

A paqua strike (top photo) and a tai chi kick (above). An example of a hsing-i kick (right).



This
monumental
and ground-
breaking
work
represents a
thorough
analysis of
the physical,
mental, and
energy
principles of
each internal
system.

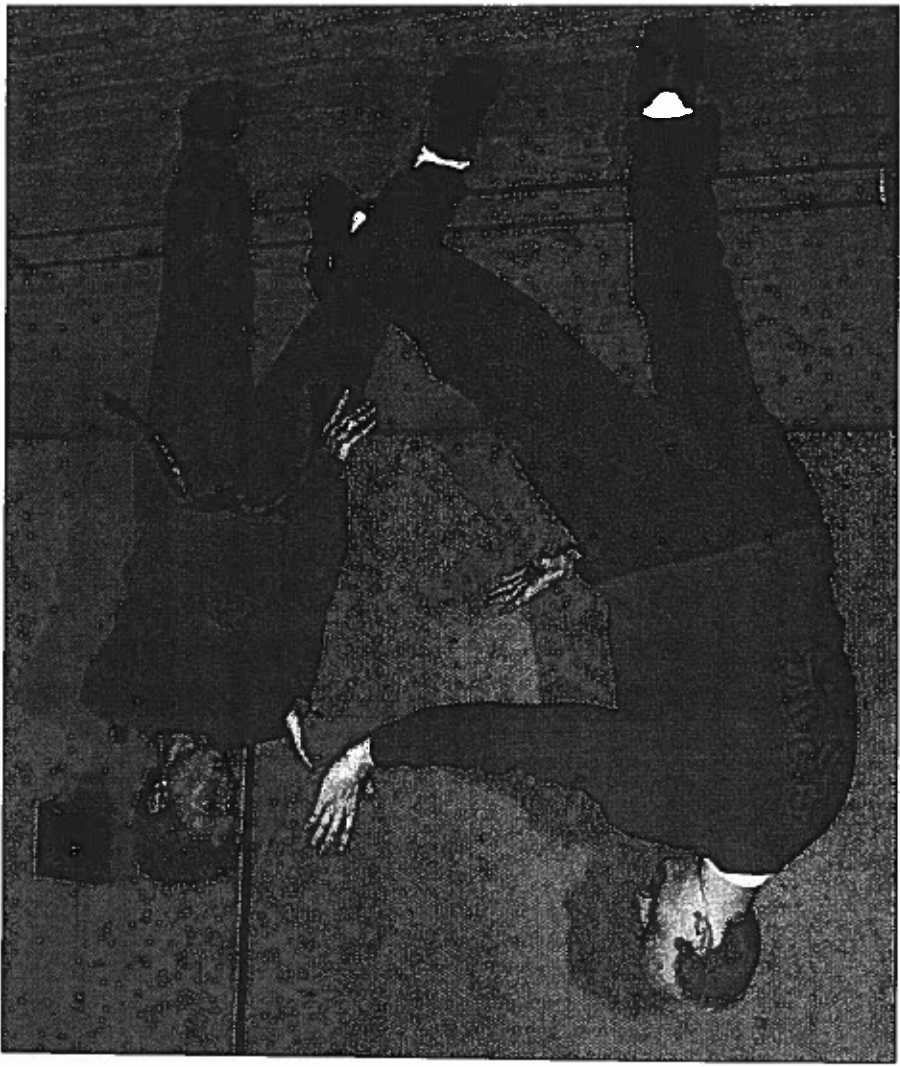
TAI CHI, HSING-I, & PAQUA THEORY AND PRACTICE

By Jeffrey Glanz

I've been teaching the martial arts for over 20 years and practicing since 1967. I started my training in the hard styles of karate (shotokan) with professor H.I. Sober, and I underwent rigorous training for nearly seven years before. Shortly after being awarded shodan (first-degree black belt), I seriously injured my back. A first lumbar fracture of my vertebra precipitated a reconsideration of my future in the arts. I quickly realized that engaging in vigorous and strenuous martial arts practice placed inordinate stress on my now

frail, sensitive, and injury-prone body. Would I be resigned to retirement at the ripe old age of 22?

