

INTERNAL TEACHINGS OF



HAPKIDO

The Water, Circle and Power Principles Can Lead Any Martial Artist to Victory! by Steve Petermann



Out of the corner of my eye, in the reflection of the mirror, I saw Rudy grab the bamboo training sword. As a lower belt, he had no reason to pick it up, and since only he and I were in the training hall ...

Turning just as he swung, I slid in, enveloping him and the sword, wrapping my arms around his. Using his energy from the missed swing and adding a little of my own derived from twisting my hips, I redirected his power and sent him tumbling across the mat.

As he came to a rest, Rudy's mischievous smile turned into one of incredulity. I stood there amazed. "Wow, this stuff works!" we said at the same time.

Circle principle: Steve Petermann (left) and his opponent square off (1). The opponent punches with his right arm, and Petermann uses his left arm to block the inside of the wrist of the attacking arm (2). The hapkido stylist then strikes the opponent's left ear with his right hand (3) and redirects his energy into a circle as he throws him (4).



Water principle: Steve Petermann (right) faces his opponent (1). The opponent punches with his right arm, and Petermann checks the elbow (2) as he slips to the outside of the fist and attacks the face (3). Pinching the opponent's gum line and gouging his eyes, Petermann forces him to bend backward, thus facilitating the takedown (4).

Fortunately, I had seen Rudy's smile during the swing. Unfortunately, I saw it too late to stop his wild ride. He admitted that he had intended to give me a surprise whack with the practice sword. Neither he nor I knew that his prank would lead to our deeper understanding of the principles of *hapkido*.

A Matter of Principle

Hapkido is a Korean martial art whose name means "way of coordinated power." It includes more than 3,500 self-defense techniques—a veritable mountain of moves to memorize. Consider this: Even if you were to prac-

tice 100 techniques a day, you would still have 400 to go at the end of even the longest month. Only by focusing on the principles of the art can you practice the techniques efficiently and effectively.

Hapkido is composed of three main principles: the water principle, the circle principle and the power principle. Although not every technique exhibits all three, all techniques use at least one.

The Water Principle

Water has many properties that can influence the way you act or react. By imitating its yielding nature, you can

improve your evasion and envelopment skills. If you yield to your opponent's attack, you will sustain little or no damage should he strike you. In a game of tug of war in which power opposes power, the stronger person will win. However, if one side lets go unexpectedly, the other one will tumble into a heap. Likewise, when your opponent pulls or pushes you in a fight, the best option may be simply to yield.

Yielding, however, does not just mean "letting go" or "backing up"—although they are components of the concept. Successfully yielding for the purpose of evasion and/or envelopment enables you to avoid the opponent's attack and puts you in position to respond effectively.

A distinctly different property of water is its ability to overwhelm. That is illustrated by the force exerted against your abdomen when you do a belly flop into a swimming pool. The ability to overwhelm is important because the goal of self-defense is not so much to avoid a single blow as it is to neutralize the threat. When you apply force to neutralize a threat, your action should have a psychological and a physical impact on the attacker. In other words, it should overwhelm him. That will minimize the amount of physical injury required to convince him to desist, and it will expose you to less danger than in a traditional give-and-take encounter.

Water also embodies the quality of persistence. If you train hard in any art and still believe you are not improving, you should recall the persistence of



water. Although the change it effects on stone may appear agonizingly slow, the results are dramatic. Just as a continuous drip will bore a hole into the hardest stone, continuous practice will eventually penetrate even the hardest head.

The Circle Principle

The properties of the circle and the way objects move along a circular path can help you expect the unexpected and develop smoothness of motion. They can also teach you how to generate power without resorting to lateral or vertical movement, which is important when you wish to exert force but have to overcome your opponent's resisting body.

The distance traveled by an object with a short rotational radius is less than the distance traveled by an object with a longer rotational radius. Therefore, the circle principle teaches you to redirect a straight punch or kick into an arc, thus off-balancing the opponent. By turning yourself (the hub of the wheel) as quickly as possible, you force him to try to run around the arc traced by your arms or legs (the end of the spokes of the wheel). When he fails to do that, he falls.

