Level Three, Session One
Wuji-to-Taiji, Six Harmonies, Peng-An

Taijiquan Core Principles are descriptions of the essential criteria for *taijiquan* practice based on natural laws governing human structure, movement, and function. They are trainable concepts meant to be integrated into any and all *taijiquan* solo and partner practices. Taijiquan Core-principles—Level Three concepts use classical *taijiquan* literature, internal energetic points and functions, and the deep theoritical structures of *taijiquan* to approach the significance and meaning of the basic principles that guide our study and practice. They are directly related to the ideas and practices found in Taijiquan Core-principles—Levels One and Two.

1. How the body moves

Taijiquan Treatise (Taijiquan Lun 太極拳論) opening paragraph:

> *Taiji* (太極)—born of *wuji* (無極)—is the mother of *yin* and *yang* (陰陽).
> In motion it differentiates. In stillness it reunifies.
> It is without excess or deficiency.

The transformation from *wuji*—the state of non-polarity—to the *yin* and *yang* extremes of '*taiji*' is the basis of all *taijiquan* movement. All phenomenon arise from a state of *wuji,* enter into the state of *taiji,* and return to *wuji.* The question is whether one is aware of the *wuji* to *taiji* process and can act (or remain still) in accord with conditions.

For the *taijiquan* player *wuji* to *taiji* can be understood at a physical or 'external' level as a state before any kind of flexion has occurred followed by the emergence of *flexion*. At the level of 'internal' psycho-emotional processes *wuji* to *taiji* refers to a state before *intention* (*yi* 意) has arisen and then to its arising.

At the external level *wuji* to *taiji* occurs when movement begins—bringing about a condition of complimentary opposites: forward-backward, up-down, left-right. Internally this begins with the arising of intention. This is described in the *Taijiquan Treatise*:

> Everything has to do with 'intention'; not with what is outside.
> If there is an up, there is a down.
> If there is a front, there is a back.
> If there is a left, there is a right.
> If one wants it to go upward, simultaneously direct the intention downward.
> Causing it to surge upward (*xianqi* 掀起) will defeat its strength (*li* 力);
> its root will be severed; bringing about quick and certain upheaval.

2. Review of the six harmonies

As can be seen above the internal process must precede the external process if movement is to be consciously intended. In Level Two of this core-principles series we explored the six 'six harmonies' (*liu he* 六合) theorems that are broken into two broad categories: the 'outer harmonies' (*waihe* 外合) and the 'inner harmonies' (*neihe* 内合). In the Level Two study we focused on the 'outer harmonies' that, in the Masich Internal Arts Method, are studied methodically using the Yin-Yang Silk Twining Training (*Yin-Yang Chansigong* 陰陽纏絲功) method.

Review: The *outer harmonies* describe three symmetrical pairings between the six joints of the upper and lower extremities—shoulders, elbows, wrists; hips, knees, ankles.

Three Outer Harmonies (*san wai he* 三外合)

1) Shoulders and hips harmonize (*jian yu kua he* 肩與胯合)
2) Elbows and knees harmonize (*zhou yu xi he* 肘與膝合)
3) Hands and feet harmonize (*shou yu zu he* 手與足合)

The *inner harmonies* concept is a traditional way of describing psycho-emotional processes that support physical actions and expressions of energy. It considers *three relationships* between *four elements* ('heart,' 'intention,' 'vital energy,' 'force') that are managed in order to bring subjective qualities into objective expression.

Three Inner Harmonies (*san nei he* 三内合)

1) 'Heart' and 'intention' harmonize (*xin yu yi he* 心與意合)
2) 'Intention' and 'vital energy' harmonize (*yi yu qi he* 意與氣合)
3) 'Vital energy' and 'force' harmonize (*qi yu li he* 氣與力合)

The first of the 'three inner harmonies' formulas is '*xin* and *yi* harmonize.' This takes place when the awareness of a form of heat (emotion) associated with the heart takes place stimulating an imaginative picture. The heat-based imaginative picture (through association with previous experiences) culminates in a decision-like thought called 'intention' (*yi).* This is the nexus of the *wuji* to *taiji* process.

The second of the 'three inner harmonies' is '*yi* and *qi* harmonize.' When an intention is formed, previously-developed actions are awakened and vitalized throughout the system as bio-electric charge (*qi*). The awakened and vitalized areas are activated in such a way as to stimulate blood and other bio-fluids. This process is called 'mobilization.'

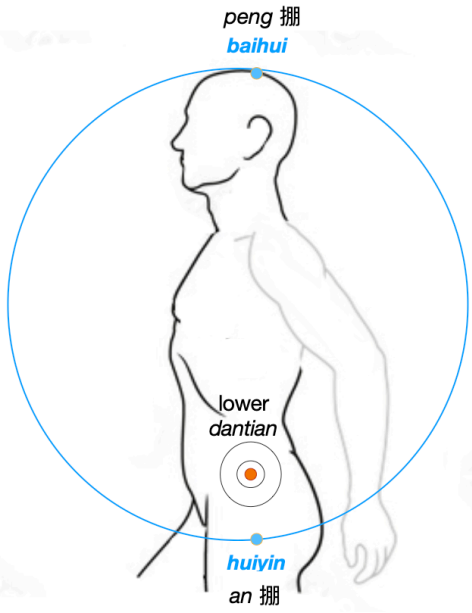
The third of the 'three inner harmonies' is '*qi* and *li* harmonize.' Charged blood and an activated nervous system cause *flexion* in the muscle tissues. Contracting muscles pull on the tendon and ligament structure producing activity in the bone-skeletal structure. This is called 'movement.'

Most human movement is not registered within conscious awareness. Therefore, it is difficult to assess or improve the quality of the movement. Understanding the *wuji* to *taiji* process, especially in relation to the three internal harmonies allows one a deeper and more robust connection to the factors that animate the body. It also allows one to move in a way consistent with *taijiquan* aims. This is described in another way in the *Taijiquan Classic*:

> In motion, the whole body should be light and agile;
> and, importantly, it must be internally threaded together (*guan chuan* 鼓盪).
> The 'vital energy' (*qi* 氣) should be roused in the manner a drum (*gu dang* 鼓盪);
> the 'spirit' (*shen* 神) should be internally gathered.
> Without defect anywhere; without hollows or bulges anywhere;
> without breaks of continuity anywhere.

Tip: Mastering the 'five words of self-composure'—'breath,' 'calm,' 'centre,' 'root' and 'energy'—can help one better apply the three inner harmonies ideas.

3. The 'Centres': *Peng* & *An*



In the earliest stages of learning and training taijiquan core-principles the focus is on such subjects as: 'joints and segments,' 'standing up,' 'sinking down,' 'shifting weight,' 'hip and arm track,' 'stance,' 'basic form structures,' and the like. Later, an understanding of traditional concepts such as 'rooting,' 'stance continuum,' '*yin* and *yang*,' 'relative and carried movement,' 'six harmonies,' 'chansigong,'etc.

In advance core-principles studies the process deepens to include the *dantian* and valve structure, the 'four bodies structure,' perceptual movement, and more. One aspect of the more advanced study has to do with the 'thirteen centres' and their relationship with the thirteen powers in *taijiquan*. The first two centres are the 'hundred gatherings' centre (*baihui* 百會) and the 'gathering of *yin*' centre (*huiyin* 會陰) that are related to 'ward' (*peng* 掤) and 'press' (*an* 按) respectively.