3 Techniques of Dantian Internal Rotation and Use of Meridians in Chen Family Taijiquan

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Introduction

Chen Family Taijiquan (陳氏太極拳: chénshì tàijí quán) is the mother form of Taijiquan from which all other Taiji styles are ultimately derived. The 9th generation of Chen Family representative, Chen Wangting, created Taijiquan from heritages of his past generations about 400 years ago. Unlike other Taijiquan styles, Chen Family Taijiquan still possesses explosive power (發勁: fājìn) expressed in the Cannon Fist forms. Authentic Taijiquan requires a harmony of 4 characteristics that are sturdiness, softness, fastness and slowness, and it is impossible to master Chen Family Taijiquan without these characteristics. Chen Family Taijiquan aims to acquire fangsong (relaxed and grounded) by practicing slowness such as Laojia Yilu (老架一路: lǎojiàyīlù, Old Frame Fist Road) as it helps deeply relax the muscles, joints and spine while breathing naturally.

Training with speed such as in the Laojia Erlu form (老架二路: lǎojiàèr lù, Old Frame Second Road) helps a practitioner understand the use of the fast energy exchange of the positive and negative force (yin and yang) to increase the power of one’s dantian. If a practitioner practices with authentic instruction, he or she should be able to get the root of the dantian (丹田根: dāntián gēn) and control dantian internal rotation (丹田內轉: dāntiánnèizhuàn).

Before these steps, it is required to open one’s dantian and energy pathways so that the dantian circulates qi powerfully. In other words, the energy blocked areas in the body will be pierced out due to powerful qi circulation. For instance, if a practitioner has an ailment, their qi will not flow through that impaired area due to the blockage created by the injury or illness. However, they may remove foul energy of the ailment if the dantian can circulate qi through Silk Reeling Energy. Silk Reeling or Reeling Silk is defined a spiral movement from dantian that leads movement in the body. All movements of Taijiquan practice must originate from dantian to be done properly- this is the key concept of Silk Reeling Energy. In order to circulate and cultivate powerful energy by Silk Reeling Energy, it is necessary to study the energy pathways in the human body, as a practitioner should know how to intend energy flow with certain energy pathways. The energy pathways are called meridians which are where energy circulates in various ways throughout different areas in the body. With correct understanding of the meridians, it helps lead cultivated energy in
the meridians naturally and a practitioner will deepen a relationship between Taijiquan practice and the
system of meridians.
In order to maximize the use of meridians, it is important to acquire certain techniques of dantian internal
rotation. In Chen Family Taijiquan, silk reeling energy is activated due to these dantian rotations, and with
consistent practice, eventually interpenetrates through the meridians. The descriptions below are authentic
training methods of Chen Family Taijiquan’s Silk Reeling Energy and dantian internal rotations.

Reeling Silk Energy
Reeling Silk (or Silk Reeling) Energy (纏絲勁: chánsījìn) of Chen Family Taijiquan is the key concept that
moving spiral energy from dantian (丹田: dāntián) penetrates through the entire body. When dantian rotates,
all related joints and muscles follow the direction of dantian. From a dantian’s movement, Silk Reeling
Energy will penetrate through the hips, knees, ankles, waist, back, shoulders, elbows, wrists and fingertips
(節節貫串: jiéjié guànchuàn). In this way, a practitioner can circulate Qi (氣: qì, energy) through the entire
body and sink energy into dantian area. Eventually, a practitioner can learn to harmonize energy between the
body and mind by stimulating meridian energy pathways. After the basic Silk Reeling exercises, the mother
form of all Taijiquan styles, Old Frame First Road, instills profound knowledge of various expressions of
Silk Reeling Energy with different postures. If the basic Silk Reeling practice is not deep, old frame practice
cannot seize all requirements of Taijiquan.

Understanding of Meridians
To circulate qi effectively, it is important to know basic meridian pathways for silk reeling exercises. It is
known that the Taijiquan founder, Chen Wangting, created Taijiquan based upon the Yin and Yang theory
from Yijing (易經: yìjīng), breathing of Qi Inducing Practice (導引吐納: dǎoyǐn tǔnà), 29 postures of the
military tactics book (紀效新書: jìxiàoxīnshū) by Qi Jiguang (戚繼光: Qī Jìguāng) and the theory of
meridians in Chinese medicine. In particular understanding meridians is important to being well-acquainted
with Silk Reeling exercise and other forms. It is easily to observe that many practitioners of Taijiquan have a
lack of knowledge when the meridians are concerned. Any practice without this understanding would not
seize the essence of Taijiquan and could easily become a “Taijiquan-looking dance.” Chen Family Taijiquan
aims to evolve the use of meridians through the practice of standing post, silk reeling exercise, and the forms.
Without these progressive steps, it is inauthentic. During this process, hands-on correction from a teacher is mandatory to acquire the genuine Taijiquan.

