

GRANDMASTER WONG KIEW KIT'S HOME PAGE
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

QUESTIONS ON IRON WIRE



QUESTION 1

Are there certain force training methods that are better to practice every day (or almost every day) rather than once in a while, and some once in a while rather than every day?

For example, will we get more benefit if we train the Iron Wire Set (or part of it) every day, or if we train a spread of force training methods, training Iron Wire once out or twice out of the week, and leaving the other days for other things like One Finger Zen, Lifting Water, Siu Lin Tou, Flower Set, and others?

— Sifu Mark Blohm

In normal situations, a practitioner will get the best benefit practicing any force training method, including the Iron Wire Set, every day. This enables him to get the benefit of accumulated effect, which is essential in internal force training.

If one practices any force training method, including the Iron Wire Set, once a while, he commits a serious mistake known poetically in Chinese as "one hot ten cold". No matter for how many years he spreads over his training, if he trains only once a while over the long spread of training period, he will not derive the desired internal force.

Except for us in Shaolin Wahnam which I shall explain later, both students and masters practice only one force training method at one time because they get the best benefit in this way. If they practice different methods at the same time, like Iron Wire once a while and other methods like One Finger Shooting Zen, Lifting Water, Siu Lin Tou on every other days, they will get less benefit as the different methods negate one another.

Here I am referring to someone practicing a particular method to develop a particular force. For example, he is new to Iron Wire, and practices it to develop internal force. But if he already has the force, like he already has a lot of force from his Iron Wire training below, he can practice different force training methods for review or for maintain his force.

However, if practitioners are not strong enough yet, or the force training is too powerful, they have to practice just a part of the method everyday. If the method cannot be divided into parts, like the case of Bone Marrow Cleansing, they will have to practice the whole method every alternate day, or one every three or four days.

The interval should not be too wide apart that the practitioners miss the benefit of accumulated effect. It should not be too close that their physical body does not have enough time to adjust to the new energy level.

Such subtleties are usually not known to students. Or even if they know them in theory, they lack the skills and techniques to make good judgment and adjustment. This is one reason amongst many others that internal force training should be attempted under the guidance of a competent teacher.

These "normal" situations may not apply to us because we are special. For

example, while practicing only one force training method at any one time is the norm for other people, we actually get more benefit by practicing two or more force training methods at the same time, even when the force training methods are, for most other people, conflicting. This is because we gain from the advantage of breadth and depth.

In other words, while for other people practicing two conflicting force training methods, like Iron Wire and Taijiquan, will minimize the force derived, but for us practicing these different methods at the same time will maximize the force. The secret lies in chi flow, which we have but most other people don't.

It is worthy of note that the terms "normal" and "special" are relative. Compared to other people, we are special. Hence, the advice to practice only one method everyday may not apply to us. But considering ourselves as an exclusive group, these special situations are normal. For example if our students practice two or more methods and yet get better result, it is nothing special, it is normal. To have another example, to be healthy and happy is special to most other people, but to us it is normal.

Let us now answer the question in relation to our situations. Are there certain force training methods that are better practiced everyday and some once a while?

The answer is no. We have become so skilful that we can practice any method everyday, or any method once a while but practicing other methods on the other days, and still get a lot of benefit - more benefit than others who practice the same method everyday.

For example, we may practice just Iron Wire everyday, or we may practice Iron Wire on some days interspaced with other methods on other days. We still get a lot of benefit.

This does not mean that the benefit is the same. Whether practicing one method every day or different methods on different days will result in more benefit depends on a few variables like the objectives of the training, the methods chosen and the developmental stage of the practitioners.

But generally, practicing the chosen method about 60 to 70 percent of the time, interspaced with other methods about 30 to 40 percent of the time will produce better result than practicing the same method everyday, or practicing different methods spread out equally everyday.

For example, if you have chosen Iron Wire as the main method for a period of training, you will get the best result if you practice Iron Wire about 6 or 7 days out of 10, and for any of the remaining 3 or 4 days you practice Lifting Water, Siu Lin Tou and the Flower Set. This is because in this way you benefit from both breadth and depth, and accumulated effect of Iron Wire training.

QUESTION 2

When practicing the various patterns of the Iron Wire set, what should be our state of mind?

Should we simply empty our mind, or direct consciously the energy in various parts of the body (accordingly to the respective patterns), or rather use some other kinds of visualization?

— Sifu Maxime

Generally we should keep our mind clear when practicing the Iron Wire Set. This is a main reason why we can develop so much mental clarity practicing Iron Wire, which was particularly outstanding in the Iron Wire course in Ireland.

Nevertheless, we may sometimes focus our force at particular parts of our body. For example, in the pattern "Hands Guard Dan Tian" we may focus our energy at our arms. We can do this well when our mind is clear.

Some patterns can be used to develop different types of force. For example, "Lift Bridge" can be used to develop "lifting force" and "pressing force".

Practicing Iron Wire develops 12 different types of force. Actually the force is the same, it is how the force is used that makes it different. Using the mind to direct particular uses of force, besides applying their appropriate patterns, results in the 12 different types of force for which the Iron Wire Set is famous.

Besides developing a lot of internal force, Iron Wire is also excellent for developing mental clarity and mental focus, though many people may not know it.

Some people mistakenly think that mental clarity and mental focus are mutually exclusive. They consider it impossible for one to clear his mind of all thoughts, and at the same time focus well on a particular thought.

Firstly, we may not necessarily clear thoughts and focus on thoughts at the same time, we have mental clarity first, then mental focus, or vice versa.

On the other hand, we can also have mental clarity and mental focus at the same time. Indeed, it is because of mental clarity that we can focus very well on one thought or even a few thoughts.

The confusion is due to the limitation of words. When we say we have mental clarity and mental focus at the same time, we may not mean we are clearing thoughts and focusing on thoughts at the same time. Yet, this can actually be done when our mind is strong. While we focus on a particular thought, or even a few thoughts, we can simultaneously clear away irrelevant thoughts.

Practicing Iron Wire provides us with an excellent method to attain these abilities.

QUESTION 3

What kind of practical results should one reasonably expect after, for example, one year or a few years of Iron Wire training?

— Markus Kahila

After one year of correct training of Iron Wire, a practitioner would be full of internal force and mental clarity.

His body would be rounded and charged with energy. His eyes sparkle and he speaks with a voluminous voice. He has a lot of energy and vitality.

When he spars, ordinary martial artists will find his arms very powerful. If he smashes his arms on opponents, he could break their bones.

His mind is fresh and clear, and he defines problems and see solutions easily. He can work on intellectual issues without feeling mental fatigued. He generally feels peaceful and cheerful.

