

On the Practical Methods of Non Professional Martial Artists Learning Changquan

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ABSTRACT

Changquan, as a major form of traditional Chinese martial arts, is characterized by stretching movements, distinct rhythms, and a combination of rigidity and flexibility. In the conventional path of martial arts learning, the study of various martial arts routines usually starts with the basic skills of Changquan, and then gradually expands to the study of other routines on this basis. Learning Changquan not only exercise the physical fitness, endurance, coordination, etc. of martial artists, but also gradually deepen understanding of martial arts techniques through the improvement of practice level. Based on this foundation, this article elaborates on the origin and characteristics of Changquan through literature review and induction methods. In further discusses the content, learning methods and explores in depth the content and methods required to learn and practice Changquan.

1. Introduction

As an important part of traditional Chinese culture, martial arts not only carry rich historical and cultural connotations, but also have a profound impact on the physical fitness, spiritual outlook, and social values of the Chinese nation. Practicing martial arts is not only a necessity for current public fitness and exercise, but also a way to inherit traditional Chinese culture and promote national spirit. I have been thinking about how to make martial arts accessible for scholars to learn and practice, from learning martial arts to professional martial arts training and eventually teaching martial arts. I think this should be what every non professional martial arts enthusiast wants to know and understand the most. Because the public believes that martial arts movements are complex and the content is unpredictable, making it difficult to learn and

practice. Based on this, this article starts with Changquan, a type of martial arts, and elaborates on how to learn and practice the basic skills and routines of Changquan, allowing martial arts enthusiasts to understand and participate in practical exercises by text based guidance.

2. The origin and characteristics of Changquan

What is 'long fist'? Since there is a 'long fist', is there also a 'short punch'? The concept of "long fist" and "short punch" can be traced back to the article "Wu Bian · Quan" recorded by Tang Shunzhi, a famous anti Japanese general in the Ming Dynasty. Wu Bian · Quan "is the first specialized essay on boxing in the history of Chinese martial arts development. The article clearly describes the concepts of long fist and short punch, as well as their different

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technical characteristics - “Long fist changes momentum, short punch does not change momentum, short punch is used for approach, and long punch is used for distance”^[1]. Changquan, also known as “Taizu Quan”, is a type of Chinese martial arts boxing. The rumor originated from Zhao Kuangyin, the founder of the Song Dynasty, but the term “long fist” first appeared in Qi Jiguang’s “Ji Xiao Xin Shu: Quan Jing Jie Yao Bian” in the Ming Dynasty, which stated that “ancient and modern boxers, Song Taizu had thirty-two powerful long fists”^[2].

Changquan is a traditional martial arts routine that focuses on long-range attacks and combines various techniques such as hand, step, body, and leg movements. Its characteristics are smooth movements, lively rhythm, and a balance of rigidity and flexibility, emphasizing flexibility and versatility in practical applications. The basic techniques of Changquan include the “Four Strikes,” “Eight Techniques,” and “Twelve Forms,” collectively known as the “Twenty Four Essentials. Overall, it is required that the “four strikes” must be legal and orderly; The “Eight Laws” must be integrated internally and externally, with both form and spirit; The “Twelve Shapes” are used to metaphorically describe the rhythmic patterns of movement, such as movement and stillness, speed and slowness, lightness and heaviness^[3]. Exquisite techniques; Eight techniques: hand, eye, body, step, spirit, qi, strength, and martial arts. That is; Hands should be agile, eyes should be fast, body should be flexible, steps should be steady, spirit should be abundant, qi should sink, strength should be smooth, and skills should be pure. The movements should be relaxed and graceful, with orderly speed and distinct rhythm. Standing like a nail, standing like a pine, fast like the wind^[4]. Changquan is not completely slow or fast in terms of movements, nor is it a stop and go movement. Instead, it features a combination of fast and slow movements, ups and downs, twists and turns, and a rich rhythm. As stated in the martial arts manual, ‘When the movement is urgent, it responds quickly; when the movement is slow, it follows slowly; when it is still, it touches; when the movement is still, it transforms into something magical.’ This rhythm is also determined by the methods used in the movements, reflecting a brave and lively spirit^[5]. It can be seen that the history of Changquan can be traced back to ancient China, and through the inheritance and development of martial artists throughout history, it gradually formed today’s system. It combines the strengths of many schools, absorbs the essence of other boxing, and has unique characteristics. It has become a comprehensive martial arts form integrating competition, fitness, self-defense, and appreciation.

3. The basic techniques that must be practiced in learning Changquan

Usually, martial arts training begins with basic movements. Only after mastering these basics can one advance to learn different routines. When practicing basic skills, the first step is to solidly practice individual movements, starting with learning boxing techniques, footwork, and eye movements, and progress from simple to complex actions.

