

Amica e

YANGJIA MICHUAN TAIJI QUAN

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楊家秘傳

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Losing the roots?

As classes resume, it is very important not to lose the thread of our discipline's teachings, even if the practice rooms have been somewhat deserted. Not to lose the thread is also to be well rooted and the root can only develop with a well placed pelvis. Marc and Jean-Christophe bring us back to this awareness of a part of the body too often neglected. Then Luc brings additional details with the study of some Chinese characters while introducing this notion in the practice of Tuishou.

Murielle takes us towards the internal with a little guided tour that we could extend with the “architecture of the living human body” described by Jean-Claude Guimberteau.

Are we really getting old at the Amicale?

Following an article published in the previous Bulletin, Christopher wonders why the Amicale's population is aging and proposes some solutions such as opening up to other communities.

And to philosophize...

Jean-Luc, with his usual poetry, imagines a fourth duan in our style, an idea that Patrick will be able to meditate on after having finished with Laozi.

Thank you to all these authors for coming to share with us some pleasant moments full of hope for our style that some would like to see decline while it is in full expansion with multiple research poles.

Claudy Jeanmougin

Première de couverture, « Michel au stage de Maître Wang à Chatillon en 1982 » : © Marie-Christine Moutault

Quatrième de couverture, « Sun Moon Lake, ou lac des Amoureux, Kaohsiung, Taiwan », « Calligraphie dans un temple à Kaohsiung » : © Claudy Jeanmougin

The Word of the President

There is still hope for an improvement despite the fact that the conditions for the start of the new school year look suspiciously similar to those of last year. Nevertheless, there is still a good chance that the Meetings will be held in Merlimont. However, you don't seem to believe it because for once there are still places available at the end of August. Of course, the reception center will have no choice but to check our sanitary passes. A number of us have expressed their reluctance to vaccination and test but the organizers have no freedom in this case. We will therefore have to choose quickly, taking into account the fact that rapid tests performed in pharmacies, less invasive, should be sufficient.

For our associations, a slow year that I hope everyone will have used for personal practice, even if not everyone has the ideal conditions for this. The Amicale has continued to work quietly.

Issue 7 of Wen Wu is nearing completion. This collective work on the different aspects of tui shou will be very rich and should encourage teachers and students to approach or perfect this facet of our art.

The sustainability committee has also worked well, especially during a physical meeting in mid-August at Zouzou's house. It underlines that the ageing of the volunteers of the Amicale reflects that of its practitioners. The future of the Amicale and of the

Yangjia Michuan TJQ therefore requires to address also younger practitioners. A particularly attractive aspect for them is the playful work with a partner. This issue of Wen Wu is timely in encouraging teachers to teach tui shou after they have been discussing the pedagogy of tui shou together in the College seminars for two years. Now it is time to bring it into the classroom!

You hold this newsletter in your hands and it has kept us all together because the authors, the Editor, the people involved in pre-reading and proofreading, the translators, the graphic designers, and the senders have not let go in these difficult times. I would like to thank them all for their hard work!

However, I must announce that Françoise will have to leave her position as Editor-in-Chief because other time-consuming and energy-consuming priorities have imposed themselves on her. Claudy will (once again) be the interim editor for issue 99, but it is becoming urgent to find another willing person if we want an issue 100.

Wishing you a much better season than last year, I hope to see you in great shape in Merlimont in November.

Best wishes
François Schosseler

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4th duan

Jean-Luc Pérot

Inspired by the article by Christopher Nelson who proposes an interpretation of the Lo Shu in relation to our practice of TJQ and specifically of the 13 Postures, I feel like clarifying my proposition for a 4th Duan.

This 4th Duan would be the free expression of the vocabulary presented in our forms with, as a starting point, the schema presented by the Lo Shu, meaning a central 5 surrounded by representation of the cardinal and diagonal directions.

As such:

4	9	2
3	5	7
8	1	6

Level 1: the practitioner is in the center in the 5 position and develops sequences taken from the three Duans, in all directions while freely mentally browsing the repertoire.

Some formal sequences ready to be used in order to familiarize oneself with the changes in directions and changes of cardinal/diagonals:

The 13 Postures

1st Duan: Cai, Elbow Strike, Shoulder strike, the diagonals at the end.

2nd Duan: Strike 3 Times, Punch Under the Elbow, Monkey Retreats, Cloud Hands, Punch To The Groin, Wind in the Ears, Yin/ Yang kicks.

3rd Duan: Pat High the Horse, Fair Maiden, Separate the Hands, the 100 methods of stepping, Lotus Kick.

Level 2: In the center, after the opening, train to respond in all eight directions with the same movement.

For example, punching - once again, we dip in the formal repertoire of the various occurrences of a punch.

1st Duan: Single Whip, straight punch as in the final diagonals.

2nd Duan: punch after the horizontal elbow strike, Punch Under The Elbow, Turn and Punch, Punch To the Groin, Punch the Tiger, Wind in the ears,...

3rd Duan: Step to the 7 Stars, Fire the Bow...

Basically, we could do the same with kicks, or isolated movements like Push The Mountain Into the Sea, Separate the Hands, Carry the Tiger,...

Preparation

Place yourself in the center and feel the possibilities of movement: forward, back, side step, crossing the feet or not, 1/4, 1/2, 3/4 turn.

From this central position, imagine being attacked from one of the eight directions and formulate a response based on the formal vocabulary.

Integration

a. We stay on the initial schema and without moving it we move through it without any obligation to go through the center (as we do in the 13 Postures).

We thus move through complete diagonals or cardinals; we perambulate on the sides of the square, we play with the straight lines to explore the various geometric figures found in the initial square.

b. The initial schema moves with us in order that, no matter our movements, we always find ourselves in the center with of all the possibilities that this offers.

c. The schema of the Lo Shu is also inscribed along a circle, which offers the possibility of circular movements as is found in Bagua Zhang.

And to dream: the kinesphere or kinecube

We stand in the middle and mentally visualize the directions of the Lo Shu on the frontal or sagittal plane, or lateral to the right or left. The foot is on 1, the head is on 9, and we decide on the alignment by internally turning towards 7 or 3.

Have fun.

Note de la rédaction

L'article de Jean-Luc Pérot a été tronqué dans le bulletin n° 97 p. 8 : « En écho à l'article de Serge Dreyer : trois modalités de conscience dans la pratique du Taiji quan, à savoir : les mouvements lents, le tuishou, le sanshou ». Nous tenions à réparer notre erreur en vous donnant la suite et fin de l'article. Et toutes nos excuses aussi bien à l'égard de l'auteur qu'aux lecteurs et lectrices.

.....

L'ensemble fait que la forme est un répertoire gestuel, un réservoir de vocabulaire et de modes d'expression où l'on peut à loisir puiser pour composer des phrases, des séquences inédites d'attention et d'intentions variables.

C'est dans cet esprit que je la vois comme le fondement de la pratique, de l'apprentissage et de la transmission.

Namur 19 mars 2020



“Physical” goodbyes from our friend Michel Timochenkov

Here is the letter that Michel sent to Françoise, our editor of the Amicale's newsletter:



Hello dear Françoise,

In spite of my resistance to Parkinson's disease (which surprises more than one doctor) which has been “eating away” at me since 1998, my movements are becoming more and more painful.

You could see this in Strasbourg where I was walking very bent over and did not participate in any of the themes in the big hall.

I still want to thank warmly ZOUZOU and other organizers who, during the “shouting”, sent me participants to the “Awakening of the Vital Energies”, or what I had announced at my registration in 1992: AVE (Awakening your Vitale Energy).

Since my affiliation with the TJQ in 1890, I have taken many pictures and sent negatives to Claudy Jeanmougin.

I wish to say my “physical” goodbyes to all my brothers and sisters by sending, enclosed, my heartfelt memories.

I have memories that I wish to share with “DA JIA” the Great Family.

Françoise, I have done my best AND if you have any suggestions to make to say “By by”, I am all ears and eyes.

I embrace you and wish you in superb health.

Michel

Rixensart (Belgium), March 16, 2021

This mail was accompanied by some photos that were not of good quality. At my request, Michel sent me back some photos that I was able to scan because the negatives he is talking about had been returned to him. Françoise will choose the ones that seem to her the most favorable to Michel's wishes.

These lines are very moving and as I share long years of exchanges with my big brother Tiger (we are both tigers), I express the desire to say a few words that Françoise will be able to complete.

It is with Kuo chi that Michel had his first encounter with our style of Yangjia Michuan Taiji quan. Although he practiced with Vlady Stévanovitch, he remained faithful to our style, having a certain adoration for Master Wang whom he discovered in 1992, without denying his other "Masters": Kuo chi, Vlady and Shen Hongxun for qigong.

Michel has always had a fighting temperament which explains his great resistance to his illness which has been undermining him since 1998, that is to say more than 23 years... I remember how he roughed me up during a tuishou session using his famous grip which appears on one of his photos bearing the caption "The sumo woodcutter at work".

If Michel wants to say his "physical" goodbyes, as he says, it's simply because he's getting tired of moving around. Do you remember him in Strasbourg at the 2019 Rencontres Amicales? Again with his backpack as if he was going on a great adventure. In fact, he always came to the Meetings to experience new adventures during the different workshops he could still attend and during the exchanges with new acquaintances. But now, the travel is taking its toll on him and he longs for a little rest and tranquility.

But here it is, physical or not physical, I don't want to say goodbye to him! I will continue to write to him and, if I can, I will visit him as soon as it is possible. Yes my brother, you will not get away with it...

Michel is a great example of physical and mental resilience and there is no doubt that his various practices have helped him and continue to help him. The people who have followed his massage workshop in the last few years at the Meetings have been able to see the energy that this man gives off. Always smiling, I never heard him complain, on the contrary, he wanted to show us that we should never give up.

Michel, if you can't come to us anymore, then we will come to you with some nice words either by post or by mail, to tell you that the Yangjia family doesn't forget you and won't leave you alone in your corner, as peaceful as it is.

