

CHI FLOW

NEWSLETTER

Bagua's Lake Palm

We will profile the Lake palm and consider its place within the Pre-Heaven and Post-Heaven Trigram Symbols.

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THE TRIGRAMS AND BAGUA'S PALM

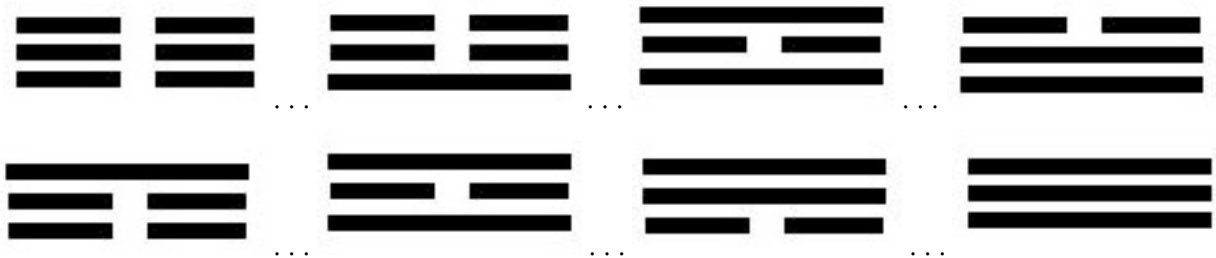
The Eight Palms, of Baguazhang (or, Eight Trigrams Palms) are primarily derived from the various shapes of the palms based on the Eight Trigrams as featured in the I-Ching (Book of Changes). The trigrams are eluded to in both the Tao Te Ching and the Hua Hu Ching. The Eight Trigrams and the Eight Palms have a variety of associated martial actions. Some of these associations start with the progressive nature of the Trigrams and embodies them in the way that the shape and changes to the shapes of the palms progress in Baguazhang.

The three lines of the Trigrams relate not just to the palms but also the structure and action of the hand, body, and foot. When the hand initiates, the rest of body follows closely in sequence finishing in the feet. This approach to the body movements in the practice of Baguazhang takes it beyond performing isolated techniques or particular movements. Instead of an emphasis placed solely on the Palms, the Trigrams are used to point the way to a more holistic integration of entire body's structure and movement by characterizing the changes to the hand, body, and foot in sequence.

In this installment on Bagua's Eight Palms we focus on the Lake Palm.

BAGUA'S LAKE PALM

As discussed in the last issue, the Eight Palms, of Baguazhang (or, Eight Trigrams Palms) are primarily derived from the various shapes of the palms in accordance with the Eight Trigrams. These are detailed in the I-Ching (Book of Changes) as well as the Tao Te Ching and the Hua Hu Ching. Each of the Eight Palms has a variety of associated behaviors that progressively transform through cycles nature of the lines of Bagua.



However, the three lines of the trigrams not only refer to the palms but also align with the action of the hand, body, and foot. The hand initiates, the body follows closely and at last the action comes to rest in the feet. In this way, the practice of Baguazhang moves beyond an emphasis placed solely on the Palms as isolated techniques or particular movements, but instead, points to a more holistic integration of hand, body, and foot.

In the polar or Pre-Heaven symbol, the Lake symbol is located above the Mountain symbol. The Lake symbol is located between the Earth and Heaven trigrams in the cyclical, or Post-Heaven symbol.

The Lake Palm is characterized by a concavity in the palms which face and press towards Earth and rise upward in the center of the palm from the Earth towards Heaven. This is directly connected to the polar (Pre-Heaven) view, which places Lake above Mountain: the Lake symbol is that of a broken (or concave) line above two solid, unbroken lines. The placement of the palms between Earth and Heaven connects with the cyclical Post-Heaven view. Additionally, the concept of making the chest concave and raising the back is also featured in parts of both Xingyiquan and Taijiqian where there is a similar structural arrangement as in the Baguazhang Lake Palm.

The Lake Palm is sometimes performed as a beginner's step: it can be done both linearly and circularly. The downward pressing action of the palms with slightly curved arms leads to a rounding of the back and the torso. This further produces a spring-like energy or Beng Jing that is often culti-



Fu (Dui.)

The Lake Trigram.

This trigram is associated with the action of pressing. It sits above the Mountain Trigram in the Pre-Heaven arrangement of the Bagua symbol and is concaved from which the pressing downward concept is derived from. Lake is associated with the following traits: joy, inviting, soft outside and hard inside, as well as salt found at the bottom of a dried lake bed.



vated in other internal arts such as Taijiquan and Xingyiquan, (not to mention Yi Quan).