My primary teacher, professor H.I. Sober, a master of the soft styles as well, suggested I study with the late Kwong Yung Chang (more commonly known as Franklin Kwong). I began studying tai chi chuan with professor Kwong, as he was affectionately referred to, and continued to do so for three years. Since then I have continued my studies in tai chi, Hsing-I and paqua with Sober. Not only did I regain



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my former strength and vigor, but a new world of martial arts opened to me. I no longer wanted to return to my practice of shoto kan karate, but strongly believed that both the study and practice of these internal arts (nei kung) would sustain my thirst for the martial arts.

This article is not about my personal journey through the arts, but an attempt to compare the theory and practice of tai chi, paqua and hsing-I. As a professor of education at Kean College of New Jersey, I have been interested in conceptual paradigms which help synthesize and concisely explain diverse and seemingly disparate theories in various disciplines. Applying this methodology to theories of internal boxing is intriguing and enlightening. In essence, I have taken complicated theories and movements and broken them down, so to speak, into fundamental concepts. This results in two benefits:

1. The teacher can easily explain the essential components of each art in a simplified, introductory manner; and
2. The student will be more easily able to understand and integrate the theories of these esoteric arts.

The comparison study chart which accompanies this article contrasts tai chi, paqua, and hsing-I in terms of 16 criteria. The chart represents a thorough analysis of the physical, mental, and energy principles of each internal system. The remainder of the article will briefly describe each criterion by providing examples where appropriate.

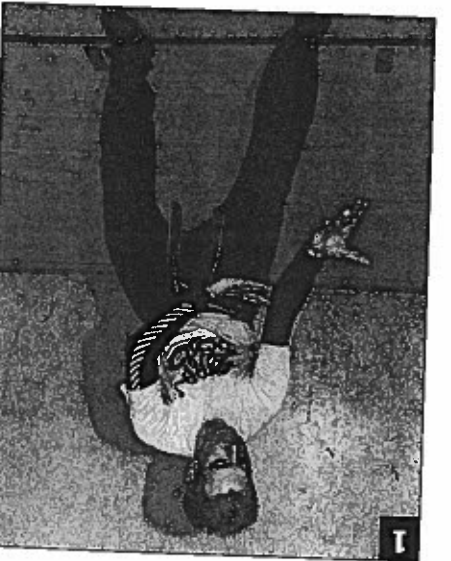
Commonalities

Tai chi, paqua, and hsing-I represent the three most fundamental internal styles of Chinese martial arts, whether external or internal, have their origins in Chinese tradition and culture. What differentiates external and internal systems is the degree to which emphasis is placed on chi development.

Tai chi chuan, paqua chang, and hsing-I chuan emphasize the cultivation, dissemination, and utilization of chi more than any other style of martial arts. While there are certainly important differences, both conceptually and practically among these three internal systems, it is necessary to understand the similarities among them.

At the most fundamental level, they all are internal styles which, by definition, concentrate on circulation of chi throughout the body. Practitioners of internal systems understand that training the chi body is more important than training the physical body. Learning to build chi, circulate, and apply it

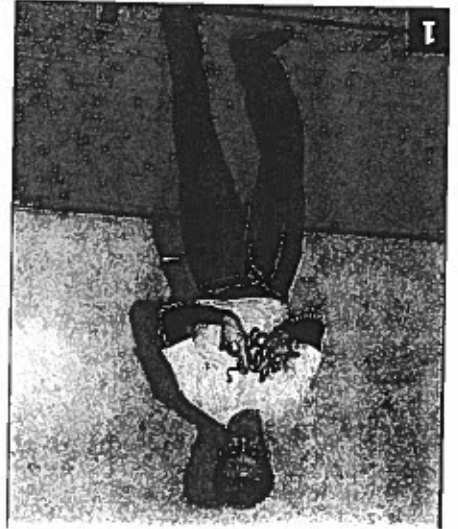
Chi in paqua is generated by drawing energy from circular patterned movements. The size of the circles may vary. When generating chi, the practitioner stands on the circumference of the circle, drawing energy from the center while performing various hand and foot postures.



In tai chi, chi is generated at the dan tien, and is continually guided throughout the body by a series of controlled breathing and mental techniques.



Hsing-I power is concentrated and developed at the dan tien. Chi in hsing-I, however, is projected outward, creating spirals of energy. The energy patterns are much smaller circles than those created in either tai chi or paqua.