The eight extraordinary meridians are considered the root of energy pathways while the twelve standard meridians would be considered the branches in Chinese medicine. Even more sophisticated meridians cannot exist without the eight extraordinary and twelve standard meridians. The eight extraordinary pathways (奇經八脈: qíjīngbāmài) literally have eight energy pathways. They are the directing (任脈: rènmài), the governing (督脈: dūmài), penetrating(衝脈: chōngmài), girdle (帶脈: dàimài), yin linking(陰維脈: yīnwéimài), yang linking(陽維脈: yángwéimài), yin heel(陰蹻脈: yīnqiāomài), and yang heel (陽蹻脈: yángqiāomài). The terms, “vessel” or “course” are commonly used to indicate a passage of energy pathways.

The simplified diagrams are included, but only necessary meridians are shown from the eight extraordinary and twelve standard meridians. For more information, please find meridian diagrams in Chinese medicine textbooks.

Simplified Diagram of Two Extraordinary Meridians

**Directing Vessel**

Pic- directing vessel

Dantian exists approximately 1.79 inches (1 cun = 1.19 inch) below the navel.

Huiyin is the perineum.
**Governing Vessel**

Mingmen exists between Lumbar 2 and 3 on the spinal column.

Lingtai exists at Thoracic 6 on the spinal column.

Dazhui exists at Cervical 7 on the spinal column.

Extraordinary Meridians are powerfully independent regardless of the sequence of energy circulation in the pathways. For example, it is possible to activate the girdle vessel before the meridians in the legs and still maximize the effectiveness of each meridian. In other words, it is possible to take advantage of part of these extraordinary meridians individually or at once. This is why it is considered extraordinary. However, the goal is to synchronize these meridians at the same time. If there is a blockage due to an ailment, the meridians cannot be combined. In order to lessen this type of error, Chen Family Taijiquan aims to develop four extraordinary meridians in the lower body at the beginning. They are the Yin linking, Yang linking, Yin heel and Yang heel vessels. The calcaneus (heel bone) has two meridians that are the Yang heel and Yin heel vessels. The talus (ankle bone) has two meridians that are the Yang linking and Yin linking vessels. The standing post vigorously stimulates these four extraordinary meridians that pass through the legs and these meridians are being actively used due to the center of dantian and gravity of the thighs from practicing correct Silk Reeling practices. It is not necessary to intend sensing these meridians too much because it brings a very physical and direct stimulation of the legs. This is the reason why the four meridians in the
lower body are omitted in the aforementioned diagram of the eight extraordinary meridians. For instance, the thighs feel burning and shaking because the upper body’s energy is condensed into dantian and the lower body makes full spiraling movements when executing Silk Reeling practices. The hip, knee, and ankle (including all related muscles, joints and nerves) are used to make the spiraling and coiling movements from dantian internal rotations which produce Silk Reeling energy. These meridians are linked throughout the entire body. Unless the meridians are fully opened, there is normally physical pain while practicing, but this is how a practitioner is able to pierce out any blockage in the meridians. A few indications of powerful energy cultivation and piercing out a blockage in the meridians are a burning sensation in the thighs, shaking legs and warmness throughout the body.

The girdle (band) vessel is directly related to opening the dantian because its meridian pathway passes through the lower abs and the waist area. In other words, it controls the internal organs that exist in the lower abdominal area. There is a specific technique to use this meridian in Chen Family Taijiquan. The key is conditioning the upper body and lumbar to allow a practitioner to breathe naturally. In this way, a practitioner is able to activate the girdle vessel by natural breathing. This specific technique requires physical movements of the lower abdominal muscles and lumbar with inhalation and exhalation. In order to execute this, the dantian and mingmen should have a horizontal alignment to have the stability of dantian. (* The technique for the girdle vessel will be explained in the next chapter.) The penetrating vessel is considered the most difficult energy pathway to acquire because it passes through an internal spinal course. If the seven vessels of the eight extraordinary meridians are truly open, then it satisfies a prerequisite to train this vessel. The use of this vessel should only be taught after clearly mastering the small heavenly circle (a connection of the directing and governing vessel.) It is commonly referred to as “the big heavenly circle” and requires a master’s confirmatory reaction from meridian sensitivity.

