

“four tips” closely connected, coordinate the upper and lower body segments, distinguish stance weighting and offweighting, and hold the body straight. Only then can you become naturally smooth.

#### d.      Stable Balance:

*Xingyi* moves quickly with force, and differentiates distinctly between action and stillness - “initiate action like an avalanche, set into the ground like a tree putting in roots.” During practice, you must pay particular attention to keeping your balance. Your ability to keep stable will improve as you get used to the techniques and as your body becomes conditioned. In the beginning stage you must develop strength of the lower limbs and flexibility of the lower back and legs, and repeatedly solidify the basic movements and basic requirements. You must especially train “standing” to get the upper body extended and the lower body solid, to give you a stable foundation, and to allow your energy to reach from the crown of the head to the tip of the toes. When practising the five basic techniques, keep the positions at the same level - do not rise and drop at random. Whether advancing or retreating, rising or dropping, stay light, agile, stable, and strong. When practising the twelve animals, whether you extend or contract, move horizontally or vertically, rise, land, or turn, you must “move like the wind and stand like a nail.” As you land, flex the knees, roll the hips, and grip the ground with your toes to prevent your upper body from swaying.<sup>21</sup>

#### e.      Solid Strength:

When learning, the fist must be tight, the stances stable, the feet solid, the strikes fast and strong, and the power full. All the muscles are trained by contracting against each other. When advancing, the front foot should stick close to the ground so that the force goes straight forward, and the back foot should drive with full force into the ground such that “the feet tread the

centre door and don't land empty." Breathe out to gain power to drive the back foot. Whenever the front fist punches with an outward rotation to shake outward, the rear fist rotates forcibly inwards with a tucking in force; if the left fist drills upwards then the right fist pulls downwards - the hands balance each other. The forearms rotate inward and outward, like wringing a rope, so that as one rises and drills the other lowers and rolls, both twisting and rolling back and forward as a unit. When the arms pull in they must stick tight to the body; "the elbows never leave the ribs, the hands never leave the heart, follow the body tightly like going in and out of a hole." This will make the body hit as one unit.

Being solid does not mean being tense. You must not tense the chest, pull in the abdomen, hold the breath or use brute force. You should keep the spirit calm, the chest open, the abdomen solid, and the breath natural so that the muscles can contract or relax as need be. The segment using power will be hard but still soft, fast as lightning, and the other segments will be naturally open, relaxed and steady. The chest especially must keep empty and calm.

## 2) Improvement stage - "hidden power"

ànjìn

暗劲

The requirements of this stage are:

linked (flowing)	liánguàn	连贯
round (smooth)	yuánhuó	圆活
supple (pliable yet tough)	róurèn	柔韧
complete (integrated)	wánzhěng	完整

<sup>11</sup> tr note: Hold the ground with the meaty ball of the toes, don't curl the toes under.

Guo Yunshen called this stage that of “hidden power.” He said: “The spirit and energy are expanded and not broken, movement is rounded and not blocked,” and “train in order to lengthen the ligaments, combine the channels, and lengthen without weakness.” When training, work on linking the basic positions and basic movements together so that you can move comfortably. This makes the movement smooth, integrated, expansive and precise.

To be “linked together” means that every single position has total coordination between the seven body segments - head, shoulders, elbows, hands, knees, hips, and feet. To be “smooth and integrated” means to achieve the six unities of the internal and external, and the seven sequential movements of the upper and lower body. That is, that the head leads the body, the waist (lower back) leads the hips, the hips lead the knees, the knees lead the feet, the shoulders lead the elbows, the elbows lead the hands, and the hands lead the fingers. In this way the entire body moves as a unit.

Training during this stage emphasizes flexibility and agility. Practice can be either fast or slow, changing naturally. At this point, when the postures stop, power should continue, and when the power changes, intent should continue. In this way the rhythm is quick and clear, and has a sharp yet continuous feel. Power should be both hard and soft, combining both without losing either. Do not hold the fists too tight. Punch as if pulling on a spring, this will make techniques solid yet elastic. Perform split as if chopping an object in front of you. The hands should be springy whatever the technique - whether they are both striking to the front, one twisting to the left as the other twists right, one driving up as the other presses down, or one striking forward as the other pulls back. This elastic quality differs from the quality sought in the previous stage of training, which was obvious and hard power. In the previous stage you sought to be clear, quick, hard and fierce; now you should seek to be subtle, solid, and agile. The sound the landing foot makes should also change from loud to soft, from clear to quiet (with a slight sound). Training in this way it appears as if the strength lessens, but