

# THE INTERCEPTING CIRCLE OF THE FIVE-ELEMENT FIST

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The most important factors in Chinese martial arts are principles, theories and concepts. They are the very foundation by which the arts stand. Even though it may carry different traditions, it is the major doctrine that separates and cultivates what is considered true Chinese martial arts as distinguished from other arts. How we define the principles of the yin and yang in reference to internal and external applications will make all the difference universally in the preservation and cultivation of the arts. For example, if my understanding or perception of the principles of the yin and yang theory are not clear, it will affect the outcome of the technique mainly with the distortion of natural forces.

Focusing on the external principles of the yin and yang, we come to realize the internal values that cooperate with its function. Along with the basic concept of push and pull, we can understand a lot about correct applications in managing kinetic force. Rather than offering resistance to kinetic energy, we should cooperate by managing without resistance the kinetic force, by allowing the natural but continuing force to apply itself to the proper focus. For example, we perceive a method or technique as "punch" and "block" rather than "push" and "pull." Externally the idea of "punch" and "block" has already determined its response, which is to resist or offer an equivalent force as a response. Since blocking means to stand in the path of force, there really is no need to use force towards the "punch." This is strictly an external view of how to manage kinetic energy or physical force that defeats the natural principles and concepts of the yin and yang theory. Unfortunately, most artists prefer to challenge energy rather than manage it. The result of not cooperating with natural forces and underestimating its ability can be devastating. The most powerful force is that which we cannot see aside from natural movements.

So if our understanding is based on what we can see, it will result in our response being limited and useless. If the yin and yang principle is universal, it should be applied in every aspect of the martial arts.

The intercepting circle principle of the five-element fist reveals conceptual differences that are not commonly known or understood by many practitioners and teachers of Chinese martial arts. These differences are based on fundamental principles that have not been hidden but many times ignored or overlooked. The intercepting circle method requires an understanding of the principles of push and pull (yin and yang) and axial transitions that are applied to non-directional path of force. The intercepting principle is clearly demonstrated with the use of positions that offset direct force with continual response using circular and pivotal methods. It is understood that while we have been taught to resist force with force we find that this idea is not always possible. Because of our lack of strength or underestimating the strength of others, it is important that we learn to rely on no more than we can produce. Therefore, the balance of energy and the focus of energy for resistance must be used differently. The most effective path of energy is from one direction to the other, not moving in the same path in the opposite direction. The Shaolin boxing principles incorporate different methods and principles depending upon the skills taught. However, they are not totally depended upon physical strength. By the same token, physical posture and positions (or forms) are important. The understanding of external and internal flow of energy is important. For conservative purposes and focus, we need to include these understandings in our training.

The idea of the intercepting circle boxing method consists of four points. First is to avoid meeting force with force. Secondly, you want to get into the proper position by countering the undefended places. The third point is to strike the weak points and lastly to absorb the energy of

the adversaries. This is also the fundamental tactics of Shaolin boxing. There are very few schools that teach this method and because of the conceptual differences in applications, the methods are not even considered. Since fighting in the Chinese martial arts is primarily focused on reactions and principles, it is important to have a perception that is clear and a concept that is practical. The emphasis on this boxing style is centered on circular counter methods requiring little resistance as possible. The recorded origin of this southern style dates back to 1775. According to historians, during China's most progressive period of expansion, which was during the reign of Qing Emperor Qianlong (1736-1795), the intercepting circle as it is called now was called the "Gate Fist" style by the Yue family. Yue or "Yuen" was from a small province called Dongsheng, located in Sichuan. It is believed that this style may be even older tracing back to the period of the three kingdoms of Emperor Wei Mingdi (227-239). Historians record that during this time a famous doctor named Hua Tuo created one of the most popular exercises called the "Five Animal Play" (Wusingsi). Over time he passed this information down to a few of his students, who traveled throughout southern China, combining these exercises and teachings with herbal medicines. While traveling it was said that they had come upon the Yuen family who shared with them new herbs. In exchange, the students taught the Five Animal Play to the Yue family who were farmers. Down through the years, the Five Animal teachings were modified to include fighting techniques and principles. During the last year of Qing Emperor Qianlong (1795), Yue began to teach this style openly in Sichuan and later relocated to Hunan. He taught the Five Animal style and the fighting principle of the intercepting circle that was handed down by his family. After years of keeping the style within the family because of threats and danger from government regulations, the Yue family no longer taught the style to outsiders. As the family

spread across southern China, the boxing style became known as a lost style and was not discovered again or even recognized until the 1800's.