While the Lake Palm is often characterized as a downward pressing, concave shaped palm, explorations into the convex shape can lead to a variety of ways of issuing enormous amounts of downward pressing power. It's almost like a double hammer, or drop, of force on an object when carried forth transcending from concavity to convexity; especially in the midst of a martial application.

(Image on Right) Zou Shuxian in "Unicorn Spits Out Book (Right):" the left hand forms a Lake Palm and presses downward.



Another concept that uses the downward pressing Lake Palm with first concavity changing to convexity, involves rounding the back up from the feet over and around the dorsal side of the thoracic region (as if rising up from the surface like a mountain) and down through the palms. This theory comes from the Pre-Heaven arrangement of symbols in which Lake is above Mountain. Closer inspection of this posture leads to the conclusion that in order to be martially effective structure, the back must be held in such a way that the tailbone is dropped and the top of the spine is lifted. Just as it says in the Taijiquan classic, the body is aligned through the top of the head as if suspended from a string. In practice, this action not only fortifies the pressing power of the Lake Palm, but strengthens the spine as well.

The Lake Palm is often used to press down on the opponent's face or chin in order to manipulate the back of an opponent's neck, or cervical curve. When grabbed in an around the torso hug, the opponent's neck can be manipulated by grasping the chin - effectively using the back of the opponent's neck like a hinge. Common next steps involve toppling the



opponent at the waist or performing a standing choke. At this point, you are usually also on top. Then you are in good position to apply a naked choke with the palm, edge of the hand, or forearm. When attacking an opponent, you can grab the chin in the same way, or put one hand on the face (or chin), the other on the back of the head, and then follow through with manipulating the neck as previously discussed.

In the next installment we will discuss the Fire Palm and its lifting concept, as it can be used to attack either (or both) the upper or lower hemispheres of an opponent's body, as well as manipulate either upper or lower limbs to carry forth a variety of joint locks or chokes.



Gerald A. Sharp in the "Mount the Horse and Draw the Bow" (Left) posture. Notice the right hand forms a Lake Palm and presses downwards.



A BINARY PERSPECTIVE: MATH AS A FOUNDATION OF NEI JIA KUNG FU

BY DAVE TAYLOR

The foundation of modern binary mathematics was set forth by Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (who also invented Calculus independently from Newton). It is clear that Leibniz had been thinking about the symbolic representation of logic for some time. However, the inspiration and at least some of the content for his binary work came when Leibniz interpreted a 64 hexagram chart from a copy of the "I Ching" as a system of binary mathematics. How much of this understanding of binary mathematics



is built into the hexagrams and how much is due to Leibniz is uncertain. We may not ever be able to correctly attribute the contribution of the Chinese Yin-Yang diagrams in the emergence of binary mathematics.

In about 1700 Joachim Bouvet, a Jesuit missionary in China, passed a copy of a 64 hexagram chart to Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz. Leibniz had a long history of interest in symbolic logic. The hope was that the mathematical puzzle of the arrangement of the Chinese symbols would interest the famous mathematician. In my view, this simple event changed the world.

Leibniz made a significant effort to unlock the mystery of the symbols and published a paper, "An Explanation of Binary Arithmetic Using only the Characters 0 and 1, with Remarks about its Utility and the Meaning it Gives to the Ancient Chinese Figures of Fuxi"

<http://www.leibniz-translations.com/binary.htm>

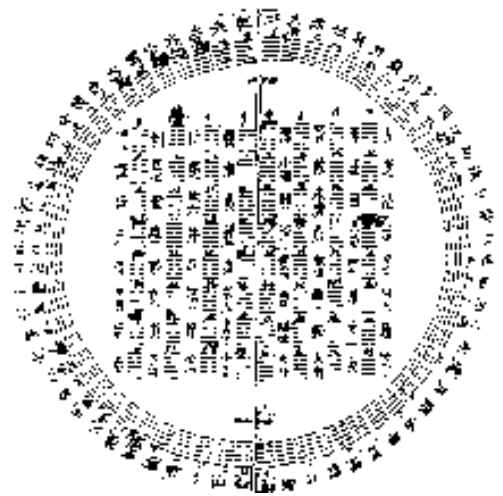


This paper lays out all of the foundation of binary mathematics. This is the basis of binary computers. There are also other applications in terms of both logic and mathematics.

