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ll mind/body practises acknowledge the intrinsic energy of the body as their fundamental rule - that the spine must be held straight for the body to be properly aligned, thereby allowing energy to move unobstructed within its channels. **Ngo cho kun** or **Five Ancestor Fist Kung-Fu** derives power, focus and root, in part, by activating the three *dan tian* (energy centres) when aligned as part of six essential points that fall along these energy pathways.

DAN TIAN

The term *dan tian* in traditional Chinese



➤ Alex Co demonstrates Fajing power

stem from the correct energy of yin tang. Proper yin tang energy will allow you to not give up under duress of any kind, to see things as they are and to ultimately know yourself.

HUNDRED CONVERGENCES (BAI HUI)

The **bai hui** point is found at the top of the head - the location of the soft spot on a baby's skull. Loosely translated, bai hui is the 'hundred convergences' point where blood vessels, nerves and qi converge. To locate this point, draw a line bi-laterally from the apex of each ear to the top of the head, to where the fingers meet. As you practise Kung-Fu, you may begin to feel different

NGO CHO KUN: BODY STRUCTURE & INTERNAL POWER

Mark Wiley introduces the reader to **Five Ancestor Fist Kung Fu** - a style utilising the theories of traditional Chinese medicine...

medicine (TCM) and *qi gong* translates as 'elixir field' and refers to areas in the body where intrinsic energy (qi) derives, gathers and disperses. According to the theories of traditional Chinese medicine and *qi gong* - upon which Chinese martial arts and health exercises are built - there are three locations in the body where the life force is most active: the lower dan tian, the middle dan tian and the upper dan tian.

LOWER DAN TIAN (QI HAI)

The lower dan tian is known as **qi hai**, and is the 'sea of energy.' It is believed to be the area where ancestral qi originates - that is, our genetic blue print at birth. After conception, 'acquired qi' from the grain (food) and water (beverages) we consume is stored at this point. Sexual energy (*jing*) is also derived here, as well as a sense of physical balance and spiritual centering. Qi hai is located in the lower abdomen, approximately four fingers' width below the navel. This area is where focus is placed when holding a firm 'root' for optimal balance. The pelvic floor is partially tensed by tilting the pelvis, which aligns the lumbar and sacral vertebrae. This alignment not only adds stability to postures, it also allows for a pulling-out of energy stored in the lower dan tian for use in applying the art.

MIDDLE DAN TIAN (SHAN ZHONG)

The middle dan tian is known as **shan zhong** or 'chest centre.' It is located on the anterior midline of the chest, between the nipples - level with the fourth intercostal space. This is the gathering and dispersing place of qi and corresponds with respiration and the circulation of qi and blood. It is also the meeting (*hui*) point of qi in the body and is a place where five meridian channels intersect. With proper alignment of the spine, the point will sit naturally in the body - thus engendering full lung capacity, energy distribution and balance.

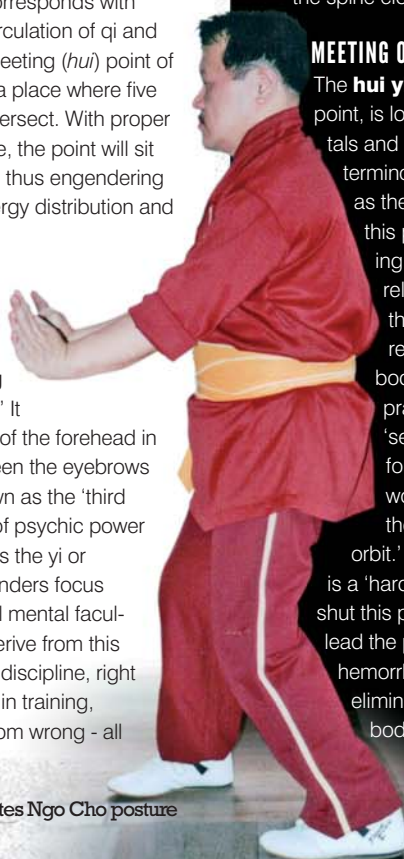
UPPER DAN TIAN (YIN TANG)

The upper dan tian is known as **yin tang** or 'hall of impression.' It is located in the area of the forehead in the depression between the eyebrows and is popularly known as the 'third eye.' It is the source of psychic power and thought. It houses the yi or intention, which engenders focus and concentration. All mental faculties are believed to derive from this point. Pure thoughts, discipline, right action, perseverance in training, distinguishing right from wrong - all

sensations, even soreness at the bai hui point. This is excellent and is an indication that you are opening this important portal where qi from heaven enters the body. Keeping this point upright will prevent the *ngo cho kun* practitioner from leaning his head forward, thus making him off balance and susceptible to an opponent's strike. For proper posture maintenance, you can imagine that a string connected to bai hui is pulling the head upward, thus keeping the spine elongated and straight.