3.1 Boxing Techniques

The common boxing techniques in Changquan are divided into fist, palm, and hook hand. The practice of punching can be divided into flat punching and standing punching. During the practice process, taking Right Punch as the first example, stand with your feet and shoulder width apart, and hold your fists around your waist with your feet as roots. Step on the ground with your right foot and turn your body slightly to the left, using your waist as the axis. Quickly thrust your right punch forward from your waist, extend your arms, and apply force to the tip of the punch, while retracting your left punch back to your waist. When punching, pay attention to hitting the ground, twisting the waist and shoulders, and exerting complete force. You can practice repeatedly left and right in place. Similarly, taking the right palm as second example, stand with your feet naturally apart, hold your palms with both hands, and use your feet as roots. Step on the ground with your right foot and turn your body slightly to the left, using your waist as the axis. Quickly thrust your right palm forward from your waist, straighten your arm, and move your palm forward. At the same time, retract your left palm backward to your waist. When pushing the palm, take the foot as the heel, use the waist belt palm, and push the palm root firmly. Repeat the exercise in place left and right. The practice of hooking requires standing with both hands clasped together, feet as roots, and natural separation. Taking the right hook hand as third example, at the beginning of the action, the right arm bends the elbow, the five fingers of the right hand are squeezed together, and the lateral hook is pulled out from the upper right corner of the body, grasped tightly, and the hook tip is directed downwards to exert force, with the arm level with the shoulder. When hooking, pay attention to the strength of the wrist, so that the hook tip is vertically downward and practiced alternately left and right.

3.2 Steps

The footwork of Changquan should be learned from five types of steps, namely bow stance, horse-riding

stance, crouch stance, empty stance, and cross-legged sitting stance. After learning and mastering the key points of step patterns, one can then learn step pattern conversion exercises, as well as progress and regression exercises during walking.

Firstly, practice bow stance by bending and squatting the front legs, keeping the thighs close to horizontal at a 90 degree angle, with the knees facing forward and perpendicular to the toes, keeping the hind legs straight and straight, and placing both feet on the ground with the toes inward. The horse-riding stance requires two feet to be parallel, larger than shoulder width, with a distance between the left and right feet of about 3 to 4 times the length of the feet. The legs should be bent and half crouched, with a round crotch, slightly inward buttoned toes, and flat thighs. Crouch stance requires one leg to squat completely, with the toes slightly extended, and the other leg to stretch out and lay flat on the ground, with the toes inward and both feet fully on the ground. The empty stance requires the legs to bend and squat, the thighs to be close to horizontal, the other leg to bend slightly and stretch forward, the thumb of the foot to the ground, with a clear distinction between virtual and real, and the weight falling on the hind legs. Cross-legged sitting stance requires standing with both feet crossed back and forth, bending knees and squatting, inserting the knees of the hind legs forward and pressing them tightly against the outer side of the knee socket of the front legs, sitting with the buttocks at the heel of the hind legs, with the front feet fully on the ground and the front feet of the hind feet on the ground.

3.3 Eye technique

Eye expression practice is crucial in the process of martial arts training. Changes in eye expression can impart a storyline to the movements. The coordination of eye expression can be described as follows: before the movement begins, look in the direction where the movement is about to take place; during the movement, follow the movement with your eyes; when the movement ends, fix your gaze on a fixed point^[3].

Fixed point practice can be done by standing in front of a mirror, with both eyes focused on the target directly in front of you at eye level. Keep your eyes fixed on the front for a certain amount of time, and gradually increase your fixation time as the practice progresses. This exercise can exercise the focus and stability of the eyes, making the gaze sharper and more energetic. Moving exercises can be combined with head swinging, fixed position, punching, and clapping. It is recommended to practice the movements during the process by standing in front

of a mirror, which can provide a clearer view of changes in gaze and facial features. It is also possible to combine footwork with eye movements in martial arts. During the process of transitioning between archery, horse steps, and virtual steps, the eyes should rotate with the movement of the body and changes in posture, always maintaining a high level of awareness of eye movements.

3.4 Jumping action

The jumping movements in martial arts are rich and diverse, with flashing, jumping, and high viewing value. They not only showcase the beauty and strength of martial arts, but also have practical offensive and defensive significance. The basic jumping movements include Jumping front kick, Whirlwind kick, Jumping lotus kick, Butterfly kick, and side somersault.