DUALITY AND BINARY CONCEPTS

The modern view in the west is that the symbols that inspired Leibniz were just symbols and their associated meanings are entirely what you make of them. (To paraphrase information theorist Claude Shannon.) This view is that (like the canals on Mars) the intelligence is behind the eye of the beholder. It was the genius of Leibniz that was the wellspring for the insight into the importance of binary symbols as a mathematical system.

Alternatively, the Yin-Yang symbolic formalism is a binary concept. The Yin-Yang symbols are certainly intended to be used to parse ideas into a dualistic logical structure. Dualities are fundamentally linked with a binary per-

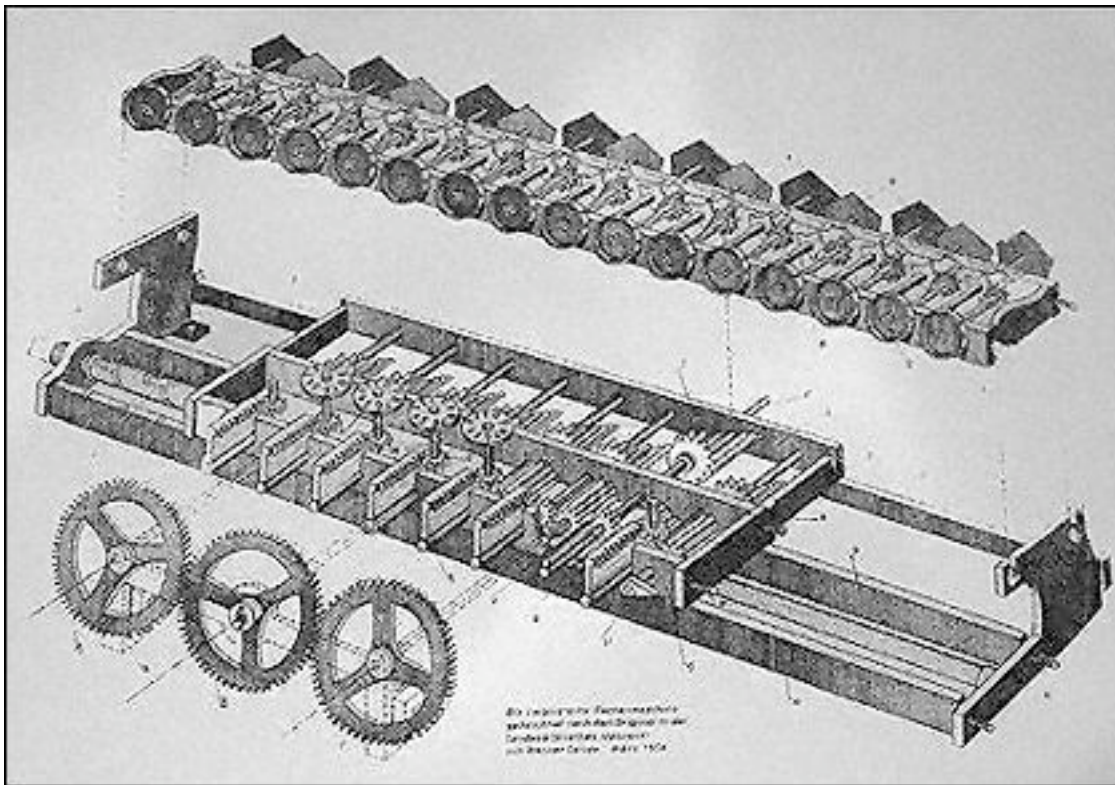




spective. The Yin-Yang symbolic construction is very ancient and significant losses in transmission have been associated with book/scroll burnings and other events in Chinese history. Parts of the binary interpretation of the trigrams and hexagrams are clearly consistent with addition and arithmetic operations. The use of the trigrams or hexagrams in mathematics is no more of a stretch than any of the astronomical associations that were key to so much of the early development of mathematics and physics. In this view, Leibniz was necessary to provide an accessible mathematical interpretation of a sort of Rosetta Stone from the ancients that was laid in his lap.

So, even our view of the role of Leibniz and the role of the 64 hexagrams in the development of a useful binary mathematics is uncertain (and binary in its own way): we cannot escape the duality between two different perspectives.

