

Amicale

IT'S THIRTY YEARS OLD

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Journal from Taiwan

Hollow the chest, stretch the back
Tuishou in Laillé ... and elsewhere
Practical Taiji Association

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Flowered balconies, half-timbered houses, a cathedral... I couldn't resist this idealised image to greet Strasbourg, which will once again serve as a backdrop for our next meetings. A city closely associated with the history of the Amicale (and in good chauvinism, I would say *ex-aequo* with Angers...) and with the history of many YMTJQ practitioners.

Is it time for assessments, from a community as well as a personal point of view? For my part, I suddenly realize that I am one of the "old practitioners", this is a strange observation, made of deep joy but also of nostalgia. Because the world of Taiji, the world of Taiji teaching has changed, that's for sure. We no longer teach and learn today as we did thirty years ago. What is reassuring, however, is that the various editors who enrich our newsletter come from all generations of the YMTJQ.

So we can say that "research is progressing" despite everything. And there are still such a great diversity of articles in this 92nd issue that we couldn't even display them all on the front cover.

The great taiji festival will take place in Strasbourg, indeed, with this profusion of teaching, from which we will once again gorge ourselves but at the end, it will take place quieter every day, in our own cities and practice rooms.

I have a thought for all those who will not be able to be with us, who will remain on the sidelines because of the very fast registrations (first come, first served...), and who will therefore be missing, will be missing from our gathering, who will be missed at all.

Woodstock is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. Should we consider, one day, a "Woodstock" of Taiji quan to allow everyone to meet again?

Wishing you all a good new term, and a good reading.

Françoise Cordaro

A word from the President

The Amicale celebrates its 30th anniversary this year. It now brings together nearly 2400 practitioners in nearly a hundred associations. Our Annual Meetings bring together a large number of these practitioners, who are happy to share a friendly and joyful moment of practice and sharing. Despite an effort to find more spacious accommodation, we are forced to refuse people due to a lack of places. Thus, registrations for the Strasbourg Meetings had to be closed less than three weeks after their opening and unfortunately, a number of you are frustrated that you cannot attend.

It is a beautiful journey from the beginning and we can be proud of the collective work accomplished. At the same time, this anniversary and these results must be an opportunity to ask ourselves where we are going in the coming years.

Indeed, more and more does not seem to be a sustainable long-term objective in the current functioning. The 2020 Meetings will be led by two individual members, Joël and Danielle Panhelleux, and on this occasion, they began a reflection on the consequences of this growth for the organization of the Annual Meetings. They propose a different approach and you can read them in the December Bulletin. The thirties are a bit like the end of carefree growth and the approach of the crisis of middle age. We need to be prepared for this and the Board of Directors has taken the opportunity of Erica Martin's work to start thinking about how to gradually involve more members in the functioning of the Amicale.

This approach echoes the questions that cross our societies about civic engagement and sustain-

able development. Our practice is underpinned by values that are useful for this questioning: respect for the place and qualities of each individual, the importance of patient work, concern for maximum efficiency at the cost of minimal effort, listening to the environment and taking into account the effect of our actions on it. The practical health aspect of our discipline is important in our ageing societies where the rising cost of care is a very serious problem: our practice is in line with an approach based on prevention rather than on solving health problems and is a rational response to this inflation in demand for care and support.

These are good reasons to continue to develop and disseminate the practice of the Yangjia michuan taiji quan. But we must ensure that we preserve the bonds of friendship that bind us together and reflect together on ways to prevent their dilution in the anonymity that awaits members of structures that are too large.

Memory loss is another peril that often accompanies age. If you take the time to consult on our site the indexes compiled by André Musso from the articles published in our Bulletin since the beginning of our history, you will easily notice the very great richness of the subjects covered. Feel free to download past issues of the Bulletin and (re)diver into this mine of teaching.

I wish you all a good resumption of your courses and perhaps see you soon in Strasbourg.

With kind regards,
François Schosseler

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Reflections about the Tuishou

Manuel Solnon

Part I: Reflections and summary about the TUI SHOU experience¹



The true motion settles in stillness². It is a free, whole, relevant, appropriate motion. Accurate minds watch with lucidity and detachment what occurs in, by and around them. This detachment will generate non-action, which in turns will create the stillness of mind. Stillness of mind is not drowsiness, non-acting is not non-action. Non-action is pure action.

Through non-action, the mind stimulates creative spontaneity³. Spontaneous creation is the daughter of Tao, she draws inspiration from a spiritual impetus. Bound to my partner, I am applying essentials principles⁴. In the Dantian⁵, the Qi focuses, it releases from lower back, it drives through the pelvis, it expresses itself through my hands.

Non-acting acts without comment, concession, deduction. Thus it does not hinder the Qi and convinces the opponent as much by the harmony of the movement performed as by pushing. In Tai Chi Chuan Tuishou, pushing is not the ultimate goal⁶. The proper

1. All these comments are the result of a long practice of the author and his deductions concern himself only.
2. Those of the heart and mind leading to the absence of thoughts and emotions. Stillness of mind is nothing but insensitive.
3. Spontaneous and sudden intuition.
4. The basic principles of Tai Chi Chuan.
5. For the author, the Dantian is the second brain.
6. The Masters claim that the one who, by force, gets the upper hand on his/her partner actually loses, defeated by him/herself.

course⁷ is the intended goal because it induces the true understanding of Tai Chi Chuan which reveals the secrets of Tao.

In order to observe in full consciousness, the mind of the practitioner should combine three qualities. These qualities are similar to those belonging to the man of science, the man⁸ of prayer and the man of war. The scientist studies, the monk meditates, the warrior listens⁹. These three paths share an identical principle, that of the void¹⁰ of the mind¹¹. They are based on a strict observance of what exists (and not what is intended) without interfering or compelling by mere will or brutal force¹². Discovery, liberation and life depend on this capacity of analysis, observation and attention.

Although studying necessarily begins with well-known exercises, one shall develop and quickly sharpen listening in order to free oneself from a probable standardization of movements¹³. Assertive "knowledge" may develop overconfidence¹⁴, and consequently, spoil the freshness and overshadow the sharpness of the mind. It might be wrong to venture into learning, filled with knowledge, hampered by principles, saturated with theories, inhibited by sterile rules and tedious protocols. In addition to a necessary reasoning, intuition, instinct, creative spontaneity, revealing happenstances, necessary occurrences, uncertain initiations, unexpected encounters are major conductive vectors for those who want to understand the great mystery in its entirety. Using only one of these vectors would be too limited.

Do not believe in what is stated, dictated, imposed, established but question everything until the light suddenly springs like the newborn coming into the world.

Part II: questioning

Comments

1) Choose listening rather than watching. Sharpen it until you can detect the partner's energy as the doctor can detect his patient's pulse.

7. Sometimes the movement seems suspended, however the Qi flows freely without finding any obstacle.

8. Read scientific woman or man

9. The scientist studies the micro and the macrocosm, the monk meditates illusory reality, the warrior listens to the silent resonance.

10. The lucid void.

11. listening, total attention.

12. From C. Larre, commenting about Wuwei (non-action) and Ziran (path of nature and spontaneity) : « Do not impose your will but let what simply appeals for happening every moment come over ».

13. The risk is the mechanical motion, without awareness. Each situation is unique.

14. The belief in a « static, motionless, unchanging knowledge ».

2) Do not tense on the opposing force but avoid giving the partner the opportunity to spot and to enter your centre (or in that case, knowingly¹⁵).

3) Catch his/her rhythm, motions (shifting, if there is any). Decode on his/her rituals, habits, distracting¹⁶ and conflicting¹⁷ movements.

4) Take advantage of "blank" spaces¹⁸ (translator's note: gap).

5) Identify the dynamic and rhythmic repetitions¹⁹ as well as the structure of his/her motion as a whole.

6) Be fully in the present time, be not disturbed by what surrounds us. If there is a disturbance of the mind, only be attentive and go on exchanging with your partner until distraction clears up.

7) Explore and develop the "paradoxical" and "deconstructed" movement²⁰.

8) Being aware of the moment conveys an advantage over the partner. Therefore you will always have the upper hand. To be aware, deepen "the lucid consciousness" or "the conscious void²¹".

9) Reading the partner's rhythm is controlling time. Acting in response is dealing with the other's will, the practitioner then struggles into the "far too late".

10) Go beyond the idea of "pushing" but stay vigilant as for the exchanged movements.

11) Do not seek victory, but surprise the ephemeral and formidable ego's satisfaction when it occurs.

12) Communion of opposites must prevail and not domination of one over the other.

Communion must remain unchanging, invulnerable by practice steadfastness.

13) Whatever our improvement and extent of knowledge, we shall always be our greatest enemy¹⁹.

Questions:

A) Does the practitioner have self-control or is he soaking up the rhythm in order to adapt to vague spontaneity?

B) Is soaking up the partner's rhythm or following the partner somewhat different?

C) Having self-control generate hardness of life and spirit?

D) Does the watching mind possess as much flexibility as firmness?

E) What does "self control" mean?

15. As part of an applied strategy.

16. Like rituals, habits, distracting movements are unconscious movements that prompt a weakness into the structure.

17. Postural mistake, wrong polarity, conflicting emptiness and wholeness.


18. Body spaces deserted by consciousness when too focused, the partner forgets him/herself.

19. Obvious unintentional motions for example, a swinging movement from front to back.

20. This is an unpredictable, spontaneous, unexpected, genuine, unstoppable movement. It is a movement which is unforeseen, that reason rejects without studying it for it is contrary to common sense and to established principles.


21. The chosen terminology is one's own. The important thing is not the word, but the given meaning and its application.





Han xiong ba bei Slightly tuck your chest in, and stretch your back¹

Serge Dreyer



Since it was first given to us by Yang Chen Fu this instruction (henceforth HXBB) has become something of a mantra for all Yang style postures. It has been repeated endlessly by teachers and practitioners of the various Yang schools including Wang yen Nien. And yet, upon closer examination, we see that this advice is not always respected, including by Yang Chen Fu himself, if we are to take the photos in his book as examples. I have long wondered about both the nature and implementation of this oft repeated phrase.