In the direct lineage of Chen Family Taijiquan descendants such as Grandmaster Chen Xiaowang, Grandmaster Chen Xiaoxing, Grandmaster Chen Yu and Master Chen Bing, still possess all techniques to opening the eight extraordinary and twelve standard meridians with dantian internal rotation techniques. This instruction is only opened to their disciples.

There are the twelve standard meridians (十二正經: shí‘èrzhèngjīng) that are directly derived from internal organs. The twelve meridians are Taiyin Lung Meridian of Hand, Shaoyin Heart Meridian of Hand, Jueyin Pericardium Meridian of Hand, Shaoyang Sanjiao Meridian of Hand, Taiyang Small Intestine Meridian of Hand, Yangming Large Intestine Meridian of Hand, Taiyin Spleen Meridian of Foot, Shaoyin Kidney
Meridian of Foot, Jueyin Liver Meridian of Foot, Shaoyang Gallbladder Meridian of Foot, Taiyang Bladder Meridian of Foot, and Yangming Stomach Meridian of Foot. From these twelve standard meridians, only three standard meridians are mainly used with two extraordinary meridians. Therefore, the nine standard meridians are omitted for simplification.

The three vessels of the twelve standard meridians are Jueyin Pericardium Meridian of Hand (手厥陰心包經), Taiyin Spleen Meridian of Foot (足太陰脾經), Taiyang Small Intestine Meridian of Hand (手太陽小腸經). The two vessels of the eight extraordinary meridians are the directing and the governing vessel. Since the eight extraordinary meridians are the true source of all energy pathways, it is not required to intend using all of twelve meridians. The directing and governing vessel are combined to use in Silk Reeling exercises because combining those vessels makes a synergy to use the eight extraordinary and twelve standard meridians at the same time. Here are simplified meridians that are utilized in practice.

Simplified Diagram of Three Standard Meridians

**Jueyin Pericardium Meridian of Hand**

[Diagram showing points along the Jueyin Pericardium Meridian of Hand]

- Zhongchong is in the center of the middle finger.
- Laogong is between the 2nd and 3rd metacarpal bones.
- Quze is at the ulnar side of the biceps brachii tendon.
- Tianchi is about 1.19 inch (1 cun) lateral to the nipple in the 4th intercostal space.

**Taiyin Spleen Meridian of Foot**

[Diagram showing points along the Taiyin Spleen Meridian of Foot]
Zhourong is 7.14 inches lateral to the anterior midline in the 2nd intercostal space.
Shidou is 7.14 inches lateral to the anterior midline in the 5th intercostal space.
Fuai is 4.76 inches lateral to the anterior midline at directing vessel.
Fujie is 4.76 inches lateral to the anterior midline, on lateral side of rectus abdominal muscle.

Small Intestine Meridian of Hand
Jianwaishu is 3.57 inches lateral to the lower border of the spinal column of T1.

Jianzhen is 1.19 inches above the posterior and inferior to the shoulder joint.

Xiaohai is in a depression between the elbow and the ulna with elbow flexion.

Shaoze is 0.119 inches posterior to the corner of the nail on the ulnar side of the little finger.

In the actual practice of Silk Reeling Energy, two extraordinary meridians (the directing and governing vessel) are used with three standard meridians (the pericardium, spleen and small intestine vessel.) Below is an order to circulate energy in the meridians and practitioners should become acquainted with this information.

1. Meridian 1 (Jueyin Pericardium Meridian of Hand + Taiyin Spleen Meridian of Foot)
   Zhongchong – Laogong – Quze – Tianchi + Zhourong – Shidou – Fuai - Fujie

2. Meridian 2
   Fujie (Taiyin Spleen Meridian of Foot) – Dantian (Qihai) (Directing Vessel)

3. Meridian 3
   Huiyin (Directing Vessel) – Mingmen (Governing Vessel) – Lingtai (Governing Vessel) – Dazhui (Governing Vessel)
4. Meridian 4 (Small Intestine Meridian of Hand)

Dazhui (Governing Vessel) – Jianwaishu – Jianzhen – Xiaohai – Shaoze

These four orders of the meridians should be used with a practitioner’s intention when practicing Silk Reeling Energy exercises. The intention must be very natural. If the level is unnatural and creates too much tension in the body, it is hard to maintain correct postures and circulate energy. The feeling should be maintained with a midpoint between consciousness and unconsciousness. If this kind of practice is well built, all meridians will be opened even if a practitioner has a serious ailment. All he needs is a strong desire and determined effort for practice.