Claudy Jeanmougin, Chérac on March 31, 2021

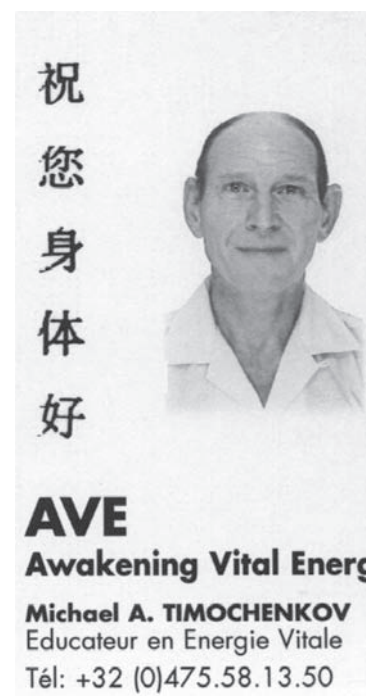
Our great prince says goodbye? But what will become of all your princesses dear Michel? Because yes, during a meeting, who is the one who did not leave with the feeling of having been a princess, a queen, during a smile, a kiss? You have this talent to seduce and to make us feel unique, with so much tact and savoir-vivre! Something in us remains forever queen or princess, for having passed at least once in front of your blue eyes and your immutable smile.

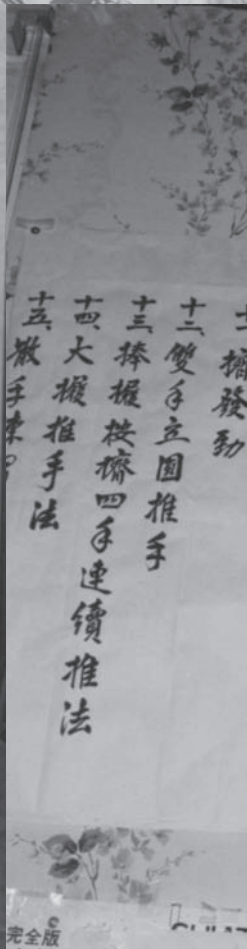
In the meantime, we invented social networks, thank God, and we continue to follow you, to hear from you, to send you lots of little red hearts on your publications, a way for us to say "thank you for being there", no matter that you will not be at the next Meetings, you are there, within eye reach.

My prince, my dear prince, you may not have realized it, but your princesses are also getting grey hair today and are starting to feel a little sore all over. Perhaps they will not all participate in the next Meetings either. Time flows fore everyone. So let's stay together for some more time, because we definitely need your affection and your tenderness, you have all the gifts to be an inspiring person all along.

If Claudy has a seat in his car to go to see you, I book my place!

François Cordaro, Angers, July 31, 2021







十按發勁
 九棒擺勁
 八向前棒手彎腰
 七向後棒手彎腰
 六單手平圓推手
 五左右單腿跪化
 四向前彎腰
 三向後彎腰

如用右脚踏勁時就天罡之氣下行

中氣神貫注於



Rooting in Taiji Quan

Meaning of the concept

Application of the concept, methods to realize it in the practice

Mistakes to avoid

Consequences

Luc Defago

8

The French term for rooting: s'enraciner, in Chinese zhāgēn 扎根, may be translated as "planting roots", but with a sense of strength in action. Just like those tall trees which are lifting tar or concrete with their powerful roots. A bit like a pitchfork that we stick in the ground. Now, as we will see, this concept of strength to plant oneself there is far away from the concept of rooting in Tàijíquán 太極拳 (from now on TJQ). The Chinese word to mean rooting in TJQ is chén 沉.

Unfortunately, there is no word in French to translate this term. In English, we would use 'to sink' which has two acceptations: to sink and to root. The idea is like a boat that starts to sink, heavy with the water it began to take and accumulate. The opposing concept would be "to float, to be buoyant", with the corollary of being easily moved by waves, wind and currents. We would be tempted to say that to be rooted is to be anchored... However, an anchor holds the boat but hardly stabilizes it against the waves and gusts of wind! The term "anchoring" will not satisfy our rooting in TJQ. Far be it from me to do a cuttlefish inking and a smokescreen for our public! By the way, another term comes sometimes to mind trying to explain our TJQ rooting: 'the wedge', 'to settle oneself'. Unfortunately this term is far too static and does not take into account the dynamic aspect of the forces involved. So, dry dock!

Another term heard: to settle down. It is true that if someone is said to be steady will not be easily troubled. It is a thinking person... By contrast, an object or a body which is set down has no more strength than of its own weight. Could it be that it is rooted? If so, what

conditions would be required for it to be so? An object filled with liquid, for exemple a raw egg? You may know the Zen meditation which consists of placing a raw egg on a smooth, horizontal surface with the tip down and stabilizing it until the egg stands still and balances itself. It seems impossible at first, but with some calm and practice, we manage to "feel" the gelatinous mass in the egg and stabilize it to achieve balance. This gives us the idea of rooting in TJQ. What is revealed by this example of the egg? Every body, every object possesses a centre of gravity. This center of gravity can vary considerably depending on the posture, positioning and distribution of fluids in the body. We are far from the concept of using force to plant ourselves in the ground! Putting force would only cause the opposite effect, to bounce and therefore to become floating.

How to achieve this "passive" rooting?

The lower the centre of gravity, the better the intrinsic stability. But if we try to force it, the rebound emerges... That's not necessary.

Therefore, to lower the centre of gravity, two elements:

- 1) breathing through the Dān tián (Cinnabar Fields) 丹田 and
- 2) relax, release the tensions unnecessary to maintain the posture, this relaxation will "weigh down" the body, which will not be floating but rooted.

The Dāntián 丹田 breathing is the corollary of relaxation without loss of tone. The breath will only be able to flow freely throughout the body if there is relaxa-

tion and elimination of tensions that prevent the flow of breath, and then there will be a great freedom and mobility of limbs and of the entire body. As it is the breath that carries the movement, there is no loss of tone, on the contrary: the energy is available. The TJQ Classics say: "breathe through the heels". This means that the breath makes the great circulation and fills up the body down to the feet. Through training in Nèigōng 內工 (meditation, internal work), the breath amplifies and will go further than the fingertips or the soles of the feet. Waves of breath penetrate the ground naturally: the feet plant invisible and mobile roots... Be careful, this should not be done by force! By practicing Nèigōng 內工 we do not force the breath. Progress is slow and intangible. With perseverance, results will come. This technique is completely natural. The practice is linked to the mind and spirit. The mind guides the breath. Even so, this is not imaginary. It is an effective breathing work. The mind must not be fixed or tense. We should practice regularly every day. However, too much willpower, too much voluntarism creates tension. Too much relaxation creates sleepiness. It is in this intermediate state, in alpha waves, that we must navigate.

Perseverance. With time, the parasitic thoughts pass as clouds in the sky and fade, the focus is improved with the intensity and lengthening of the slowing breath. The tensions go away and at times, the whole is ONE apart from space-time. These moments become more frequent and last longer. This is a clear sign of progress, a reward of the efforts and the time given to good use!

How to apply it in Tuīshǒu 推手 and in the practice of the form?

- 1) Maintain a deep breath in the Dāntián 丹田.
- 2) Relax all the muscles which are not necessary for the movement.

First, the posture has to be correct and erected, all the body parts must be aligned to avoid a break in the continuity of the breath circulation and in the transmission of the forces from the feet to the tip of the hands and the top of the head. Every break implies a stiffness and a lack of strength. The force leans on the base. If the pelvis is rightly placed, it is connected with the legs and the soles of the feet. Then the pelvis will be able to distribute the forces and movements to the upper body as well as in the hands, developing from the legs. The balance will be solid while giving a great mobility to the entire body.

To achieve this relaxation and keep the breath in the Dāntián 丹田, we also have to keep a serene and calm mind. In the face of adversity, our answers will often be inadequate or late or overly anticipated. No stress, keep calm. Take note. Invest in loss... learn from your mistakes. Analyze. See the full and empty...

Empty one and fill the other (just like in the pub). That is also the way to remain posed. In all the senses of this term.

Mistakes to avoid: lose patience. Keep up a regular practice. Do not force. Movements must be natural and enjoyable. The pleasure that comes with practicing reinforces your motivation. Do not be careless: if you notice mistakes or if you do not understand a movement or discomfort that you may feel, keep searching, keep questioning. Strive hard. If you still feel floating, keep going, searching, questioning...

Consequences:

With a good rooting, the breath circulate in the entire body. The energy is inexhaustible because we are connected and nourished by the energies of the universe. The mind is lively and available at the top of the head. The view is clear with a global vision of the situation at any one time. The center of gravity of the other is visible, our own centre is deep and mysterious. Our movements are agile and swift without apparent efforts, carried by the breath.



On the introversion of the pelvis and the counter-nutation of the sacrum

Jean-Christophe Clavier

Who has not heard of the introversion of the pelvis? "Tuck in the hips", "drop the tailbone"... in almost all the movements the teacher insists on this tucking in of the waist, this famous introversion of the pelvis.

But in the end, what does it entail?

Without going into the details, the pelvis can be seen as a single block attached to the back and the legs, between the spine (via the sacrum) and the femur (through the hip joint). So the introversion consists in the tilting of this entire block.

But this view is too simplistic. It might work at the beginning, but to stop there can quickly lead to a limiting of the finer movements, in particular when dealing with the knees. Keeping the knee in line with the axis created by the hip, the ankle and the tip of the foot is one of the most common difficulties for beginners.

It is therefore important to look more closely at the pelvis and how it is articulated in order to use it with more finesse in our movements.

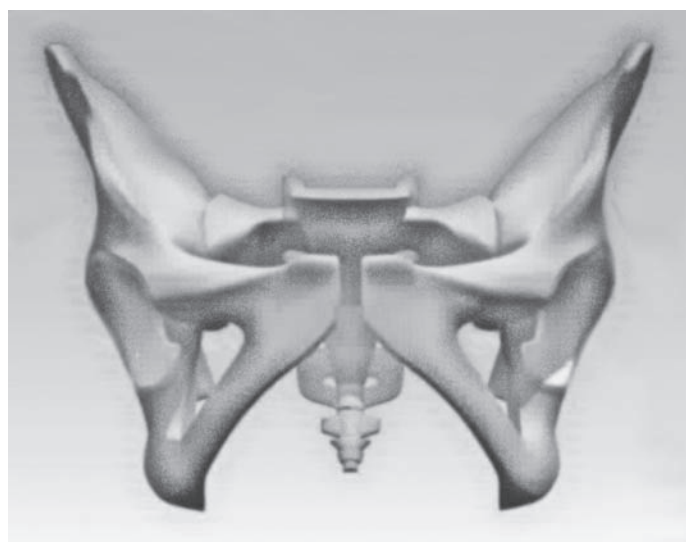
Without getting too far in the details, a pelvis consists of two segments (the iliacs) joined by the pubic bone in the front and the sacrum where they meet the spine.