1. The chinese wording

The Chinese wording suggests an inward movement of the chest (*han xiong*), which is itself problematic. Indeed, the chest is a relatively immobile part of the human body (the ribs being attached to both the spine and sternum). The only possible way to “retract the chest” would be when the rib cage moves during exhalation of non-abdominal breathing. It seems highly unlikely to me that Yang Chen Fu had this process in mind, because this movement is natural and therefore does not need to be taught. It is therefore likely that he meant this instruction to be understood in connection with the second part of the statement, which literally consists in “raising” the back (*ba bei*) as translated by D.

1. Compare the translation of C. Despeux (*T'ai-ki k'iuan, long life technique, combat technique*, Collège de France, Institut des Hautes Études chinoises, doctoral thesis, p. 155) and D. Wile (*Lost T'ai-chi Classics from the Late Ch'ing Dynasty*, State University of New York press, p. 11).

Wiles. Unfortunately, this interpretation would seem to contradict another extremely important aspect of the practice of taiji quan, namely “relaxing the shoulders”. That is why I prefer C. Despeux's translation, which evokes a “stretching” of the back that makes more sense for my practice². But even if we confine ourselves to this interpretation, stretching the back must not be done by projecting the shoulders forward, because that would create tension. In addition, the resulting mobility of the chest would be too small to be even worth discussing. It is therefore necessary to look towards the solar plexus to find a significant gain of space in the practice of taiji quan, both for health benefits and for martial effectiveness. I will come back to this point later.

As a preamble to the following discussion, I therefore claim that the way this instruction is worded seems problematic to me on several levels. But before going into more detail, it should be remembered that Yang Chen Fu dictated his teachings to his students, some of whom wrote them down. It is not clear under what conditions the transmission from oral to written form took place. Is it a text that Yang Chen Fu had carefully thought about in preparation for his book? Had there been any debate in his entourage over the relevance of the wording? Did the person who wrote the text transform Yang Chen Fu's words into a clearer written formula, more adapted to the canon of literary Chinese? The answers to these

2. However, if the original meaning of raising seems logical to you or if you have read/learned somewhere that this translation makes sense in practice, it would be interesting to discuss it in these columns.



questions might shed light on the ambiguities of this wording, which poses major problems in the practice of taiji quan.

2. The perverse effects of the wording

There are many perverse effects of the wording of this phrase, but I will talk mainly about issues concerning posture, where I have some standing. The most common error in this posture is to carry the shoulders forward and to create a “hollowing” of the chest (actually at the plexus level) thus exaggerating the arch of the back, a posture typical of kyphosis³. The consequences are easily noticeable: head too far forward to compensate for the weight of the body shifting backwards to the upper back, and hips too often forced forward when the practitioner tries to erase the lumbar curve in order to hollow the chest. This is a posture which should

be avoided, from both a health and martial martial-arts perspective. I’ve noticed multiple ways of adjusting between this extreme version of the position and a correct re-alignment, all of them tend to carry the upper back too far back. Not only is the softening of the chest only partial if it is done at all, but it also involves a set of muscles that must stretch or contract to maintain balance in the vertical plane. In this position, the health benefits of taiji quan practice become questionable. And worse, this posture can persist and become justified by the fact that when slow movements are practiced it can give the impression (illusion?) of being relaxed. I therefore propose the following correct posture (photo 13) which combines a body position conducive to the state of *fangsong*⁴ beneficial for well-being and effective for the martial aspect of taiji quan.

3. I am progressing in this field under the authority of two Taiwanese friends, one a highly talented physiotherapist and the other a back surgeon.

4. “[This corresponds] to both physical and mental flexibility which, at a high level of practice, become one”, S. Dreyer, 2017, in “Practices of Conscience”, STAPS N^{os}. 117-118, Ed. Deboeck, pp. 141-154.



3. Slightly tuck your chest in and stretch your back as a result of...

Mr. Wang was clear that this formulation was in fact a consequence of erasing the lumbar curve. He was absolutely right, but the action to be taken is not as simple as it seems. First of all, this erasure should not be done by pushing forward the lower back, which contracts the thigh and back muscles while tending to block the hips. This posture is as much to be avoided as «putting your buttocks on the balcony» (see Wang yen Nien's French-English version of the book p. M37, photo F6). It is neither desirable for health nor for martial effectiveness.

The correct posture requires simply tilting the pelvis forward. There are some easy ways to know if one is doing this correctly. First try this test with a partner. He/she stands upright with legs slightly apart. You apply the palm of your hand to the lower back, the middle finger touching the upper coccyx and the

wrist placed where the lumbar curve begins. Then put the other hand flat on the dorsal arch in such a way that this hand perpendicular to the spine. The idea is for the partner to maintain his or her lumbar vertebrae against the palm of your lower hand without pushing with the upper back on your upper hand, while using the legs to lower the body. Repeat with the same starting posture but this time place your hand high on the solar plexus, the middle finger pressing slightly on the top of the stomach and the wrist on the base of the sternum while the other hand remains in the same position on the hollow of the lumbar vertebrae. Again using the legs to lower the body, a hollow should appear under the hand on the solar plexus while the hand at the level of the lumbar vertebrae remains "stuck" to the lumbar vertebrae. There are therefore three important parameters to take into account: the hollow at the plexus, the resulting rounding at the upper back (stretching) and the erasing of the lumbar curvature. This exercise allows the practitioner to develop a conscious awareness of the direct relationship

between the movement of the lumbar vertebrae and the inward movement of the chest. When this posture is correct, you can immediately feel the difference, the body is placed on the feet without contraction of the thighs or toes. Beginners, or those who have maintained a deficient posture, will at first have the impression of holding their heads too far forward, but this is the “natural” effect of a “reprogramming” of the body.

We will note an interesting phenomenon that should encourage us to share our experience with other taiji



quan schools. It seems that those postures rooted on the forward leg, with a large distance between the feet, tend to “ignore” the deepening of the chest when the body is carried forward but accentuate it in the passage toward the rear leg. In order to tilt the pelvis forward and create a hollow in this posture, it is necessary to have a greater elasticity of the adductors. But the advantage is a greater propensity to stand up straight, which is not always the case in our style. It would also be interesting to exchange with practitioners of certain Wu styles who intentionally lean their bust forward.

4. The hollow of the chest: a space rich in potential

After examining and debating the relevance of Yang Chen Fu's instruction, let us now look at what it can bring to the practice of Tuishou. As far as fitness is concerned, there are many people more



qualified than me in our style to discuss the benefits of good body alignment on health, so I will not discuss this subject here.

I will begin with a philosophical consideration by quoting Lao Zi⁵: “Clay is shaped into vases, but it is the inner emptiness that makes them useful”. The image seems to me to be very relevant to Tuishou. When watching two people practice fixed-step tuishou, the eye naturally follows the changing

5. Tao Tö King, *Lao-tseu, translation Liou Kia-Hway, Gallimard, 1969, p. 71.*

shapes of their bodies. And yet their continuous transformation is essentially dependent on HXBB as a consequence of lumbar erasure. From the inside, the game should therefore ideally feel like a combination of the arched/rounded movement of the lumbar vertebrae with the lateral movements of the pelvis. This applies in theory because, as Pierre Desproges said, “One day I will go and live in theory because everything is fine in theory”...

But let us return to this hollow created at the solar plexus. It is interesting on three levels. These three levels are actually dependent on the back and forth movement between hollowing and opening the



© Bruce Watts

logical technique for the vast majority of martial arts throughout the world, but not for taiji quan, which advocates non-resistance to the opponent as a way to better control him. From the moment you use the HXBB to dodge the thrust you create a distance (compare photos 8 and 10, 1 and 6) from the initial impact of the thrust (photos 8 and 1). This distance obviously generates additional time to react to the attack.

It should be noted, of course, that a push does not always come to the chest. But whatever the part of the body is pushed (see the basic exercises of our style in R. Habersetzer/Serge Dreyer, *Taiji quan pratique*, Ed. Amphora), the effectiveness of dodging is closely linked to the quality of HXBB. Unfortunately this connection is too often overlooked, the basic tuishou exercises of Yangjia Michuan Taiji quan having become an almost autonomous discipline in most of the schools in our style.

4.2. Hard-soft

As a tactic, this dimension is closely associated with a state of mind. From the moment you have decided to counter a push with flexibility, you enter a mental game with your opponent. When someone pushes, it is logical for them to assume that as soon as they make contact with your body their power will have a direct and immediate effect on your balance. In fact, by playing the hard and soft you instil in your partner's mind a doubt about every push. This doubt will concern not only the transition from attack (hard) to dodge (soft) but also the counter-attack (hard).

The "push on the belly" exercise (photos 8 to 10) provides a good opportunity to work on this distance-time dimension. This exercise is exemplary in terms of the role of HXBB. I often observe practitioners of our style who stick out their buttocks when pushing. This approach is systematically dangerous in a real tuishou situation because if the plexus has not retracted, the entire upper body stiffens and resists the push (photo 7). If, on the other hand, HXBB is properly in place (photo 10), both the rib cage and the pelvis regain a high lateral mobility, which increases the possibilities for dodging.

4.3. The transformation of direction

This is probably the most fascinating aspect of the proper execution of HXBB. We quickly realize that from the empty space created we can direct the opponent's thrust in all directions. Whether in a horizontal, oblique downward or oblique upward plane with all the combinations generated by a spiral movement, this space generates all the imaginable conditions of evasion. I carefully specify these conditions because the correct use of a dodge obviously implies other factors. For example, if after a good

plexus. We could put them in three categories: distance-time, hard-soft, direction-transformation.

4.1. Distance-time

If an opponent puts his palm on your open⁶ chest, the power of his push will be expressed as soon as he makes contact (photo 1). By keeping the plexus open you must rely solely on your natural speed to dodge the attack. In other words, you create a contest between your dodge speed and your opponent's pushing speed. This may be a perfectly

6. By "open" I mean the chest and the plexus more or less forward.



dodge of a push, the arms are extended and stiffened prematurely to repel the opponent, it is likely to be ineffective.

We also should consider the virtues of this empty space on our consciousness, since a void by definition has no form. Ideally, it is neither an anticipation of the opponent's attack nor a tangible form of defenses and counter-attack. Here we are approaching the crucial notion of non-action (*wuwei*)⁷.

5. Conclusion

The proper implementation of HXBB should become the top priority in learning our taiji quan style. I see it regularly, even with long-term practitioners: it is the most difficult posture to correct because, as the expression in French says, *on l'a dans le dos* (it's in our back).

