

How is the Refined Form different?

Paul Fretter , March 2022

This paper outlines some of the key differences between the Short Form and the Refined Form but is not intended to be comprehensive. In common with the way that I teach this Form, I assume the reader already has a good understanding of the processes of loading, [imaginary] base-breaking and releasing in the Short Form. Gaps in a student's knowledge will become readily apparent when learning the Refined Form, and this is to be welcomed and appreciated.

Practicing the Refined Form led me to question my knowledge of the Short Form, and inspired me to re-analyse what I was doing, leading to a deeper understanding of both.

What is different about the Refined Form?

The Refined Form is similar in length to the Short Form, with many familiar postures, along with other movements recognisable from the Long Form such as: Needles at the bottom of the sea, Fan through the back and Parting the horse's mane. There is also the Turning the ball movement, which will be familiar to those who practice our system of White Crane.

Aside from the choreographic instructions, there are two key pieces of information that I learned from Wee Kee Jin, which I then tried to understand by practicing the Form with him and observing how he moved. I have based a lot of my practice, analysis and experimentation on these two pieces of information:

1. All releases in the Refined Form are by sinking
2. The Refined Form introduces overlapping movement

Releasing in the Short Form

In the Short Form there are two different types of releasing practiced, depending on the movement:

- a. Loading and then release by borrowing from the ground. This is mostly, but not exclusively, seen in postures culminating in the bow stance.
- b. Release by sinking. This is mostly, but not exclusively, seen in postures culminating in the body-weight being all or mostly on one leg.

Release by borrowing - Using the 'press' movement from Grasp the sparrow's tail as an example, once the [imaginary] opponent's base has been broken as a result of the loading, and you are in the bow stance with 55%-45% weight distribution, then the release by borrowing can take place. This release is characterised by a slight straightening of the rear knee joint and the awareness is brought from 'under' the rear foot, up to the fingertips, resulting in an upward flow of relaxed force to be projected into the opponent/distance. During the release there must also be a simultaneous wave of sinking into the ground under both feet.

Release by sinking – Using the end of the 'Raise arms' posture as an example. Once the [imaginary] opponent's base has broken, and the body is facing midway between the *South West* and the *South*, then the release by sinking can take place. To conduct the release, continue to turn to face the South while sinking through the supporting leg, relaxing the shoulders, and hanging the elbows, and having an upward intention to slightly lift both hands.

Releasing in the Refined Form

In the Refined Form, all the releases are by sinking only, and this brings a subtle change in approach to many of the postures, which is most easily seen in the bow stance where there is an overlap in the timing disrupting of the [imaginary] opponent's base and the release.

As the base move forwards there is a continuous wave of sinking into the ground under both feet which initially breaks the other's base and then becomes the release as the movement progresses. The movement and the release complete at the same moment the base arrives in the bow stance, with 55%/45% weight distribution. There is no slight straightening of the rear knee and no bringing up the awareness to the fingertips. So, in this regard it is **simpler** than the Short Form version because there are fewer things to do. However, to be effective it requires a more nuanced approach to the timing of feelings that cause the breaking and then the release. In this regard, it is more **refined** than the Short Form.

Stepping in the Short Form

When moving into postures such as Single whip, Diagonal flying and others, the stepping foot is first brought in close to the supporting foot, before stepping out with the heel. This can be envisaged to represent stepping around an opponent's front leg. For the beginner learning the Form it also allows them to restore their balance more easily before stepping out.

Stepping in the Refined Form

When moving into postures such as Single whip, Diagonal flying and others, the stepping foot [heel] is moved directly to the next position. This is more difficult for balancing and requires a more **refined** approach to grounding in the support leg and adjusting the hip joints during the step.

End.

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