

**Excerpt from the book Li Tianji's The Skill of Xingyiquan
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APPENDICES

三节说

三节举一身而言，手肘为梢节，身为中节，脚腿为根节是也。分而言之，则三节之中亦各有三节也。

如手为梢节，肘为中节，肩为根节，此梢节中三节也。脚为梢节，膝为中节，胯为根节，此根节中之三节也。头为梢节，心为中节，丹田为根节，此中节中之三节也。要不外乎起、随、追而已，盖梢节起，中节随，根节追之，庶不至有长短曲直参差俯

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仰之病，此三节之所以贵明也。

三节即三体也，手为梢节，身为中节，足为根节，三节不明，周身是空，上中下三节总要分明，上节不明手多强硬，下节不明足多盘跌，中节不明浑身是空。

Explanation of the three segments¹

The three segments refer to the body – the whole arm is the tip, the body is the middle, and the whole leg is the root. Breaking it down further, each of the three segments has three segments. The three segments of the tip segment are: the hand is the tip, the elbow the middle, and the shoulder the root. The three segments of the root segment are: the foot is the tip, the knee is the middle, and the hip is the root. The three segments of the middle segment are: the head is the tip, the heart area is the middle, and the centre of gravity² is the root. This cannot be separated from initiating, following, and chasing - that is: the tip initiates, the middle follows and the root chases. Knowing the three segments is important because that enables you to avoid

¹ tr. note: The body is divided this way in other styles as well, and is often likened to the branch, trunk and root of a tree. This division refers to the principle of summation of forces, or transferring power sequentially from the ground through the body to the point of power application. This is also described in the ‘seven flows.’ Power transfer differs according to the point of reference, which is why there is more than one ‘three segments.’

² tr. note: The *dantian*. The centre of gravity lies roughly in the lower *dantian* in most *xingyi* stances. See the diagram on page 297.

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the mistakes of too long and too short, too bent and too straight, unevenness, and leaning.

When the three segments refer to the body as three limbs (as in the *santishi* stance), the hand is the tip, the body the middle and the foot the root. If the three segments aren't clearly distinguished then the whole body is empty. The upper, middle and lower segments must always be clearly distinguished. If the upper segment is not clear the hands will be too stiff. If the lower segment is not clear the feet will be all over the place. If the middle segment is not clear the whole body will be empty.

五行说

五行者，金、木、水、火、土之谓也，如人之内有五脏，外有五宫，皆与五行相配合。心属火，脾属土，肝属木，肺属金，肾属水，此五行之隐于内者；目通肝，鼻通肺，舌通心，耳通肾，人中通脾，此五行之著于外者。金生水，水生木，木生火，火生土，土生金，是五行相生之道也；金克木，木克土，土克水，水克火，火克金，此五行相克之道也。

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Explanation of the five elemental phases

The five elemental phases are metal, wood, water, fire and earth. They relate to five visceral organs of the human body internally, and to five organs externally. Internally, the heart relates to fire, the spleen to earth, the liver to

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wood, the lungs to metal, and the kidneys to water. Externally, the eyes connect to the liver, the nose to the lungs, the tongue to the heart, the ears to the kidneys,³ and the philtrum⁴ to the spleen. The cycle of creation of the five elements is: metal creates water, water creates wood, wood creates fire, fire creates earth, and earth creates metal. The cycle of control of the five elements is: metal subdues wood, wood subdues earth, earth subdues water, water subdues fire, and fire subdues metal.⁵

tr. note: The explanations of the four tips and the five elemental phases are part of the traditional Chinese world view which is applied to the understanding of the body and in traditional Chinese medicine (TCM). This text is not meant to be mysterious in any way to the Chinese – it is a simple description of well-known physical phenomena. Sometimes things are put into five phase categories for convenience, because of their relationship to something already categorized (the lungs are metal because they create water vapour in the body, the lungs open to the nose, so the nose must be in the metal phase).

³ tr. note: The kidneys include the adrenal glands, which sit on top of them.

⁴ tr. note: The philtrum is the dip in the upper lip, between the lip and the nose.

⁵ tr. note: five elemental phases cycle of creation: metal creates water (metal sweats) → water creates wood (trees need water to grow) → wood creates fire (fire needs fuel) → fire creates earth (all turns to ash when burned) → earth creates metal (minerals are formed in the ground). five elemental phases cycle of control: metal controls wood (axes chop wood) → wood controls earth (roots break up soil) → earth controls water (earth can dam rivers) → water controls fire (water puts out fire) → fire controls metal (fire melts metals).