It would also be good to think about whether HXBB should be used systematically in all postures or if it is relevant only in certain situations. Looking at Wang Yen Nien's book, it is clear that he does not apply it in certain postures (photos section 1-9, 1-12, 1-13, 1-19, 1-20, 1-20, 1-26, 1-28, 1-30, 1-35, 1-39, 1-42, 1-53, 1-59, 1-60, 1-77, etc.) while HXBB appears marked in others (1-16, 1-21, 1-25, 1-25, 1-29, 1-36, 1-40, 1-57, 1-85, 1-88, etc.). If we look carefully at the many videos on the Internet ranging from the most famous to the most obscure practitioners, we also see that HXBB is interpreted in many different ways. In my own practice, I mark it more in certain postures than others. One question that arises is whether, for example, it should be applied primarily to dodges and given a less important role in attacks. In any case, the practice of *Tuishou* forces us to consider this distribution. Further consideration of this question may allow us to respond more effectively to criticism of a closed posture in our style that may not be healthy when applied systematically.

The cultural aspects of body language which are largely ignored in reflections on the practice of taiji quan, also deserve our attention. In my profession, I have worked extensively on how social values are incorporated into body language. For example, one of the essential values in China is the notion of humility (*qianxu*). It's influence on posture is more pronounced in women (chest often retracted) than in men (who are influenced by the patriarchy to be more macho). History could also teach us a lot about the body image inherent in taiji quan which was

created during a period when China suffered great humiliation by foreign powers.

I will add to this small conclusion the results of an informal survey I conducted during the last *Rencontres Jasnières*. Only two of all the teachers and students I asked established a direct connection between the lumbar vertebrae and HXBB in their practice of taiji quan. Virtually all the others evoke a sensation that will have to be refined with practice...



7. Read on this subject *Lessons on Chuang-Tzu* by J.-F. Billeter, Ed. Allia (2014), in particular the passage on the butcher Ting. For English speakers an in-depth study of the concept in *Effortless Action...* by E. Slingerhand, Ed. OUP, USA, 2007.



Review of Yi King: new geometric structures. New drawing methods by Augustin Thiong-Ly

Sylvain Maillot

The I Ching, undoubtedly one of the most important books of Chinese civilization, fascinates Western scientists since it seems that Leibniz (1646–1716) saw it as the basis for binary counting. If we match the solid line “Yang” the number 1 and the broken line “Yin” the number 0, each trigram corresponds to an integer between 0 (noted 000) and 7 (noted 111). All trigrams can therefore be equipped with addition, subtraction and multiplication operations “modulo 8”.

In this curious arithmetic, if, for example, we wish to calculate 110×011 , we proceed as follows: the notation 110 (which corresponds to the Sun trigram [the wind] represents the number $1 \times 4 + 1 \times 2 + 0 \times 1 = 6$); likewise the notation 011 (which corresponds to the Dui trigram [the lake] represents the number $0 \times 4 + 1 \times 2 + 1 \times 1 = 3$). We have $6 \times 3 = 18$. However 18 reduced «modulo 8» is 2 (because $18 - 2 = 16$ which is a multiple of 8.) The result is therefore 010, or the Kan trigram (water.)

Augustin Thiong-Ly's book explores the consequences of this arithmetic for the two classical dispositions of trigrams, called “Fu Xi diagram” and “Wen Wang diagram”. Without going into too many technical details, we can notice that each trigram has an “opposite” in which each line Yang is replaced by a line Yin and vice versa. For example, the opposite of 010 is 101. In the Fu Xi diagram, the opposite trigrams are represented at the opposite (!) of each other. In arithmetic modulo 8, this results in the equation

$$x + y = 7$$

if x and y are opposed. (In my example, 010 represents the number 2 and 101 the number 5 and we have $2 + 5 = 7$.) The suite uses Galois' theory and is much more difficult.

This book also includes a discussion of other mathematical topics related to Chinese culture, including which I will only mention here the suite called (by the Westerners!) Fibonacci's suite. This is the only infinite series of integers that start with twice the number 1 and in which each term is the sum of the two previous ones: 1, 1, 2 (= 1 + 1), 3 (= 1 + 2), 5, 8, 13, 21, etc. This sequence shows several numbers of which the importance will not have escaped the Taiji Quan practitioner! It also has links with the golden number and the logarithmic spiral that appears in pine cones, among other things.

Finally there is a study of the probabilities of drawing the different combinations of hexagrams according to the drawing methods.

I recommend this book to all lovers of Chinese science and culture.

Meeting at Laillé, week- end of the 23rd and 24th of mars 2019

Sébastien Breton

A meeting with Tui Shou... a meeting with the other...
a meeting with yourself.

In 2017, Christophe Lephay had already organized a Tui Shou seminar in Laillé, Brittany. I had not been able to attend it, being too busy.

Here we are, two years later, inspired by the enthusiasm of Christophe, I decided to make the journey from Annecy (Haute Savoie) to Rennes to participate in this national gathering of 160 practitioners from all over France.

Organized in the small community of Laillé, near Rennes, the weekend gathering is scheduled to start at 2pm in a superb and newly-built sport complex. We took the time to eat in a small restaurant on the bank of the river Vilaine, a magnificent spot under the clear blue sky.

Meanwhile, the group of volunteers from the organizing association was already at work with dynamism and joy. We joined them at 2 o'clock. The whole crew was at work, greeting the participants with good humor along the water. Everyone found their proper place under the guidance of the volunteers. Some of the participants, having met in previous meetings and seminars, greeted each other warmly. Everyone was smiling and of good cheer.

The weekend was split into three half-days (one on Saturday afternoon, and the rest on Sunday). Each half-day session consisted of a Tui Shou workshop lead by a certified and experienced teacher, follo-



wed by a period of free-style pushing, with a change of partners every 10 minutes. 150 participants led to the possibility of experiencing 150 different energies, 150 different exchanges, 150 different potentialities and therefore develop your creativity and experience.

The workshops started at 3pm, with the participants split into balanced groups. The sport complex was so large and comfortable that each group had plenty of room to move.

During this time, the ever-cheerful volunteers were preparing the afternoon break, consisting of small cakes and warm drinks (prepared by the same volunteers who had been working so hard the whole weekend). The participants appreciated the break before returning to the main hall of the gymnasium for the free-style Tui Shou, during which they chatted about the workshop they just attended, what they had discovered and learned, or what they were looking forward to the next day. The discussions are animated, the faces relaxed and jovial.

The free-style Tui Shou then starts. Pleasure of the exchange, of the sharing, of the laughter, of the sweat (at least a little bit). Every 10 minutes the gong sounds and we switch partners. After an hour and a



half of intense exchanges, the practice ends. Satisfaction and happiness is on every face. Joy fills the space. The practitioners are peaceful and inspired. They speak of the experience they have just had, of what they have just learned. Tui Shou, seen by the beginners as a confrontation, actually brings people together.

The volunteers were not finished. They had organized a demonstration of calligraphy, which required quiet. Absolute silence settled. All the participants watch, sitting cross-legged, this demonstration of calligraphy of the four seasons. The calm and silence grip everyone.

As a follow-up, three students from the organizing association performed a concert. Harp, violin and a third instrument (who's name escapes me) fill the space with a formidable energy. The participants are captivated, as if mesmerized.

During the concert, a demonstration of Wing Tsun Kung Fu is being prepared behind a curtain. It is a festival full of surprises and events. It is hard to imagine the amount of work needed to put together this kind of seminar.

The Wing Tsun demonstration begins. Everything has been magnificently organized and choreographed.

The sound of the wooden arms of the mannequin, snapping and clacking, resonate throughout the hall. The techniques of this art are presented by the members of a local club related to the association organizing the seminar. It is a chance to discover an art related to ours.

The demonstration ends and the volunteers offer us drinks before we head out to a tavern for the night's dinner. After a few miles of driving, we reach a magical establishment where the wonderful couple that runs it greet us with smiles. The meal is spent in an atmosphere of good cheer, shared by the restaurant owners and the enthusiastic Tai Chi practitioners. Wine flows like a river (but a little one!), the meal is delicious and plentiful, the discussions are animated and cheerful. Laughter and joy nourish our Qi to prepare us for the following day.

Back to bed for a too short night. Then a Sunday morning filled with the same workshops, the same engagements of the participants. Martial friendships are formed, people are happy to be here, simply, away from modern life, away from time, but connected to each other. Connected to life.

A Tibetan meal is served for lunch for a ridiculously small fee. The afternoon session starts.



The evening comes, and with it the small sadness of saying goodbye, and the promise of seeing each other next time. People embrace each other, exchange phone numbers and social media. Harmony and friendship rule over the slowly emptying hall.

The weekend is over. The volunteers (again and still! So many thanks to them!) have already put away everything. It is time to head home, enriched by the new experiences and encounters.

In conclusion: wonderful weekend on all fronts. Faultless organization. Volunteers available and knowledgeable. A magnificent location. Highly qualified teachers. Motivated and numerous participants. Wonderful festive moments. And one more thing: A chance for encounters. The encounter with the people of Laillé, with wonderful people, with friends. Encounter with the technique, with the other in order to encounter oneself, with the practice and the questions.

Thank you to the volunteers. Thank you to the organizer of this event, always full of love, of energy, of kindness, of giving and listening, which he spread to the place and the people who were there. Thank you Christophe.



The positioning of the front foot

by Nicole Henriod

In the Yang school I studied with over ten years, the explanation of the step specified that once rooted on the rear leg, the length of the step was determined without disturbing the axis of the rear leg. Then came 'entering into the step' where the forwards movement had a very strict limit; the knee should under no circumstances go further forwards than the roots of the toes. Beyond that point one would fall into being double weighted.

During the summer of 1989 I took part in a course with Master Wang. Whilst I saw unfold movements I knew from the form (the white crane, brush the knee, to cite but two examples), what attracted my attention was the way in which the step was constructed for each movement. Seen from the outside, the heel of the front foot lifted more or less at the end of the push whereas for me that was precisely the moment when the whole body relaxed and found its support in the two feet, of course whilst remaining careful to separate full and empty.

At first, to explain everything, I received the instruction to raise the heel of the front foot so as to obtain a weight distribution of 75% on the rear leg and 25% on the front foot. I have to admit that these figures meant very little to me and certainly did not

constitute a sufficient reason to justify this upwards movement.

So I took to observing the practitioners. Whilst the heel was in fact lifted in each case, the method for achieving this was not the same for each person.