**Dantian Location**

In order to maximize using the meridians in the legs, it is necessary to know where the dantian exists and learn breathing through the core center. Generally speaking, the dantian (丹田: dāntián) is located three fingers downward from the navel or approximately 1.5 inches below the navel. Since the dantian location varies due to different body shapes, each practitioner can identify their dantian by measuring with their own fingers. In order to know where it is, it is recommended to press down softly until a practitioner recognizes the location of dantian. When practicing, there should be a deep sense of stability and sensitivity of dantian at all times by intention. It is fine to think that the dantian is just an area of lower abs and it is the center that controls the whole body if you are not clear in understanding this concept, but it is not just a muscular group or singular body part. It is considered an antenna that watches and is connected to all of big and small changes in the body. For instance, the dantian feels uncomfortable and imbalanced if a practitioner has a physical error or if Qi is not sunken. On the contrary, dantian feels full and the sensation of heaviness is apparent, but it is very relaxed while Silk Reeling or during any Taijiquan practice, for that matter. Also with this, the mind is able to be clear, calm and peaceful.

**Opening Dantian**

In the classical Chen Family Taijiquan practice, the dantian is the core that builds a practitioner’s motion and energy. At the beginning level, it is not clear to sense or feel the existence of the dantian because the body and mind are not developed in Taijiquan’s way. There is a methodical way to open one’s dantian, and this specific training method is the Standing Post. To practice, the entire spine should be relaxed and a practitioner must intend all principles of Taijiquan to sink energy into the dantian. Since Taijiquan’s
principles are very well-known, let us focus on specific techniques used to open one’s dantian. The first principle is to have the upper chest relaxed with a sunken diaphragm, while keeping the upper back slightly rounded (含胸塌腰: hánxiōngtāyāo). There is a common misunderstanding about this, as a lot of practitioners create tension in the upper body by making the upper chest too hollow. This and all other requirements should be done naturally. The second principle is to have the lower back (lumbar) relaxed so that there is no convex or concave shape to it (塌腰: tāyāo). If done correctly, the coccyx will be naturally rolled-up so that a practitioner feels a physical expansion from the lumbar to the coccyx (尾闾中正: wěilǘzhōngzhèng). Properly done, while closing the chin and relaxing the neck muscle (貞頭懸: zhēntóuxuán), a practitioner is able to expand the entire spine to sense it as, “one big stick.” If the spine is truly relaxed, the energy point called Mingmen (命門: mìngmén) will be ready to cultivate powerful energy. Mingmen is translated as, “Door of Life” and is the main center to refreshing the entire spine. This happens by circulating qi while training in standing post. Mingmen is located at the spine protuberance between lumbar 2 and 3. With correct posture of the standing post, the dantian and mingmen will make a horizontal interpenetration line and it is the key practice to making the internal alchemy (內丹: nèidān) of Taijiquan. This horizontal alignment line of dantian and mingmen, is called Damai (帶脈: dàimài) which is noted as the girdle (band) meridian and activates the dantian (* This meridian is quite different from Chinese medicine’s girdle meridian.) It is important that this structure should be kept all the times during practice of Taijiquan. Within these two energy points is where the dantian exists. Opening the girdle vessel is the seed to making the dantian truly open. Breathing through dantian and mingmen physically while in the standing post is necessary to open up the dantian. Dantian and mingmen are expanded naturally while inhaling, as a balloon is expanded when air is inserted in. Dantian and mingmen are contracted while exhaling. Since there are health risks with improper instruction, it is important that a practitioner be taken care of by an authentic instructor with hands-on corrections. A clear sign of this technique done properly is warmness in the lower abs. For example, sensation of coldness in the dantian area is an indication of improper practice. The intention of this breathing has to be natural, while still engaging the lower abs and back physically, ultimately existing as intent with application. Done properly, one should experience expansion and contraction of both the front and back of their waist while breathing. In this way, a practitioner will develop the dantian core and cultivate powerful energy with standing post practice. This is the stage of energy cultivation called, “Dantian Breathing”. In later stages of practice, dantian and mingmen should expand and
retract by themselves. Delicate instruction from qualified instructors to properly learn this process of breathing is a necessity. If not, side effects may occur due to incorrect instruction or relaxation technique.