During practice, when taking off, the jumping front kick should be fully kicked, lifted, the waist should be upright, the head should be lifted, the arms and swinging leg should be quickly raised, and the other leg should be lifted and the knee should be retracted. In aerial movements, the hip and abdomen should be retracted, the upper body should be slightly forward pressed, the front toe should be over the shoulder, and the landing action should use the forefoot to land first, followed by a cushioned landing. When the whirlwind kick requires takeoff, follow the force of the forefoot pedaling and actively swing the arms and twist the waist to make the waiting leg fully jump; The aerial movements should involve rolling the hips, standing the waist, and lifting the head to maintain center position. The rotation of the body should follow suit, and after completion, it should be cushioned and landed. Jumping Lotus Kick should be done in an arc shape, with the body slightly tilted to the right. When stepping on the ground with the right foot, the hip should be raised, the toe should be extended, and the body should be fully stepped on. The left leg should be placed flat or bent and lifted, and the forefoot should land first. Pay attention to bending the ankle and knee, and maintain moderate tension.

Butterfly kick requires that the swinging arm and pedaling should be coordinated and consistent, the posture in the air should be relaxed and open, and the landing should be light and stable. Side somersault requires coordination between the swing arm and the ground kick, with moderate amplitude and force of the swing arm to provide better power for jumping. When flipping, take your waist as the center, lift and use your body's inertia to flip, keep your toes straight, and pay attention to cushioning when landing.

4. Practice methods of Changquan routines

Regardless of the routine, the first step after under-

standing its cultural characteristics is to practice basic skills. The basic movements of Changquan include boxing techniques, footwork, straight swinging leg techniques, bending and stretching leg techniques, sweeping and turning leg techniques, jumping movements, etc. On the basis of learning these movements, one can advance to the practice of combining individual movements into coherent combinations. At the same time, based on the practitioner's mastery of basic movements, a transition can be made for the subsequent learning of routines. Basic movements can be connected for practice, which is called combination movements. The connection of combination movements is called segmented movements. The premise is that the basic skills must be very solid. If there is no standard correction for the basic movements, the coherent combinations and routines will not take shape. To practice well and effectively, the following steps are requested.

4.1 Flexibility and Strength Exercises

Flexibility training should focus on the neck, shoulders, legs, waist, ankles, and hips, pulling the muscles of each joint apart. Good flexibility can make the movements stretch and open when completed. While maintaining flexibility, there should also be support for strength training, which should focus on the stability of upper limb, core, lower limb, and small joint strength. The improvement of flexibility and strength is not achieved overnight. It is necessary to gradually increase the difficulty, intensity, and duration of practice according to a reasonable pace, in order to avoid over training leading to injury or fatigue accumulation. The body should have enough time to recover and avoid continuous high-intensity training in the same area. Balanced development is more important.

4.2 Single Action Practice

Every martial arts movement has its specific specifications and standards. When practicing a single movement, it is important to pay attention to the movement path of the movement, whether it is an upper limb movement or a lower limb movement, and to clarify its starting position, movement trajectory, and ending position. At the same time, martial arts movements require coordination and cooperation between the upper and lower limbs, and each movement has its own inherent rhythm, including three stages: starting, process, and setting. The specifications of each stage must be completed properly.

4.3 Combination Exercise

Firstly, when practicing combination movements, special attention should be paid to the standardization of

individual movements. Only when a single movement is completed to the required standard and the combination movement is coherent, will the movement not deviate. Secondly, in the connection of movements, it is necessary to be coherent and smooth. According to different styles of boxing, the rhythm should be mastered, the characteristics should be highlighted, and the strength and speed of the movements should be coordinated and matched with each other.

4.4 Segmented and Complete Exercises

When practicing in segments, it is important to pay attention to reasonable paragraph division, natural movement coordination, and avoid situations where a certain paragraph is too long or too short, in order to ensure the rhythm and coordination of the entire routine. Each paragraph should have certain characteristics in terms of action content, rhythm, or style, in order to demonstrate rich variations during practice and performance. In terms of rhythm, different paragraphs can adopt different rhythm changes, highlighting the ups and downs of the paragraph rhythm. By utilizing different features, the entire routine becomes more attractive and expressive. The arrangement of a complete set of martial arts movements should be coordinated and consistent as a whole, with rich content of movements. Attention should be paid to the quality of combination movements and individual movements. At the same time, the routines should have ornamental and artistic value, which can attract the attention of the audience and leave a deep impression.

4.5 Practice of Spirit and Rhythm

The practice of internal and external essence, spirit, and rhythm in martial arts requires a deep understanding of the connotations and philosophical ideas contained in martial arts. In practice, we need to gather our spirit in order to express the essence of martial arts movements more deeply. At the same time, corresponding exercise styles should be demonstrated based on different martial arts styles and action situations. For example, when practicing Tai Chi, one should appear calm and composed, reflecting inner peace and composure; When practicing martial arts such as Changquan, one can show a resolute and brave expression, enhancing the infectiousness of the movements.