Illustration adapted from a screen shot of a DVD from Taiwan, 1982



Here are three images illustrating these differences.

Figure 1: the version 'on points' (referring to pointing the toes, an expression originating in dance schools) with a straightening of the front leg. The weight has clearly stayed on the rear leg. The whole upper body is upright.



Figure 2: the version 'cat's belly', an expression the Chinese use to denote a prominent abdomen. This results from an exaggerated retroversion pushed a little too far forwards. Led by the arms, the upper body crumples in on itself and the back is more or less hunched.

I remember in one course; I was clearly asked to push the retroversion very far forwards by an imperious 'tuck your tail in'. If the 'cat's belly' is the consequence of exaggeratedly tipping the pelvis, then my posture thus forced to an extreme approached that of a castrated tomcat.



Figure 3: the version 'abut against the front foot'.

Once the step is in place, the knee draws the axis forwards and so as to avoid it exceeding the toes, the heel lifts so forming a stop preventing any overshooting. The back remains straight.

This was the solution which suited me best to start with and I put it into practice. It was not until later that I really assimilated the Michuan step and discovered all its wealth.

Meanwhile, having lifted my heel because one had to, then rejected this instruction (and discretely abandoned it) due to lack of conviction, it is only thanks to questioning, personal practice and via meetings, discussions and discoveries that I now able to feel the benefits of this subtle and singular aspect of our school.

During the spring seminar 2018, I questioned my colleagues on this tricky subject: what instructions they had received precisely regarding this aspect, how do they practise the Michuan step and how do they transmit it? Many confirmed to me that, just like me, they had limited themselves to imitating what they saw without question.

Regarding how high to lift the heel, we learned that if Master Wang exaggerated the movement it was to clearly show that the heel was empty. To get an idea as to 'by how much' was correct, he would give the image of a cigarette paper saying that it should be possible to extract it from under the heel without tearing it. I have heard another comparison, that of a little mouse delicately trapped under the heel, it should not be able to escape but nonetheless should not be crushed.

After the seminar I received a note from Claudy Jeanmougin saying:
'Laoshi pointed out that with time one lifts the heel less and less and that in Tuishou it should not be visible so as not to show the opponent on which

foot the weight rests (...). It was the student teachers of Laoshi who grossly exaggerated this movement of tipping the front foot with a much lifted heel and crushed foot, which are absolutely not desirable. Furthermore, Laoshi showed that the vertical down from the knee should not pass in front of the ankle. Thus there is a limit to the bending of the knee which facilitates the phenomenon of abutting in the energetic expression of the movement.'

If in their teachings, the Chinese masters continually show the 'how', they rarely expand on the 'why'. Is this because for them, only practice brings answers? How many times did we hear Laoshi repeat 'Practise, practise, practise!' 'Understand, the energy circulates with experience. With time everything becomes clear.' (The Classic of Taiji Quan, in the Little Red Book edited by the Amicale).

Regarding the positioning of the front foot, I retained two reflections expressed during the seminar:

'The best way to explain to beginners that the rear heel does not lift during a forward push (something which they do instinctively), is to tell them to lift the heel of the front foot.'

It is perfectly logical. Nevertheless, although this pedagogical argument is very convincing, it is only works for the very beginning stages of the learning process, at least hopefully.

'Master Wang introduced the practice of Neigong into his teaching.'

This input came from his Master, Zhang Qinlin, who he had met in the Golden Mountain Taoist school. To meditate is to be attentive to the internal motion, the celestial circuit, deep within. The energy circulates inside the body following the meridians Ren Mai and Du Mai. A movement downwards, followed by a movement upwards. And so heaven and earth are connected. In our school, it is as the energy rises that the front foot rolls into place as a visible consequence of this internal movement. The heel, suspended lightly, underlines this vertical impulse. Since the practice of Taiji Quan is a meditation in movement, all schools talk about this upward impetus. The school of Yang Chengfu has even made it the first of its ten principles; Xu Ling Ding Jin (lightly raised / slightly held up, the force / energy rises). Whether the load on the heel of the front foot is reduced or not, the Taiji step is defined in a general way by a movement forwards and upwards, this last being directed by intention rather than will.

Regarding the why of the placement of the front foot, Claudy specified in his note: *'... quite simply to provide more power to the expression of the hands! The expression occurs at the precise moment when one blocks the forwards roll of the foot at the forefoot, which means that the energy generated no long propagates in the direction of*

the front foot but towards the bands. (...) the forefoot serves as anchorage when one pushes and this anchorage is all the more effective when the heel has been unloaded. The rolling into position of the foot massages the point 'the bubbling spring' as well as all the sole of the foot and is in some way a pump for the blood circulation in the lower limbs.'

There exists video documentation which is without the slightest doubt the most precious reference we possess and which should bring consensus regarding the subject of this article. The images date from 1971 and were filmed by the first students of Laoshi. The transfer from super8 to DVD has rather degraded the recordings quality technically; the film is scratched, the images jump from time to time, the colours have turned pinkish. Nonetheless we are lucky to be able to see Master Wang in fine fettle demonstrating the three Duans. By concentrating on the rolling of the front foot into position, I found that the extent to which the heel was raised differed between movements. Sometime even I wondered if it left the ground at all. To me this signifies that this particularity of our school, far from being an unfounded reflex, is rather the natural consequence of an internal motion where the intention (Yi) is always present. It is this deep and consistent internal work which governs the step of the Yangjia Michuan school.*

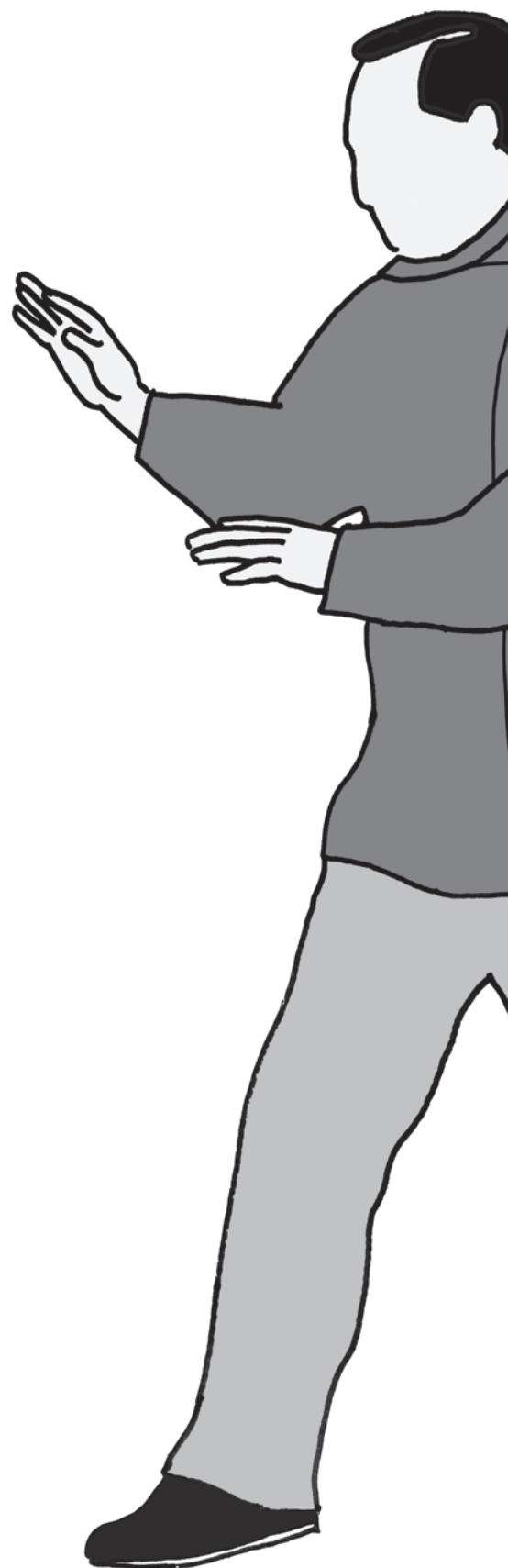
'Once upon a time humans breathed through their heels.' This assertion, attributed to Tchouang-Tseu, expands the field of possibilities. This eminent thinker reveals to us that in addition to the cervical, thoracic and pelvic diaphragms, there is a fourth under the foot which joins in with the pumping action of the three others and raises on the expire. The front heel, not being the load bearing heel, is available to raise spontaneously together with the general internal motion of respiration. So the uniqueness of our style derives its origins from a very ancient understanding of human beings.

As often happens with the College, one subject leads to another. This time, spurred on by Claudy who had at last found his keys, the discussion slid from the front foot to the rear (see the second part of this feuillet). And so we ran out of time to discuss the repercussions of the way the front foot is positioned on the practise of Tuishou.

To fill this gap, I refer you to the very compete articles by Serge Dreyer in Bulletins 87 and 88.

Lausanne, August 2019

* Master Wang in fine form can be seen practising the first Duan on the Taichi Yangjia Michuan Facebook page, on line from 28 August 2019. This clearly demonstrates the Taiji step of our school with the characteristic way the front foot rolls into position and the correct posture which ensues.



Focus on the rear leg

'More weight on the rear leg' and an end to 'the weight of the body on the rear leg'



From the theme 'The positioning of the front foot' on which Nicole Henriod had lead a workshop during the spring seminar 2018, the subject had slipped onto 'the support the body on the rear leg' which, for many, is the great characteristic of our style. I have to admit that I rather helped this diversion having written on the white board; 'never again the weight the body on the rear leg as characteristic of our style'.

How can one not discuss supporting the body on the rear leg when the theme is positioning the front foot? The two are intimately entwined and, with Nicole, we decided to write an article each from their perspective on this double theme.

(Collegial reflection on a posture that puts our style in a critical situation with regard to others and what is more, to all of us ...)

Discussions reported by Claudy Jeanmougin

This is the first time we transmit a team effort in the Feuilletts du Collège. To avoid errors in reporting what was said, this article has been reread by all those who contributed and who I cite at the end of the article. I will do my best to be a conscientious reporter but will not abstain from adding my little contribution....

I have not forgotten the article on the same subject by Serge Dreyer which appeared in two episodes in bulletins 87 & 88.

Let's stop talking nonsense...