These two bones have some mobility, and it is easy to feel it:

Standing, feet shoulder-width apart, the feet slightly turned inwards, place the thumbs on the iliac crests and the index fingers of each hand pointed towards each other (without touching, they need to be able to slide past each other).

Bringing the knees together while sticking the bottom out brings the fingers together, showing the relative motion of the iliac crests. These crests themselves do not move much, but the soft tissue around them amplifies the feeling of movement which allows us to better feel it.

Let us now introduce the concept of nutation and counter-nutation of the sacrum.





Nutation is an oscillation up and back of the coccyx. If a tail was attached to the coccyx, like that of a German shepherd¹, this movement would be the equivalent of lifting it. This leads to a forward and downward movement of the sacrum as well as the iliac crests being brought together.

Counter-nutation is the reverse (the equivalent of bringing our imaginary tail between the legs, forward). It is an oscillation down and forward of the coccyx with a spreading apart of the iliac crests.

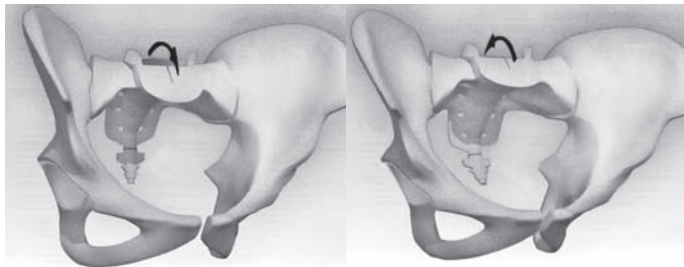
By alternating nutation and counter-nutation, with the attention brought on the coccyx, the waist relaxed,

apart in sync with the iliac crests. If we now focus on the femurs, we can sense a slight internal rotation during the nutation, and an external rotation during the counter-nutation.

These rotations can be amplified by working at the level of the hip joints.

As we saw, beyond just a simple tilt of the hips, retroversion creates a counter-nutation of the sacrum and an opening of the iliac crests as well as an external rotation of the femur. Inversely, an introversion creates a nutation of the sacrum, a closing of the iliac crests and an internal rotation of the femurs.

All these movements are very slight and a deep relaxation and body awareness is necessary to be conscious of them. Nevertheless, they are very important in order to allow the overall structure to be correctly positioned and to properly transfer the forces to which we are subjected to, whether it be gravity or the perturbations brought about by a partner in Tuishou.



thumbs on the iliac crests and the index pointing at each other as in the previous exercise, it is possible to show how the bones of the pelvis move. The nutation brings the iliac crest (slightly) closer while counter-nutation spreads them apart. This is due to the subtle play of angles at the level of the joints between the sacrum and the bones of the coccyx.

By continuing these movements while focussing on the knees, we can feel that they move back and forth while simultaneously coming closer or further



¹. Any dog, cat, fox or wolf would do here.



Without the opening of the iliac crests and the external rotation of the femurs during the retroversion, the knees have a tendency to come together. On the left, the retroversion is paired with an opening of the iliac crests and a rotation of the femurs. On the right, the pelvis tilts as a block. The picture is taken along the axis formed by the hips, ankle and toes. The picture on the right clearly shows an incorrect alignment of the knee.

The amplitude of the movements of the pelvis might seem slight, even negligible. But that is not the case. The pelvis is very close to our center and its slightest movement is vastly amplified as the motion reaches the extremities.

All these small movements have large effects on the rest of the body, and therefore it is a good practice to pay attention to them in order to understand the importance of generating movement from the pelvis. It is therefore beneficial to become aware of these micro-movements and to focus one's attention on them during practice.

During grounding exercises, the opening of the hips helps in the correct positioning of the knees and the feeling of the arcs of forces along the legs in particular. The correct placement of the sacrum straightens

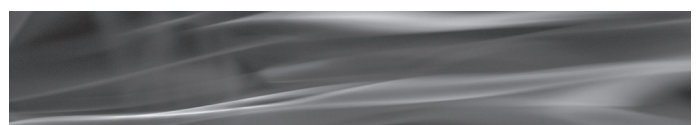
the spine (removes the curves) and allows the feeling of a suspended head to be discovered.

This is also found in the mediation posture. The Tai Ji Classics recommend to "tuck in the hips to let the energy rise in order to have a the head suspended".

In the context of the form, bringing one's attention to these movements of the hips allows for the upper and lower body to be unified by engaging the entire structure of the body in each gesture. The weight transfers are more fluid and the knees remain well positioned.

And in the case of Tuishou, a waist that is relaxed and mobile will lead to a release and a greater mobility of the upper body as well as a better structure for the lower body.

To finish this approach, a study of the muscular chains engaged in the movements would be very interesting in order to refine the sensations around the pelvis. In particular, the layers of perineal muscles allow for a more precise manipulation of the bones in the pelvis.



FEEDBACK ON THE WORKSHOP DEVOTED TO THE PELVIS DURING THE RENCONTRES OF THE AMICALE IN STRASBOURG

Following the Rencontres which took place in Strasbourg, I was asked to put my approach for this workshop on the pelvis into writing. In the brief time-slot of one hour and fifteen minutes which had been allotted to it, it was difficult to cover all that is necessary for the correct positioning of the pelvis, the subject being so broad and complex. We barely scratched the surface.

First of all, let's recall the stages we went through in order to find the correct positioning and operation of the pelvis.

To correctly position the pelvis one must:

1. Relax the feet, loosen the knees, free the coxofemoral joints (the Kua).
2. Mobilise the pelvis through varied and continuous exercises.
3. Free the shoulder girdle (the shoulder line), both in movement, stretching and releasing.
4. Make oneself realise the importance of the gaze in the positioning of the body: standing, directing the eyes in different directions, to feel that all the body, drawn on by the action of the fascia, follows the direction given by the gaze.
5. Understand the positioning of the ischia between the two feet.
6. Tighten the buttocks to feel the buttock muscles, their spiral action which acts on the pelvis by opening the Kua.
7. Feel that squeezing the buttocks brings the pelvis forward to, in a second step, gently release the buttock muscles without releasing the pelvis and maintain the relaxation in the muscular activity, the Kua remain open without effort.
8. Do not force the pelvis forwards in its retroversion, but relax the knees well and release the Kua to understand the positioning of the sacrum which naturally should be vertical.
9. Keep the body vertical, erect and maintain the axis earth-heavens.

Before continuing, I want to clarify that it is not a question of concentrating exclusively on the pelvis. It is necessary to work with the whole body to achieve the correct positioning of the pelvis since all is interconnected, just as the correct positioning of the body depends of that of the pelvis.

The thoughts which follow are linked to my current research around a dynamic relaxation of the body, the body structurally unified in the movement itself.



*kuà

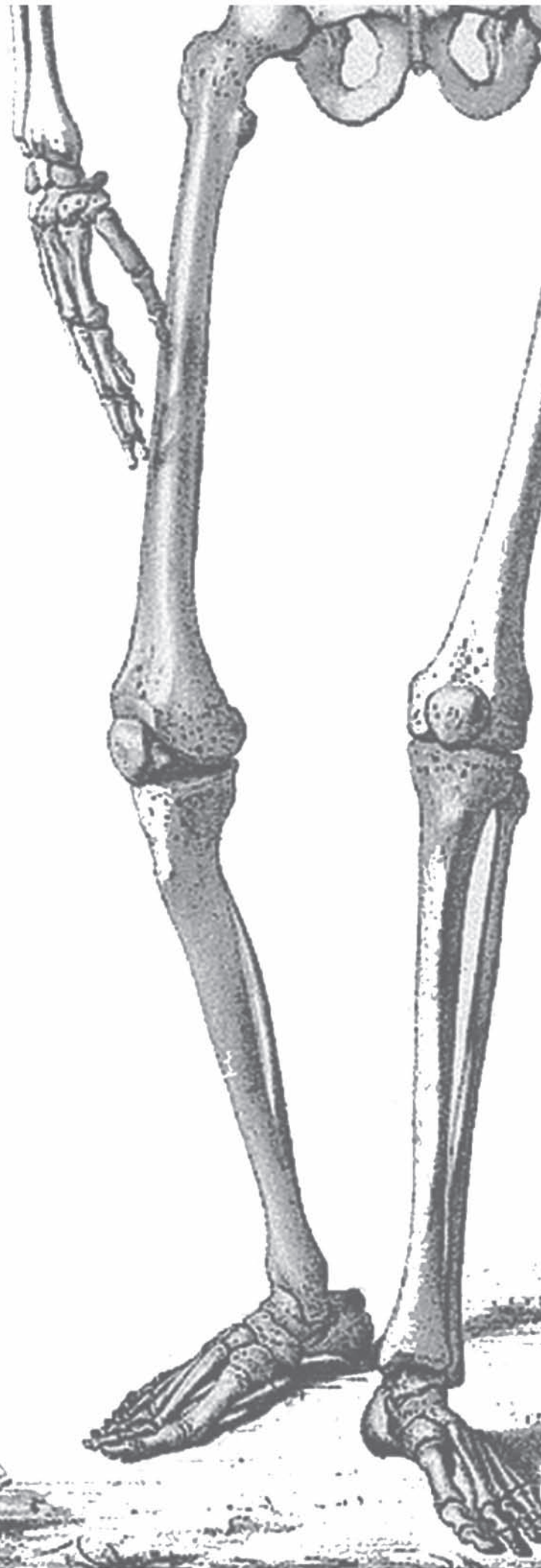
BELOW THE PELVIS

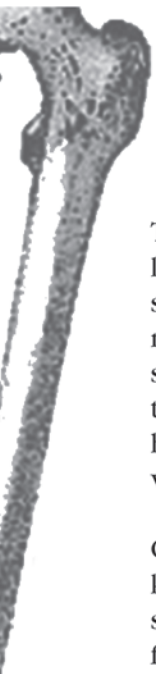
The feet

We have two important energy points under the feet:

1. The point Yong Quan (Bubbling Well, 1st point on the kidney meridian) under the forefoot.
2. At the centre of the heel.

light and calm. When standing still, the positioning is easier to feel and allows the link ground-head to be adjusted. To find it, start by rocking gently and continuously between the two points, then identify the place where there is the least pressure. It is located at the instep which serves also as the point of reference for aligning the body earth-heavens. It is helpful to feel this zone such that the whole body can place itself correctly, like a coat on a hanger the right grip of which allows it not to fall whilst resting on it with all its weight.