Tai Chi/Paqua/Hsing-I Comparison Study

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| Tai Chi | Paqua | Hsing-I |
| 1. Internal (style) 2. Circulates Chi (purpose) 3. Calms the mind, improves the health, self-defense (effects) | | |
| Meaning | Grand Ultimate | Eight Trigrams |
| Chi Flow | Even, smooth (Yang/Wu styles) | Smooth circles |
| Speed | Slow (but can increase speed for fighting) | Medium |
| Movements | Soft | Medium |
| Power | Soft as a whip (effect: strong & penetrable) | Soft circles |
| Fighting Strategy | Defense as offense (passive) | Curiosity Defense: circles and rounded attacks (passive) |
| Distance | Middle/Short range | All ranges |
| Major Offensive Technique | Push | Point-strike |
| Body | Iron wrapped in cotton | Soft/hard |
| Kicks | High/Middle/Low | Seldom |
| Practice | Push Hands (Chin Na) | Rapid Walking (Chin Na) |
| Philosophy | Yin/Yang | Trigrams of I-Ching |
| Origin | Ching Sun-feng Sung Dynasty 12th Century | Long Hsi-huan 18th Century |
| Pattern | ☉ | ☐ |
| Similar Systems | Crane | White Lotus |
| | | White Eyebrow Phoenix fist (Chen) |

are major purposes of internal styles. In other words, chi kung is the primary form of practice among all internal systems.

As a result of practicing the three internal systems, there are three effects that readily become apparent:

1. Health improves because of physical conditioning, cardiovascular fitness, and better circulation of chi;
2. Mental focus and enhanced concentration are developed; and
3. The ability to defend oneself is enhanced.

In sum, tai chi, paqua, and hsing-I are similar in style, purpose, and effects (see chart).

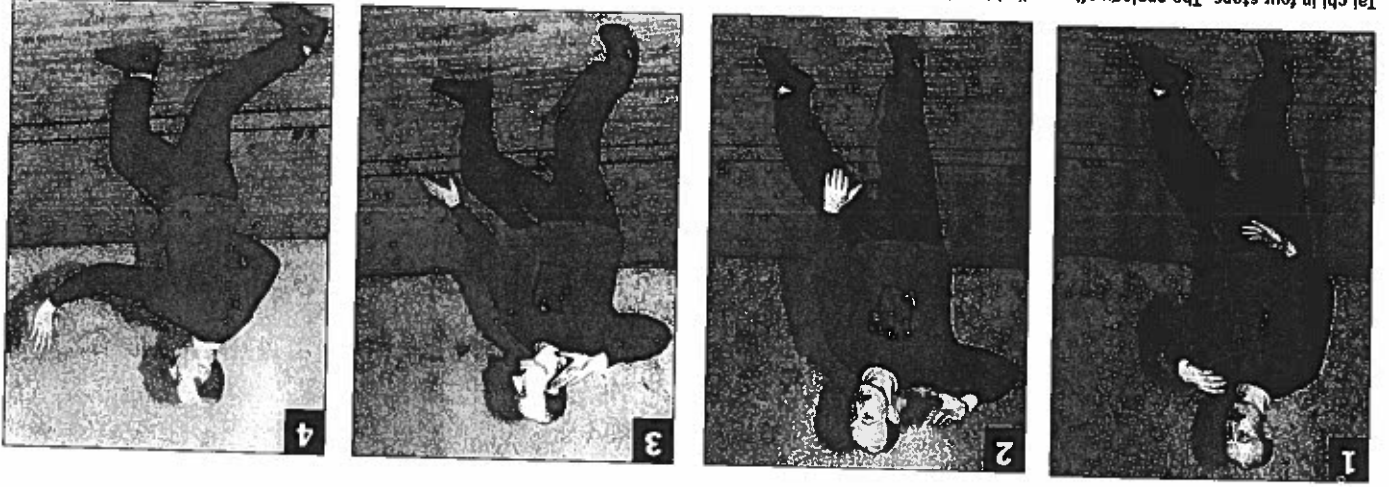
Meaning

• Tai chi chuan is a Chinese exercise system that consists of slow, circular hand, foot, and body movements combined with deep breathing and focused attention. Tai chi means "Grand or Supreme Ultimate" martial art form or system. Many believe that it is the source of other more-advanced forms or styles; hence, it is known as the "Supreme Ultimate" style.