3 Techniques of Dantian Internal Rotation

After accomplishing the previous requirements in the stages of energy cultivation, it is important to contemplate how to circulate energy by silk reeling from the dantian. Practice of theory of dantian internal rotation (丹田内转: dāntiánnèizhuàn) allows the area of dantian to articulate three dimensional movements with the principles and requirements of Taijiquan such as qichendatian, tayao and dantiangen. The standing post is considered the stage of energy cultivation in dantian through Damai (girdle vessel) while not engaging in Silk Reeling (dantian does not rotate or revolve while doing standing post.) With a normal human’s standing posture, dantian is blocked because dantian and mingmen are not facing each other on a level or parallel line. Unlike Chinese medicine’s meridians around the skin, the damai line in taijiquan penetrates internally and directly through the dantian. The damai or band interpenetration line required by standing post preparations does not access the dantian for internal rotation, but if the dantian moves, there is silk reeling energy. If the dantian does not initiate and control movement in the body, there will be no silk reeling energy. The three physical techniques of dantian rotation consist of horizontal, vertical and mixed internal rotations. Without this understanding, any form practices will be a taijiquan-looking dance and will be ineffective in application.

First Technique – Horizontal Dantian Rotation

The first technique is pretty obvious to sense and acquire at the beginning level because it only has two horizontal directions which are to the left or the right. With the principles of standing post, a practitioner has to rotate dantian horizontally. This first technique of dantian rotation (as shown in images below) in the front silk reeling exercise is effectively used to acquire the horizontal dantian internal rotation.

Preparation (Standing with closing feet)
It is not just boring standing. It requires relaxing the whole body from head to toe. Wait until everything becomes calm down and breathe deeply three or five times for deep relaxation. Do not start to practice if there is not enough relaxation. When fangsong is deepened, the body feels like a jelly or pudding status. It is a good sign to have a higher level of relaxation.

Step 1 – lowering hand - Meridian 1

Pic: FS 1, FS 2
Slowly bring down a hand with intention of activating meridian 1 and 2. To lead Qi effectively, the thumb and pinky are useful to intend Qi. When Qi comes into the negative vessels, the pinky leads the arm movement. The thumb is a standard point when Qi comes through the positive vessels. In this step, Qi goes down from the middle finger to meridian 1 and 2 when joints are rotating. Step 1 requires a natural vertical dantian internal rotation so that the upper chest can relax to condense energy. Please be sure to relax the back and “dangle” the coccyx. When the hand is near the level of dantian, Qi arrives around the ribs.

Step 2 – Moving dantian horizontally and intending qi to dantian – Meridian 2

Pic- FS 3, FS 4

Softly shift the weight and turn dantian to the left. Qi comes back to the dantian area due to the horizontal dantian internal rotation. The hip’s level should be parallel to the ground so that dantian has the central stability.

Step 3 – Sending Qi down to the perineum – Meridian 3
Step 3 requires a delicate instruction. As soon as finishing the previous steps, dantian begins the third technique and it rotates as an oblique circle. When the hand reaches the shoulder level, Qi rises to the cervical 7 (Dazhui). In this step, the directing and governing vessel are used. Although the weight stays on the left foot, the right foot should be rooted.

Step 4 – Sending Qi to the pinky – Meridian 4

Smoothly shift the weight to the right foot and slowly turn dantian to the right side without turning the right knee out. After rotating dantian, the arm should be moved afterward. If the elbow is lifted too much, Qi will not
flow through the arm. Meridian 4, the small intestine meridian, is used.

Second Technique – Vertical Dantian Rotation
A second type of dantian internal rotation is not simple to acquire, however, this small silk reeling exercise helps one’s understanding of the physical requirements and sensation of proper execution (more than mentally.) Dantian rotates vertically forward and backward with the upper chest, diaphragm, and lower back. This rotation connects force of dantian when raising and lowering hands in practice. For example, to capitalize on properly generated energy (with correct alignment) while doing jumping kicks, one must use vertical dantian rotation. In this way, Qi flows through the back to fingertips.