To follow on with, several possibilities are available to us to work on the feet: to relax them, strengthen them, to get them to rotate in different directions, to use the internal and external sides, to direct the feet by means of the toes or the heel, discover the ball of the foot and the heel; by thought, whilst moving, link the hands with the feet, link the feet to the shoulders.

One can also try to understand, without any great knowledge of the details of muscles, the internal spiral movement of the body starting from the feet: the feet flat, as if glued to the floor, as if one were on glides, move them from the internal edge to the external edge, from the front to the rear and the reverse, and this starting from the heel; to feel the repercussions of these movements on the pelvis and the whole structure.

If there were only one thing to remember from this article, it would be that the pelvis, with the ischia, must absolutely remain between the two feet. It is important that it does not go too far to the rear, otherwise it will tip outwards and will take next to nothing to be knocked over.



The knees

Rather than keeping the legs stiff, it is preferable to unlock the knees. To feel the appropriate positioning of the knees, bring them to the rear then release them a little. This action alone already takes part in the loosening of the pelvis and the bringing of the sacrum to the vertical without over doing it.

The golden rule regarding the pelvis: never force it but let it live. So that it remains flexible and mobile. Coming back to the knees, so that the weight of the body does not remain blocked at their level, try to feel and be aware, as much physically as mentally, of the passage of the body's weight towards the ground. The body must rest on the ground and not on the knees due to excessive tension, rigidity of the joints.

The legs

All the gentle stretches for the legs and their four sides are good for learning to relax them, and not to stiffen them which would have repercussions on the mobility and positioning of the pelvis.

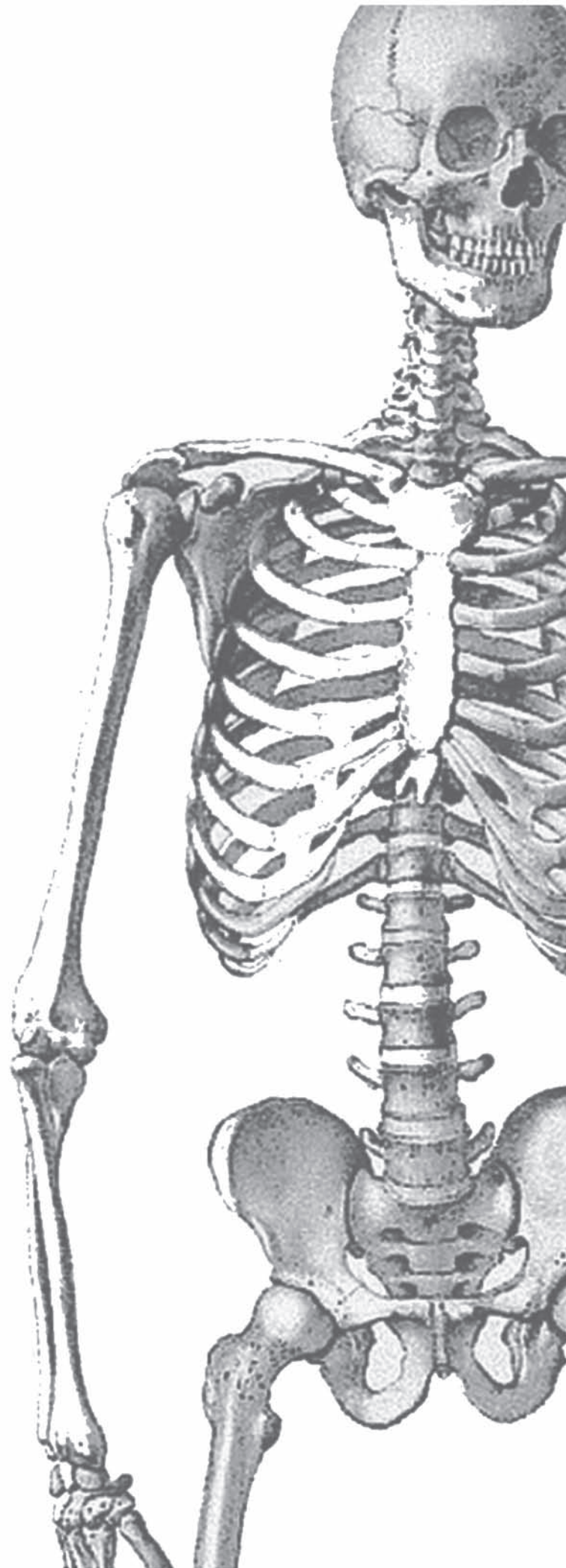
THE PELVIS

The Kua, in the passage of the inguinal fold (coxofemoral joint)

Being able to visualise the pelvis is important so as to become aware of this region within us, to develop an internal perception of it. I am thinking especially of the motion of the two bones, the iliac and the femur. The best would be to be able to manipulate those of a skeleton so as to become aware of their internal mechanical function, both by means of a physical view as well as a tactile sensation of these bones. Deciphering their function leads to a better understanding of the articular motion of the Kua, but equally of the rest of the legs right down to the feet. Of course, the Kua are important to get to know, but the movement which occurs within, of which the exercise on the spiral we saw above gives us a glimpse, requires appropriate work to be understood. One will only fully feel what happens in the pelvis once it is well loosened, by the suppleness which can be acquired by the stretches or the mobility exercises which make it move in different directions, and if the rest of the body has been well trained.

The perineum

The perineum is a region to discover or to rediscover. It is a set of muscles which covers the lower wall of the pelvis (lesser pelvis) between the pubic symphysis and the coccyx, a sort of hammock which supports the whole region of the lesser pelvis and thus the genital organs and the anus. The tendinous centre of the perineum with a fibrous nucleus is a very solid area between the genital organs and the anus. One can make oneself aware of it quite simply by contracting and relaxing this specific area several times. This allows an improvement of the sensitivity of the area which is often forgotten for many reasons which I will not elaborate. When the perineum is held too tight, tense, it can bring about an internal tension along the whole line going up from the lesser pelvis right to the shoulder girdle.



ABOVE THE PELVIS

The diaphragm

Another important subject: the diaphragm. As it is a muscle, we can strengthen it, make it supple, mobile, vigorous, just as the other parts of the body we have dealt with so far. From a structural point of view, the diaphragm is interesting. Like the pelvis, it is a centre, an intersection, but rather of the upper part of the body.

This muscle, as you probably know, is indispensable for breathing. If it lacks in range, the rib cage can freeze and slow down practically all movements of the body, affecting even the mobility of the lumbar and cervical spine. The best way to maintain and make the diaphragm work is to practise breathing exercises.

The vertebral column

Of all the panoply of joints, one of the areas which I did not cover in detail, and which nevertheless contributes to the structuring of the body and the positioning of the pelvis, is the vertebral column.

Of great importance, it makes the connection between the feet, the pelvis and the head.

It is thus inevitably linked to the whole body; there is not one movement which does not pass through it.

It is also permanently in contact with the interior as much as with the exterior; each organ or muscle has an effect on it. One can integrate it more into our thinking when we do the form whilst visualising its two extremities, the sacrum and the occipital bone, as well as the axis linking these two points, just as it links the two planes of the earth and the heavens. It decides the verticality of the body, its rooting and its elevation.

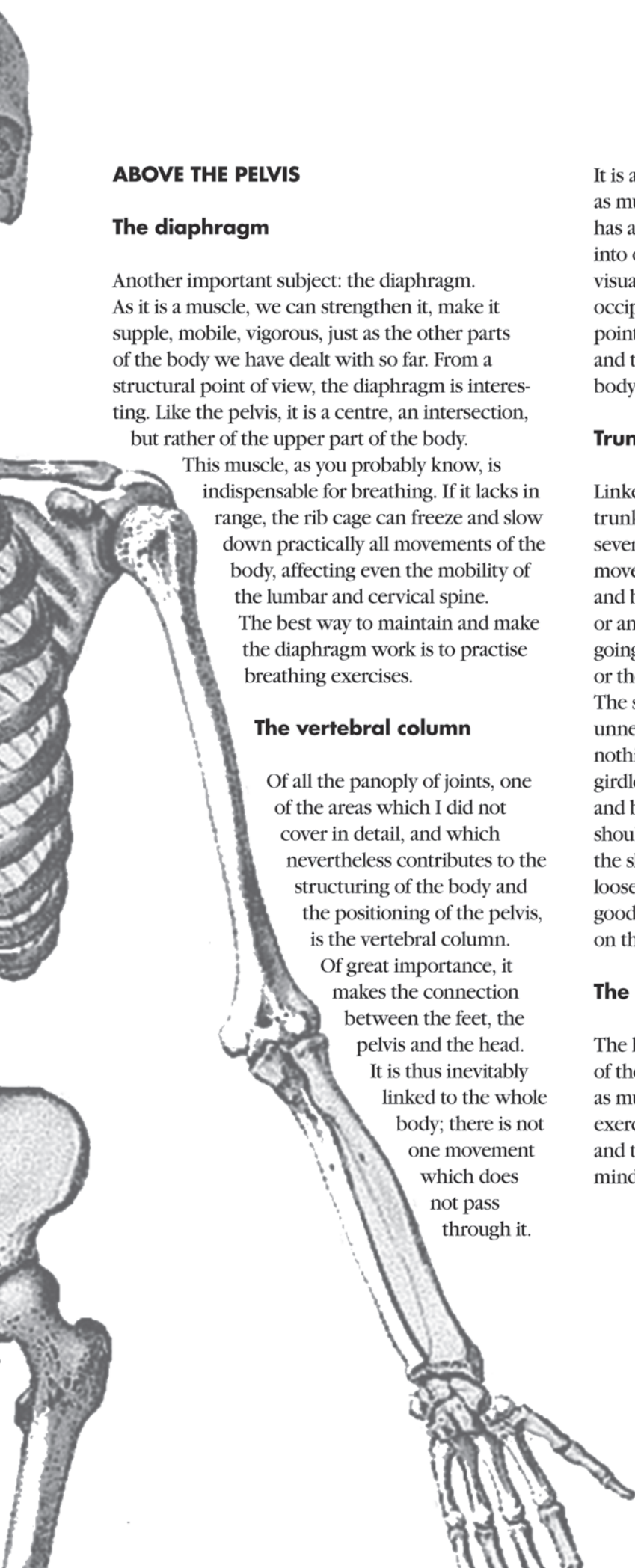
Trunk and shoulder girdle

Linked to the vertebral column, and like it, the trunk needs to be loosened, not in one but in several directions. One can start with simple movements, making the trunk move forwards and backwards, then following a figure of eight or an accordion (moving to the right or the left, going upwards or downwards, towards the front or the back).