However, if he practices wrongly, like tensing his muscles or intellectualizing during training, he would have adverse effects. He may develop big muscles which gives a false sense of powerful. He is strong due to his big muscles, but he becomes tired easily.

Though he is fit, he may not be healthy. He is often stressful, and have difficulty thinking for long periods. He finds his thoughts wander aimlessly. Emotionally he feels oppressed, and sometimes angry for no apparent reason.

It is easy to practice Iron Wire wrongly. Hence, it is very important to learn it from a competent teacher.

QUESTION 4

How does the internal force generated from this set compare to other methods in Shaolin Wahnam such as Golden Bridge, One Finger Shooting Zen, Three Circle Stance, Sinew Metamorphosis and The Flower Set?

— Sifu Andrew Barnett

With the exception of Sinew Metamorphosis, the internal force generated from the Iron Wire Set is generally more powerful than that from other chi kung exercises. This does not necessarily mean that practicing Iron Wire is a better choice than practicing other internal force training methods, because other factors are involved and this will become clear as you read on.

I have mentioned somewhere that the Iron Wire Set is probably the most powerful internal force training method. This was because I was thinking of practicing Iron Wire as a set compared to practicing individual exercises of Sinew Metamorphosis.

With our high level of cost-efficiency, it is not necessary, and sometimes harmful, to practice the whole set of 12 Sinew Metamorphosis exercises in one training session. If we do so it is for the purpose of review and we purposely perform at a much lower level of efficiency to avoid too much force at one time. The Iron Wire is usually practiced as a set, though students learn it gradually at the beginning and sometimes we may perform a part of it for some special reasons.

At a thematic level, the internal force generated from different force training methods is different in nature, function as well as time taken to develop it.

Iron Wire force is "hard" and is generally used for combat. Normally it takes a few months before a practitioner can feel the internal force generated. But with our highly cost-effective methodology, our students often feel the force on the very first lesson, or at most after a week of daily practice.

It is easy for other people to misunderstand my frequent mention of our cost-efficiency. We honestly do not mean to belittle others nor to glamorize ourselves, but it is necessary to mention it so that our students have a clearer picture of the training, not only letting them know that their progress is greatly speeded up but they need to be careful of correct practice as wrong practice will also greatly speed up adverse effects. As a comparison, using the traditional method it took me a few months before I could feel internal force from my own Iron Wire training.

The force developed from Golden Bridge is also "hard", and is less flowing than that in Iron Wire. The nature of training is also different. In Iron Wire a practitioner has to "consolidate" his force at the appropriate place, whereas in Golden Bridge the force is allowed to be "consolidated" on its own due to the particular position of the stance.

It is therefore easier to make mistakes in Iron Wire than in Golden Bridge. While

the force in Iron Wire is particularly geared to actual combat, that in Golden Bridge is more for laying foundation. If one is a beginner, it is faster to develop force using Golden Bridge than using Iron Wire. But if he is already very skilful, he can develop force faster using Iron Wire than using Golden Bridge. Regarding the order of learning, it is more cost-effective learning Golden Bridge first, then Iron Wire than vice versa.

The force in One-Finger Shooting Zen is "softer" and more "flowing" than that of Iron Wire. It is an excellent combination of the "flow method" and the "force method", whereas Iron Wire employs the "force method". If one uses only the "flow method" or only the "force method", he can still develop internal force, but this is not so with Iron Wire. If one uses only the "flow method" in Iron Wire, he cannot develop internal force, he has to use the "force method", though energy flow is essential.

It is easier to make mistakes in Iron Wire than in One-Finger Shooting Zen. On the other hand, mistakes made in One-Finger Shooting Zen can be easier rectified, but not in Iron Wire. One-Finger Shooting Zen is very versatile. It can be used for almost any purpose, like combat not only at the finger but any part of the body like the fist, the palm, the claw, the elbow and the leg, overcoming illness and maintaining health, expanding into the Cosmos, for healing and for daily life. The force from Iron Wire is more restricted.

It is also faster to develop force using One-Finger Shooting Zen than using Iron Wire. If one knows One-Finger Shooting Zen, his progress in Iron Wire is much speeded up, On the other hand, if one learns Iron Wire first, he may hinder his progress in One-Finger Shooting Zen later.

The force derived from the Three-Circle Stance is much "softer" and more "flowing" than that from Iron Wire. Like in Golden Bridge, the force in Three-Circle Stance is allowed to develop on its own due to the particular position of the stance, whereas in Iron Wire a practitioner has to "consolidate" his force. Relatively, the force from the Three-Circle Stance is spread all over the body, including nourishing internal organs, whereas the force of Iron Wire is focussed at the arms, particularly for combat.

A beginner will develop force faster using the Three-Circle Stance than using Iron Wire. But a skilful practitioner can develop more force and faster using Iron Wire.

Amongst the various force-training methods mentioned, Sinew Metamorphosis and Iron Wire are most similar in the nature of force developed. Both are "hard" and vibrant. This won't be a surprise when we understand their historical background. The Iron Wire Set, I believe, was developed from the Triple-Stretch Set, which in turn was developed from Sinew Metamorphosis.

But relatively, Sinew Metamorphosis is more internal whereas Iron Wire is more external. The force from Sinew Metamorphosis is more holistic, whereas the force from Iron Wire is more focussed at the arms. Both a beginner and a skilful practitioner can develop force faster using Sinew Metamorphosis than using Iron Wire.

The development of force in the Flower Set is similar to that in the Triple-Stretch Set, both use the triple-stretch method. The force derived from the Flower Set is "softer" (which does not mean less powerful). This is because the Flower Set employs the Goat Stance or the Two-Character Stance which makes the force more flowing, whereas the Triple-Stretch Set employs the Horse-Riding Stance which makes the force more focussed.

The nature and function of the force from the Flower Set are somewhere between those of One-Finger Shooting Zen and Iron Wire. Flower Set force is "harder" and less "flowing" than that of One-Finger Shooting Zen, but "softer" and more "flowing" than that of Iron Wire. It is less versatile than that of One-Finger Shooting Zen, but more versatile than that of Iron Wire. Flower Set force is also easier and faster for a beginner to develop, but a skilful practitioner can develop more force using Iron Wire within the same time period, but not necessarily easier, than using Flower Set,

Studying the advantages listed above, it appears that other force-training methods are more advantageous than Iron Wire. For a beginner, it is both safer and faster to develop internal force using other methods than Iron Wire. The functions are also more varied. Why is it then that I strongly recommend Iron Wire for our students?

It is because the students to whom I recommend Iron Wire are not beginners. There are already quite skilful.