CALCULATING IN BASE 10 AND IN BASE 2

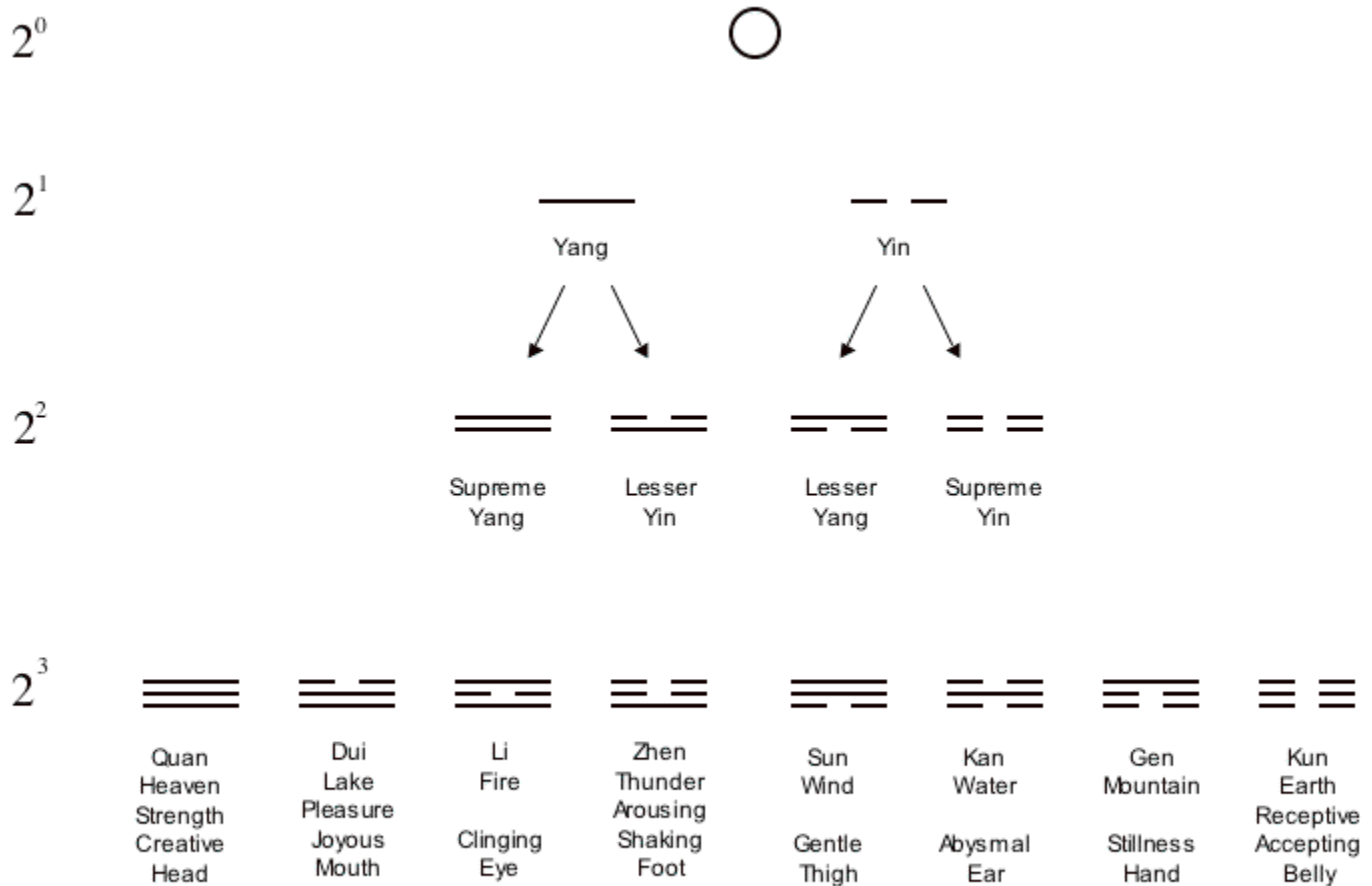


Leibniz also developed a mechanical decimal (base 10) calculator called a “reconner.” The picture of a model of this device appears on this page. A design schematic of the decimal calculator also appears on this page. There were issues with the way this device handled the arithmetic operation of carrying, which limited the usefulness of the base ten prototype mechanical calculator that Leibniz built.