The shoulder line must also be freed from all unnecessary muscular constraints which are nothing but a restriction. So that the shoulder girdle gains in mobility, roll the shoulders forwards and backwards, observe how to relax and free one shoulder whilst keeping the other tense, spread out the shoulder blades which should be completely loosened, supple and above all open to ensure a good positioning of the torso and the upper body on the pelvis.

The head

The head also has its role to play in the positioning of the body. As for the rest, it is good to loosen as much as possible using various stretching exercises. The head is to be connected to the arms and the feet. The point of connection to keep in mind is the occipital bone.



THE STRUCTURE : UNITY IN MOVEMENT

All this brings us back to principles mentioned in another recently published article. In fact, I think we should strive to make the body move as a whole. This integrity is transmitted through the connection of the feet, the pelvis and the shoulders. This whole plays and positions itself at the same time. The interplay of joints and the correct positioning occur in motion and in unification. Since the unification of the body requires a movement which starts at its extremities, the behaviour of the pelvis also depends on it. Thus, it is just as important to direct the hands and the feet correctly, as it is any other part of the body.

And so the judicious positioning of the pelvis depends on the state of the rest of the body. Taking only the most important parts; the feet, knees, pelvis, centre of the body, shoulder girdle and head are to be linked, their joints loosened and their muscles strengthened. The whole body is linked. Its parts are interconnected. Whatever affects one part has repercussions on the others, which means that achieving bodily unity within a gesture also necessarily requires good control and positioning of the pelvis. Putting into practise the concepts of going back and forth and 'listening' allows a progressively finer adjustment of the body with the pelvis. You will find more details regarding these concepts in the article which appeared in the Bulletin no.96.

From back and front, the photos show that the ischia are always between the two feet (central stick) and that the iliac spines are directly above the second toe (lateral stick).

The two sticks are within the support polygon.

For me the weight distribution is 51/49 and so there is no double weightedness. Then follows adaptations for the terrain!

My position is not quite straight because I am having to hold the sticks!

The appropriate positioning of the pelvis requires freedom in all the joints, looseness in all the muscles, the relaxation of the whole body in a complete and supple mobility, whether in a passive or active mode. By dynamic relaxation in a passive mode, I mean here a relaxation during movement in two modalities, passive-active and active-active. Passive-active implies that the release is static, that is immobile, like when holding a TJQ position for example, but when receiving an action of a partner who manipulates us, pushes us. The interest is to learn to relax ourselves in a movement which is transmitted to us, even on the support which the partner gives us who is himself mobile. In active-active mode, the principle is similar: the one working receives the pushes of the partner, but instead of holding a static position, he continues in his current movement in spite of the pushes, whether that movement be muscular such as press-ups or a sequence from the form.



In these exercises of relaxation and mobility in passive-active or active-active, one does not oppose the one pushing with resistance or tension, but one does nonetheless not facilitate his movement. Relaxation is to be found in this happy medium. All configurations are worth trying: standing up, lying on the front or the back, whilst building core strength, during different displacements, etc.

Relaxation in general helps to develop good sensitivity, to feel the body better, but dynamic relaxation also allows one to understand its volume, in three dimensions. To reach this sensation of volume floor-work alone or with a partner represents an important stage. Passing through all the dimensions, from moving on the floor to working standing up, is necessary to correctly position the structure and consequently for a good positioning of the pelvis so as to reintegrate it in a unified movement.



Finally strengthening the structure is also necessary, I consider this a prerequisite to attain this corporal unity in movement and it can be obtained by strengthening three large groups of muscles, the shoulder girdle, the abdominals and the quadriceps, this strengthening can be achieved in various positions. This type of exercise gives the body tone, stability and contributes to unifying it structurally.

All the parts of the body are therefore to be awoken, to be brought together, so as to gradually improve the anarchic gestures of the beginnings of our apprenticeship, up to the solid experience of the form and to refine over time a gestural which we will make our own, appearing serene and pure due to the mastery we have of it.

Here are a few ideas I suggested to put in place during the workshop, and the extension of some, so as to train our body and judiciously position our pelvis. Of course, this remains brief in the context of the potential extent of the subject. One notices this by skimming over the points mentioned and one understands more easily that all this does not happen overnight. There is a long road ahead, this is just a beginning, wishing you many discoveries and pleasure in your practice.

GOOD TRAINING.



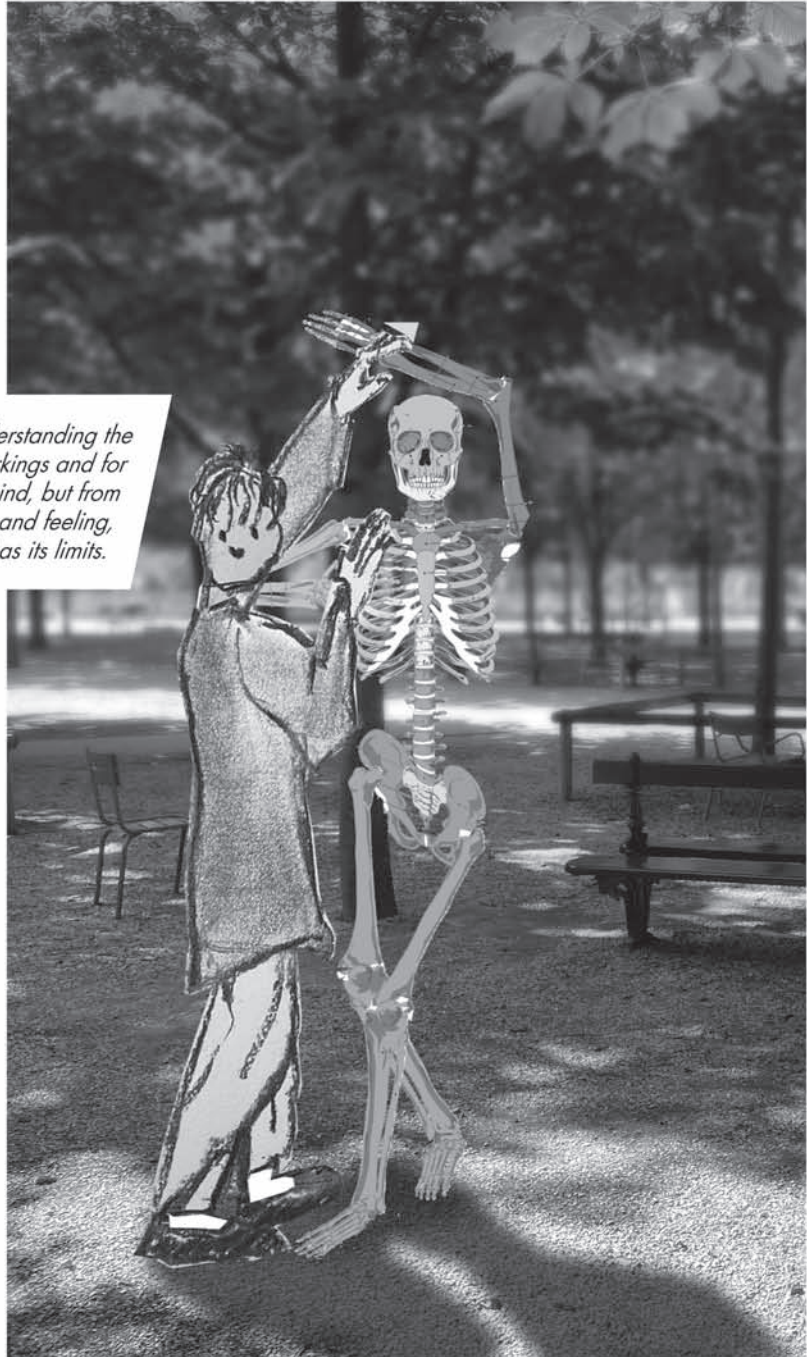
Marc Appelmans
Lucas Limasset

Translate from french by
Erica Martin-Williams

*To learn is to row against the current.
As soon as one stops, one goes backwards.*
Hennig Beck, Brain Errors.

*Rowing with the current
makes the crocodiles laugh.*
African wisdom.

It may be helpful for understanding the internal mechanical workings and for keeping the occipital bone in mind, but from the point of view of suppleness and feeling, one has to admit that it has its limits.



jean-claude issemann

On the aging of the Amicale

Christopher Nelson

In an article published in the latest Bulletin de L'Amicale, Claudy brought up the issue of the aging of the Amicale membership and the difficulty in recruiting young people into YMT. It was only a small part of the article, but it has stayed stuck in my memory.

We must first address a parallel question: why did one generation find YMT interesting but the new generation does not. For one generation YMT was the answer to a need – social, personal, physical or medical. For the new generation, YMT does not seem to be an adequate answer to the present conditions. They are wrong, but the burden falls on our shoulders, not theirs. They have no way of knowing what YMT offers.

The world today is far more chaotic than it was 20 or 30 years ago. It is closer to the 1960s or 70s, during another moment of social instability. Tai Chi was part of a search for new ways of living and thinking, a solution to the troubles of the times.

YMT is still that solution, but we must face the fact that the generation that is in charge of promoting this solution is not fully aware of the problems. This is no one's fault, it is simply impossible to live in someone else's shoes. It is therefore with full awareness of this myopia that I propose what follows. It is not a solution, but rather an invitation to think about the problem of the aging of the YMT membership in a slightly different way. With a bit of luck, this change could make YMT more acces-

sible and interesting to a new generation of practitioners.

I am drawing from two sources: my own experience in the YMT and martial arts community, including the problems I have experienced; and the book "The Taoist Body" by Kristofer Schipper which describes the lived Taoism of the Chinese population (and not the philosophical Taoism).

