

Chapter 2

Taichichuan as a Health Exercise

In the sporting circle it has long been acknowledged that taichichuan is suitable for both men and women, old or young, weak or strong, and those suffering from chronic diseases due to the softness, slowness, coherence and harmony of the exercise. Evidence shows that the prolonged and conscientious practice of taichichuan significantly improves ones health. Both the strength of the bones and muscles and the functions of metabolism, respiratory and cardio-vascular systems are better for those who exercise taichichuan than for those who do not, according to a survey in an aged group. Their X ray film study shows only mild degeneration and hyperplasia of the bones and spine, and most of them walk vigorously without bending the back or knee. Their mean blood pressure is 20mm Hg. lower than those of the controll group, with lower incidence of arteriosclerosis. An exercise loading test made by performing within one minute 15 trips of up and down two steps, also showed better functions of the heart.

It has been stated in the taichichuan classic *Chant of Thirteen Kinetic Movements* that the final purpose of practising taichichuan is to reach longevity and eternal spring(youth).The authoritative classic of taichichuan also described: 'How delightful it is to see that a Master of taichichuan in his eighties is able to fight a crowd,' which shows the physiological effects of delaying the aging process and maintaining vigour in the aged. A convincing example is one of the authors. Ma Yueh-liang now 86, has been engaged in the art for more than sixty years and is as healthy and vigorous as ever. He continues to teach and participate in various nationwide martial arts demonstrations, and his mental and physical responses seems no weaker than when he was young.

Taichichuan is quite distinct from such strenuous and energetic sports as long-distance running, ball games, swimming and others. The latter are called dynamic physical exercise, which depends on strenuous activity of the muscles and greatly increasing the oxygen demand

from his family. In the traditional slow forms, he omitted some of the repetitions, jumping and stamping movements, so as to make the forms more smooth and structured, thus creating one of the main schools of taichichuan, the Wu style, which has been appreciated and enjoyed by vast numbers of students for many years. The fast form on the other hand kept the original jumping and attacking movements to be studied by those people eager for further study and practice.

The forms of Wu style taichichuan are naturally structured and characterised by agility, smoothness and continuity. All movements conform to the theory of the mutual promotion of yin and yang.

Wu style tui-shou(push hands)requires strictly centred equilibrium of the body, stillness, subtlety and softness in practicing the interweaving variations. In tui-shou with moving steps and *dalu* (a special procedure of tui-shou with moving steps), alertness and 'sticking' to each other are also outstanding characteristics. Lan Cai Hua is the name of a combat exercise reaching the acme of perfection; it is as mighty as the flow of a great river and has such a complex strategy that it can hardly be described in words. Besides these, the Wu style taichichuan has kept many types of weapons such as the double-edged sword, tai chi combating sword, tai chi broad sword, tai chi long spear, twenty four stratagems of tai chi spear, four 'piercing' spears and the sticking sticks.

In the year 1928, Master Wu Chian-chuan moved from Peking to teach taichichuan in Shanghai. The Shanghai Taichichuan Association was founded in 1935. In 1939, the members of the Association were given a fund to build the Chian Chuan Hall on the ninth floor of the YMCA building on Tibet Road in Shanghai, a convenient place for learners to practise and study. Meanwhile overseas organizations of Wu style taichichuan were also established in Hongkong, Macao, Singapore, Malaysia Philippines, Canada and other countries. There are also Wu style taichichuan classes at the United Nations' Club. Master Wu Chian-chuan died in 1942. It was a great loss in the field of martial arts in China. The work of the Association in Shanghai is being continued by Ma Yueh-liang and Wu Ying-hua.