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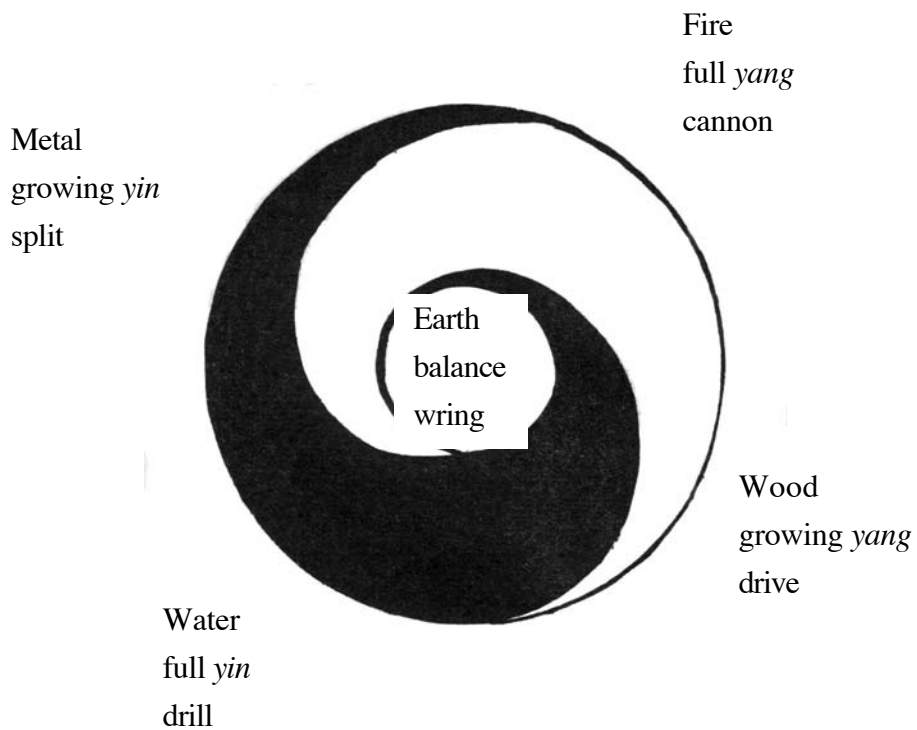
Some relevant categories are:

five elemental phases	metal	water	wood	fire	earth
five techniques	split	drill	drive	cannon	wring
five internal organs	lungs	kidneys	liver	heart	spleen
five organs	nose	ears	eyes	tongue	philtrum, or mouth
five tissues	skin	bones	tendons	blood vessels	flesh
five seasons	autumn	winter	spring	summer	transitional, or Indian summer

The *yin yang* theory predates the five phases, and is more all-inclusive and flexible. When five phases or four tip categorization don't work well, *yin yang* theory can override them. But, although these cycles of creation and control may seem arbitrary at times (i.e. a fire can be put out by earth as easily as by water), a more organic way to look at the five phases shows that the categories are not as arbitrary as they may appear. The cycles show that metal stands for phases or functions which are declining (like autumn, *yin* is growing); water stands for phases or functions which are at the maximal state of inaction or rest (like winter, *yin* at the full, about to reactivate); wood stands for phases or functions which are growing (like spring, *yang* is growing); fire stands for phases or functions which are at the maximal state of activity (like summer, *yang* at the full, about to decline); and earth stands for balance or neutrality, so is a buffer between the others (like interseasons, *yin* and *yang* in balance).

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tr. note: *Xingyiquan* always combines technique with mindset, so this organization of elemental phases can well be used to categorize techniques of defense and attack and the corresponding mindset.

	Mindset	Defense	Attack
Metal	hardheaded	take it, hold your position	focus, controlled attack
Water	flowing, soft	dodge, avoid the force, give in to get your way	sneak around redirect softly or get in another way
Wood	alive, aware	absorb and recoil directly	sense, react quickly and get in
Fire	fully committed	charge in to cut off the attack	charge in , no return don't care what happens
Earth	centered, calm	cover, neutralize, absorb	sense and redirect

Split (metal) uses the full potential of both hands to hold the position by using the back hand to trap and pull down the attack to allow the front hand to apply a clean strike. You don't need to back off to apply it. You can also directly attack with it, controlling the opponent as you go in.

Drill (water) doesn't directly apply itself to the oncoming attack, but slides along and through without force.

Drive (wood) leaves you open as you punch without much assist from the other hand, so you have to react, absorb and be aware of what your opponent is doing to be able to get the punch in.