The characteristic of our style is 'weight on the rear leg', and it conjures up an image of an awful posture with a trunk falling over backwards, an exaggerated spinal curvature which makes one think that our style is one of hunchbacks, the heel of the front foot which lifts excessively and the calves contracted so as to compete with Jo the cock, the mascot so typically French. This image commonly spread around does not pay our style justice and we have an obligation to rectify it.

Of course, if we look at some photos of Master Wang we are surprised at some of his postures. One must be aware that Master Wang was 'naturally' slightly hunched and that he had to hold the positions for a long time when being photographed. Anyone who has worked with a photographer knows that to hold a posture can be so uncomfortable that little by little it props itself up to avoid the fatigue. And everyone knows that a blocked posture is the complete opposite to one described as balanced.

Our practice should not consist of aping the Master but of interpreting his teaching whilst relying on the principles which govern our discipline.

First of all, let us answer the following question; 'At which moment do we find ourselves with the body's weight on the rear leg in the practice of our style? The body's whole weight on the rear leg?'

Practically never except for the fleeting instants of change of support or of a step forwards.

And if one looks closely at most of the photos of Master Wang in Volume 1, it becomes clear that one can very often not tell on which foot to dance...

Now, let's ask ourselves the real questions:

- In our style are we more on the rear leg?
- If we are more on the rear leg, under what circumstances is that the case?
- And finally, what are the advantages of such an arrangement?

More weight on the rear leg?

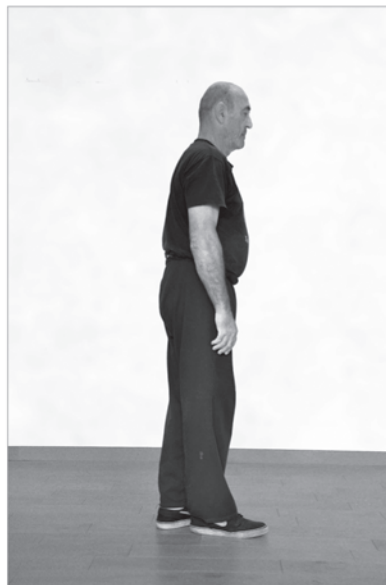
Let us consider the example of Cai shou to the right. During the first stage of the gesture, the weight is entirely on the rear foot, the left. We enter the phase of stepping forwards. Then, we fold at the waist to bring the heel of the front foot, the right, into contact with the ground. Then, at the same time as we roll forwards on the front foot, we move the wrist so as to generate a downwards and forwards push with the heel of the hand.

Once support is established on the forefoot of the front foot, it is right moment to express Cai, at this precis moment there is more weight on the rear leg but by only a few ounces...

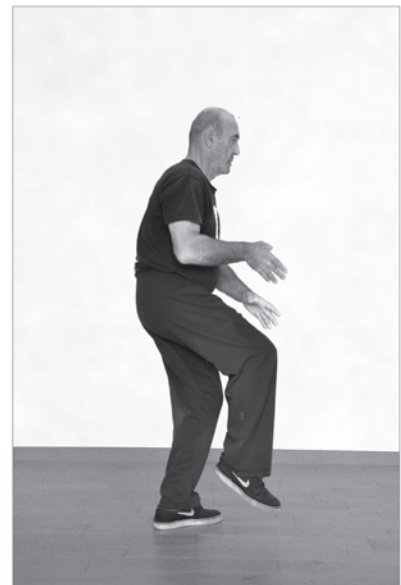
Then it is up to the practitioner whether they transfer their weight to the front foot or not. In our style we do this rarely except when we wish to extend the expression of the gesture. In other styles it is very frequent, precisely to extend the expression of the gesture.

The advantages of this way of practising

The first advantage is to be able to express fajin which is characterised by the expression of relatively explosive gestures. The push extended by transferring onto the front leg can be efficient with an acceleration of the expression but dangerous as the partner can take advantage of it with a Lü.



Starting position



Bend in the middle to lift the knee

The second advantage is its speed if the technique is accompanied with a short step which should be the case. This speed allows one to evade with the whole body and not just with the hands or arms, as Serge says.

The third advantage, linked to the one before, is the potential it offers to transform rapidly with a transfer of weight from one foot to the other.

For Master Wang, as Serge Dreyer tells us, the interest of having little or no weight on the front leg allows one to avoid having the front foot swept away from under us. All judo practitioners well know that that is not enough, and I remember having floored quite a few practitioners in mobile tui-shou sweeping away the front foot just as well as the back foot.

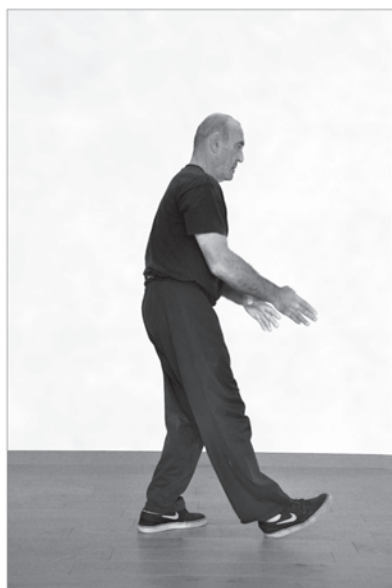
Is it the front foot that one unloads?

No! It is the weight on the heel of the front foot that is reduced. Master Wang often said that one should not show on which foot one carries most weight, and regarding the front foot he explained that if one were to put a sheet of paper under the heel it should be possible to remove it without it tearing. All this to say that as opposed to what is said, there is weight on the front foot and I would add that there is 'almost' as much as on the rear foot. Practice with a partner, whether it be technical applications or mobile tui-shou, demonstrates well the value of the principle of transforming whilst transferring weight from one foot to the other, whether the front or back.

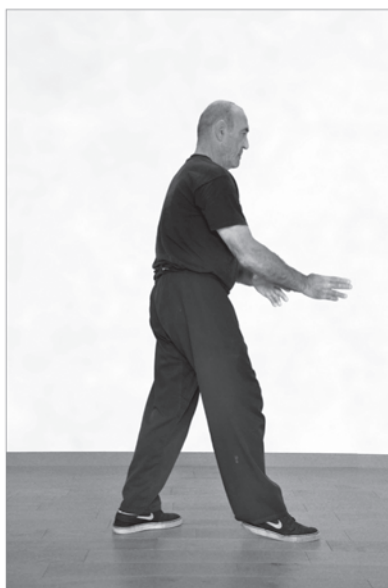
As to a martial practice, it is quite impossible to imagine without rapid displacements. Hence, once again, this need for an unequal distribution of weight between the feet.

Should one not distinguish between the practice of the form and the other aspects of our style like tui-shou, and the technical and martial applications?

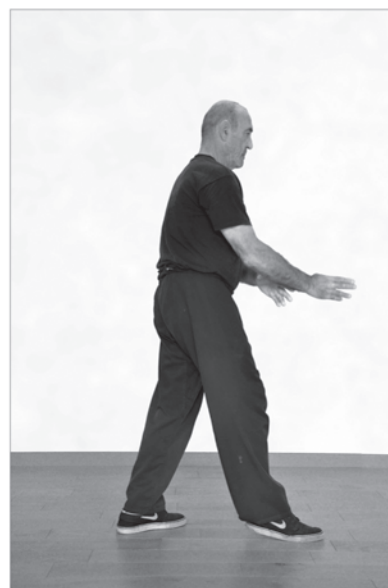
I consider that it is important to make sense of one's practice even if it doesn't always correspond to what one might expect. Yet, one has to admit that practising the form is very different from studying the technical applications and has nothing to do with training for free combat.



Putting the heel down whilst starting with the right hand.



Rolling forwards on the foot whilst pressing downwards with the heel of the hand. Association with ankle / wrist = precise moment to express Cai. Note that the vertical down from the knee is behind the ankle.



Release, the hand continues forwards whilst the vertical down from the knee remains behind the ankle.

Practising the form is when we absorb all that serve the other aspects of Taiji quan. Amongst others, to strengthen the structure in its 'substance' and not in its muscularity.

Hervé said the following: 'When considering the push from the 'rear leg', one cannot discuss the front foot rolling into position without discussing the retroversion of the pelvis. When considering the push, one cannot discuss the retroversion of the pelvis without discussing 'compression'. Regarding compression, we rather use the deep, postural muscles to 'absorb' with the structure. This is quite different when one takes large steps (large flexions and extensions) in which one uses more the external, locomotive musculature.

At the structural level of the body, all compression brings about an expansion without the muscles being activated. This is an important point as the expansion will only take place if the posture is correct and Hervé gave some conditions for this.

From another side, one must know that it is putting the skeletal muscles under tension which brings about the reaction of release. A high jumper will not be able to jump over a 2 metre bar just by contracting his muscles in a voluntary act. What is important is the run-up which generates sufficient tension for a reaction of maximum contraction. Furthermore, this run-up must not be too long as this would generate a crushing without the

spring reaction. And aren't we quite right to speak about jumper's spring?

We are faced with two concurrent phenomena, a compression of the body's bulk associated with a stretching of the musculo-tendon-aponeurotic tissue. Having understood this one realises that the time for expression is the final stage of the compression and tensioning, and not just simply an extension of the segments of the lower limbs and above. Thus, the expression of Cai does not occur when the rear leg relaxes but just before the release. This release being simply a phase of relaxation after the expression.

Hervé provided some hints to help carry out the above: *I recommend starting this work by displacing the centre of gravity towards the centre of the supporting area without going beyond it; supported by the rear leg one approaches the centre of support without transferring to the front leg. First we will descend a little by bending the knees towards the toes. In doing this we will tilt the pelvis backwards, turn it a little towards the front leg and unload the heel of the front foot. The extension of the structure (without any particular effort from the locomotive muscles) is immediate and, to start with, the pelvis appears to be 'suspended' between the two femurs, like a 'mechanical shovel swaying'. To start with one can maintain the retroversion until the end of the extension to prolong the feeling of suspension, however once one has understood it is no lon-*

ger necessary, furthermore in the second part of the extension, one can allow the pelvis to turn slightly anti-clockwise (if the left foot is behind).'

If we pay attention to the above when practising the form, it will no longer be necessary to think about it in the other practices as it will all have been absorbed. The form is there to consolidate the structure whilst allowing the energies to circulate freely. If the structure is not solid one risks injuring oneself if we want to work more dynamically. Hence the need for some muscle-building exercises to consolidate the structure so as to avoid strains for example.

So, what about this weight on the rear leg?