Preparation - same as above

Pic: SS 1
Step 1 – Vertical Forward Rotation – Directing and Governing Vessel (Microcosmic Orbit)
When the thumb goes outward from the dantian, energy circulates from the governing vessel to the directing vessel. This is a vertical forward rotation of dantian which needs careful consciousness of the practitioner to not hollow the upper chest too much. The upper chest makes a natural curve during this type of dantain.
rotation. In this exercise, the height of body makes down-up changes with rotating dantian and hands. The wrist, elbow and shoulder joint have to make a big circle with relaxation. When the body is lowered, Qi circulates from Dantian – Huiyin (Perineum) – Mingmen – Lingtai – Baihui – Renzhong – Shanzhong - Dantian. This is commonly defined the small heavenly circle or microcosmic orbit. Hands begin to have less energy than the orbit due to energy circulation.

Step 2 – Reversal of Microcosmic Orbit

Pic- SS 9, SS 10
For the vertical backward rotation of dantian, it is simply a reversal when the thumb comes inward to dantian. With this movement, qi circulates from the directing vessel to the governing vessel. This type of qi
circulation is rare to find in Chinese medicine and qigong because it conflicts with the traditional meridians. However, Chen Family Taijiquan does have this concept from a long time of practical heritage based on the principle of the contradiction between yin and yang. When the thumb comes outward towards the dantian, Qi circulates from dantian to baihui, dazhui, lingtai, mingmen, huiyin and dantian. It is a reversal orbit of small heavenly circle. With this practice, severe neck and shoulder pain can be relieved and arms will increase physical flexibility. The lungs should not be used too much in order to avoid making the shoulder tensed. It is because the lower abs and dantian, are mainly used instead of using the lungs.

Third Technique - Mixed Dantian Rotation
A third type of rotation is a combination of the first and second technique of dantian rotation. The Double Hands Silk Reeling maximizes all three techniques of dantian internal rotation. It can be defined as the combination of the first type of lateral and second type of vertical rotations while practicing silk reeling movements within the old frame forms. This mixed type of dantian internal rotation is not fixed, with unique paths throughout each movement to adhere to correct posture. To acquire this type of dantian rotation, it is crucial to have the previous techniques. Chen Family Taijiquan forms include a lot of mixed dantian rotations as the classical forms are based on theory of these movements. This concept should be kept simple, and if there is anything unclear or ambiguous about this mixed rotation, one should go back to mastering the previous exercises.

Meridians become more complicated (than previously) as one begins to use double hands because the left and right side of meridians are both being activated at once. However, with correct guidance and proper training of the first and second techniques, there will be no problem in applying this third technique.

Step 1 – Activating two meridians at the same time
If previous practices are properly built, it is comfortable to activate two meridians at the same time. As shown in the picture, the left hand activates meridian 1 while the right hand uses meridian 3. However, it is not forced to sense these two meridians at once because the central dantian status will circulate energy itself by a practitioner’s correct posture. For example, one feels both feet are rooted if dantian is centered and then the mind becomes calm and peaceful. If not confident of using these meridians, meditating movements of dantian internal rotation would be an alternative way to acquire this exercise. Please keep the kua (hip) parallel to the ground. Hands and feet feel swelling or tingling if Qi is circulating correctly, if not, the whole body is getting cold (please be advised by your instructor, for this is a bad sign while doing this practice).

In this step, the weight is on the left foot and double hands are raised. Open the point of laogong while relaxing the shoulders and lowering the elbows (沈肩墜肘: Chénjiānzhuìzhǒu). The left knee does not go beyond the toe line and the back has no concave or convex shape.

Step 2 - Rotate dantian horizontally to the right side
Slowly shift the weight on the right foot with the first dantian rotation technique that is the horizontal rotation. Dantian leads the movement of arms and the hips are parallel to the ground. Because meridians 2 for the left hand and meridian 4 for the right hand are being used, dantian makes the core axis to combine those two meridians and the lower body becomes really full. The intention must stay in dantian in order for meridians to circulate energy fine. If there is an error, energy will be stuck in the upper chest and the area of dantian is getting tensed. For instance, the body and hands feel cold obviously. This type of error should be corrected.

3. Step 3 - Mixed Rotation of Dantian
There is no weight change, but a third technique of dantian internal rotation is being activated in this step. After the first dantian rotation in the previous step, dantian makes a vertical and horizontal rotation at the same time while sinking energy. Except clear dantian internal rotations of the first and second techniques, other types of dantian internal rotations can be said a mixed type. In this step, the meridian point, Yongquan (湧泉: yǒngquán), feels very soft and supple due to sinking energy. Meridian 3 for the left hand and meridian 1 for the right hand are activated.