Here is where spread and depth play a very significant part. With the skills derived from other force-training methods, our students can generate tremendous internal force safely within a short time - more force and in less time than using other methods.

It is easy for other Iron Wire practitioners to make mistakes, like performing it as isometric exercise instead of as energy exercise. Even when they practice it correctly, it takes a longer time for them to develop internal force. But for our students, even when they make mistakes, their chi flow will erase the adverse effects. The chi flow will also greatly speed up their progress in developing force.

Our students are also able to use the force generated from Iron Wire for purposes beyond what other Iron Wire practitioners can do. For example, other Iron Wire practitioners may use their force only for combat, whereas besides for combat our students can use the force for overcoming illness, maintaining good health, promoting longevity, enriching daily life, as well as for healing and spiritual cultivation.

QUESTION 5

Wong Fei Hung had a long and legendary career as a fighter, a physician and a defender of righteousness in his community. Please could you comment on the effect of learning the Iron Wire Set from Lam Fuk Sing on his development and career?

— Sifu Andy Cusick

The Iron Wire Set contributed much to Wong Fei Hoong's fighting ability, healing success and defence of righteousness.

Wong Fei Hoong learned the Iron Wire Set from Lam Fook Seng, who in turn learned it from inventor of the Iron Wire Set himself, Tiet Kiew Sam.

I believe Tiet Kiew Sam developed his Iron Wire Set from the Triple Stretch Set, which he learned from his teacher, the Venerable Cheng Choe, in Sai Sim Tzi or the Western Temple of Zen in Guangzhou (Canton). The teacher of the Venerable Cheng Choe was the Venerable Sam Tuck, whose specialty was the Triple Stretch Set, which he learned from his teacher, the Venerable Chee Seen, the Abbot of the southern Shaolin Temple on the Nine Lotus Mountain.

Wong Fei Hoong had three famous sets, namely Taming the Tiger, Tiger-Crane, and Iron Wire. In Wong Fei Hoong's lineage, which is now known as Hoong Ka (Hung Gar) though Wong Fei Hoong himself called it Shaolin, the Iron Wire Set was the most advanced and was specially meant for developing internal force.

Obviously Wong Fei Hoong needed a lot of internal force to be a very good fighter. It is worthy of note that there were no records of Wong Fei Hoong trained hard in punching sandbags, striking poles or lifting weights, which many Hoong Ka practitioners today do. It was also worthy of note that Wong Fei Hoong was not muscular. How did Wong Fei Hoong develop his tremendous force? It was from his Iron Wire training.

The two specialties of Wong Fei Hoong, with which he defeated many opponents, were Tiger-Claw and No-Shadow Kick. But Wong Fei Hoong did not train his Tiger-Claw by jabbing his hands into beans or train his No-Shadow Kick by kicking sandbags. Where did he get his power for his Tiger-Claw and No-Shadow Kick? From his training of the Iron Wire Set. Internal force is versatile. Although Iron Wire training focuses on the arms, Wong Fei Hoong could channel his tremendous force derived from Iron Wire training to his Tiger-Claw and No-Shadow Kick.

Wong Fei Hoong was a famous physician specializing in "tiet ta" or traumatology. Hard conditioning like jabbing fingers into beans or striking sandbags would make his fingers insensitive, which would be detrimental to his medical practice, especially in feeling pulses, and feeling and setting fractures. But internal force derived from his Iron Wire training, which made his fingers sensitive and his grip powerful, would enhance these medical practices.

Iron Wire training strengthens the muscular and the bone systems, which

directly strengthen the gall bladder and the bones. When one's gall bladder is full of energy, he becomes courageous. When his bones are full of energy, he becomes upright physically and morally. In fact, the Cantonese term for being courageous is "tai tam" ("da dan" in Mandarin), which literally means big or strong gall bladder. The Cantonese term for integrity is "kui hei" ("gu qi" in Mandarin), which literally means bone energy.

Hence, his Iron Wire training gave Wong Fei Hoong courage and integrity, which are essential for championing righteousness.

QUESTION 6

How would the force developed by Iron Wire be applicable to healing and everyday life? How would that compare to the force developed by Cloud Hands and Golden Bridge, and what would be the key differences in application?

— Sifu Barry Smale

If all other things were equal, a person who has more internal force and mental clarity will perform better than another who has less internal force and mental clarity in both healing, especially chi kung healing, and everyday life.

Iron Wire training, when practiced correctly, develops a lot of internal force and mental clarity. Hence, it greatly enhances healing and daily life.

I purposely add the phrase "when practiced correctly" because it is easy to practice Iron Wire wrongly and without being aware of it. It is common to practice Iron Wire, which is an energy exercise, as isometric exercise, which is physical.

The application of internal force and mental clarity from Iron Wire training to healing and daily life can be spontaneous or purposeful.

In other words, because one has practiced Iron Wire correctly, without him doing anything extra, his healing and everyday life will be better. On the other hand, he may purposely employ his internal force and mental clarity in his healing and everyday life.

For example, when he channels chi to his patients in his healing, which can be quite draining, or running up a flight of stairs in his everyday life, he may use some of his force derived from Iron Wire. When he listens to his patients reporting their symptoms, or to his wife complaining of household problems, he may use the same mental state employed while practicing Iron Wire. In both cases, he would be able to understand the problems better.

The force developed in Iron Wire is quite different from that in Cloud Hands and in Golden Bridge. The force is hardest in Iron Wire, less hard in Golden Bridge and softest in Cloud Hands. It is less fluid in Iron Wire, more fluid in Golden Bridge and most fluid in Cloud Hands.

Understanding this nature of the different types of force from the three different force training methods will enable us to use the appropriate force with the best results for different situations in healing and in everyday life.

In situations demanding hard and solid force, like breaking a patient's bone which was badly set so as to reset it properly, which some confident traumatologists did in the past but not now as Western medical orthopaedic treatment has become excellent, or breaking open a locked fence in everyday life, Iron Wire force would be the most appropriate.

On the other hand, in situations where soft flowing force is needed, like moving a patient's stiff arm to enhance his mobility in healing, or shoving a stubborn

dinner guest away from a heated argument in everyday life, Cloud Hands force will be most useful. In situations between these two extreme Golden Bridge force will be most desirable.

In their application, the key difference is between consolidation and fluidity. Where hard, solid force is needed, we consolidate our force. Where soft, flowing force is needed, we let our force be fluid. Where both consolidation and fluidity are needed, we operate somewhere in between.

