

Date: Wed, 13 Mar 1996 15:40:55  
Sent-Date: Tue, 12 Mar 1996 18:26:40 -1000  
From: Chip Ellis  
Subject: neijia: Re: Yang Style Stepping

Yang style has a variety of ways of stepping. To keep this short, I'll just talk about a standard full forward step, as in the beginning of the grasp the bird's tail sequence (right foot stepping forward).

First the physical aspect:

The supporting (left) leg stays bent and rooted strongly as the right foot steps out. A common mistake is to straighten the left leg, thus weakening the root as the body moves up. As the right foot moves, the leg is empty. As the foot touches down the heel leads the way with the ball and toes softly coming into contact with the floor. Don't slap the foot down.

Immediately after the initial full contact with the floor, the right foot is still empty. (Walk like a cat stalking a mouse - softly and with great control and focus). Once the foot is in full contact with the floor the weight transference begins. As it progresses the front foot becomes more and more rooted.

I have been taught that when a foot is rooted to the floor the weight is fairly evenly distributed across the sole of the foot. If anything, there is a greater emphasis on the heel (the heel is the root). The toes are slightly curled so that the arch of the foot rises just a little. The toes are not tens, however, just using some energy.

The energy side of things:

As you begin your step, when you are on one leg, your energy is compressing or gathering in your body (different ways in different parts). As your leg begins to move out your body starts a transition toward expansion. The timing is hard to explain in writing, and I don't have the patience, so go look at a good practitioner and see for yourself.

When the front foot first touches down the energy is still toward the rear. You are not committed to the forward course of action. It is still possible to retract energy and your leg. As you begin to shift toward the front foot your energy moves from the rear foot, up through the dan tien, and over

to the front foot. This is not to say there is no energy in the dan tien already. It's just a description of one of the energy paths.

An important point is that the energy transference from back to front does not go up higher than your dan tien. (Sure you can do it if you're advanced and have some purpose in mind. I'm just talking about a simple example here.) If it does go higher there is a strong tendency to lose your root.

The energy on the foot, when the toes are slightly curled, is something like a suction cup. The feeling I get is like my energy is being sucked down into the earth. The root is stronger than with a flat foot. (Although when I first began to practice this way I found it harder to get rooted. Now it seems stronger.)

The applications:

When you step out lightly you are not committed. You stay flexible and mobile until the very last second. Also such a step can be deceptive. An opponent might think you are committed and take a course of action, only to find that you have reversed yourself and something else is going on.

Naturally, as you root the foot you are able to use it to fa jing.

The health benefits:

When you step out you flex the foot. How much depends on what you're doing. Serious fighting, quick small movements, etc. would have little flex. Big circles for health and energy work would have a lot of flex. With the big flex comes a stretching of the Achilles tendon and a strengthening of some of the leg muscles.

The neijia aspects:

To me the internal energy aspects of this kind of stepping relate to opening and closing (as the step is initiated), and rooting (as the step is concluded). The feeling is different from that experienced when the foot slides (as in Ba Gua mud stepping).

As I said at the beginning of this too long post, there are many ways of stepping. It's good to explore all of them.

Aloha,

Chip Ellis