But, as the Leibniz clearly points out in his 1703 paper in the “Memoires de l’Academie Royale des Sciences,” he was keenly aware of the advantages of the binary (base 2) scheme for machine computation. It is said that Leibniz proposed a binary mechanical calculator but was unable to get funding to build the device. I find it ironic that Leibniz, who was known for his “this is the best of all possible worlds” philosophy, proposed building a binary digital mechanical computer but was unable to get grant funding despite the merit of his idea.

SPANNING THE POSSIBILITIES IN A BINARY SYSTEM



There are other examples of ancient civilizations employing base two systems of symbols, but it is the Chinese yin-yang system from I Ching as interpreted by Leibniz that blossomed into modern binary mathematics. The yin-yang system not only provides the foundation for modern digital technology but also dovetailed with Leibniz's fascination with symbolic logic into Boolean and other logic systems.

The dualistic point of view leads to defining simple ways to span all logical alternatives that are possible. In binary, the first cut on this is one or zero, off or on, high or low, yes or no, etc. In the yin/yang symbolism, the first cut is soft or hard, empty or full, male or female, etc. (In this scheme, the indeterminate state is Wuji, before the first separation is made.) In this parsing of categories into subcategories, we continue with dividing the zeroth order categories: HARD is divided into HARD/Hard and HARD/Soft while SOFT is divided into SOFT/Hard and SOFT/Soft. Or expressed another way major Yang/minor Yang; major Yang / minor Yin; major Yin / minor Yang; major Yin / minor Yin. The next step takes us to the trigrams (see the Figure).



Each of the next set of Yin-Yang categories has more detailed associations, while still spanning all the possibilities. The choices of associations are not unique, but the next cut and the subsequent associations depend on the earlier associations. This is the sort of distinction we see in the differences between different styles of Baguazhang, and even between Baguazhang, Xingyiquan and Taijiquan. Once a movement is categorized, it effects the categorization of everything that comes after it. In this way, the each set of categories can all span every possible alternatives with different categorizations.

Why would this esoteric mathematics be useful to a martial artist?

While it may appear that these categories are needlessly complicated descriptions of actions, they make it easy to place a fluid and evolving situation into a context and structure that provides a direction for your response. Instead of one specific technique followed by a single specific counter-technique, your response to an action can be chosen within a continuum of choices within a group. This builds a certain amount of flexibility and innovation into the martial art system.



In practice, the consequences of this approach can be seen in a fight. We are used to thinking about the outcome of a fight hinging on a single opening or error leading to a decisive technique. I am visualizing something like a heavyweight boxing knockout punch, where a single mistake is all it takes. In Neijia kungfu, there is something a bit different going on: often there is not anything that can be identified as a single big mistake or an opening. Instead, an opponent often makes reasonable-seeming choices and their situation still goes from bad to worse. It is not that there are no mistakes. It is just that the organizational scheme discussed here provides the neijia practitioner both a more nuanced perspective and a view of the changes in the larger context. Things go from bad to worse for the opponent because they fail to comprehend at least one level of the conflict. This is exactly the sort of ability that separates the relatively small group of superior fighter pilots who are able to think about their combat in three full dimensions.

This yin-yang (trigram) categorization also allows a martial artist perspective to pursue a balanced development of the various component groups that span all the possible actions. Just as making the opponent one dimensional can be an advantage, keeping yourself from becoming one dimensional can be an advantage.

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Qigong in Water SpiritWalking: AQUA CH'I™

by Bett Martinez

First I want to thank my dear friend and teacher Gerry Sharp - first for sharing so brilliantly, and in great detail, the wisdom of Liangong Shibafa, and second, for offering me the opportunity to share my work with all of you. Since I don't know your backgrounds, assuming it is mainly martial arts, I'll give some background on qigong, with apologies to those who know more than I do.

Where did Qigong come from and how did it develop?

Qigong is generally considered to have been around for 5000 years, but if you think about it...every culture is going to



have some form of Qigong, when you define it generically as "working with your Life Energy," or as some translate the characters: "Spiritual Achievement".

By legend, Qigong had its origins in communal healing dances and shamanic practices, which appear in other indigenous cultures, including Africa, the Americas, and Australia. If we examine our own origins, we will find that most peoples have utilized communal ritual of coming together at certain times to engage in spontaneous or stylized movement, often in imitation of animal patterns. Dayan Qigong, which I have been privileged to study and teach for nearly 15 years, employs movement and lifestyle of the Wild Goose.

The common function of these rites is the employment of movement in its capacity to help take you out of your mind; it kind of seduces you into it stillness.