For example, in a free sparring competition if you want to break an opponent's arm as he attacks, you use Iron Wire Force (and Choy-Li-Fatt techniques). If your opponent is strong and huge, and you want to use his momentum to fell him, you use Cloud Hands force (and Taijiquan techniques). If you want to confuse your opponent and strike him, you use Golden Bridge force (and Flower Set techniques).

Most martial artists are limited in their force training methods as well as their range of techniques. Those who practice hard, external arts like Karate, Taekwondo and mediocre Hoong Ka, for example, would use hard, solid force with straight, direct attacks and defences. If they wish to dodge opponents' attacks or release themselves from locks, they may not be able to adjust their force and techniques readily.

On the other hand, those who practice soft, flowing arts, like Judo, Aikido and Taijiquan, would use soft, flowing force with circular, evasive attacks and defences. If they wish to press into opponents or forcefully control them, they may also not be able to adjust their force and techniques readily.

We in Shaolin Wahnam are special. Not only we benefit tremendously from spread and depth, even if our students have trained only one type of force, they can readily convert it to other types, a privilege not normally available to students in other schools.

For example, other students trained in Iron Wire can only use Iron Wire force, or if they are trained in Cloud Hands only use Cloud Hands force. But our students trained in Iron Wire, not only they have Iron Wire force, but also they can convert it to Cloud Hands force or Golden Bridge force. Not only they can use the force to break an opponent's arm, they can also use the same force, with some conversion, to shove a stubborn guest away gracefully.

Do you know what the secret is that enables this possibility? Yes, it is chi flow. Of course if they take advantage of great variety of training methods and application techniques available in our school, their results will even be much better.

QUESTION 7

Why is the Iron Wire set so easy to be practised wrongly, even by advanced practitioners in our school? Our students and instructors are, for the most part, very skilled in the art of relaxation and know better than to tense when practising any qigong or force training method. Is it because the Iron Wire set involves the making of unfamiliar sounds or are there other factors?

— Sifu Zhang Wuji

Yes, it is very easy to practice the Iron Wire Set wrongly. Nevertheless, for students and instructors of our school the chance of practicing it wrongly is much less than that for students and instructors of other schools.

As a rough estimate, if they learn on their own from books or videos the chance of practicing the Iron Wire Set wrongly for students and instructors of other schools is about 99%, whereas that for students and instructors of our school is about 75% and 50% respective.

If they learn from a competent teacher, the chance of their practicing it wrong is about 80% for other schools, and about 20% and 5% respectively for our students and instructors.

As usual, other people may become angry at my estimate or think we are boastful. That is their problem, not ours, but my estimate is made honestly and the reasons are as follows.

One important factor why it is easy to practice the Iron Wire Set wrongly is that practitioners lack the philosophical understanding why and how Iron Wire training develops tremendous internal force and mental clarity. This factor is important but many practitioners, including masters, may not be aware of it. Many also do not realize that Iron Wire training develops mental clarity too, though they know Iron Wire develops internal force but they do not know why or how.

Some Shaolin Wahnam students may be surprised because in our school we usually explain the philosophy of what we are doing. Knowing the philosophy is an exception, not a norm, in kungfu training. Even masters who are very powerful and know that their internal force comes their Iron Wire training, do not know how or why the Iron Wire training gives them internal force.

This is where our instructors and students have a big advantage over others. We know the underlying philosophy. When you know the underlying philosophy of an art, you are less likely to practice it wrongly. For example, if you know that doing A and B gives result R, you would do A and B if you want result R. You will also know that if you do C and D, you would practice the art wrongly.

Please note that here A, B, C and D usually refer to skills and not to techniques. Techniques are visible and external, and hence practitioners are likely to perform them correctly. It is usually making mistakes in skills that cause their training to be wrong.

We know all this, but others don't. Others often do not know the difference between techniques and skills.

Another important factor which may not be obvious to practitioners is their lack of exposure to the effects of right practice. This factor, lack of exposure, is related to but not the same as the factor explained earlier, i.e. lack of philosophy. Lack of philosophy concerns theory, whereas lack of exposure concerns experience.

Not only practitioners do not know how and why Iron Wire training produces a lot of internal force and mental clarity, but also they have little chance of seeing the effects of those who have practiced Iron Wire correctly. Hence, it is easy for these practitioners to practice wrongly.

For example, they may become powerful and think that they have practiced correctly. But they fail to realize that their power comes from muscular strength. Because they have little exposure to those who have practiced Iron Wire correctly, who are powerful despite not having big muscles, and have vitality and mental freshness, these practitioners do not realize they have practiced wrongly as indicated by their big muscles, being tired easily and being mentally stressful.

Again our instructors and students have a big advantage over other practitioners. Not only we know the philosophy, we have examples of those with internal force and mental clarity as a result of Iron Wire training. Our practitioners have comparison and reference to check their training.

A third factor why it is easy to practice wrongly is because many practitioners confuse isometric exercise, which is physical, with consolidating force, which is energetic. This is where our students and instructors may fail. They know the philosophy and have exposure, but they may still practice Iron Wire wrongly because they perform isometric exercise instead of consolidating force.

I know this problem well because I myself made this mistake in my early years of practicing Iron Wire. But I had a huge advantage of chi flow. Although I made the mistake, which I did not know at that time, my chi flow overcame the adverse effects of that mistake and still gave me a bonus. It was much later that I discovered the mistake. Not only I could make corrections, but also realizing my mistake enabled me to have a deeper understanding of how Iron Wire training developed internal force and mental clarity. This enables me to help students achieve results in three months what I myself took a year.

Both isometric exercise and consolidating force enable practitioners to be strong. But the former employs mechanical strength and therefore needs big muscles, whereas the latter employs energy flow which needs relaxation and mental focus.

Force from isometric exercise is external and localized, whereas force from energy flow is internal and versatile. External force is limited to age, size and gender, but internal force is not. Localized force is restricted to striking with the arms, whereas versatile force can be used for anything, including good health,

peak performance and spiritual cultivation.

Although many people, many of whom have not practiced the Iron Wire Set at all, say that making correct sounds is very important and making sounds other than the ones prescribed can cause serious side-effects, I disagree with this observation. Hence, my answer here may be a surprise to many people.

At first I succumbed to this view too, but during my training of the Iron Wire Set I found that this was untrue.

You will notice that in the paragraph above the previous one, I use "sounds other than the ones prescribed" instead of "wrong sounds" This is purposely done to highlight the following crucial points.

1. "Wrong sounds", of course, are wrong, and by the fact that they are wrong, may cause side-effects.
2. Wrong sounds may not necessarily be sounds other than the ones prescribed.