When the opponent falls, he does not continue in an arc; rather, he takes off in a straight line away from the impact site. This property of circular power that redirects a force tan-

All that Power

Hapkido teaches the following lessons that capitalize on the power principle:

- Coordinating power to impotence: If for every step forward your opponent takes, you take one of equal size backward, you will negate his attack.
- Coordinating power to maximize results: When a person is pulled, it is natural for him to pull back. You can use this knowledge while you are yielding as outlined in the water principle, and it can help you persuade the attacker to provide more power for your defense. If you can get him to pull you toward him while you strike, your blow will have your power plus his behind it.
- Coordinating power to chaos: For your opponent to maximize the effectiveness of his attack, he has to strike with all the power he can muster and maintain control. If you add a little of your power to his, you can turn a controlled event into chaos. He will have to expend energy to recover, perhaps providing you with an opportunity to end the attack.
- Coordinating power with your world: This does not refer to drawing in the energy of the universe and storing it in your body—although many respected martial artists believe that is possible. Rather, it refers to using the energy for self-defense potential that exists in the natural and man-made objects that surround you. Modern man likes to pooh-pooh the idea of mystical forces, but simply because most people no longer ascribe mystical power to things does not mean we should deny the existence of unseen forces. Consider: Before Isaac Newton, how did common people understand the force of gravity? You cannot see it, but that does not stop you from believing in it. —S.P.

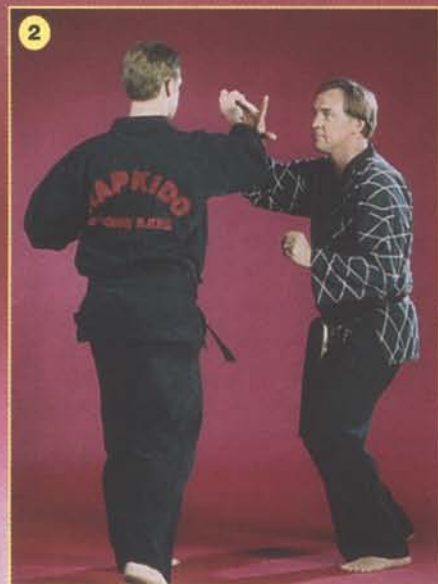
gential to the arc can help you defensively, too, by reducing the effect of blows you cannot avoid. When an opponent's strike lands on you and you are rotating, the force will be spread over a wider area and part of

it will be cast off.

The Power Principle

In the beginning of your training, you may think *ki* (internal energy) refers to only your own power. Later, you

Power principle: Steve Petermann (right) faces his opponent (1). As the opponent punches with his right arm, Petermann uses his own right hand to block from the outside (2) and swing the opponent's arm downward along a circular path (3). Once the hapkido stylist makes the other man overextend his inertia, he augments the power principle with the circle principle and tosses him onto his back (4).





Combining Principles

By combining two or more hapkido principles, you can achieve great things. For example, using the circle principle in combination with the power principle, you can encourage an attacker to move quickly in one direction. Uncontrolled inertia may cause him to topple, but if you change direction, the original inertia will be amplified by the change and the application of the opposing energy. When that combination is used against a joint or to increase the damage of a blow, the result can be overwhelming.

The application of the three principles can extend beyond the realm of self-defense and into your personal life. When you study hapkido, you embark on a course that will hopefully put you in harmony with yourself, with the world around you and even with your attacker. You will strive to be like a large body of water—calm on the surface but with sufficient depth for love and knowledge. By adopting the properties of a spinning circle, you can deflect personal attacks and failures and stay focused on completing all that you begin. ✘

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Combining principles: When a sword-wielding opponent threatens him (1), Steve Petermann uses hapkido's water principle to avoid the attack and envelope the attacker (2). Using the circle principle, he then traps the other man's arms (3) and pivots to place his hips under his center of gravity (4). Adding a little of his power to his opponent's, Petermann bumps him into the air and slams him to the mat (5).

learn that it also includes your opponent's power and later still you will discover that it includes the world's power.

Hapkido deals with the application of all those powers in terms of inertia. Power has the property of facilitating motion. Inertia, however, exists in both moving and resting bodies.

Power as described by the power principle is not strength. If the strength of your body were the sole determination of self-defense ability, all training would revolve around building muscle. However, smaller and weaker people who learn the power principle can avoid or redirect an op-

ponent's power and successfully defend themselves.

To harm you, an opponent must exert energy. His exertion tires him, and directly resisting his efforts tires you. However, when you minimize your expenditure of energy and attempt to use the energy expended by your opponent, you gain maximum effect with minimum effort. In this way, you can outlast your opponent if necessary, and you can more easily overcome differences in height and weight. Once you learn the power principle, you will never fight alone; you will always have your opponent helping you.