It is clear that it is less a question of the weight of the body on the back leg but rather to develop a posture that will allow a compressive force to express itself. So what is the aim of generating this compressive force? Quite simply to allow the expression of the gesture to reach the hands which are in contact with the partner. And if there is no partner what happens when I do the same movement, Cai for example, since it is the gesture we have chosen?

If there is no partner in front of me and so I am just practising the form, what is the use of expressing the 'power' of the gesture? It is the opportunity, as I have already said to work on oneself so as to be in optimal condition

when faced with an adversary / partner and to work on the release / relaxation of the whole body which completes the gesture. If I have a partner in front of me, the expression of the 'power' generated must be directed in his direction and not into the front foot.

Hence this block of the front foot at the precise moment which precedes the moment when the body's weight could be distributed equally between the two feet.

One rapidly notices that in both cases there is weight transferred onto the front foot! Practically 50% when practising the form and a little less when with a partner depending on the type of push, since when pushing straight forwards there has to be a significant force of reaction in the rear foot hence the need for a well-balanced structure below the driver being the waist, as practically all those who spoke indicated:

Jean-Paul Bonhuil cited Michel Timochenkov: *'... on the rear leg, tip the pelvis, lift the knee and the heel lifts...'*

Henri Mouthon : *'Relaxation, root oneself on the rear leg and push or slide the pelvis.'*

The movement of the pelvis is fundamental in the rise of the power towards the hands.

Hervé paints a picture of this movement of the pelvis:

'The concept of a spring implies that we cannot consider the pelvis as a door which turns on hinges since then the energy would not accumulate in the dantian. To start with one should consider the femur and the pelvis as being integral parts of a spring and so to restrict their rotation to within these limitations. This does not of course exclude working to mobilise the pelvis as a 'door' for other circumstances.'

And then added: *'When the pelvis turns, it is necessary to feel the tension between the pelvis and the thorax. It is self-massage, a 'wringing' of the abdomen which allows amongst others to decongest this central region (which comprises the liver, stomach, etc.). It is also the means extending the notion of 'spring' towards the upper body. This is the opportunity to use the diaphragm as if we were 'stroking the top of an egg'. It also allows us to feel the inner central axis along which the great flow of life passes (aorta, vena cava and the oesophagus) and by the by to 'free the column of air' when we chant or scan.'*

So the body's weight is not on the rear leg but practically equally shared between the two feet with just a little more on the rear foot. What becomes important is less the distribution of the body's

weight, than the mobilisation of the pelvis so as to assure the transformations which allow the 'power' to express itself.

But then:

What is it that characterises our style?

Frankly, the idea that our style is characterised by the weight on the rear leg should be put to one side and rapidly forgotten. This decision was unanimous and so the question must be reformulated; 'what is it that characterises our style, so different from the others and yet so close?'

Jean-Claude Trap made the following proposition; *'Our style is characterised by a spiral movement around a vertical axis which expresses itself horizontally.'*

Whilst I share the basis of Jean-Claude's proposal, I find the formulation insufficiently explicit. Equally I think there is confusion between the notion of 'going upwards' in the development of the internal force and the physical gesture which rather goes 'downwards' seeking to attain the compression explained by Hervé. This is particularly clear in the practice of fajin.

>

And so I will make another proposal, which is of course open to correction: *'The Yangjia Michuan style is characterised by short steps and a locking of the knee and ankle of the front leg at the instant of expression which allows a rapid development of force upwards and towards the hands transmitted by a spiral movement of the pelvis.'*

Nathalie Plewniak : *'What disturbs me in this phrase is the term 'locking' of the knee and ankle. I don't really agree, if I use the freedom of movement in the kuas I do not feel a locking but more that my front leg is free.'*

To carry out a block of the front foot such that the gesture of the arms results from the downwards compression, it becomes necessary to limit the bending of the front knee (as well as the rear knee) otherwise the 'force' is absorbed in the knees. Better still, the optimal posture would be to stop the flexion of the knee before the femoral condyle slides in the tibial glenoid, or a maximal flexion of about 20°¹, which confers a relatively erect posture.

¹ To clarify, the femoral condyles start by rolling in the tibial glenoids up to a flexion of about 20°, then they slide. At the precise moment when they start to slide there is friction and it would not be wise to block the knee at that moment as there is a risk of an injury well known to footballers.

And this relatively erect posture, isn't it also one of the characteristics of our style? And it is erect quite simply because the steps are short.

No, our style is not characterised by weight on the rear leg but by:

- erect posture,
- short step,
- short push without weight transfer to the front foot,
- respect of the principles stated in the Classic texts.

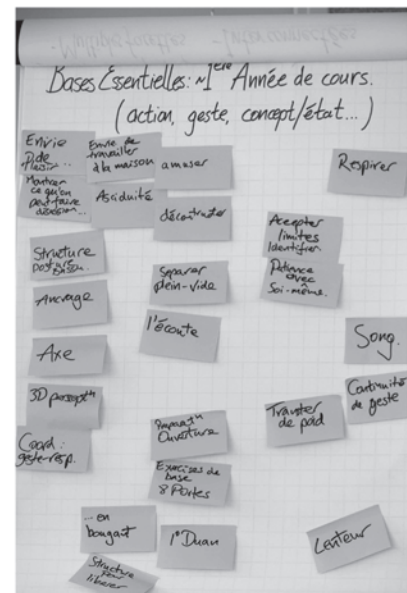
The results of these characteristics are the following:

- speed of movements,
- expression of gestures with fajin,
- upwards energy flow with global downwards compression of the structure,
- spiral motion of the pelvis which accentuates the energy rise.

Based on these observations, everyone can choose how to describe the characteristic with the words that suit them best.

Those who contributed to this workshop were: Anne-Lise Python who wrote the minutes, Nicole Henriod who lead the workshop, Henri Mouthon, Hervé Marest, Eugène Meyer, Valérie Opper, Laurence Bovay, Frédéric and Nathalie Plewniak, Pietro Papagni, Jean-Claude Trap, Jean-Paul Bonhuil, Jean Boucault, Nicolas Tesnière, Jessy Debarbieux.

Chérac, may 2019
Translated by Erica Martin



Piètro Papagni, Nicole Henriod



Claudy Jeanmougin, Henri Mouthon



Jessy Debarbieux, David Banchereau



Geneviève Drant, Nathalie Plewniak



Spring seminar 2018 at La Rochette



Photos Frédéric Plewniak



#jean-claude issenmann | -:

– It is almost five years now that I come here to practise daily and just as I start the form, every time, I cannot stop myself pondering this question which disturbs my inner calm, ‘will it be today that I am able to perceive the precise moment when the femoral condyles start to slide in my tibial glenoids?’



Journal notes

Mark A. Linnet

The notes primarily come from workshops that Laoshi gave in the 1990's, where he spoke about Tái Chi principles, as well as training methods for practicing what might be termed the Tuishou curriculum. The material assumes a basic knowledge of the Tuishou exercises and movements so the material might be useful to more advanced students and teachers. Undoubtedly there will be many questions and that is something that can only serve to enhance and deepen our practice.

Hopefully these notes will stimulate questions and serve to provide a deeper understanding of our form and practice.

The *italicized* print indicates my comments and reflections.

There must be a word of deep gratitude to Wang Laoshi for his teaching. The notes certainly speak for themselves as to the depth and breadth of his teaching.

Also, many thanks to Julia Fairchild for her translation during the workshops.

In April of 1993 Laoshi taught a class in which we practiced rooting. During this class students were first asked to push at the Dantien of their partner and then at the *Ming Men* point in the lower back. He wanted us to be certain that we were not holding our breath during the push so he asked us to say a few words while being pushed.

- *The person being pushed naturally breathes out, absorbing the incoming push. But the person should not completely exhale so as to keep some Chi in the Dantien.*

- *Laoshi mentioned that when meditating, emptying the Dantien is not a problem but when doing Tuishou some chi should remain in the Dantien.*

- *The breath out should also correspond with the timing of the push.*

- *If the push is long then the breath out should also be long.*

- *Sink deep and relax into the root if the push is strong and long.*

Also, we practiced *Peng* position (Hold Off) using internal force rather than hard strength. There is no movement in this position. Partners remain in *Peng* position without moving. Then we slowly and mindfully move in a horizontal circular pattern while maintaining the *Peng* position. As the partner adds more force, we absorb the force by sinking deeper onto our back leg, relaxing, slightly bowing the back and hollowing the chest (*Hang Xiong Ba Bei*).

Next, there is a push to the chest and then to the right and left shoulder. When a push comes very quickly there are times when we have to separate the shoulder from the waist. Of course, in most

instances we want to move the waist and the shoulder as one unit.

The challenge is to maintain our root in the midst of an incoming push and to remember when being pushed at the chest; the front knee should remain relaxed and bent. If it is straight then once a push comes, it is difficult to maintain the root on the back leg.

Also, keeping the head straight, relaxing, hollowing the chest and tucking the *Wei-lu* point in the lower back were important points to remember.

When practicing (Basic exercise # 6), *Peng* moving in a horizontal circular motion, keep in mind that the elbow turns toward the Dantien as one turns the waist. First the elbow tucks in before the waist turns.

At the end of April, Laoshi described the movement of *Jin* (internal energy). The *Jin* (internal energy) from the legs and the waist meet at the *Ming Men* point, which is then expressed through the arms and hands. *Jin* is not only generated in the legs and expressed through the arms and hands; the legs seem to move first but if that were the case then the body would not be balanced and stable for the push.

Everything has to move together.

When doing *Tuishou*, use the mind (intention) to find your partner's center. Then you don't have to use (*Li*) strength to push.

The Hands

In *Tuishou* the whole body is moving together from ankle to the wrist. When the body moves – the whole body moves. The joints fold when pushed – the

knees, elbows, waist and chest – if you resist you will be pushed away. Hands must be lively, light, listening and working together – as soon as the hands meet with your partner start to change – listening energy is crucial.

Don't just stand there and wait to be pushed. Use one hand then the other to channel energy – don't use two hands to push. Hands need to be lively, rotating, sticking and constantly changing.

Use the body like a hand to listen to your partner's hands.

Always look for his center point in the partner's body. Allow the hands to rise and to make contact with the pushing hand. The hands should not be dead but constantly listening and transforming. Hands do not move alone but are constantly transforming.