I propose that four categories in YMT become the basis for discussions and workshops during the Rencontres, to stimulate an engagement with the new generation. In each case, the goal is not to have an answer, but rather to have interesting questions and to let the members of the Amicale (and of the world YMT community) engage in the work of furnishing answers.

The four categories are the Form (13 Postures and the Duans), medical benefits, Push Hands and fighting, and the YMT community.

The Form:

The study of the form is fundamental and therefore this is the category which requires the least change. There is no question that the form must be studied and memorized with the least amount of deviations. But it is possible to approach the form not as a choreography that must be learnt by heart, but rather as a reference text that can be engaged with. The evolution in complexity from the first to

the third Duan shows us the process; we start with a limited number of techniques, the 13 Postures.

The 13 Postures are the eight basic moves (Peng, Lu, An, Ji...) and five examples of combinations of these eight moves: Catching The Sparrow's Tail, Brush Knee...

The first Duan shows us immediately variations on what we saw in the 13 Postures: Drag Down but with the intent towards the upper arm, Brush Knee but done at elbow height and from the diagonal...

In each case, it is a response to two questions: what combination of the eight basic moves is effective, and how to express this combination when the vectors of force change directions. The same combination can have physical expressions which are very different yet maintain the same energetic qualities. From this point of view, each named move in the Form (Brush Knee, etc.) is the answer to the first question, and each variation is the answer to the second. For example, "Play the Pipa", which we find in the 13 Postures, is also found immediately after the Brush Knee of the first Duan, but as a completely different physical expression. The difference is that the first version is used against a punch at head height, and the second against a punch towards the belly.

The Form is like a map which traces the evolution of the movements, from the simple to the complicated. It is therefore possible to make connections between moves within the Form, and to study them as a group rather than in isolation.

We can now ask the new students of YMT to do more than memorize the form, but rather to study it like a text, or the I Ching.

Medical Benefits:

The health benefits of Taijiquan are well known, and several medical studies have proven them. There are also the benefits derived according to Chinese traditional medicine, as well as the connections between Taijiquan and Qigong.

It seems to me that the topic of health can be a link between the members of the Amicale who are doctors, acupuncturists, chiropractors or simply interested in the subject. This link could be reinforced by the creation of an official discussion group on this topic. This group could then present their results of their discussions during the Rencontres, or in the pages of the Bulletin.

The goal here is to give concrete answers to the question: why practice Taijiquan, and more specifically YMT. In addition, this would give students who are interested in the topic and immediate point of contact.

Again, the goal is not to create a final and definite text, but rather to engage the community in an exploration of the topic. In addition, this would give the teachers an additional resource when addressing the questions of their students.

Push Hands and fighting:

Taijiquan has a mixed reputation. Historically, it was a renowned combat art. Today, it is seen mostly as a gentle gymnastic without any real martial value. The history of YMT explains this transformation, but in general we remain far from a real combat style.

I do not think that classes of YMT should become combat seminars, but rather that the possibility of real self-defense become a part of the training in YMT, based on the interest of each teacher. To reach this goal, we must first address a mistake in the idea of YMT as a martial art, a mistake which also points to a solution.

Most of our assumptions about wrestling come from Judo, or Greco-Roman wrestling, or even Jujitsu. The problem is that all these styles of wrestling go to the ground. Chinese wrestling rarely does so. Shuai Jiao, the most common Chinese wrestling art, is upright, fast, more or less linear and includes strikes. There are many styles, each with some variations, but the oldest ones had knee and elbow strikes.

This style of fighting is much more in line with Push Hands and the martial applications of YMT. There are many movements in YMT that are also in Shuai Jiao. For example, Brush Knee is an attack of the knee followed by a strong push. It's linear, with no intention to follow the partner to the ground.

If we forget our presupposition of what a wrestling move looks like (hip throw, large movements, ground work,...) and instead follow the example of Shuai Jiao, we can suddenly find a huge list of wrestling techniques in the YMT form.

What I am proposing is to add a layer to Push Hands. It should be possible to do a form of free-style Push Hands, with moving feet, where we open up the possibility of leg sweeps, brush knees, etc. Movements coming from the YMT form, but that include an element of wrestling. This could give the possibility to those who are interested to engage in the more martial aspect of YMT without losing the Push Hands roots, or moving straight into sparring. This is a half-step towards sparring, which by the way is found in the Chen style of Push Hands.

The YMT community would be engaged in this research into Shuai Jiao to find common points, the techniques that could illuminate some applications in YMT, and create a space for the young (and not so young) who are interested in YMT because

it remains, unlike the other Tai Chi cousins, a real martial art.

The YMT Community:

The College and the Amicale have done an incredible job of creating a community of practitioners and teachers of YMT. It is, I think, the ideal to follow. But there are other communities who can be integrated under the umbrella of YMT, without necessarily belonging to the Amicale.

Here I come back to the root of the Taoist martial art that will become YMT. It is not a military school or some genius of combat, but the humble medieval Chinese village. We can see it in the history of Tai Chi; the similar Chen style is named after the village (and family) from which it came. Each village developed its martial art style in order to defend itself from raiders. Martial arts was an aspect of the rituals, the obligations and the celebrations that cemented the community around Taoism. The entire village was part of the effort, part-religious and part-social, of building the temple, of transmitting the knowledge of rituals and of the fighting techniques. And each village was itself part of a larger network of social and religious obligations that unified a region.

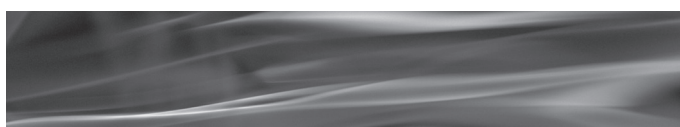
We cannot recreate the life of a Taoist villager, but the communal instinct which is at the center of this life can be followed. I for one know that it was the little moments before and after the classes I taught, moments when we exchanged cups of tea while chatting, that created the feeling of community, of family. In the same way, YMT has to find its place within the communities where it is practiced. What is the function of the groups practicing YMT in the villages and towns they are part of? Are there other groups that have a connection with the philosophy, the meditation the martial art which is at the center of YMT? Some of these connections might be weak, but they can have an important resonance.

A rather silly example (though very serious) is the connection between YMT and the Star Wars movies. It might sound strange, but there is an immense number of young people (and less young) who declare themselves of the "Jedi" religion. Do they know that all of that is based on Taoism, and that YMT is a way of learning a real sword fighting form? Is there a Star Wars fan club in your region?

Another example would be to find partners I other martial arts schools. This would force a frank look at YMT, but I am sure that would be positive in the end. But other examples can be less ambitious. Simply hosting a dinner between practitioners once a month (or once a week) where friends and families are invited would make the group more permeable to the community.

Once again, I offer no solutions, but rather a call to the practitioners of YMT to look around to find the way in which they can become members of a larger community. YMT should be a facet of a larger network. This will require some humility and a sense of humor: to open oneself to others is also to open oneself to their judgement. This will also require an opening of YMT itself, or at least a little less clinging to the appeal of Chinese exoticism.

If the YMT is aging, it is because it is not connected to the community it should be part of. The only way to change that is to turn towards that community and find out place again.



Architecture of Human Living Fascia

Claudy Jeanmougin

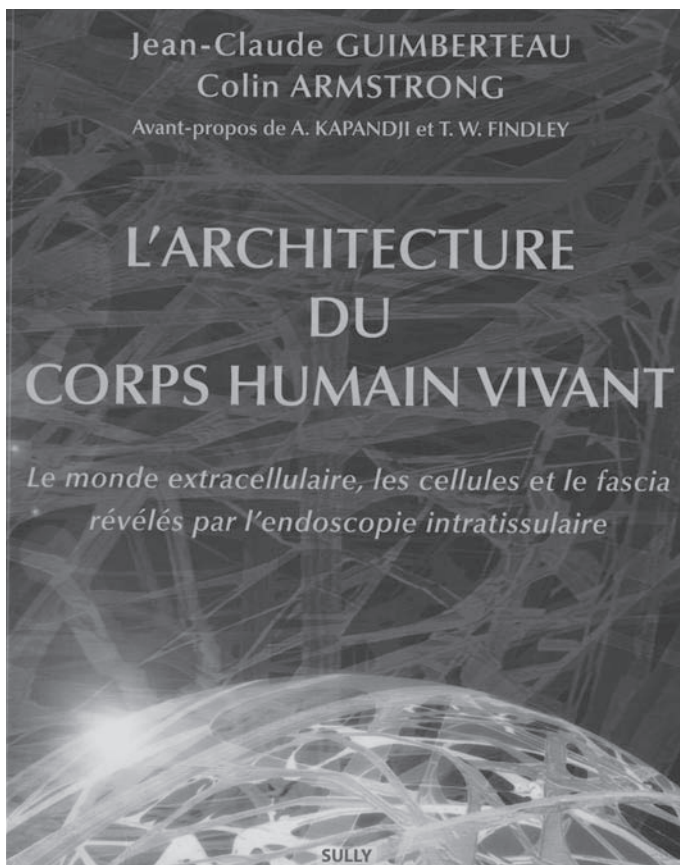
Architecture of Human Living Fascia - Cells and extracellular matrix revealed through endoscopy
Jean-Claude Guimberteau, Colin Armstrong
Handspring Publishing, 2015

The book is accompanied by a CD featuring phases of live endoscopic exploration (really stunning!)

I am always glad to share the pleasure I found in the books I discuss in the reading abstracts. But the present book is of special importance to me because the experience Jean-Claude Guimberteau exposes here demonstrates a fact I was convinced of without being able to prove it. For this reason, rather than a simple book review, today I will write a short article to draw attention to the fascinating world of fascia.

Our introductory anatomy classes discouraged several of my classmates. As for me, anatomy never put me off; it is a discipline everybody finds interesting when teachers share their own enthusiasm instead of conducting a dull class with such minute descriptions that students cannot see the body as a whole from the smallest unit to the full picture. Anatomy classes were more invigorating during my osteopathy studies, at least more than during my sports education courses, but I still found it unsatisfactory. I was convinced much more remained to be discovered in that field, yet I didn't know how to move forward. Jean-Claude Guimberteau did it by simply observing the living body rather than a cadaver in a dissection room.