In the pattern "Hands Guard Dan Tian" of the Iron Wire Set, for example, the prescribed sound is "herit", like the sound we make in "Black Tiger Steals Heart". Many students close their mouth while making the sound, which becomes "hup" instead of "herit". "Hup" is a sound other than the one prescribed, and in this case it is a wrong sound as it causes side-effects.

Suppose a student makes the sound "herit", which is the same sound as the one prescribed. But he tenses his chest while making the sound. So, in this case although the sound is the one prescribed, it is a wrong sound.

3. On the other hand, instead of making "herit", a student makes "ouit" or even "yaa", and he does so without tensing his vocal cords or lungs. Although the sound is not the one prescribed, it is not a wrong sound because it does not cause side-effects, though the good effects may be different. When one makes "herit" correctly, the sound vibrates at the dan tian; "ouit" the sound vibrates at the stomach, and "yaa" the sound vibrates at the lungs.

There are other reasons why making other sounds is not necessarily wrong, and why making the prescribed sounds is not necessarily right. In other words the difficulty of training the Iron Wire Set correctly is not due to the making of unfamiliar sounds.

The same sound when pronounced in different tones will actually become different sounds. The famous example is "ma", which may mean mother, numb, horse and scold depending on which tone it is being pronounced. The same situation applies to sounds in the Iron Wire Set, like herit, ouit, yaa, chaa, yeh, shss, and sss.

In the pattern "Hands Guard Dan Tian", "herit" is to be pronounced in the 4th tone. Will there be adverse effects if it is pronounced in other tones? No, as long as the vocal cords and lungs are not tensed. On the other hand, even when "herit" is pronounced in the 4th tone but with the vocal cords or the lungs tensed, then it can cause adverse effects. The same principle applies to other sounds.

Some people say that the various sounds in the Iron Wire Set affect different

organs of the body. If the right sounds are not used, then it will cause harm. This observation is incorrect. While it is true that different sounds affect different parts of the body, it is not true that if sounds other than those prescribed are used, it will be harmful.

If sounds other than the prescribed ones are produced correctly, they benefit organs other than those prescribed. For example, instead of saying "herit" when performing "Hands Guard Dan Tian", you say "ouit", you will vibrate your stomach instead of your dan tian.

On the other hand, even when "herit" is pronounced but with the vocal cords tensed, instead of vibrating the dan tian this may cause energy at the dan tian to stagnate.

QUESTION 8

It seems from the information available to us on the Iron Wire Set that Patriarch Tit Kiew Sam personally composed it as a crystallization of his extensive internal force training and experience.

The set that you have been so kind to share with us seems similar to the spirit of Patriarch Tit Kiu Sam's Iron Wire, in that it (to the best of my understanding) combines and crystallises your intensive experience of many useful internal force training methods into a balanced set, building on the established version of Iron Wire taught in Grandmaster Lam Sai Weng's lineage.

In what ways is Iron Wire as practised in our school similar to the Iron Wire of Grandmaster Lam Sai Weng's lineage, and in what ways does it differ? And more importantly, what unique benefits are to be had from practising our modified composition over the established one?

— Max

Yes, the Iron Wire Set was composed by Tit Kiew Sam, the most senior of the Ten Tigers of Canton. His teacher was the Venerable Cheng Caho who learned from the Venerable Sam Tuck, the second most senior disciple of the Venerable Chee Seen, the Patriarch of Southern Shaolin Kungfu.

Although his internal force was tremendous and his fighting experience wide, Tit Kiew Sam did not have extensive internal force training methods. This was the norm. Even great kungfu masters had only one or two methods. The internal force training method of Hoong Hei Khoon, for example, was Triple Stretch, of Yim Wing Choon was Siu Lin Tou, of Huo Yun Jia was Eighteen-Lohan Art, and of Yang Lu Zhan was Grasping Sparrow's Tail.

Exceptions were kungfu geniuses like Zhang San Feng, Ng Mui, Pak Mei and Chee Seen who knew many internal force training methods.

The internal force training method which Tit Kiew Sam learned from his sifu was Triple Stretch, which was the specialty of his sigung, the Venerable Sam Tuck. It was from Triple Stretch that Tit Kiew Sam drew his inspiration and method to compose the Iron Wire Set. It was recorded that Tit Kiew Sam was very impressed with the tremendous internal force of his sisookgung, Hoong Hei Khoon, who was then over 80 years old. Tit Kiew Sam sought from his sisookgung the finer points of the Triple Stretch Set.

Yes, the Iron Wire Set we practice in Shaolin Wahnam is based on that taught in Grandmaster Lam Sei Weng's lineage which inherits the Iron Wire Set of Tit Kiew Sam. Grandmaster Lam Sei Weng learned the set from his sifu, Wong Fei Hoong, who in turn learned from Lam Fook Seng. Lam Fook Seng was Tit Kiew Sam's disciple.

You are also right in your observation that I crystallized my experience of many internal force training methods and incorporated them into our version of the Iron Wire Set. Hence, our version of the Iron Wire Set is quite different from that

found in Grandmaster Lam Sai Weng's lineage.

The general structure, patterns and force training approach in our version are similar to those in Grandmaster Lam's version. There are, however, three important force training patterns that I introduced into our version and therefore not found in Grandmaster Lam's version.

The first is the signature greeting pattern from my sifu, Sifu Ho Fatt Nam. This signature greeting pattern is also found in the fundamental set practiced at the Southern Shaolin Temple, namely Four Gates. I find this signature greeting pattern extremely useful as right at the start it sets the Small Universe flowing, roots the practitioner firmly onto the ground, and channels his energy through both arms to the index fingers.

The second pattern is "Big Boss Lifts Bronze Vessel" taken from the Eighteen-Lohan Art. This pattern uses the hard approach to develop a lot of internal force, opens the heart, strengthens the kidney system, and roots the practitioner to the ground.

The third pattern is "Left Right Circulating Soft Bridge", taken from my specialty, Dragon Strength Circulating Energy Set. It uses the soft approach to develop internal force, and circulates energy to various parts of the body. Although this pattern is not found in Grandmaster Lam's version it is found in the Tiger Crane Double Form Set of his lineage.

Moreover, although both we and practitioners of Grandmaster Lam's version use the triple-stretch method to develop internal force, our approach is softer.

Thirdly, we pay much importance to energy flow and employ "Flowing Wind Swaying Willows" after each section as well as at the completion of the set. Practitioners of Grandmaster Lam's version generally do not do this.

Because of the addition of these methods, we have special benefits in our version over the other version. The internal force developed in our version is softer and more flowing. Its application is more versatile and varied. While the internal force of the other version is mainly used for combat, that in our version can be used for combat as well as other purposes, like overcoming pain and illness, promoting good health, vitality and longevity, and for spiritual cultivation.