Listen with the palms

The *Chi* is turning in the center of the palm. Stay soft, listening with the entire body and mind, use your *Yi* to listen to your partner's energy. Use the waist to yield and listen for full and empty – using various attacking methods – moving in different directions – sinking and waiting for someone to come – then turning when the push comes, listening and bonding to your partner, constantly looking for opportunities, sinking or sitting as well as rising to discharge energy.

Discharging is short (*Duan Jin*), natural and clean not long (*Chang Jin*). If your partner grabs you, then quickly push. As soon as the hands move, the waist is already moving.

When you find yourself in a difficult position or disadvantageous position release and relax. Use different parts of the arm to listen (*Ting Jin*)... Wrists, elbows, palms, and shoulders all cooperate.

The partner should not feel any pain or slapping when being pushed. Pain and slapping are two signs of the use of *Li* or strength. As soon as you feel the heat of the hands start to turn. Slow non-dramatic turning of the waist. When someone pushes at the waist, move the waist in a small circle so that it returns to its original position.

The first push will usually be deflected. Return to a neutral position when the push does not work. Continue to look for blocked points, searching for points where your partner cannot escape. Slowly push your partner into a "corner" where he has no escape, and where he has less and less room to maneuver. If his body is resisting your hand, it gives you a point to hang onto or a point where



you can push off from. Pushes should not be easily seen. One hand is blocking at the same moment the other is pushing out. Try not to give your partner any idea of where to push or where to put his hands.

The feeling is that he has no place to push. Control his arm or body part until he cannot move—that's the time to push.

Practice being soft and moving with the push... If the push is slow, we move slowly with the push. If the push is fast be the first to arrive. With practice we slowly develop sensitivity and can feel that when the partner begins to manifest his/her push. If he does not move then do not move. With practice we develop the feeling when the chi is manifesting but not yet appearing. If we can feel the chi rising and gathering before it has actually manifested then we can yield to it since we can see it coming before has arrived.

Sink the chest – don't resist. Allow the hands to slide off the body like ice.

Timing must be perfect like catching a metronome in movement – Yielding and striking at the proper moment.

The Legs

For the most part the center is on the back leg. Don't shift to the front leg—but keep the front leg free. If the partner uses his legs to sweep or kick, he will go after the front leg. Also it is much easier to make changes staying on the back leg. If you really use the legs well the partner will not know how you arrived. Never straighten the legs, especially the front leg. If your legs are straight you will easily be pushed over and easily lose stability.

Movements should be small, if they are large they are much easier to see. If the movements are too large then areas of the body are exposed to attack. Too small then there is very little time to react for the beginner. Actually there is enough time if the body turns but the timing has to be perfect.

Yin Jing Luo Kong (Draw your partner into the void). Emptying draws your partner into the space where he loses his root and his center of equilibrium. That is the time to push him. This all happens in an instant...

When you turn the body you get closer. Deflect and the hand moving outward is immediately longer. Extend the shoulder. Practice the turning of the waist so that it becomes a habit. Try not to use hand strength



when deflecting. When pushed follow the push into the body, try not to react in a quick fearful way.

Use the body as a hand. Stick and bond to the incoming energy catching bonding and yielding at the same time – not a sudden movement to deflect – investigate the bonding and yielding. When we stay back to protect ourselves and then step up to push, it is easy for the partner to see the push coming. The idea is to get close and to get the advantage. Continually find the place where you have more hands available than your partner. Give him what he wants then you can push him at will.

The real road is to give yourself to your partner. Give your whole body. There is nothing you don't give him.

Do more *Embrace Tiger Return to Mountain* to get more spring in the legs. The basis of *Tuishou* is *Ding Bu* (fixed step) – to channel energy outward you have to be fixed, even if you are moving around you have to fix your step before you discharge energy. To stay fixed you have to put your mind in your feet. Do not move the feet.

When you practice form, practice low, strong and hard.

Practice every day. Basic Exercises are crucial.

Look to practice an alternative to yielding... *Ding Jin*. When someone keeps doing the same push do something that surprises him. When pushed to the *Dantien* or other parts of the chest—fill the *Dantien* and root the push. This kind of *Ding Jin* is very important since it is the kind of *Ding Jin* that one needs to discharge energy. Perhaps use against someone who is looking for a way to push then suddenly soften and root his push. This kind of movement is not the same as resistance, we are using the chi in the *Dantien* and the root in the feet to push back incoming energy.



The waist, legs, hands, chi, and breath have be coordinated, practice until it becomes natural.

Tuishou is really a practice of the mind...

Relax in the waist and legs... We cannot be relaxed without breathing and chi. Whole body needs to be full of chi. Sometimes it takes 5 pushes or more to find the right opportunity to push. Be careful not to grab, when using pulls, just a quick light grab below the elbow or perhaps just slightly above the elbow.

Use your yi to make contact with your partner... as if there is no separation between his/her body and your hand. The connection is made with the Yi. If you use *Li* or hard strength then it is very difficult to bond to the partner and to truly know him and his intention.

Inward strength must be matched with outward relaxation.

Give the body – give it totally – use the waist... everything will follow.



Commentary on “The song of the authentic path”



Pierre Lang

The following text (in the new version proposed by the commission on classical texts which will be detailed in a future *Wen Wu*) is a poem which describes the culmination of internal work. The apparent meaning of the verses is deepened by notes in parenthesis which help reveal the hidden meanings.

The Song of the Authentic Path

Without form or appearance

(in a total forgetting)

My body is emptiness

(internal and external are undifferentiated)

Free and unattached

(in the moment)

Held echo from the Western Mountains

(oceanic vastness, infinite Heavens)

The tiger roars, the monkey cries

(refining my seminal essence)

Clear is the source, calm is the water

(the heart is quiet, the mind sharp)

The river empties itself, the sea churns

(the original energy gathers)

Unfolding my deeper self, cultivating my vital energy

(the mind is settled, the breath full)

This text, which contains implicit references to internal alchemy practices held hidden from the uninitiated, runs the risk of being studied only for its uniqueness, much as the hermetical texts of

alchemy of the Western Middle Ages. My aim is not to decode a message aimed solely at initiates, but to bring some clarity to the poetic dimension of the text, and to show how the power of the imagery can enrich our practice.

In this text, unlike the vast majority of the “classical texts”, there is no advice or council from a master to his disciple. Instead we find a text written in the first person by a Taijiquan practitioner having reached a high level of realization¹. It makes use of poetic images, since only poetry can approach the ineffable.

Without form or appearance *(in a total forgetting)*

In the practice of Taijiquan our intent is brought onto the realization of a form whose appearance we interiorize. This automatic awareness is an impediment to the awareness of the moment. The forgetting is therefore the pre-condition to the welcoming of the present.

My body is emptiness *(internal and external are undifferentiated)*

The body is empty of all that can block the free circulation of energy, empty of all tensions creating the illusion of an identity separate from the external world. This emptiness is simultaneously omnipotent, able to generate all forms, and dissolving of the barrier bet-

¹. This text is by Song Shuming (1840-1925), a reputed master of Taiji quan, author of many texts on Taiji quan of which the Song of Taiji quan.

ween myself and the world, between microcosm and macrocosm.

Free and unattached (*in the moment*)

The omnipotence generated by the emptiness of the body is made present by the expression of a movement free of all restraint and attachment. This movement is not born of any intent, which would be an expression of the ego, but of a pure spontaneity born of the moment.

Held echo from the western Mountains (*oceanic vastness, infinite Heavens*)

The West being associated with dusk, "held echo from the Western Mountains" can be understood as a memory of the ending day, of the time going by never to come back. The Western Mountains are those behind which the sun sets and are therefore the last image left by the day before the start of night. This "held echo" tells us also of the evening air, of the sky still lit by the setting sun while the land is in darkness. This twilight moment where everything is fading into the limitless, where space and time become one and infinite. If "the heart is calm" (see below), it does not reject the emotion born from an awareness of this infinity, and of its beauty.

The tiger roars, the monkey cries (*refining my seminal essence*)

At this moment of twilight, between "tiger and monkey", the diminishing light frightens the wild animals, from the most courageous to the most cowardly. Only human beings know that the light will return and give birth to a new beginning. But in order for this new beginning to not be a simple repeat of the past, an effort must be made, an effort towards refining the self (our essence), a new chance in other words.

Clear is the source, calm is the water (*the heart is quiet, the mind is sharp*)

The water referenced here is not the sea or the ocean, a metaphor for the Dao, but the river, which is closer to the human. "Clear is the source" points to our essence and at the transparency required to reach our "proper nature". To return to the source, and to clear it of all that obstructs a vision of the moment as it really is, that is the proper mindset. "Calm is the water" points to the necessity of controlling this element (the most important of the Five Elements for at Daoist), which, left to itself, can engender chaos (floods, for example). The mind needs to be like a clear spring, and the heart must be calm. This calm state cannot be forced, it is the result of a long process of self development, identical to meditation (TaijiQuan being considered then as a moving meditation).

The river empties itself, the sea churns (*the original energy gathers*)

Here we have two distinct events which share a common image; that of the loss of boundary. To make this clearer, consider the river as it reaches, and mixes with, the sea. The water where the river and the sea meet can be said to be of the river or of the sea, but it is clear that it is a point of transformation from river water to sea water. What we are considering here is a transformation, and it can be considered from either point of view.

From the point of view of the river, it "empties itself", and if the river is the metaphor for the self, (the sea being the metaphor for the infinite, the Dao), this points to an "emptying", to a reversing of the awareness, a "metanoia". This "metanoia", this reversing of awareness, makes what was perceived before by the old awareness (the river) as a chaotic loss of self into barely a ripple by the new awareness (the sea).

The information in parenthesis points to the fact that this important event is accompanied by an influx of original energy, just as the river receives the sea, a sea which contains the primordial waters from which all things emerged (including the river).

Unfolding my deeper self, cultivating my vital energy (*the mind is settled, the breath full*)

In conclusion, the poem brings the preceding abstract imagery back to the essential ideas: "being oneself", "being alive". The "deeper self" or "original self" is an idea essential to the Daoist project of fusing with the Dao.

The "mind is settled", though on what is not said, invites to settle on nothing while being intensely present, and perceiving the world as it is in perfect clarity.



A new association: “Practical Taiji”



How did was our Association born ?

Angers and its region already have many Taichi Chuan associations of different styles, so why create a new one ?