A few months ago, following a television broadcast about the fascial organisation of the human body based on tensegrity, I got Carla Stecco's book, *Functional Atlas of the Human Fascial System*, Churchill Livingstone – Elsevier. For tensegrity, I will refer you to the article co-written by Lionel Descamps,

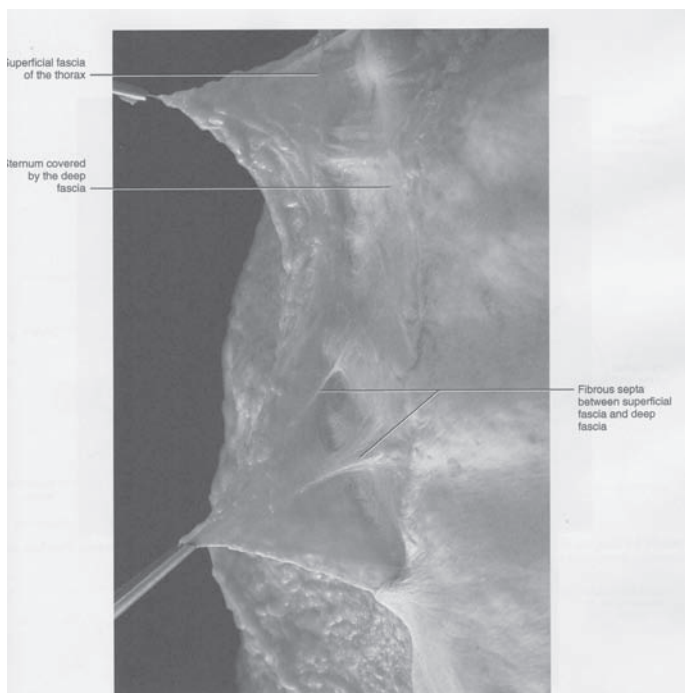


Alix Helme-Guizon and François Besson in *Les Feuilles du Collège* (Bulletin de l'Amicale N° 86, September 2017). In Stecco's book, you find splendid photos of fasciae highlighted by a rigorous dissection. Here is one of these photos¹ (photo No. 1) that clearly shows how the various layers are interrelated; there is no such thing as separated layers.

On this photo presenting the anterior part of the thorax in a dissected cadaver, we can distinguish small columns (fibrous septa between superficial fascia and deep fascia). They appear to be few in numbers suggesting that a large number of these columns have been either ripped off or severed in order to expose the different layers.

Photo No. 2 – taken from Jean-Claude Guimberteau's book² - has been juxtaposed so that you can see the difference between a cadaver dissection and the observation on a living body by intratissular endoscopy. The author's purpose is to show there is no discontinuity between the various layers, and that it should probably be regarded as tissular continuum with specialized zones rather than individual layers. Observe closely the difference between the two photos and you will see that there are many more columns here, and diversely intertwined. The author adds that these fibres are hardly visible to the naked eye, he used a magnification of 20.

Photo 1: Front part of a thorax (cadaver dissection)

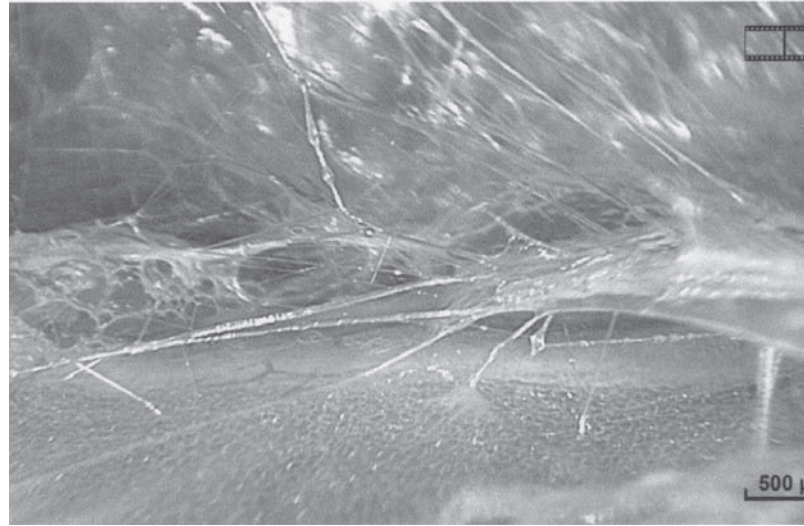


1. C. Stecco, p. 149, fig. 5.8.

2. J.-C. Guimberteau, p. 41, fig. 1.12.

You can see the small columns that connect the fibrous septa, deep and superficial.

Photo 2: Subcutaneous fibres stretch out when you pull the skin slightly (upwards on the photo). On the video, it's mind-blowing!



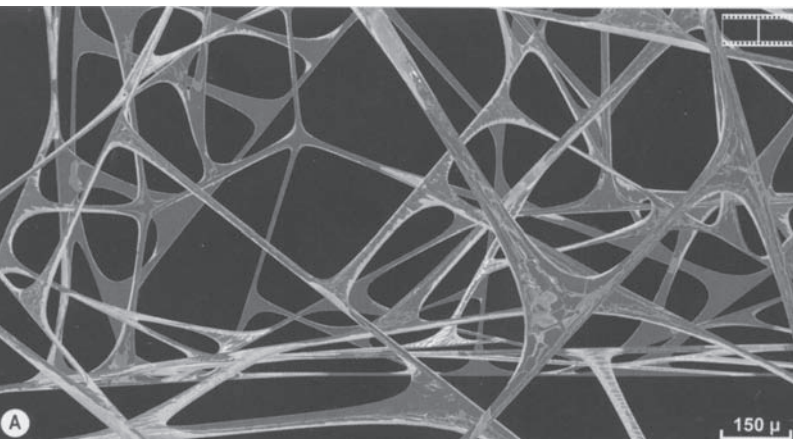
Based on his observations, the author developed the idea of "microvacuole". What does he say about it? "Once the skin is incised, if you give a light pull upwards with tiny hooks placed on both sides of the incision, the structural elements that were initially stacked one upon the other will progressively fan out (...). These elements are flat, though they create a volume and participate in the creation of a shape as they superpose upon one another. The assumption that the cells placed underneath the skin are laid out in regular order is false³ (...). A 10 to 60 magnification of living structures reveals a network, a kind of mesh based on the repetition of the same polyhedral unit; I called it microvacuole⁴."

The author states it clearly, the microvacuole bears no resemblance to a beehive cell structure for instance; that is why he refers to microvacuoles as constituting an open space, not a closed one. He adds that it is not the cell that generates the structure but the whole "microvacuolar" system.

3. Ibid., p. 41.

4. Ibid., p. 42.

Figure 1 is an animated diagram showing the elongation of fibres, the microvacuolar structure.



This is an open fibrillary system, the very matrix of our body matter.

During a discussion I had with Lionel and Alix (see above) I made it clear that, even if I fully supported the tensegrity system, I thought it could not apply as such to the human body as it is constructed not only on hard structures (like bones) and elastic ones (like fasciae) but also with the omnipresent fluid element, what JC Guimberteau demonstrates in his book and film. More specifically, I said that tensegrity was irrelevant for the human body if this liquid environment was left out. It seems I found an answer to this question in the author's research when he refers to "biotensegrity", a theory I very much approve of because it relates to the vital phenomenon and not just a mechanical approach. I confessed to Lionel and Alix that the work I carried out in the field of biomechanics had nothing to do with a living organism. They were just a few steps towards a better awareness of our body through its movements, a measure taken to prevent our practitioners from making irreparable mistakes. Even if mechanics and biomechanics lacked accuracy, I think we avoided serious injuries. And I am convinced that we should not cast aside this information available to all even if it does not correspond to the exact definition of the forces in question. Having said this, I do not share Lionel's belief that tensegrity is purely a non-living issue.

To finish this little article whose topic would deserve a closer examination I would like to introduce the notion of biotensegrity that I prefer to tensegrity when it comes to the human body. Lionel broached the subject but not in the same terms as Jean-Claude Guimberteau.

Firstly, let us not forget that tensegrity is a term that might have been coined in 1949 by the American

architect Richard Buckminster Fuller (1095-1983). Tensegrity combines the words tensile (elastic, stretchable) and integrity (whole, complete); it conveys the idea that a structure constructed upon this principle is a whole whose parts are linked and mobilized together when set in motion. The balance of the entire structure is achieved through the balance of both tension and compression forces. You may yourself enjoy making small-scale models like those below.



The type of organisation you find in fasciae hold the attention of osteopaths since the 80s. Danis Bois took interest in fasciae in that period, and developed a therapy called fasciatherapy that was circulated in France and abroad. Strangely enough, he never connected his research with the tensegrity theory and his name was absent from the TV programme I referred to earlier. I wished to pay him tribute because he helped osteopaths to understand the importance of fascia.

What is exactly biotensegrity? Let's simply quote Jean-Claude Guimberteau: "Biotensegrity -a word coined by Stephen Levin- is when you apply tensegrity principles to living matter. It introduces the element of tension and the idea of balance between various elements, and represents a major step forward in our understanding of the organisation of anatomic structures. Biotensegrity can be applied to biological organisms at all levels, from molecules to the spine."⁵

There's an interesting point in this definition: the fascia system is not only limited to maintaining the fascia-musculo-skeletal structure. For JC Guimberteau, the vacuolar system gets as far as the heart of the cell. Hence, this new definition of fascia he considers more accurate: "Fascia is a continuous and tensioned fibrillary network inside the body from the surface of the skin to the heart of the cell. This global network is mobile, adaptable, fractal and irregular; it constitutes the fundamental structural architecture of the human body."⁶

5. Ibid., p. 150.

6. Ibid., p. 193.

How is this notion of tensegrity going to help TJQ and tuishou practitioners? Lionel and his co-authors already gave a first answer I would like to refer you to. Yet, I only partly agree with one of his remarks: "I've noticed that to maintain my structure I put to work certain muscles normally dedicated to movement; this does not allow the positioning muscles to play their role to the full and the structure is not in tensegrity. Incidentally, it does not make movement muscles available for their own task."⁷

I do not fully share this view because it could be inferred that the structure of muscles associated to position are the only ones concerned by tensegrity while those dedicated to movement would not. Tensegrity concerns the fascia system and fasciae are everywhere without exception, unto the heart of the cell, even amidst the molecular structure.

That being said, I want to thank these authors for drawing the attention of Bulletin readers on this incredible architecture we constantly put to work since immobility does not exist among living species, sometimes to the point it is jeopardized (pregnancy, obesity, improper tuishou practice) and causes fibres rupture with irreversible microscopic injuries.

