture can be applied immediately to pull out the toxic **ki** that has caused the injury and which is accumulating in the injured body part. If this does not happen, the **ki** will become trapped inside and will be more difficult to treat later on. In such a case, the trapped **ki** may cause local blood stagnation at the point of injury. This is even more difficult to treat from the point of view of Traditional Chinese Medicine as it represents a deeper layer of injury and disease.

If the injury involves bleeding this has to be stopped first and if a break has occurred the Martial Artist must have the bone set. However, even in the case of a broken bone, it is preferable to (gently) draw the toxic **ki** out of the affected area before

the bone is set to avoid it being set along with the bone. If this happens it results in the affected area feeling constantly tender and vulnerable and needing of protection. In such instances, treatment can still be given but recovery time will be longer (even years in some cases - until the Martial Artist's body releases the trapped **ki** - a process which if forced can actually drive the **ki** deeper into the body and cause it to become even more cemented within the affected area. Through the selection of appropriate **meridians (energy pathways)** and acupuncture points, the toxic **ki** and stagnant blood can be drawn away from the affected area, alleviating the tension and pain within.

Once the toxic **ki** has been purged from the injury, Acupuncture and Shiatsu can be applied to restore and regenerate the area in order to bring fresh **ki** to it.

After the initial treatment, successive treatments further strengthen the affected area by removing the last of the trapped **ki** and **blood** and replacing it with fresh vital **ki**. The injured body part (as well as the Martial Artist as a whole) is imbued with optimal **ki** and vitality, and is

soon able to return to full practice. Of course, some rest and time off may be prescribed in the “self – help” component of the treatment. Many Martial Artists are extremely passionate about their training and part of the therapeutic whole-healing is the “coaching” of an injured patient through the frustrations that arise due to not being able to train. It takes time and wisdom to respect the natural recovery-time of the injury and allowing the body its own full time to recover. Irritation and impatience to return prematurely to strenuous training can be as detrimental as not receiving any treatment. Both situations will end up with the Martial Artist re-injuring themselves, perhaps more seriously the next time. The help of both the teacher and the therapist are vital in this aspect of the practitioner’s recovery (see later – Psychological Aspect of Injury).

(2) Chronic Injuries:

(a) The Martial Artist who has delayed at tending to an injury until weeks, months or years after its occurrence

can also be helped. The process might, however, take longer since he/she has become accustomed to living with this injury and has accommodated it by developing energetic and physical patterns to compensate for it in daily life and training practices.

One example is a practitioner of Tai Chi Chuan who injured his knee many years ago. His knee never fully recovered to the extent that today his entire approach to training has been compromised. His accommodation of the injury has led to a loss of equilibrium and diversity in his training as now he only fully trains one side of his body. These limits have two implications. Firstly, he is unable to fully explore the entire spectrum of his body. Secondly, if his opponents realize this weakness, this represents a problem and risk for the Martial Artist.

The treatment process in this case is not dissimilar to being lost in a maze and realizing that you are in a dead end. The therapist has to guide the patient out of the *cul de sac*, to retrace the steps to the path out of the maze and back to the Martial Arts group or class.

(b) Some Martial Artists with whom I have worked bring injuries that have “developed” over a period of time. No particular event caused the injury. It just happened. In such cases, 2 questions arise:

(a) The Practice – are they performing their practice in the correct manner? Incorrect practice (which includes approach to the practice) can lead to what are commonly called “repetitive strain injuries.”

Repetitive Strain injuries can also occur if there is simply not enough variety in the practice of the Martial Art. For example the consistent and diligent practice of forms (sequences of techniques specific to the Martial Art) in a prescribed manner can, over time cause one part of the body to become overworked and eventually deficient in strength. Of ten forms will be practiced in a certain direction and hence movements will place more emphasis on a certain knee. Over time, this can lead to “wear and tear” of that knee alone. In such cases the Martial Artist should be instructed to practice their form in reverse so as to build strength on both sides of the body and alleviate the overstrain on one side.

(b) Life style – what factors in this person’s lifestyle (mental, physical, spiritual, emotional) could be causing the **ki** to be come imbalanced to the degree that the affected area has been physically compromised and weakened?

An in-depth assessment based on the Traditional Chinese Medical (TCM) philosophies of **Yin and Yang** and the **Five Elements** and using **tongue, pulse and haradiagnosis** establishes the energetic patterns of **ki** within their bodies. Diet, sleep, digestion and menstruation are all considered as is the person’s attitude towards life and his/her training regime (which will also be a reflection of his/her life and attitudes).

Treatment will focus on tonifying **meridians** with depleted **ki** so as to nourish and support the deficient areas as well as dispersing and releasing the **meridians** which flow through the areas of tension. The practitioner will take time to ascertain whether the area of injury is **kyo (deficient)** or **jitsu (excessive)** in **ki** or if the problem is due to a stagnation of blood or an accumulation of **body fluids**. Any of these can cause pain or de-

creased mobility or sensation of the body. Correctly identifying which factors are involved will determine the approach to and course of treatment. For example, knee pain could be due to a deficiency of **kidney ki**. In TCM the knees are considered to be “governed” by the **kidney energy** – a deficiency of which could lead to a weakening of knee function. In such a case the kidneys themselves would have to be boosted with **ki** so as to strengthen the knee’s functioning power.