MEETING OF YIN (HUI YIN)

The **hui yin**, or 'meeting of yin' point, is located between the genitals and anus. In Western medical terminology, this area is known as the *perineum*. Focus on this point and its surrounding area should be one of relaxation as it controls the general relaxation response of the entire body. In certain *qi gong* practises, the perineum is 'sealed' shut, which is ok for 'soft' internal energy work in order to facilitate the so-called 'microcosmic orbit.' However, *ngo cho kun* is a 'hard' style and squeezing shut this point while practising can lead the practitioner to develop hemorrhoids, difficulties with elimination of waste from the body and hypertension. Hui



➤ Alex Co demonstrates Ngo Cho posture



Yin is the intersection (*jiao hui*) point of three meridians. Proper alignment of this point will help strengthen the kidneys and low back - thus affecting core stability and leg strength.

GUSHING SPRING (YONG QUAN)

Yong quan is the point located on the ball of the foot, one-third the distance down from the base of the toes to the heel. This is the location where the qi of earth is absorbed, as well as being the gateway of energy outflow where we 'root' back to the earth. Yong quan is the location of balance in the feet, where our weight should rest and where turns are articulated.

Alignment of the six essential points is one of the keys to excelling in the development and application of *ngo cho kun* techniques. Proper alignment at once allows energy to flow in correct patterns while constructing a proper body structure for stability and rootedness in stance and step. At first, it is necessary to constantly think of these points and their alignment while practising the basics and forms of the system. Over time, however, you will feel when they are aligned - in both a musculoskeletal and an energetic sense. When this happens you will no longer have to purposefully think of these points and your energy, balance and body structure will be solid and powerful.

THE SIX INTERNAL CULTIVATIONS

To acquire mastery in *ngo cho kun* requires the development of what is known as the **six internal cultivations**. These are actually six different aspects of 'energy.' Without these, the practitioner is thought to be merely swinging arms and flailing legs. Power generation, correct use of force, absorption of the opponent's energy, expulsion of that energy, rootedness in stance and step, focus and intention are all derived from years of practise steeped in the proper development of the six cultivations known as *qi* (energy), *yi* (intention), *shen* (spirit), *sze* (posture), *li* (strength) and *jing* (force).

QI (ENERGY OF BREATH)

Generally speaking, **qi** refers to the vital energy, life-force, or cosmic spirit that pervades all things. In the human body, qi is accumulated in an area four fingers' width below the navel, called *qi hai* (sea of energy), where it is stored. Wasting of this energy can result in weakness, sickness, or possibly death. It is believed that this vital energy or life force can be strength-

ened through various mindful breathing exercises that develop qi, or the energy of breath. This vital energy flows through the human body along pathways referred to as **meridians**. One must keep the qi flowing in order to maintain health, through its ability to circulate blood, engender respiration and regulate body temperature. Qi gives us energy to use in martial arts, and martial arts develops energy for health. Qi is developed in *ngo cho kun* primarily through the timed respiration and physical movements of the *sam chien* form and, secondarily, through general practise.

YI (ENERGY OF MIND)

All aspects of the mind are guided by intention, or **yi**. Yi is knowing and focusing on what you want to do, want to accomplish, want to overcome. In a psycho-energetic sense, the yi coordinates the intrinsic energy for use in the art. It is said that the mind (yi) directs the energy (qi). A Chinese adage states, **"The mind commands, the body moves and the energy flows."** Connecting mind, body and spirit is an essential practise of Kung-Fu. Focus on what you want, maintain intention through each movement, and use your mind to direct your qi and your Kung-Fu will develop accordingly.

SHEN (ENERGY OF SPIRIT)

Shen is the energy of spirit, the living spirit that animates each of us. When developing the Kung-Fu spirit, one gathers his energy, focuses his intention and assumes expressions of determination and focus. Shen is the spirit to work hard, even during difficult times. It is the spirit of resolve, the resolve to dedicate time and energy to the pursuit of longitudinal goals in life and martial art practise. It is the fighting spirit, the will to overcome against all odds.

SZE (ENERGY OF POSTURE)

Proper musculoskeletal alignment of the body is known as **sze**. Sijo **Chua Giok Beng**'s primary emphasis in teaching was on developing proper form (**sze**). **"Without proper form, the practitioner is believed to be like a puppet, pulled and controlled by a string. Lacking proper form, the practitioner, while moving forward and backward, will lack the grace and posture of the style."** In *ngo cho kun*, proper form is not only necessary - it is essential.

Proper form in *ngo cho kun* is assumed by combining various elements. In a general sense, the body trunk and limbs must align properly. The chest should be expanded, the pelvis must be tilted upward for proper alignment of the spine and easy passage of qi and the testicles are to be tucked in, with

concentration focused on the dan tian. The clenched fist must be half yin and half yang (i.e., held diagonally). The feet should hold the practitioner firmly to the ground. Just as the foundation of a tree comes from its roots, the source of strength emanates from the soles of the feet. The ears should be sharp to detect even the slightest blowing of the wind. The eyes should be aware of the four directions of the human gate - left and right, back and front.