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Cannon (fire) is the technique that will plow through anything if you have enough attitude. You can also charge in with a no-holds barred attack.

Wring (earth) will only work if you are well centered, and can neutralize the opponent enough to redirect the force in all directions (the hands separate with force to the front and back and also twist in opposite directions).

In this way, the five phases can be used to describe more than which technique can be used to defend against which, as they are commonly used (fire controls metal so cannon blocks split, etc). Cannon isn't the only technique which can counter split, so how useful is this information? With the organic approach, if you want to use cannon, you have to be fully committed, while if you want to use wring you have to settle down and centre yourself. Animal techniques can also be sorted into a five phase category as well as a *yin/yang* category, giving more focus to the mindset.

四梢说

人之血、肉、筋、骨之末端曰梢，盖发为血梢，舌为肉梢，牙为骨梢，爪为筋梢。四梢用力，则可变其常态，能使人生畏惧焉。

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1. 血梢：怒气填胸，竖发冲冠，血轮速转，敌胆自寒，发毛虽微，摧敌不难。

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- 2。肉梢：舌卷气降，虽
山亦撼，肉坚似铁，
精神勇敢，一言之威
，落魄丧胆。
- 3。骨梢：有勇在骨，切
齿则发，敌肉可食。
眦裂目突，惟齿之功
，令人恍惚。
- 4。筋梢：虎威鹰猛，以
爪为锋，手攫足踏。
气势兼雄，爪之所到
，皆可奏功。

Explanation of the four tips⁶

The ends of blood, muscles, tendons and bones are called the four tips. Hair is the visible tip of the blood, the tongue is the visible tip of the muscles, the teeth are the visible tips of the bones, and the claws (nails) are the visible tips of the tendons. When the four tips use their force they can change normal behavior to enable a person to intimidate others.

⁶ tr. note: The basic connections are standard understandings of TCM, which enable the doctor to diagnose internal problems by examining the tips. How *xingyi* puts this understanding to use to psyche oneself up and intimidate others is particular to the martial arts. Intimidation can be useful, so it is wise to be aware of such techniques, but you certainly do not want to practise or even fight in most situations with your hair standing up and your eyes bugging out. This runs counter to most of the other writings, which emphasize calm and centredness.

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1. The blood tip (hair): When anger fills the chest it makes the hair stand on end strongly enough to raise a cap, and the blood circulation quickens.⁷ This makes the gall bladder of the opponent go cold.⁸ Although hair itself seems insignificant, you will defeat your enemy with no difficulty.
2. The muscle tip (tongue): When the tongue is rolled the *qi* settles, even if mountains shake.⁹ The muscles become hard as iron, and the spirit brave. In one word your impressive strength is shown and your opponent's courage drops and he 'loses his gallbladder.'
3. The bone tip (teeth):¹⁰ When courage is in the bones you look like you could eat your opponent - with bared teeth and glaring eyes. This skill of the teeth can put your opponent in a trance.
4. The tendon tip (claws):¹¹ The tiger is awe-inspiring and the eagle is fierce. They use their claws as the cutting point of a knife, the hands grab and feet stamp. When you have their lofty mien, then when you grab you will succeed with extreme skill.

⁷ tr. note: In TCM, blood includes more than the blood in the blood vessels. It also includes fluid that circulates in the meridians. Someone who has control over blood and meridian circulation can make his or her hair stand on end on purpose to intimidate. The heart regulates the flow of blood, so this ability shows strength of heart.

⁸ tr. note: The gall bladder rules decision making ability, so its being 'cold' or losing it would cause indecision and timidity - the equivalent to 'having no guts.'

⁹ tr. note: See 'prop up' in the Poem of the eight words on page 221 - when the tongue touches the palate it connects internal pathways so that *qi* which has risen and transformed is able to settle down to the *dantian*, thus giving you more power.

¹⁰ tr. note: The power of the kidneys is manifest in the teeth. The action traditionally ascribed to the kidneys of most importance to *xingyiquan* is to store *jing* - the essence that underlies all organic life. The implication is that showing teeth, an aggressive action in any language, would show confidence in your abilities - confidence in your life force's ability to overpower another's.

¹¹ tr. note: The power of the liver is manifest in the nails. In TCM the liver rules the tendons and ligaments and maintains harmony in the body by allowing smooth flow of *qi*, blood, and other bodily substances. Also of importance to *xingyiquan*, the liver helps harmonize the emotions. When you are calm you have strength. In *xingyiquan*, the whole finger or toe, instead of just the nail, is often referred to as the tendon tip, so this calmness would give your hands a solid grip and your stance a solid foundation.

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