

Chapter 3

The Characteristics of Taichichuan in Martial Arts

Taichichuan is a martial art. Besides being a health exercise, it is the art of self-defence. While taichichuan is often mysterious to laymen, those who have learned tuishou(push-hands) of taichichuan are able to appreciate the meaning of 'using four-ounces to deflect a thousand pounds', which is described in the classics. People are also skeptical about its effects in real combat because of the soft and slow way of practicing. The following are explanations about the characteristics of taichichuan in martial arts which are in accord with the theory of kinetics.

1. Overcoming hardness with softness

A saying in the taichichuan classics states : '*rou* overcomes *gan*'. *Rou* means soft and flexible, *gan* means hard and energetic. *Rou* as the negative force belongs to yin, and *gan* as positive force belongs to yang. If in tuishou, the force you use is antagonistic to that of your opponent, we call it the *gan* force, regardless of its quality, that is, whether it is heavy or light. On the other hand, if your force does not resist or oppose the other's, we call it the *rou* force. The dexterous and quick interweaving action of these two different forces are the fundamentals of the martial art of taichichuan.

If a *gan* force confronts a *gan* force, the person who possesses the greater physical strength will naturally win. If meeting head-on with *gan* force you resist or oppose it with your force, ignoring how to go along with it, then the strength you use is called the dead force. Contrary to this, the *rou* force is called the movable force. When the forces are in confrontation the dead force is often lead into emptiness by the movable force and the former eventually fails. This in taichichuan is '*rou* overcomes *gan*'. To apply the rule of '*rou* overcome *gan*' in practical tuishou, one should learn how to divert the opponent's force making it empty, and how to utilize one's adhesion strength to seize advan-