It is worth mentioning at this point that the kidneys are the store house of the body’s **essence**. **Essence** forms the basis of bone marrow. Thus if the kidneys contain a strong supply of **essence**, the bone marrow and bones will be strong. In the case of broken bones or joint strain it is vital to nourish the kidneys and promote the formation of kidney essence so that the bones may set correctly and strongly. Specific acupuncture points can be used perform this function.

Another cause of knee pain could be an excess, stagnation or deficiency of **ki** and **blood** in any of the meridians that flow through the knee. These include the me-

ridians associated with the Spleen, Stomach, Liver, Gall bladder, Kidney and Urinary Bladder organs. Here the **ki** would need to be supplemented if deficient or released if excessive or stagnant.

In TCM physiology, the Liver has the function of storing the blood and regulating the harmonious flow of **ki** throughout the body. As blood nourishes the tendons and ligaments, keeping them pliant and supple, it is said that the Liver governs the tendons and ligaments. If the functioning of the Liver is impaired, the flow of **Blood** and **Ki** will be affected. A person may become stiff and rigid. In the case of a Martial Artist this is undesirable and can make the risk of injury even higher. At this point Shiatsu and Acupuncture can be used to stimulate blood formation within the body, allowing the Liver to function freely and the tendons to be supple for optimum training. Further, in the case of an injury involving torn ligaments and tendons, the Liver has to be nourished so that it may be able to store and release ample supplies of **blood** to nourish the healing tendons.

Some times an injury will not get better quickly. In such cases a Therapist can be consulted to advise on other aspects of lifestyle which may need to be assessed such as diet. Human nature dictates that if certain parts of the body are weak, others will naturally compensate for them. It is thus necessary to perform exercises to strengthen these other areas so that the affected area can recover fully.

As can be seen, precise diagnosis of the genesis of the injury determines the approach to the treatment.

The Psychological Aspect of injury

As mentioned, injury is part of Martial Arts training. Techniques and applications are applied and in so doing, injury can occur. Thus there is a need for the Martial Artist to learn to realize their own power so that they can control their strength. If this can be discovered, the reckless need to try "too hard" will be diminished and with it the incidence of injury as the practitioner develops skill and control of their techniques.

Martial Artists train to develop "self." This raises greater vulnerability issues (most apparent as they deliberately make themselves more physically vulnerable). Thus, in some cases, a "healthy" injury can become a humbling and positive experience so long as it is correctly physically and psychologically cleansed from the body and the mind so that the self and the practice develop. If this is not done and, say the Martial Artist is angry (for whatever reason) about having become injured, they may inflict this anger on others through their training without even being aware of it. This is a very dangerous situation and shows clearly the need for addressing any injury that may befall a Martial Artist. Treatment will allow the pain to be resolved and released on all levels so that no one will be injured.

If an injury is not correctly treated, it will always linger in the back of the Martial Artist's mind and will always hold them back in their training. Thus it will be easier for them to become re-injured as their mind has become "tense" around the injury and its occurrence. The most difficult challenge for the Martial Artist is to overcome the

fear associated with the advent of injury. This mental aspect needs to be overcome first before the physical aspect can be overcome and healed. The mind leads the body. If the mind is tense, the body will follow and be tense as well. To overcome this mental tension is not easy. The only way is through is:

(a) The continued participation in the practice. Here the role of the teacher is paramount as it is the teacher's knowledge that will help the practitioner overcome the injury. This has nothing to do with the student but is a sensitivity to the details of the injury that only a true teacher can have gathered through their own experience. They will use this experience appropriately to guide their student to recovery.

(b) To seek treatment to facilitate healing. Zen Shiatsu and Acupuncture treat and build strength on all levels of Body, Mind and Spirit. Treatment is vital to facilitate the recovery process and to alleviate the tension around the injury that manifests on all levels (physically at the point of injury and mentally/spiritually as described above).

Often, having sustained an injury, a Martial Artist will take time off to recuperate. The healing approach of the Eastern mindset is that while it is necessary to ease off on the intensity of the training, complete cessation will not aid the further development of the Martial Artist and will, in fact, set them and the injury back in the long run. It is vital to continue to participate in class, performing exercises prescribed by a therapist and your teacher that will build up the muscle strength of the affected area in a correct and diligent manner. Only in this way can the injury be worked through and overcome. Eventually the pain will go away through the trying to build strength in the affected area. In this way, overcoming the injury becomes part of the Martial Arts training of "self."

Conclusion

The reggae artist Bob Marley composed the following line in the song "The Heathen": "... 'tis he who fight and run away (who) live to fight another day..." Inherent in the Martial Arts is "the fight." If we allow ourselves to broaden this category to not only include sparring but training in general, including the learning and practicing

of physically demanding forms, moves and sequences it is clear how Martial Artists are continuously exposed to and at risk of injury unless they are well-prepared in all respects. Zen Shiatsu and Acupuncture therapy undergone routinely offer a highly appropriate contribution to the essential whole-being preparedness (which Mr. Marley believed would equip the fighter not only to survive but to be in condition for another fight).

This, in brief, outlines one aspect of the proposition of the relationship of Zen Shiatsu and Acupuncture treatment to the successful practice of Martial Artists. The second connection is succinctly expressed by Mestre Acordeon (Bira Almeida), a renowned Capoeira master: "The first rule in my school is if you get hit, it is your fault. The second is, if you hit unintentionally, it is also your fault." This statement is the foundation of the Eastern approach to injury – that the responsibility for your recovery from injury to health rests with you, the Martial Artist, and your choice to include the preventative and energizing practices of Zen Shiatsu and Acupuncture as essential parts of your commitment to

the mature and healthy practice of Martial Arts.

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