Because of our chi flow, we are less likely to practice the Iron Wire Set as isometric exercise than in the other version. If we make mistakes in our training, our chi flow can readily clear out the resultant adverse effects. Practitioners of the other version do not have this advantage.

Because of our understanding and experience in chi flow, we can develop internal force right from the start of practicing the Iron Wire Set. Practitioners of the other version have to generate a chi flow first when they practice the Iron Wire Set, and they are often unaware of this process. Only when they have a chi flow, they start to develop internal force. Hence, our development of internal force is faster than that in the other version.

QUESTION 9A

Iron Wire is so powerful! How come we are so lucky in Shaolin Wahnam to learn how to generate so much force in such a short time?

— Sifu Anton

Our students and also our instructors are indeed very lucky in Shaolin Wahnam. Not only we have a range of internal force training methods unprecedented before, we can generate a lot of force in a very short time. Indeed, if somebody were to tell me this phenomenal situation 10 years ago, I myself would not believe it.

Such an opportunity has never happened before. Masters in the past knew only one or two internal force training method. Some kungfu geniuses like Bai Yi Feng, Zhang San Feng and Ng Mui knew many force training methods, but they still needed much time to practice each one of them to develop internal force.

In my young days I collected kungfu classics, met many masters and learned many force training methods. But I still needed much time to train each of the methods I selected.

I spend many years practicing my Horse-Riding Stance. Although my stance was solid and strong, it was due to physical strength, not internal force. My lack of internal force was painfully revealed to me when I sparred with my sihengs in my Wuzuquan classes. Although they moved their arms effortlessly, their arms were like iron rods to me, and they could push me around easily despite my solid, albeit physical, stance.

My first taste of internal force was One-Finger Shooting Zen, which was indeed a treasure. After practicing it for six months I could break a brick. Earlier I could not break one despite training Iron Palm for two years following instructions precisely, especially in not using physical strength. On hindsight I discovered that knowing techniques was not enough to produce the force. One must have the skills transmitted by a master or at least guided by him.

When I first practiced Iron Wire, it took me a few months to experience internal force. Despite my experience in a few internal force training methods, I still made the common mistake of practicing Iron Wire as an isometric exercise! You can imagine how easy for other people to practice it wrongly. But luckily by this time I had the experience of "Flowing Breeze and Swaying Willows". This gentle chi flow erased the adverse effects that my wrong practice of Iron Wire brought and still gave me a bonus.

With this background, you can better appreciate as I explain why students and instructors in Shaolin Wahnam today can experience internal force the first day they learn Iron Wire from me when it took me a few months. In three months they can generate internal force that I would need a year.

The overall reason is that having gone through different types of force training methods, I understand clearly the philosophy and experience of internal force

training in Iron Wire, and I teach our students and instructors skills which I may gather from other force training methods so that they can develop internal force in Iron Wire most cost-effectively.

Let us now examine the process in some details.

The ingredient of internal force is energy flow. In Iron Wire and other hard types of internal force, energy flow is consolidated. In soft types of internal force, like Taijiquan, energy flow is increased and speeded up. One-Finger Shooting Zen is somewhere in between. Hence my training of One-Finger Shooting Zen gave me a tremendous advantage.

In other words, if a practitioner practices the techniques of Iron Wire correctly, but has no energy flow, he will not be able to develop internal force no matter for how long he may practice because he lacks the ingredient. If he has energy flow but does not know how to consolidate it, he also does not have internal force as he lacks the mechanics.

A student learns Iron Wire techniques from his teacher. If he practices the techniques consistently for many months, he may develop some energy flow inside his arms. As the energy flow is slight and not easily visible, he is usually not aware of its importance in internal force development, especially when he and often his teacher too have no conceptual framework about chi flow and internal force development.

But as he persists on his practice, he will gradually develop this skill of generating energy flow, though he may not be aware of the skill. This will take a few more months.

After a few more months of correct, persist training, his energy flow will consolidate into internal force. Hence, he has developed another important skill, but like the earlier skill of generating an energy flow, he is also unlikely to realize this new skill of consolidating flowing energy into internal force.

He is aware of his increase of internal force, but not aware that this increase of force is due to his unconscious skills. He thinks that this increase in force is due to he persistent practice of the Iron Wire techniques, without realizing that without the skills of generating energy flow and consolidating flowing energy to internal force, he will not have any internal force though he may have practiced the techniques correctly.

Hence, this successful student takes about one and a half to two years to develop noticeable internal force in Iron Wire training. But this successful development is not typical. Out of 10 students who are taught the Iron Wire Set, probably two will have this successful result. The other eight students, even when they train regularly and consistently, will develop muscular strength instead because somewhere along their training they deviate into isometric exercise instead.

The crucial difference between the two successful students and the eight unsuccessful ones is that the successful generate energy flow and consolidate it into internal force, whereas the unsuccessful employ isometric exercises to

develop muscular strength. Both the successful and the unsuccessful are unaware of the philosophy and mechanics involved. The successful ones develop the necessary skills through practicing their techniques consistently. The unsuccessful ones mistakenly think that they have been successful because their muscular strength also gives them much power.

Now compare these other students with our students, and you can see why our students can generate so much force in a very short time. All our students not only already can generate an energy flow before they start their Iron Wire training, but also know the philosophy and mechanics of internal force training.

Thus, our students develop internal force the very first day of their Iron Wire training, whereas other students spend a few months acquiring, albeit unconsciously, the skill of generating an energy flow.

Because our students have insight into what they are doing, the energy they purposely generate is more powerful and in shorter time than the energy incidentally and occasionally generated by other students. In other words, our students can generate more energy flow on the first day than other students after a few months.

As our students already have energy flow, they learn how to consolidate it into internal force on the very first day of their Iron Wire training, whereas other students can only do so after a few months when they, without their conscious knowing, can generate an energy flow.

Not only this, their understanding and experience in other internal force training methods, like knowing the importance of being relaxed and not thinking of anything, and the skills acquired in One-Finger Shooting Zen, enable them to be more cost-effective than other students who do not have these advantages. Hence, the internal force developed by our students on the first day of their training is more than that of other students after many months.

Thirdly, our students have the advantage of accumulated effect, which is very important in any internal force training, whereas the other students do not, even when they train everyday. Quantifying the results will give a clearer picture.

Suppose our students are only twice as cost-effective as other students, which is a very conservative estimate. In reality our students could be 2 to 10 times more cost-effective.

Suppose other students need three months to develop the skill of generating an energy flow, and another three months to develop the skill of consolidating energy flow into internal force. These two estimates are generous. Needing 6 months for each skill is more likely for the successful 20%. The other 80% are likely to deviate into isometric exercise.