First of all because many of us were meeting at Tuishou workshops and we were fully aware that only frequent and regular training would allow us to integrate the principles and progress.

Then there were three to five of us who started joining in public parks on a regular basis from March 2018. We could have continued in this way but very soon we were confronted with the vagaries of the weather, and even if on a rainy morning we could have practiced at one of our homes without doing any damages, finding a sheltered and more suitable place seemed essential to us. The associations in Angers are lucky enough to have access to municipal halls free of charge, so we decided to set up one to obtain a slot.

And then, Tuishou cannot be done without a partner and in our respective classes of various forms, only a few are Tuishou fans. So we choose not to favor one style over another and allow to unite them in a meeting open to all styles and to participants of disciplines different than Taichi Chuan but close to its basic principles.

Finally, Tuishou cannot be done without a partner and in our respective classes of different forms, there are few Tuishou enthusiasts. Consequently, we have chosen not to favour one style over another and to allow them to be brought together in an meeting open to all styles as well as to practitioners of disciplines other than Taichi Chuan but close to its foundations.

Sophie Cornueil

A different functioning

Our first desire is to offer everyone a regular meeting place to rework the exercises learned in class or in workshop. But pragmatic questions have arisen about how we operate.

To begin with, we opted for a duration of 2 hours every other Sunday morning on average, because we already meet once a month during the Tuishou workshop proposed by Michel Leclaircie and the rooms are more easily available on weekends. As this is not a course given by a teacher but just a place of work and as we do not want to burden the budget of our members already registered elsewhere, we have set an annual contribution of 5 €, sufficient to cover the insurance to which the town hall asked us to subscribe; these moments are intended for the practice of Tuishou but it is nevertheless possible for those who wish to take advantage of this place to train on the sequence of their form and/or weapons in perfect autonomy.

After a year of existence, today we have 13 members even if we have never been all together on a session. Our members come from different disciplines and styles such as the Essence of Change school, the Yangjia Michuan, Qi Gong, the Systema... During the first hour we offer exercises and we try to adapt ourselves according to the levels and requests of the people present. We build on what we have studied in the courses and workshops we continue to follow to nourish our practice. And everyone is free to contribute. On the second hour, we indulge in free Tuishou, and everyone agrees with his partner on fixed steps or mobile steps, slow, fast...

This is how our shared interest in Tuishou led us to simply found “Practical Taiji”. (<https://taijipratique.wixsite.com/taijipratique>) If you are in the region and interested, you are welcome.

Volunteering and associative life rewarded

Philippe COCHAIN



On Saturday, February 16, 2019 Hélène Grimal received the Bronze Medal of Youth and Sports for her action as a volunteer involved in associative and sporting commitment, for 15 years, as president of our Club de Taichi Chuan de Versailles.

It is common to see cups or medals awarded in the sporting world to reward the winners of a competition, match or event, to honour those who have won the most points, set the most goals or arrived first. But this Youth and Sports Medal recognizes Hélène and the volunteer work, the recognition of all those who, in the background, work and give of their time, get involved in administrative tasks. They carry an ideal for the club to exist and continue to exist over the years in the city of Versailles, within our style of the Yangjia Michuan Taichichuan and the Fédération sportive Famec (Federation of Chinese energetic and martial arts), bodies where she was our representative.

Hélène has nurtured this passion to develop our association, bringing and concretizing her ideas and her vision of the club through the hours of teaching that have multiplied with the number of students enrolled, each year exceeding one hundred. She participates in the classes as an assistant to the teacher, but also gets involved in the production of DVDs, recordings, films, support material for learning our style. She is often during the workshops behind the camera, her objective remaining focused on learning and transmitting our style, the primary goal of our Taichi Chuan association.

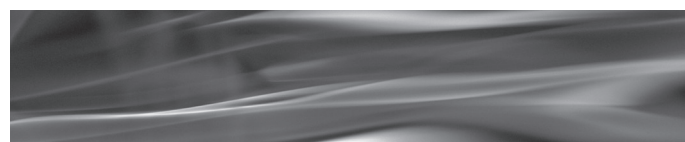
Her dynamism has made it possible to develop a partnership with the Taichi Chuan Club of Paris, where our teacher Sabine Metzlé also teaches; Hélène has set

up, with the various administrative committees she has led, the ideal conditions for Sabine, a renowned teacher, to transmit and offer us the best of her teaching. She has thus contributed to the quality of the teaching given in the club, which is one of the strong points recognized by all those who practice our style: the students and teachers who also come to perfect their knowledge. The training of teachers, some of whom become professionals, positions us as a reference club in the world of Taichi Chuan, in line with Master Wang Yen Nien's Yangjia Michuan Taichi Chuan.

On top of all these qualities, Hélène has always liked organizing and sharing friendly moments within the club, with the Chinese New Year's lunch, the local celebrations, the welcoming of new pupils and all the joyful moments that contribute to the unique atmosphere of our association.

This medal is a tribute and recognition of Hélène's efficiency, her volunteer work and her passion and, on behalf of everyone, I would like to express our most sincere and warm thanks to her for having supported and developed our association over these 15 years, wishing her to remain with us for a long time.

President of the Club de Taichi Chuan de Versailles



La nouvelle équipe du Bulletin



Françoise Cordaro,
rédac' chef



Emmanuel Leblanc,
maquette
et pages de couverture



Sophie Cornueil,
mise en page

Agenda des Agendas

Tous les stages organisés par les différentes associations sont mis à jour, quasi quotidiennement, sur notre site:

www.amicale-yangjia-michuan-tjq.org/?q=fr/taxonomy/term/Stages

La programmation peut couvrir les dix mois à venir.

Pour toute exhaustivité, vous reporter donc en ligne sur le site de l'Amicale, vous pourrez ainsi faire vos choix en pleine connaissance de cause.

Bien amicalement à tous,
Rédac'Chef et le CA de l'Amicale du Yangjia Michuan.

Le Bulletin

Est lui aussi le signe de la vitalité de l'Amicale et un outil très important d'information et d'échanges entre nous tous, membres de la famille du Yangjia Michuan. Vos articles, vos courriers des lecteurs et autres informations à faire paraître dans le bulletin sont à transmettre à : Françoise Cordaro, notre Rédactrice en chef - contact.ata.anjou@gmail.com, Le Coquereau 49320 Blaison-Saint-Sulpice.

Pour vos articles et vos courriers, le mieux est de les rédiger sous Word et de les adresser en pièces jointes à Françoise Cordaro. Si vous faites une présentation avec montage photos, n'oubliez pas de joindre le fichier photos séparément. Nous sommes obligés de traiter chacune des photos et nous ôterons celles que vous avez incluses. Nous suivrons au mieux vos consignes de présentation.

Pour obtenir une bonne qualité d'impression, les photos doivent avoir au minimum une résolution de 150 dpi (150 dot per inch) et une taille la plus large possible : 10 cm de large au moins (rappelons qu'une colonne du Bulletin fait 9 cm).

Les articles doivent parvenir à Françoise fin novembre pour celui de janvier, fin mars pour celui de mai et fin juillet pour le numéro de septembre.

Sollicitations...

Il est possible que vous soyez contactés par Françoise pour pondre un article. Ne soyez pas surpris... Quelques associations n'ont pas encore communiqué le nom d'un(e) correspondant(e) de manière à établir une communication plus aisée entre le Bulletin de l'Amicale et les associations, merci de le faire.



Le Site Web et le Bulletin de l'Amicale

LE SITE WEB est un outil important de communication entre nous ; il est également la vitrine de l'Amicale vers l'extérieur. Il est régulièrement mis à jour par l'équipe rédactionnelle. Nous espérons qu'il vous donne satisfaction et que vous y trouverez les informations utiles qui vous intéressent. N'hésitez pas à nous faire part de vos remarques et suggestions.

www.amicale-yangjia-michuan-tjq.org

Le référencement de vos associations

Veillez à faire référencer votre association avec ses coordonnées et son site Web si elle en possède un. Ceci constitue votre vitrine vers l'extérieur, vous fera connaître et vous amènera de nouveaux adhérents. Si votre association possède un site, merci d'y faire figurer vos statuts et de les mettre en lien.

Pour les associations déjà référencées

Nous vous conseillons d'aller vérifier vos informations. Si elles ne sont pas complètes, nous communiquer, via la boîte aux lettres de l'Amicale, ce que vous voulez voir figurer en termes de responsables, enseignants, téléphone, email, site Web, etc. Nous vous rappelons que le contenu de votre site est la responsabilité de votre association en conformité avec ses statuts.

Le Bulletin sur le site Web

Les bulletins sont mis en ligne, en accès libre, 10 jours après qu'ils ont été envoyés par envoi postal aux membres abonnés. Les bulletins sont publiés presque simultanément en français et en anglais. Quasiment toutes les pages du Bulletin sont traduites en anglais, pour permettre à nos amis anglophones et chinois d'avoir accès à nos informations.

Les autres chapitres du site Web

N'oubliez pas les chapitres mis à jour régulièrement : stages, événements, etc.

Les autres chapitres font également l'objet d'évolutions périodiques : allez les consulter régulièrement si vous n'avez pas opté pour l'abonnement à son flux RSS. Enfin, il est à noter que de plus en plus de pages sont traduites en anglais afin que nos amis et partenaire américains, anglais et chinois puissent avoir facilement accès aux informations.

Pour publier vos informations de stages sur le site Web :

adressez un e-mail avec éventuellement un fichier attaché au format .rtf ou .doc, ou, si ne pouvez pas faire autrement, envoyez un document papier qui puisse être scanné à Jean-Luc Pommier pommier_jl1@yahoo.fr

63, rue de Seine – 94400 Vitry – France

Conseils pratiques : soyez clairs et précis en vous conformant au schéma suivant :

- Thème du stage
- Date et lieu du stage
- Nom de l'animateur(trice) avec numéro de téléphone
- Association organisatrice
- Le contact pour le stage (nom, mail, tél., etc.)
- Adresse du site Web
- Informations complémentaires éventuellement, sous format pdf ou Word (2 pages maximum)

Procédure

Jean-Luc met le stage en ligne et en envoie la confirmation à celui ou celle qui en a fait la demande, ainsi qu'aux autres destinataires, mis en copie, de la demande. C'est la seule manière d'éviter les contre-temps. Cela permet au demandeur de vérifier si tout est OK.

楊家秘拳太極拳會



*Amicale du Yangjia
Michuan taiji quan*