This is a quality that enhances meditation and promotes healing, both for individuals, and many feel, for the planet.

Qigong in Water SpiritWalking: AQUA CH'I™

Before we are born we are composed of 99% water. As children we're 90% water, and as adults we're 70% water. Is it any wonder that so many ancient wisdom traditions connected with the healing qualities of water? Water has always been used in ceremonies of spiritual initiations--- such as immersion in rivers, lakes or fountains. For centuries water has been the primary element used for cleansing negative energies and also for bestowing blessings in every tradition.

Spiritwalking | Aqua Ch'i™ is a mindful moving water workout based on a Buddhist and Daoist qigong form blended with an ancient Judaic invocation and various Sufi circular sound healing motions, performed while navigating a water labyrinth shaped like a YinYang symbol. How did this come to be you may well ask?

In February 2003, after decades of teaching mind body practices, most recently qigong, I had a conversation with the Aquatic Director of the Berkeley YMCA , which resulted in my taking qigong practice into water with the aim of making the **ch'i** experience more immediately accessible, especially to persons with mobility impairment or other health "projects" including cancer and lymphedema.

To target this latter group our non-profit, www.possiblesociety.org, was awarded a small grant from a private foundation. Careful monitoring of funds allowed us to create and support our first teacher training program - including a 4 -day retreat attended by teachers and student/clients - and also to create a DVD which has been presented at national and inter-



national conferences http://www.possiblesociety.org/005_videos.htm . We licensed specially selected therapeutic music from Singapore composer Tay Chee Wei.

Spiritwalking | Aqua Ch'i has proven to release tension and reduce pain. Many people have gratefully testified how easily they move in water, freeing them up to leave negative emotions in the water, and experience more positive mental programs.

CASE HISTORIES: Angela practiced for several months before having a double knee replacement. After surgery she was back in the water after only four weeks, and back at work, as a hairdresser! -- the following week. She continues to come to classes weekly.

Carol was taking Vicodin every 5-6 hours because of the terrible pain from having cancer three times, heart problems and fibromyalgia. Practicing Aqua Ch'i helped her to be almost pain-free and she no longer has to medicate herself.

Kate has lupus, diabetes and asthma and was confined to a wheelchair for years. After three months training she was walking and feeling much stronger. Now she's one of our finest teachers.

Kaiser Pain Rehab Clinic is sending patients. We just began working with Brain Injured clients in San Francisco, in preparation for developing a program for Wounded Warriors from Iraq.

I invite other practitioners to work with me on this project...utilizing natural ways to return to the normal state of wellness and joy. Let's utilize qigong, martial arts and all ancient practices to create PEACEFUL WARRIORS.

For more information about Bett Martinez contact her through her website at:

<http://www.possiblesociety.org/>

Finally, I met the one guy doing pretty good Yang Style in the local Park. It was a natural occurrence as he was just arriving as I was walking about the park. I told him I thought his Yang style was pretty good, he seemed impressed with the praise and said that he had heard of me. He told me the names of some of the teachers with whom he had studied, (I know them and I think that his Yang style slow form is better than their version of the form). But he says that he owes most of his studies to Fu Zhong Wen's book Mastering Yang Style Taijiquan.

We had a great talk together, and I encouraged him to share his insights on chiflow. Anyway, contact has been made and maybe we'll make a T'ai Chi friend.

Gerald A. Sharp



For additional information about her upcoming Aqua Ch'i workshop and teacher training contact her at:

<http://www.possiblesociety.org/tara/>

Mailbox Q&A

Sophia Delza's form

QUESTION

Lou wrote:

Thank you for the newsletter and for filling my order of the Wu Style fast form Cd. I was a student of Sophia Delza. Have studied faithfully for 19 years now. I know that Sophia had told me to try completing the forms fast, but I'm interested in learning Mr. Ma's fast form. Unfortunately, there don't seem to be teachers of this form around (I was in New York City but I know live in upstate New York). I've begun teaching Sophia's form here. I often wonder, however, why her "version" is so different from the slow form of Mr. Ma. Different whip, for instance. And Sophia's cloud arms seem to contain more changes of dynamics in the hands. I wonder if you know if Mr. Ma taught her this, or did she make adaptations on her own.



Anyway, thank you again.