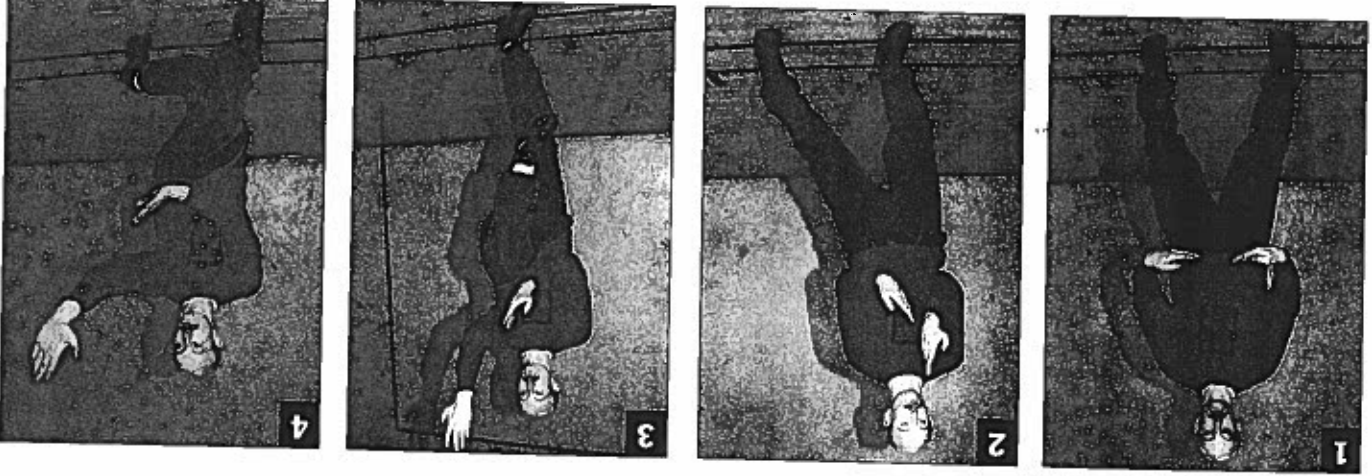
Many instructors assert that students master the elements of tai chi as a prerequisite for learning other styles. Specifically, the Yang style of tai chi is taught since it is the most popular of the four styles of tai chi and perhaps easiest to learn. Despite its apparent simplicity, tai chi is the root of other systems and its varied postures and movements form a solid foundation from which to understand and perform other arts.

• Paqua chang ("Eight Trigrams Palm") or paqua chuan ("Eight Trigrams Fist") is also a Chinese exercise system that emphasizes circular movements (both hand and foot) that are performed slowly and rapidly, alternately. Its name is derived from the book of Changes (*I-Ching*), since paqua is the physical manifestation of the philosophy that change is the most fundamental principle governing all human interactions.

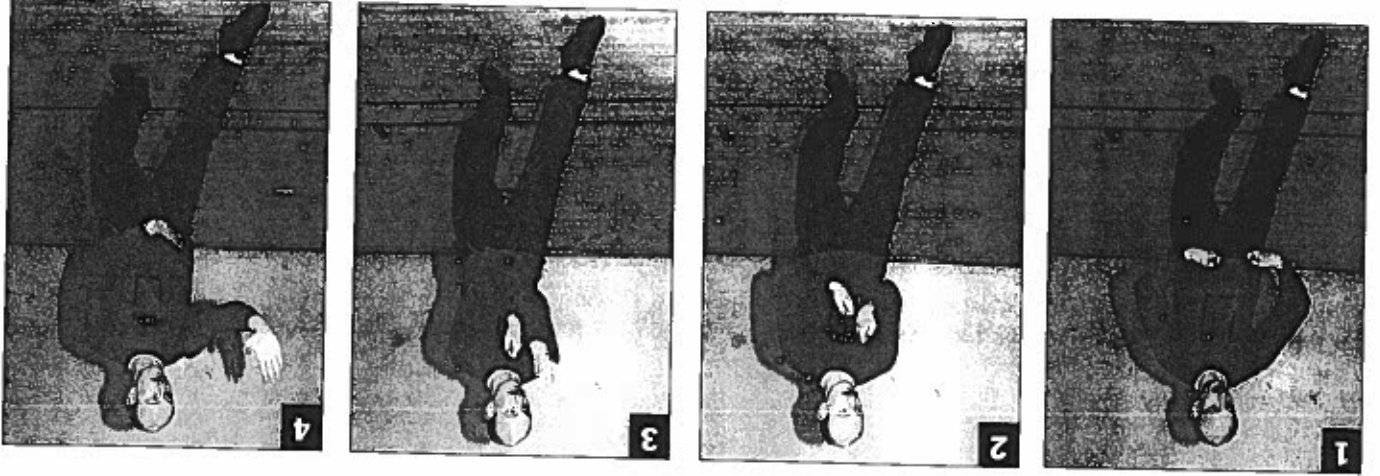
Tai chi, paqua, and hsing-I represent the three most fundamental internal styles of Chinese martial arts. Their popularity has grown immensely over the past several years.