Especially in the practice of rhythm, it is necessary to follow the arrangement of routines, and through this alternating rhythm change of fast and slow, make the routines more colorful. It is also necessary to reflect different intensity rhythms in different movements, such as the combination of rigidity and softness, and the rhythm effect of

fast and slow matching, making the entire routine exercise more artistic and unique to the style of boxing.

5.Key points and suggestions in the study and practice of martial arts routines

Learning martial arts routines may encounter various difficulties and setbacks, such as difficulty in mastering movements, lack of coordination in movements, easy forgetting, and slow progress. To address these, 1. In learning and practice, the first thing is to maintain focus, eliminate external interference, and concentrate on the specifications of movements and the coordination of breathing. 2. During practice, it is important to prevent injuries, schedule exercise time and intensity reasonably, and avoid excessive fatigue and injury. Special attention should be paid to avoiding tension and stiffness in newly learned movements. 3. The learning of martial arts routines requires continuous repeated practice in order to master the techniques and essentials of the movements proficiently. Through repeated practice, muscle memory is gradually formed, and the expression of movements is natural and smooth. Only by grasping the above learning points can one truly appreciate the connotation and essence of martial arts routines, thereby improving the effectiveness of practice. And put forward the following suggestions.

5.1 From partial practice to overall practice, from overall practice to partial practice

Martial arts movements involve rich details and techniques, such as techniques, footwork, body movements, etc. Through partial practice, it is possible to repeatedly adjust and practice each specific link of the action, master the specifications of the action, the method of exerting force, and the trajectory of the movement. When some exercises reach a certain level, and the details of each action are proficient, accurate, and can be completed stably, you can try to practice as a whole. Overall practice can enable practitioners to have completely coherent movements, organically combining various movements to enhance their proficiency in the overall routine. When practicing to a certain extent, during the overall practice process, some problems that were not discovered during some exercises may be exposed. These problems may lie in the connection, details, rhythm, and coordination between movements. By regressing to some exercises, the causes of these problems can be analyzed more deeply and solved through practice.

5.2 Practice of Attack and Defense Conversion

The practice of transforming martial arts movements into offense and defense is an important part of martial

arts training. It can not only improve the practitioner's practical ability, but also deepen their understanding of the connotation and essence of martial arts techniques. Each movement and move in the routine represents attack or defense, and only through the practice of both sides can its inherent offensive and defensive meanings be truly reflected. The strength and technical essentials of each movement can also be demonstrated in offensive and defensive exercises. During the practice, two people can practice together, simulating offensive and defensive techniques. As the practice progresses, the pace of attack and defense gradually accelerates, the intensity and complexity of the attack increase, and the practitioner can improve their ability to transform attack and defense in a more realistic combat environment. This not only clarifies the techniques used in practice, but also enhances the combat effectiveness of martial arts.

5.3 Attempt to incorporate rhythm music and showcase different styles

In order to enhance the interest and hobbies in martial arts learning and avoid tedious and repetitive learning, music can be integrated into martial arts practice to showcase different styles and add fun and expression to the practice. For example, the movements of Changquan are vigorous, rapid, and rhythmic, paired with ethnic drum music with a strong sense of rhythm, Chinese drama, and grand harmonies, which can stimulate the practitioner's spirit and strength.

After gaining a certain perception and experience of the rhythm of the music, practitioners gradually begin to match martial arts movements with the rhythm of the music. When practitioners can skillfully combine martial arts movements with music, it requires them to have a deep thinking and understanding of the structure and rhythm of the entire set of movements. At the same time, they need to adjust their emotional expression according to the rhythm of the music, so as to reflect different style characteristics and enhance the attractiveness of the overall routine performance.

6.Conclusion

Currently, the global dissemination of traditional martial arts is becoming increasingly widespread, and it has become a beautiful business card that promoting the charm of Chinese culture heritage that advances its international reach Practicing martial arts can promote mutual understanding and communication between people, and is also a powerful promoter of spreading Chinese culture. This article focuses on the martial arts category of

Changquan, discussing the basic techniques that must be practiced in practicing Changquan, the practice methods of Changquan routines, and the key points and suggestions in learning and practicing martial arts routines. It provides some practical methods for non professional martial artists when practicing martial arts. We hope that enthusiasts will understand that practicing martial arts is not a one-time effort, and requires continuous learning and gradual understanding. They will gradually integrate and appreciate the charm of this traditional skill, and then transform this love into daily habits, shouldering the responsibility of inheriting and promoting Chinese martial arts.

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