Lou

Answer:

From: Gerald A. Sharp

Lou,

Thank you for your positive feedback and trust. Ma was quite fond of Sophia Delza. She was his first American student. He had her book on his shelf and showed it to me a couple of times. He appreciated her mentioning his name as her teacher. However, honestly, and don't take this the wrong way, he pointed at the photos on both occasions,





and said 'this or that was not completely correct...' Not in a negative manner, but critical, as a good teacher would be, of certain postures.

I couldn't comment specifically on the various ones in particular, except I do recall he thought her standing leg was bent entirely too much when doing the kicks. Ma insisted on erectness with the kick and a lifting of the spine (as well as a suspension of the tailbone) along with raising of the leg in order to bring the whole lower limb up into the opponent's groin with structure and power. Additionally, he had a way of lowering his kicking leg after performing a kick that was both subtle and strong - he could pull an opponent off balance.

You bring up an interesting point, though, concerning what Ma taught Sophia as opposed to any adaptations that she might have made. I can tell you in the time I knew and studied with Ma he was very consistent in what he taught, especially concerning the outer shape and the progression of movements. There are variations in the weapons forms, specifically the broadsword and spear, but in the hand forms, there is ultra consistency and precision. However, he definitely became more and more deft and smooth about his inner actions with each passing year, when I knew him, or perhaps my perception of his inner skill became more astute. This I can't say for sure. I will say though that we are all human, and whether Ms. Delza made any adaptations I can't say for sure, I didn't study with her or really look at her book other than when Ma shared it. Furthermore, it is possible she saw certain aspects or shapes in a particular way, or perhaps she felt Ma was emphasizing a specific point during the time she had studied with him.

I know she had said to me in a mail at one point that she didn't study with Ma in the '40's, but honestly, that's when Ma claimed that she did and he also published an expose in one of the Chian Chuan Taichichuan Association monthly bulletins discussing the time he taught her in the '40's. Ma had a great affection for Americans, courtesy of the Flying Tigers and those who followed who helped liberate Shanghai during WWII. He didn't care much for the Japanese. Not that he held any grudge in his heart particularly mind you, it was just what took place during the time the Japanese invaded China, and specifically Shanghai, that wasn't a pleasant memory for him until the Americans showed up.

Sorry I don't have more information to give, Lou, and I hope that I haven't said anything that would offend or upset you. Ma was very subtle, specific to be sure, and he emphasized being light and deft. In my opinion, he chose mini-



malism and efficiency as benchmarks to aspire to, because he believed that doing more with less would ultimately advance the application of the art. This was evidenced (and is on video) in the way he performed and practiced push hands, and any aspect of the Wu Style System for that matter. There was just no one quite like Ma. He was consistent, clear, and practical. I was comfortable being around him, and he made the learning of T'ai Chi not only comprehensive, enthralling, but also a jovial experience filled with a multitude of layers and laughter and a never ending influx of experiments and ideas.

Hopefully this information is useful to you, Lou. Stay in touch if it's not too much trouble.

*Sincerely Yours,
Gerald*



Concluding the Flummoxed Flow: Qigong Medical Case Histories?

by the Chiflow webmaster

Recently one of my friends died of cancer. He had a long history of performing and teaching T'ai Chi that started during his childhood. He was a very bright person who managed to do many things well. He was one of those rare technical people who was also a good manager. He lived a full life, touched many other people, contributed in a wide variety of ways and he will be missed.

My friend had something of a complicated view of qigong. He was a scientist who had a skeptical view of qi. My friend also was a product of the Chinese culture. In some of his activities, he taught qigong as a therapeutic activity for people in need of rehabilitation. There were many people who improved to one degree or another. It was a well-regarded activity. Case histories were written.

At the end of my friend's life, medicine could no longer offer him hope. He tried to use qi gong as an alternative to western medicine. Arguably, this might have helped my friend briefly. I do not think it helped him very much or for very long – if at all. My friend died of cancer.

I do not think the anecdotal case histories are much different when used to support qigong practice than they are when the drug industry pays a bounty for case histories written by medical doctors. I have also seen enough of the



same drugs fail to show statistical effectiveness that I wonder about the use of case histories to support them. I think of my friend and wonder about how appropriate it is to use case studies to support the medical use of qi gong.

In the Next Issue of the Chiflow Newsletter:

We continue our journey through the Basic Palms of Bagua with the Fire Palm.

Our exploration of the relationship between Mathematics and Bagua will continue with a look at magic squares.

The Connection Between Standing Meditation and Application,

Keep Your Questions coming to the Chi Flow Mailbag

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