As other students are aware of the philosophy behind internal force development and also unaware of their skills, they will not generate an energy flow or consolidate internal force everyday, whereas our students can. Suppose other students can generate an energy flow or consolidate internal force after every three days, and there is a depreciation of 1 unit of force per day. Again

this is a generous estimate. It is more likely that they can do so after every 5 or more days.

On the very first day of training, our students gain 10 units of internal force. On the second day, they gain another 10 units, making a total of 20 units. In this way they will have generated 1000 units of internal force in 100 days.

For the other students, the first 3 months or 90 days they develop the skill of generating an energy flow. For another 3 months or 180 days later they develop the skill of consolidating internal force. Applying these two skills, albeit unconsciously, they gain 5 units of internal force on the 181st day.

They could not apply their skills on the 182th, 183th, and 184th day, and thus the internal force that remains is 4, 3, 2 units, depreciating 1 unit per day.

On the 185th day, they could gain another 5 units of internal force. When we add that to their remaining 2 units of force, they get 7 units of force.

Depreciating 3 units and then gaining 5 units, they add 2 units every 5th day. Hence on the 189th day, they will have 9 units of internal force, and on the 193th day 11 units, and on the 209th day 19 units of internal force. In other words, from day 181 to day 210, a period of 30 days, they have developed 19 units of internal force, which works to about 20 units per month.

Let us see how much internal force other successful students will have after three years, or 36 months, of Iron Wire training. For the first 6 months they develop the skills of generating energy flow and consolidating internal force. For the remaining 30 months they develop 20 units per month, making a total of 600 units of internal force.

Let us see how much time our students need to develop the same amount of internal force. Our students develop 10 units of internal force per day. This means they need (600 divided by 10) 60 days. In other words, our student can achieve in 2 months what other students will need 3 years.

The figures are not exact, but they give a clear picture how and why our students and instructors can develop a lot of internal force using Iron Wire training in a very short time.

This is possible because we understand the philosophy and mechanics, have the necessary skills right at the start due to our spread and depth, and we enjoy the advantage of accumulated effect.

QUESTION 9B

When does a practitioner need to practice Iron Wire and when should he prefer Golden Bridge?

— Sifu Anton

If he is already competent in both internal force training methods, when his emphasis is to lay foundation he should practice Golden Bridge. If his emphasis is to develop internal force for combat, he should practice Iron Wire.

Of course the choice is relative, and all other factors were presumed equal. Iron Wire can be used to lay foundation too, and Golden Bridge for combat.

If his intention is to focus his force in his arms, his choice should be Iron Wire. If his intention is to spread internal force more evenly, he should choose Golden Bridge.

If his preference is for combat, he should practice Iron Wire. If the preference is for health, he should practice Golden Bridge.

If he has not learned either arts, but has a chance to choose one to start, he should choose Golden Bridge. Not only it is easier to make mistakes in Iron Wire than in Golden Bridge, learning Golden Bridge first, then Iron Wire will give him more benefit than learning Iron Wire then Golden Bridge.

On the other hand, if he has to choose only one between Golden Bridge and Iron Wire, and there may not be a choice again in future, and if he knows very well that the Iron Wire teacher is competent, he should grab the opportunity to learn Iron Wire. The opportunity to learn Iron Wire correctly is much rarer than the opportunity to learn Golden Bridge.

QUESTION 10

How do the benefits of Iron Wire as a dynamic method differ from quiescent methods such as Zhan Zhuang? It seems that quiescent methods form the foundation of force training due to the mind or meditation aspect.

— Ish

Generally, internal force developed from dynamic methods is more flowing than force developed from quiescent methods. For example, the force developed from One-Finger Shooting Zen and Cloud Hands is more flowing than the force developed from Golden Bridge and Three-Circle Stance.

Flowing force is softer and more versatile, and in combat it is more fluid. Consolidated force is harder and more compact, and in combat it is more pressing.

For example, if you want to sense an opponent's movement or fell him onto the ground, flowing force, like that from One-Finger Shooting Zen, is preferred to consolidated force, like that from Golden Bridge. On the other hand, if you wish to dominate and opponent or smash his bones, consolidated force, like that from the Three-Circle Stance is preferred to flowing force, like that from Cloud Hands.

In promoting health, vitality and longevity, flowing force is more suited to cleansing and spreading, whereas consolidated force to building and strengthening. If a person is sick or in pain, applying flowing force, by himself or from another person, is preferred to applying consolidated force. If he wants solidness and stability in his daily life, consolidated is preferred to flowing force.

However, Iron Wire is different. Although it is a dynamic training method, the force developed is relatively consolidated rather than flowing. Indeed, if we compare Iron Wire with a quiescent method like zhan zhuang, Iron Wire is relatively more consolidated and less flowing. The reason is that although the method is dynamic, it is used to consolidate force, rather than let it flow.

So in comparing its benefits with other force training arts, we should consider Iron Wire as a consolidated force rather than as a dynamic method. In combat, the consolidated force of Iron Wire is more compact and pressing than force from quiescent methods like Three-Circle Stance and even Golden Bridge. If you wish to force an opponent against a wall, for example, Iron Wire Force is preferred to Three-Circle Stance force.

On the other hand, it is less fluid, even when compared to force from quiescent methods. If you wish to manipulate an opponent so that he heels overwhelmed, Golden Bridge force is preferred to Iron Wire force.

For non-combat purposes, Iron Wire force is more beneficial when situations need building and strengthening. If you want to better withstand a winter's cold, for example, or have courage to face intellectual challenges, Iron Wire force is relatively more beneficial than flowing force, like from Cloud Hands and Self-

Manifested Chi Movement.

Yes, generally force from quiescent methods form the foundation of force training, and an important factor is due to their mind or meditation aspect. The basic principles are to accumulate force at the dan tian, and develops solid stances. Quiescent methods are more conducive for such purposes. When a foundation is laid, force can then be channelled using dynamic methods various places in the body for their respective functions.

All these observations are relative and presume that all other things were equal. While consolidated force from Iron Wire is relatively less fluid than flowing force from Cloud Hands, for example, a master can use his Iron Wire force more fluidly than a student using Cloud Hands force.

In this respect, our students are very lucky. Because of the magic of energy flow, our students can readily convert one type of force to another. They may have developed consolidated force from Iron Wire, but if they need to overcome pain and illness, for example, they can just let go and enter chi flow. On the other hand, they may have developed flowing force from Cloud Hands. But if they wish to build or strengthen, they just go to standing meditation and let the force consolidate.