Tai chi in four steps. The analogy often applied to tai chi is "iron wrapped in cotton." To an opponent, the tai chi practitioner's arms feel soft and supple.



Paqua in four steps. In paqua the body is both soft and hard in similar proportions. The balance is achieved by distributing chi evenly throughout the body.



Hsing-I in four steps. "Cotton wrapped in iron" accurately depicts hsing-I's essence. The outward appearance of a hsing-I stylist is hard, yet, in actuality the energy in the muscles and bones is soft.



Power is manifested in tai chi when jing is emitted in tai chi is essential for generating power. Power also is attained by achieving a solid stance or root. The ability to root in tai chi is

• Hsing-I chuan is the third internal Chi-

nse system of exercise that is more linear in its movements and performed more quickly than the preceding two systems.

Essentially, the character "hsing" means shape, form, or the structure of a thing. "I" refers to intention or will. Therefore, hsing-I means the shape of the intention or the ability to bring will into form. According to one published report, hsing-I's names suggests "the harmonious merger of thought and action."

Chuan, the ending used for all three systems, refers to fist, boxing style, or general martial arts ethics. Chuan also implies concepts such as respect, humility, and courage which are transmitted to students and are as essential, if not more so, than the physical movements of each art. In essence, the meaning of the three internal systems of Chi-nese boxing is derived from Chinese culture and philosophy.

Chi Flow

Chi is the foundation of all three internal martial art systems. Based on Chinese medical theory, chi is the vital, unseen energy without which human life could not be sustained.

According to some, chi is the psychophysiological power associated with blood and breath. Others believe that it is electromagnetic energy produced by the body.

The concept of chi, though difficult to comprehend, is not exclusively Chinese. In Sanskrit, it's called prana; in Japanese, ki; in Greek, pneuma; and in Hebrew, ruah.

Although ever-present, chi can only be experienced through conscious efforts to feel and gain control over it.

Chi or vital energy is harnessed and circulated by performing a number of special exercises, combined with breathing techniques and mind control. The process by which chi is developed and utilized is known as chi kung.

In tai chi, chi is generated at the dan ten (literally "the place of energy" located approximately two inches below the navel and two inches inward) and is continuously guided

Speed

The movements of tai chi (especially Yang style) are practiced at a slow, even, and deliberate pace. Movements can be speeded up in case of an attack. In fact, tai chi masters are very quick and fast, as they respond to aggression. The premise behind their marked ability to move so quickly is that to truly move quickly, one needs to completely relax the musculature so a rapid explosion of energy can occur. When the muscles are tight and rigid, rapid motion is greatly hindered. However, attaining this level of speed requires years of training the body and mind to relax. The best way to achieve this relaxed state is to move very slowly. Hence, for the most part, tai chi is practiced at a deliberate and relaxed pace.

Paqua emphasizes the application of palm strikes and circular movements. While the body below the waist may be solidly planted, the upper portion of the body is flexible.

Power is manifested in tai chi when jing (power that is derived from muscles which have been energized by chi) is emitted in a whip-like fashion. (Or according to Dr. Yang, strong and penetrating.) Power is also manifested by a solid stance or root. The ability to root in tai chi is essential for generating power.

Paqua emphasizes the application of palm strikes and circular movements. While the body below the waist may be solidly planted, the upper portion of the body is flexible.

Movements

Tai chi is noted for its slow, relaxed movements to allow chi to flow smoothly. Tai chi is more than a martial art.

Paqua movements are performed as the practitioner walks around the circle, practicing various palm changes, and executing twisting and turning movements. The steps are alternately slow and rapid.