4. Step 4 – Horizontal Dantian Internal Rotation
After the previous step, slowly change the weight to the left foot and smoothly execute dantian internal rotation horizontally. Dantian should have a circular movement horizontally and double hands’ level should be around the level of dantian. Mingmen and lingtai from the governing vessel see the powerful Qi if the body structure is correct. It is a common mistake for the upper body to lean and a practitioner will not have Qi sensitivity if done improperly. Meridian 4 for the left hand and meridian 2 for the right hand are activated at the same time. Using two different meridians at once is the balance and zest of yin and yang. Double hands silk reeling exercise helps relieve and lessen ailments for practitioners because it stimulates both sides of meridians while the dantian revolves for Qi circulation. For example, the pericardium meridian of the left arm is being used while the small intestine meridian of the right arm is being activated. This practice is a symbol of Chen Family Taijiquan’s two characteristics that are “using the waist as shaft base (以腰為軸: yǐyāowéizhóu)” and ‘folding up the chest and waist continuously (胸腰折疊: xiōngyāozhédié)” with silk reeling energy.

Practicing silk reeling and forms are considered a stage of Qi circulation while the dantian remains the core center-axis that controls all movements. The theory of dantian internal rotation is the essence of Chen Family Taijiquan and the three practical techniques gradually develop one’s level of Taijiquan. As time passes, one can achieve the drilling all joints by silk reeling energy while physical ailments are significantly lessened by fully
cultivated qi from dantian. It is known that forms do not matter after achieving the highest level of Taijiquan because the dantian controls internal qi and external motions by itself allowing one’s martial application to become free-of-form. This explains why different Taijiquan styles exist in the present.

**Internal Alchemy of Chen Family Taijiquan**

After a certain amount of time with Taijiquan practice, a practitioner has to confirm his or her level with push-hand practices. Push Hand practices are hands-on exercises by a pair with direct applications of the above exercises. The practice includes various exchanges of sturdiness, softness, fastness and slowness. Chen Family Taijiquan has 5 kinds of Push-Hands that most of them require the third type of dantian internal rotation. In other words, the push-hands practices are not helpful for those who do not have a base study of dantian internal rotation. Just practicing silk reeling exercises is not enough to study all various changes and techniques of Taijiquan. While the second road forms (cannon fist) are helpful in development of fajin (explosive energy expression) with fast applications of dantian internal rotations, old frame first road and new frame first road are able to build firmness of dantian rotations in development of fangsong with slow applications of dantian internal rotations. If practicing the two characteristics of slowness and softness alone, one will not seize all requirements of authentic Taijiquan, therefore, one must express power through the action of fajin, all while engaging correct dantian. The three types of dantian rotation are crucial for correct silk reeling exercises and the key to understanding and practicing taijiquan forms and Push Hands practice.

With permission of a master, a practitioner should learn the microcosmic and macrocosmic orbit (small and big heavenly circle) techniques for the internal alchemy of Chen Family Taijiquan. If the dantian possesses powerful qi within, it should lead to circulation through renmai and dumai. This is called the microcosmic orbit or small heavenly circle. In later stages of development, energy interpenetrates through the entire spine directly from huiyin to bahui. This later level of energy interpenetration is called the macrocosmic orbit or big heavenly circle. As described previously, dantian beathing through damai is the seed of making internal alchemy of dantian before executing the microcosmic and macrocosmic orbit. The seed will be used because the meridian orbits must require the energy source from dantian for a bond. Including the direct and governing vessel, all other meridians are controlled smoothly by the energy fullness of dantian. By repeating correct authentic methods, one’s dantian will develop until the practice stops.

The practices of these three dantian internal rotation techniques have historically been and remain to be what the direct lineage of Chen Family Taijiquan uses to develop and maintain a golden internal alchemy. Please be
simple and clear about these concepts, as practical application of Taijiquan is not mysterious. If there is doubt or an unclear concept of taijiquan practice, it may be the case that one’s instruction or understanding of this practice is not profound and has no depth. This is why authentic lineages of Taijiquan exist and are still as sound in application as they were when first developed. In this day and age, many styles of Taijiquan have been practiced and exist in various forms, but as a true martial practitioner, one must release form and appearance and truly contemplate the essence of Taijiqun.

Bibliography


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