With correct posture the practitioner is ready to engage his opponent in the centre-arm, on-guard position (*tzi-ngo tiong ki*), the classical fighting stance of *ngo cho kun*. As a *ngo cho kun* maxim states, **"Motionless, the practitioner serenely manifests the gentleness of a lady - actively, he personifies the agility of a rabbit."**

LI (ENERGY OF POWER)

Strength in *ngo cho kun* is different from force - it is power. The power to hold your ground, to knock over an opponent, to resist a strike, to lock and throw a stronger opponent. In *ngo cho kun*, power is derived from aligning the six points and is emitted through the arms by prolonged and correct practise of the *sam chien* form. Absorption of force and explosion of power is the characteristic trademark of *ngo cho kun* - and is developed primarily through *sam chien* and the various conditioning exercises.

JING (ENERGY OF FORCE)

In traditional Chinese medicine, **jing** refers to semen or the essential energy of growth and development in human beings. This seminal essence is stored in the genitals, circulates through the body in the meridian complex, and is responsible for the production of bone marrow. Indeed, it is said that when jing is low, old age sets in and one experiences hair loss, low back and knee pain, slow reflexes, low immunity and osteoporosis. Jing is life energy, the motive force of life itself.

In Kung-Fu, jing is the energy that manifests in the explosive force of blows. It is a force emitted with enough shock that, with only a small movement, it can send an opponent back several feet. This occurs when the downward-bearing energy is consolidated by lowering the centre of



gravity, co-ordinating the five parts power and then explosively expanding forward the power and essence into an opponent. This, too, is developed in the *sam chien* form. Effective development and application of jing is one of the manifestations of the Kung-Fu adage: **"Eight ounces can dispel a thousand pounds."**

THE FIVE PARTS POWER

Once the three dan tian are activated, the six points aligned and the six cultivations developed, it is time to consolidate and co-ordinate energy with the **five parts power** (*ngo ki lat*). These power places are the head, the two hands and the two feet connected by the spine. When co-ordinated with waist and trunk rotation, the dynamic of the entire body is put into each movement. Proper alignment of the body and sequential movement from the feet to the trunk and out through the arms and to the hands is the key to generating the explosive force of *ngo cho kun*.

The power source of the head is manifested through proper intention (yi), posture (sze), and spirit (shen). The head should be held upright, the chin sunk low, the mouth slightly open while retracting the lips to tense the facial and neck muscles, thus **"simulating the form of a crying rooster."** To complete the fierce look the eyes are held wide open (**"like the eyes of a big fish"**), the tongue is curled to touch the upper palate, the muscles at the sides of the lips are tensely





↖ Hua Kun striking a cement wall



↗ Hua Kun and Alex Co

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↗ Wiley punching Hua Kun

pulled back and the nostrils are expanded. Each inhalation and exhalation of breath should produce **“the quiet sound of a tiger’s growl.”** With a single look, the practitioner, in such a state of facial contortion, looks like **“a beast ready to devour its prey.”** This is a physical manifestation of shen, the energy of spirit.

The power source of the arms is divided into three parts - the shoulders, the elbows and the wrists. The first power source is derived from the shoulders, which should be held down, preventing your centre of gravity from rising too high. You should feel the downward sinking of *qi* through the pelvis and into the *yong quan* points at the bottom of your feet, securing your

root to the ground. The second and third power sources are derived from the elbows and wrists respectively. The elbows are held at the sides of the torso while the forearm, wrist and hand are held in such a way as to mimic the slope of a dust pan. When the hands are thrust forward or pulled backward, with the shoulders held down and the forearms tucked to the sides, the hands will vibrate as a result of muscle tension. This force is likened to **“a dragon playing in the water.”** Exhale when you thrust your hands forward, inhale when you retract your hands to your sides. The continuous inhalation and exhalation uses *qi* to manifest power and strength.

The third power source is derived from the torso, by twisting and shaking the shoulders and contracting the abdomen until it trembles. Before thrusting the hands out, pull them in to gain momentum so that when you thrust, there will be a vibrating sound from your strength. This vibrating sound is intrinsic energy (*nei jing*). It is said that **“internally, you are hard as steel, but externally you are soft as cotton”** - thus maintaining an equilibrium of hard and soft, yin and yang. The *ngo cho*

kun maxim that describes this, states, **“The abdomen is as hard as a steel wall and the body, though hard and flexible, is like a wheel when turning.”**

When assuming a proper stance, the legs should be firmly anchored to the ground to achieve and maintain stability, while allowing fast and agile footwork. The stance’s power source comprises three segments - the upper legs or thighs, the lower legs or shins, and the feet. When focusing on these three parts, you should focus your intention (*yi*) to circulate the energy (*qi*) by way of inhalation and exhalation, with it passing from one leg to another as if in a continuous cycle. In the three segments of the legs, the thighs are pulled inward, the ankles are pressed outward and the toes are curled up to tense the calf muscles, with the soles of the feet being as if glued to the floor. When in proper form, every step will automatically be firm, like roots in the ground. This forms a solid stance, thus making the *ngo cho kun* practitioner, **“as immovable as an iron bar sunk into the earth.”** Diligent practise will enable one to move with ease and coordination while maintaining stability and power. ■

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