Also because of the magic of chi flow, our students not only can train two or more opposite methods at the same time, like Iron Wire and Taijiquan, without negating each other, but also their progress is even better than just training one at a time. This is the advantage of spread and depth.

This privilege is not available to other practitioners, including masters. If they practice Iron Wire and Taijiquan at the same time, the two opposing force training methods negate each other. For us they complement and enhance.

QUESTION 11

Which kungfu set best complements the Iron Wire set?

As you have mentioned before, some of the softer styles go against the powerful force-consolidating benefits of Iron Wire, as they are more flowing in nature, and the benefits can cancel each other out.

Although we in Shaolin Wahnam are lucky enough to have the skills to interchange consolidation and flow of force, I would like to respectfully ask which set or sets directly complement Iron Wire and also, is it because they also consolidate or instead complement this consolidation with other aspects, i.e. directing the consolidated force for other skills such as fa-jing, tiger-claw force, etc?

— Dave, Spain

For us in Shaolin Wahnam, the set that best complements the Iron Wire Set is the 108-Pattern Yang Style Taijiquan Set. They are diagonally opposite. The Iron Wire Set is hard and consolidated, whereas the 108-Pattern Yang Style Taijiquan Set is soft and flowing.

But for most other people, these two sets directly negate each other. In other words, for most other people if they train the Iron Wire Set and the Taijiquan Set the same time, they get minimal benefit. For us if we train these two sets at the same time, we have maximum benefit. How does this interesting situation happen?

The method of Iron Wire is to consolidate internal force, whereas the method in Taijiquan is to let internal force flow. Hence the two opposing methods cancel each other's benefit.

Suppose an Iron Wire practitioner has consolidated 50 units of internal force after a session of Iron Wire training. In the next session when he practices Taijiquan he lets his 50 units of internal force flow. Hence, at the beginning of the third session he has 0 units of consolidated internal force. After the session, he has consolidated 50 units. But in the fourth session he returns to 0 again when he lets the 50 units of force flow.

The same thing happens to a Taijiquan practitioner if he also trains Iron Wire at the same time. In the first session he develops 50 units of flowing force. But in the second session when he trains Iron Wire, he blocks up the force, leaving him 0 units of flowing force. In the third session he clears the blockage, but the flow is not strong enough to be a force. Hence he still has 0 units of flowing force. In the fourth session, he blocks up his force again. He remains with 0 units of flowing force.

Hence, if an Iron Wire practitioner also trains Taijiquan, and a Taijiquan practitioner also trains Iron Wire, at the end of the fourth training session both of them have 0 units of force. If they only train their chosen art, the Iron Wire practitioner will have 200 units of consolidated force, and the Taijiquan practitioner will have 200 units of flowing force, having developed 50 units of

force per session.

The process is different for us in Shaolin Wahnam because of the magic of chi flow. When our practitioner trains Iron Wire in the first session he consolidates 50 units of internal force. When he trains Taijiquan in the second session, because of his skills in chi flow, he can convert the 50 units of consolidated force into flowing force, enlarging the flow. Hence, instead of developing 50 units of flowing force in this session as other practitioners do, our practitioner can develop 70 units of flowing force. Added to the 50 units of force developed in the first session, he now has 120 units of force by the end of the second session.

In the third session, he can convert this 120 units of flowing force into consolidated force, which enlarges the capacity of consolidation. Hence, instead of consolidating 50 units of force in this session as other practitioners do, he can consolidate 70 units. Added to the original 120 units, he now has 190 units. When he trains Taijiquan in the fourth session, he can convert 190 units of consolidated force into 190 units of flowing force, which further enlarges the volume of flow.

As the flow is more vigorous, it attracts more force from the Cosmos into his body. Hence, instead of developing 50 units of flowing force like the other practitioners do, due to the tremendous volume our practitioner can develop 80 units. Added to the original 190 units, by the end of the fourth session our Iron Wire practitioner has 270 unit of force, which he can convert into consolidated force or flowing force.

This is the same for our Taijiquan practitioner who also trains Iron Wire. Bu the end of the fourth session he has 270 units of force which he can convert to flowing force or consolidated force, whereas other Iron Wire practitioners and other Taijiquan practitioners have 200 units of consolidated force and 200 units of flowing force respectively. Not only our Iron Wire and Taijiquan practitioners have more force, their force is also versatile, can be converted to consolidated force or flowing force by will.

If our practitioners train only Iron Wire or only Taijiquan, they will have more force than other practitioners who trains only Iron Wire or only Taijiquan, but less force than our practitioners who trains both Iron Wire and Taijiquan. By the end of the fourth session our Iron Wire practitioners will have 240 units of consolidated force, and our Taijiquan practitioners will have 240 units of flowing force, but they are unable to convert one type of force to the other. They have more force than other practitioners because of the enlarging of their consolidating capacity or flow, but less force than our practitioners who train both Iron Wire and Taijiquan because of their lack of converting ability which can enhance the amount of force.

In our case all sets complement one another, though they benefit one another in different ways. In other words, it does not matter which particular set you choose, if you practice any other sets, these other sets will benefit your chosen set in various ways. This is the concept of spread and depth.

Let us take Iron Wire as the chosen set. The set that best complements Iron

Wire is the 108-Pattern Yang Style Taijiquan Set. It is because they are diagonally opposite, and therefore have the widest range of interaction.

For other practitioners their interaction negates each other's benefit, but for us because of the magic of chi flow, the interaction complements each other. Hence the wider the interaction, the more benefits we get.

The contrast is not just in consolidating force and flowing force, but in many other aspects, like body movement, application of techniques and force, and use of tactics and strategies. For example, preferred movements in Iron Wire are short and straight, whereas those in Taijiquan are long and circular. A preferred Iron Wire tactic is to press in with hard force, whereas that in Taijiquan is to yield, deflect then counter-strike.

San Zhan of Wuzuquan is another interesting complement to the Iron Wire Set. All are internal sets. Iron Wire is hard and consolidated, Taijiquan is soft and flowing, whereas Zan Zhang is soft and consolidated. Hence, if we take Iron Wire and Taijiquan as two extreme ends of a spectrum, San Zhang is in between.

It is illuminating to compare Iron Wire with San Zhan. Both use short stances, whereas Taijiquan stances are long. Both are internal and hard, whereas Taijiquan is soft. But while Iron Wire is consolidated, San Zhan is flowing. Both sets are famous for developing tremendous internal force. Both sets look simple but are very profound.

The uninitiated would wonder how the patterns in the two sets could be used for combat. Relatively San Zhan looks more simple. And relatively the combat application of San Zhan are more profound.