Hsing-I is practiced at a fast speed. Feet make rapid forward and backward movements in consonance with varied hand movements.

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by building momentum via rapid spinning motions. Power in hsing-I is generated through spiraling and twisting hand movements, performed in conjunction with rapid foot movements.

Fighting Strategy

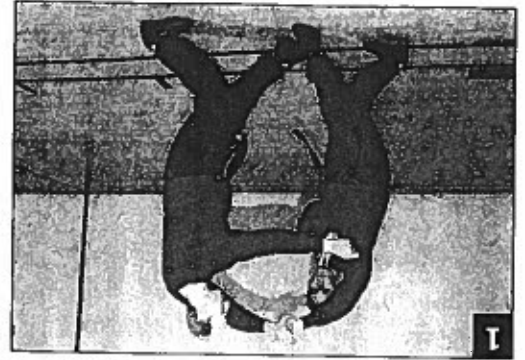
Tai chi uses the concept of yielding to overcome opposing forces. Not unlike water, which initially gives way to an opposing force and then completely envelops it, the practitioner yields at first and ultimately surrounds and overcomes the opponent. Tai chi's fighting strategy is passive in the sense that the initial reaction to an opposing force is defensive. From a defensive posture, the tai chi practitioner is best able to launch an offensive technique (e.g., a push) to overcome the aggressor.

The paqua practitioner's fighting strategy, not unlike tai chi, is not to meet the opponent's force directly but to redirect any force by moving in a circular pattern around the punch, usually hit by a palm strike. Paqua utilizes quick circular movements to nullify an attack. Paqua is also passive in that defense is the initial strategy.

In hsing-I, the fighting strategy is much more direct than the previous two, internal arts. While there is misdirection of the incoming attack, this is much more subtle and less obvious than the tai chi or paqua. Hsing-I uses an active fighting strategy by internally blocking and then striking an opponent.

Distance

Tai chi is effective at both middle range and short-range distances. This is because the practitioner uses fairly wide stances and can



This is an example of a paqua technique blocking a hsing-I attack. Paqua employs a palm strike as its most effective offensive technique. Sometimes when attacked, the paqua stylist will withdraw, then suddenly and rapidly swing around with a palm strike.

quickly step in or out, as necessary.

Paqua is effective at all ranges because of its rapid and expansive circular movements. Hsing-I is most effective at close-range quarters principally because of its narrow stances and close-in striking techniques.

Major Offensive Technique

The major offensive technique employed in tai chi is the push/strike. The push is usually made to an opponent's midsection. Hands are positioned parallel to one another or angles. By initially withdrawing, the tai chi practitioner uses the opponent's body momentum to offset balance and make the strike even more effective.

Paqua employs a palm strike as its most effective offensive technique. When attacked, Paqua employs a palm strike as its most effective offensive technique. When attacked, Paqua employs a palm strike as its most effective offensive technique.

Body

The analogy often applied to tai chi is "iron wrapped in cotton." To an opponent the tai chi practitioner's arms feel soft and supple to the touch (like cotton). However, when struck it may feel as if the opponent was hit by a crowbar (like iron). The practitioner achieves this level of ability by relaxing the body completely, circulating and building chi in the bones and surrounding musculature. To an untrained observer, the tai chi practitioner looks relaxed and elegant, albeit devoid of power. This is, of course, inaccurate. In paqua the body is both soft and hard in similar proportions. This balance is achieved

by distributing chi evenly throughout the body. To the observer, the paqua practitioner appears elusive and smooth. In hsing-I just the opposite effect is present. "Cotton wrapped in iron" accurately depicts hsing-I's essence. The outward appearance of a hsing-I stylist is hard, yet, in actuality, the energy in the muscles and bones is soft. To the opponent it feels as if the blow or strike applied is hard, but what is not perceived is that this "hardness" is generated by circulating the energy inwardly in soft, spiral motions. (Stone warrior practice, an ancient Chinese exercise utilizing isometric-like tension, is similar in appearance and effect.)

Kicks

The kicking techniques employed in tai chi are to high, middle, and low target areas. Kicks, however, are not employed with great frequency. When properly used, kicking techniques are devastatingly effective.

The paqua practitioner seldom utilizes kicking techniques. The strategy is to circle and strike the opponent with the palm. In hsing-I low kicks are employed as a means of setting up the opponent for a fist strike. Whereas in tai chi a kick may be thrown as an offensive technique (although not very often), in hsing-I the kick is most always thrown as a secondary technique to set up a punch or strike.

