A fist is a fist is a fist, and any way it hits you it can knock you out. But in tai chi and the internal arts, distinctions are made in the energetic qualities with which a fist knocks you out. Furthermore in the internal styles knockouts aren’t dependent on the fists alone – any part of your entire body can be your weapon, and distinctions are made in the qualities with which various body parts attack and defend.

The collective Chinese term for these distinctive energy qualities is Jing (also sometimes spelled Chin or Jin in English). While different instructors might define, count, categorize and interpret the various Jings in different ways, at least a couple of dozen Jings seem to be commonly discussed in tai chi circles with similar interpretations by most masters.

In this lesson I will elaborate on some of these more important Jings. This isn’t to imply that there are unimportant Jings -- they all matter to some degree or they wouldn’t have been passed down to us by the previous masters. But the understanding and development of certain key Jings will significantly help you improve your tai chi skills in practical and measurable ways – both in terms of combat and general health.
COMMON JINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT

Some of the Jings refer to the energetics of physical postures or motions, while others refer to more mental energetic qualities. First I will describe the “eight-trigram” physical Jings that form the foundation of the original “thirteen postures” of tai chi (in conjunction with the “five directions”). These eight include:

Peng Jing (Ward Off) -- This quality must permeate all of your postures and forms. You develop a sense of fullness and strength within all parts of the body, yet the body remains relaxed and pliable. Your body is like an inflated ball – any forces that hit it will be sucked in momentarily then bounced right back out. You can also think of it like a fireman’s hose: The hose itself is soft and can be rolled up and stored away, but when you connect it to a hydrant and fill it with pressurized water it becomes unbendable and strong enough that you can drive cars and trucks over it without it collapsing.

Lu Jing (Roll Back) – You shift or step back to smoothly lead the opponent’s force past and beyond you, usually downwards.

Ji Jing (Press) – You release your energy in a pushing or pressing motion, sometimes with short explosive striking power and sometimes with longer pushing power. This is generally done after the opponent has been neutralized or redirected.

An Jing (Push) – You push against the opponent, often with one hand expressing the force and the other guiding or supporting it.

Cai Jing (Pluck or Pull) – Typically by grabbing or using joint locks, you control and guide the opponent to upset his root and neutralize his attack.

Lie Jing (Split) – You split your energy or your opponent’s into two directions at once, such as pushing on his upper body while pulling his lower body.

Zou Jing (Elbow) – The elbow is used to push, strike or direct the opponent.

Kao Jing (Shoulder Stroke) – The shoulder or any part of the upper body is used to push, strike or direct the opponent.

That concludes the “eight-trigram” Jings which are at the core of tai chi as a combat style. Now here are some of the other major physical Jings:

Chan Nien (Adhering and Sticking) – Developed through tui shou (push
hands) practice, this adhering energy enable you to stick to and become one with your opponent. At first we are too stiff and insensitive to remain connected to the opponent during movement, but with practice our stepping and body movement allows us to adhere and stick.

*Chan Tzu Jing (Silk Reeling)* – This refers to the continuous, coiling energy reminiscent of pulling silk from a cocoon. We work to cultivate this skill in our form practice as we make sure our movements are smooth and connected. Our energy moves most efficiently when we develop smoothness and continuity.

*Hua Jing (Neutralizing)* – To come closer to realizing the tai chi concept of four ounces deflecting a thousand pounds, we learn how to use energy to sense, guide and redirect incoming force until it is fully dissipated.

*Dien Kan Jing (Resisting)* – In accord with yin and yang, sometimes we must be fluid and soft and yielding, but we must be equally skilled at becoming solid and immovable like a mountain. In resisting we don’t rely just on external strength, but rather on the strength that comes from proper body alignment and rooting. Many people erroneously overlook the importance of developing resisting skills – skills that are essential in grappling and combat, but that should even be employed in tui shou practice.

*Jie Jing (Borrowing)* – This energetic quality allows us to augment our own power by in effect borrowing the opponent’s power. Rather than simply executing a technique on the opponent, we respond to his intent and motion and “borrow” his force by inviting it in, merging with it, and then sending it back out in addition to our own force.

The previous Jings were physical, though of course they require the mind intent (yi) for execution. Now a couple of important mental or sensing Jings:

*Dung Jing (Understanding)* – This is a subtle mental energy that allows you to sense or interpret what the opponent is about to do, allowing you to almost intuitively counter with the correct offensive or defensive response.

*Ting Jing (Listening)* – Listening energy doesn’t refer to listening to sound with your ears, though that may be part of it. Instead you listen
with all of your senses and your entire body to the opponent’s intentions and actions. As with all interactions and communication with others, most of us neglect how important it is to listen rather than “speak.”

Many more Jings are referred to in the classic tai chi literature, and if you are serious about developing your internal skills you should study them carefully. The ones I’ve detailed above are the ones I pay the most attention to and allude to periodically in class. The ones I don’t discuss much might just be the ones that could boost your skills to a higher level.

**EXERCISE:**

For each of the Jings, visualize a concrete example when applying a tai chi application against an opponent (or visualizing against an imaginary opponent.)

**ASSIGNMENT**

Explain whether or not a deeper understanding of Jings can benefit someone who is studying tai chi for health, but not for combat. Send your thoughts to me at lessons@thepeacefuldragon.com. Please put “Lesson 40” in the subject line.

**RECOMMENDED READING**

*The Intrinsic Energies of Tai Chi Ch’uan*
*Translated by Stuart Alve Olson*

A student of the late tai chi master T.T. Liang, Stuart Olson offers useful commentaries and foot notes on the various Jings in addition to the translations from the original author, Chen, who published this material from manuscripts borrowed from the Yang lineage disciple, Yang Cheng Fu.

Another excellent book with detailed descriptions of numerous Jings is Advanced Yang Style Tai Chi Chuan, Volume One, by Dr. Yang Jwing-Ming.
Every month a book or article will be suggested by Master Sbarge. Reading about topics related to the arts you are training in will help you get the most out of your practice. Just remember that reading can never replace your practice! Each month’s recommended reading is purely optional, though Master Sbarge may on rare occasion ask that you do read a particular book.

For additional reading suggestions by Master Sbarge, go to http://www.thepeacefuldragon.com/books.shtml.

Note: All Peaceful Dragon students are urged to complete monthly assignments because they are important for you to fully benefit from your training. Master Sbarge reads every single student’s lesson responses every month, and will periodically respond or comment on them.