A better knowledge of biotensegrity should encourage us to pay a closer attention to our body substance, take advantage of the elasticity of the system to put into service each part of our body without exception, and at the deepest level. While I have been working on fascia for years, as a professional osteopath, and regardless of what we have heard from the founding fathers of osteopathy, I never realized we could go that far in the anatomical structure. When we practice tuishou, it is interesting to work deep and long on that feeling, perceive what is happening within ourselves and within our partner. Tuishou offers the possibility to create a real dialogue which enriches both partners. Then, of course, let's have fun... But when playing hurts, then it is not right, and the tuishou exercises I see on many sites is not very enticing for potential participants.

I remain convinced that tuishou may help each and every practitioner to "grow" provided they respect the fascia system.

7. Feuilletts du Collège – Bulletin de l'Amicale n° 86, septembre 2017, p. 22.



What does the internal represent for you?

Muriel Dubois

I have been modestly practicing Tai Chi Chuan for three and a half years in Rennes with the Taiji Quan Dao association with Christophe Lephay as my teacher.

A reflection on the "internal": that was the request of our teacher at the end of a session in video. Not easy but stimulating!

- "What is the internal for me?" Quite a program in this small question so simple and so kindly proposed.

In a first movement of my thought, I immediately visualized the inside of my body but without really any more meaningful content. Clearly, the internal is not reduced to the interior. Perhaps, at first, to say that is "internal" what proceeds from the inside, what happens inside.

We see at once that the notion of internal refers us immediately to the action, to the movement and also to a certain state of being in a given space.

Then the work of searching for meaning began, the question anchored like a barnacle on its rock, solid but mobile if need be, quietly made its way through the evening!

In fact, I said to myself that it was perhaps the question of limits. Can we delineate what proceeds from within versus what proceeds from without? What boundaries am I talking about here? The limits of my body or of my space? The limits of my species or of all species? The only visible limits? In fact, where does it start and where does it stop, the internal?

In short, I am faced with the problem of resolving whether the internal is simply topographical and if so, how I am going to set its boundaries? And if not, is there a definition or is it simply a subjective signifier, relative to each of us?

And finally, does this "internal" possess qualities, attributes that will allow us to identify it. Qualities and attributes which, by being expressed (by being displayed externally) will allow us to measure this object which, without the expression of these attributes remains elusive.

In fact, this little question was certainly not that naive! Thank you Christophe!

I don't have the time to go deeper into the question but I feel that it offers a beautiful matter to the reflection and to the search for meaning. Therefore I will simply and modestly deliver a bit in bulk what this notion suggests to me as tracks of understanding.

First of all, since I have been doing Tai-chi chuan with Christophe Lephay as my teacher, something has happened that I will call internal: I have mentally integrated the idea that I am a little bit of all my ancestors. They are now with me. As a result, I have assimilated a filiation that I did not suspect before. It is as if the practice, little by little, had brought to my consciousness a world, an elsewhere. This is simply an internal experience, unique and relative to my consciousness alone. Here, I speak finally of a subjective internal very relative and little shared. Limited by my own body and my awareness of an internal existence that is larger than the represen-

tation I had before Tai Chi Chuan. An internal that is a bit selfish but very pleasant since it started to reconcile me a bit with the world of others! Here, the internal is a constructed result, limited by my own consciousness. It is a place that I know and that I can go around in a way. An internal that can be located and simply expanded through the practice of Tai Chi Chuan. Here I set limits and am reassured.

However, I do feel that the internal is not simply the ability to assimilate and integrate the external and store it inside. There is this energy that carries my practice, so small and modest, but it is there. I would place it beyond my will to act, more as a deeper principle that keeps me going. I call it the energy of my will. It escapes me if I wish to master it, but it belongs to me and supports me in the duration of my actions. It gives meaning. The internal would be here this incredible thing which allows to go beyond what one imagined possible. The internal would be this energy which does not explode but maintains the fire. Tai Chi Chuan has allowed me to recognize this energy as the one that sometimes allows us to achieve the impossible. I have felt it long before I started practicing Tai Chi Chuan in specific moments of my life and I find it again today with the practice of Tai Chi Chuan. In saying this, I can see that the internal is actualized as a kind of natural thing that could eventually be governed by the laws of nature and then escape me as an individual with free will. I would then be completely determined by the laws of nature and like an animal, the "internal" energy would guide me without any need for my human free will. I think that this is not possible because it takes my own consciousness to recognize the existence of this energy and then to guide it. I think that it is not possible because it is necessary for my own conscience to recognize the existence of this energy and then to use it or not according to the historical, cultural, social, economic context which surrounds me. The internal or energy of my will will thus be relative to my environment and its expression will be linked to its context of appearance.

Here, we should be able to reflect on the 8 potentials. Christophe, very pedagogically, constantly reminds us of their importance. I love it when he talks about this because for me it is really where the "internal" is. The potential allows the energy to express itself but only if I use it. For me the internal is really here, that is to say not contained in a visible and determined border but rather in the materialization of the practice, in the gesture itself supported by this energy. My gesture calls upon the energy it needs and the energy supports it because I have called upon it.

The internal is therefore not natural in the sense of existing in myself without my will, the internal is with me free to act in the sense that it comes to support my will to practice and to act.

The internal is only internal for me because it is simply not graspable as an external object. However, it presents itself to me by its qualities and attributes to come and support me when I call upon it. The practice of Tai Chi Chuan would therefore be a way of appealing to the internal.

The internal is not the object of the practice of Tai chi chuan but rather the energy that underlies it. This energy exists without Tai chi chuan and other practices show it.

What Tai chi chuan gives me beyond the well-being, the relaxation, the reconciliation with my body, it is a dialogue which favors the access to the internal.

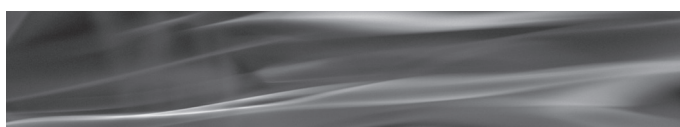
The internal is a place if I consider the borders of my consciousness as a place, but it is above all a dialectic that makes possible a dialogue between my body and the incredible energy that the latter can welcome to make its way.

All this, the great masters and my teacher have already thought about it and I know that this little reflection does not bring anything else than my testimony. Their practice and their knowledge obviously do not expect my little reflection. But my teacher asked for it, so I answer him!

That's why I am persistent. I feel this dialogue even if my body is not the best receptacle for Tai Chi Chuan!

Thank you Christophe for giving me the opportunity to share a little of the way I have taken up Tai chi chuan.

Thank you Christophe, all your students agree that you are a great guide on this path and we are very lucky to have you as a teacher.



Lao Tzu, Dao of Jing, 32

Patrick Louzon

Lao Tzu is undoubtedly a remarkable poet, but he is above all one of the Tao wisest man, if not the most important. He writes poetry as a sublime vehicle to pass on knowledge, and like any spiritual teaching, his is not always easy to understand. You could almost say that in fact, it never is, unless you resort to some interpretation, which may be right to some and not to others. So, let's take verse 32 to, at least, to try and understand it better in our own cultural and intellectual context, which of course differs from that of Lao Tzu:

The Tao is not a concept.

Insignificant in its original simplicity,
it is inferior to nothing known though.

If only kings could stoop to admire,
everyone would honor them.

Heaven and Earth would be in harmony,
and gentle dew would fall.

Peace and order would reign among the people
without anger and corruption because
of law and commandment.

Once the primal simplicity diversified,
a multitude of names appeared.

Are there not enough now?

Isn't it time to stop making up more?
Knowing how to stop protects from danger.

The Tao is to the world what rivers
and oceans are to torrents and streams.

After reading this poem, it is easy to understand that Lao Tzu invites us to wisdom. As to explain by what means precisely, there are many questions to be asked. The analogy of torrents and streams flowing into rivers and oceans is not necessarily obvious. Let's proceed, therefore to a kind of decoding, replacing some word with others more understandable in our contemporary spirituality and culture. Take, for example, the word "Tao" and replace it with "conscience", a very popular word nowadays, and terms such as "world", "people", "names" etc, that is whatever we can mentally grasp, and see what we get:

The presence of consciousness cannot
be understood as a mental phenomenon.

Although its existence is usually unknown,
it is never absent from our perception.

If only the inner self could understand it,
the mental chaos that caused
our suffering would instantly cease.

The outer world and its little inner
universe would no longer be in conflict,
and it could finally calm down
without trying to put it in order.

When the true nature of
consciousness manifested,
A multitude of mental representations appeared.

Don't we have enough of them now?

On the contrary, should we not lessen
the flow of our thoughts?

Knowing how to stop it when necessary,
keeps away suffering.

Consciousness is to the mind what inner peace
is to all our thoughts and emotions.

It goes without saying that such an interpretation will be more intelligible to those who practice meditation and what is called Mindfulness. Anyway, a spiritual teaching through poetic language must be understood one way or another or what would be the point? Lao Tzu does not write for the sake of poetry, but to teach us how to live peacefully with the Tao.

Let's be sensible and in a way a little modest! Whether we like it or not, the great cosmic order of small things in our lives will not be changed, neither the destiny of mankind. We might as well adapt the best possible way when we have obviously no other choice. Could this be a pessimistic thought? It is only a question of mental health and wisdom that Lao Tzu recommends through his teachings.

<https://sites.google.com/site/advaitaminima/language/home/des-materiaux/sagesse>





RENOUVELLEMENT de l'ADHESION à L'AMICALE du Yangjia Michuan TJQ
Attention : pour toute nouvelle adhésion contacter : secrtaire.amicale.ymtjq@gmail.com

1^{er} Septembre 2020 au 31 Août 2021

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Le site fait peau neuve

nouveau design, nouvelles fonctionnalités

www.amicale-yangjia-michuan-tjq.org

Nous espérons qu'il vous donnera satisfaction et que vous y trouverez les informations utiles qui vous intéressent. N'hésitez pas à nous faire part de vos remarques et suggestions afin de l'améliorer et nous vous remercions de votre compréhension pour les éventuels bugs qui pourraient persister pendant les premiers temps de fonctionnement.

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Bien amicalement à tous,

Rédac' Chef et le CA de l'Amicale du Yangjia Michuan.