Practice

The primary method of practicing techniques in tai chi is known as "push-hands" practice. Partners face one another and attempt to offset each other's balance. Fighting techniques are also practiced in the form of



The primary method of practicing techniques in tai chi is known as push-hands. In paqua, rapid walking practice is most often employed to teach the movement system and chi flow. In hsing-I, chin na is used as well as chi sao.

chin na—a system of jointlocking techniques similar to and a forerunner of jiu-jitsu and judo.

In paqua, rapid walking practice is most often employed to teach the movement system and chi flow. Iron palm training is also utilized by beating the palm against various substances—from beans to gravel, steel balls, and stone.

In hsing-I, chin na is used as well as chi sao practice (a two-person sensitivity exercise incorporating blocks and strikes). Also, many more fighting routines (two-person sets) are practiced in hsing-I, such as, an san pao.

Philosophy

Tai chi is based on the yin/yang theory which originally was developed to explain the creation of the universe. The ancient Chinese were very observant of the forces and patterns of nature. They studied the naturally occurring phenomena around them as a science.

Their empirical observations demonstrated that there was an inherent pattern to the changes in the universe. To explain the ever-changing and complex universe, the Chinese developed the yin/yang theory.

According to Chinese theory, prior to creation there was only stillness. This stillness is called wu chi, meaning "emptiness" or "void." Yin and yang sprang forth from stillness and it is the dynamic interaction of both forces that constitute the essence of all creative activity.

Paqua was derived from the system of philosophy based on the *I-Ching* (Book of Changes). According to author Robert W. Smith, the *I-Ching* originated as "a manual of eventually becoming a book of wisdom, one of the Five Classics of Confucianism. It became a common source for both Confucian and Taoist philosophy."

The *I-Ching* is based on the fundamental premise of change. All elements in the universe are constantly changing. The *I-Ching* or Book of Changes is based on eight diagrams known as "kuas." Each kua represented a different

Origin

The origins of these systems have not been verified for historical accuracy, however, the following represents the best information currently available. It is believed that Chang San-feng developed tai chi chuan at Wu Dan Mountain during the Sung dynasty around the 12th century. According to Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming, "Until the mid-19th century, tai chi chuan was a closely guarded secret of the Chen family."

Paqua chuan was created during the Ching dynasty, in the latter part of the 19th century, by Tung Hai-Chuan. Hsing-I's founder is thought to be Yehu Fei of the 12th century. He also was the developer of eagle claw boxing and various chi gung exercises.

Pattern

Tai chi's basic pattern is moving along a straight path, while performing circular hand and foot movements. Hence, the "circle in the square" represents tai chi's basic movement pattern.

Paqua's circular hand and foot movements are performed while walking around a circle and performing twisting, turning, and spiraling movements. Since circular movements dominate, the "circle surrounding the square"

Conclusion

This article has attempted to compare fundamental elements among the three prominent internal martial arts systems. Even a cursory examination of the chart will give you a fairly accurate comparison and help you understand the similarities and differences among the three internal systems of Chinese boxing. The chart is meant to be tentative and suggestive. Additions, revisions, and clarifications are welcomed.

If we can, in the end, develop a generally accepted summary or generalization of the major components of these arts, then students will be able to analyze, understand, apply, teach others, and, possibly, innovate. All these must take place within the context of due respect to our teachers and their teachers before them, with appropriate respect and understanding for our brother practitioners, cousin practitioners, and distant practitioners. For we are striving along the same path to truth and understanding.

Similar Systems

Tai chi, paqua, and hsing-I are similar to many other schools of martial arts, especially various animal styles. Movements, chi flow, and basic conceptual frameworks in these other systems resemble one another. It is important for students to be cognizant of these relationships. The students will realize that each style is not an "island to itself," but an outgrowth or amplification of other related styles. This analysis is also beneficial in demonstrating that there are only a limited number of basic postures or movements and that each different system develops its own interpretations, innovations, and applications. After all, the human body has just so many potential weapons and just so many potential targets.

angular steps that cut across an imaginary circle (see the chart).

accurately depicts paqua's movement pattern.

Hsing-I's straight-line attack is based upon

angular steps that cut across an imaginary

circle (see the chart).

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