

THE JOURNAL OF THE TAI CHI & QIGONG UNION FOR GREAT BRITAIN

TAI CHI CHUAN & ORIENTAL ARTS

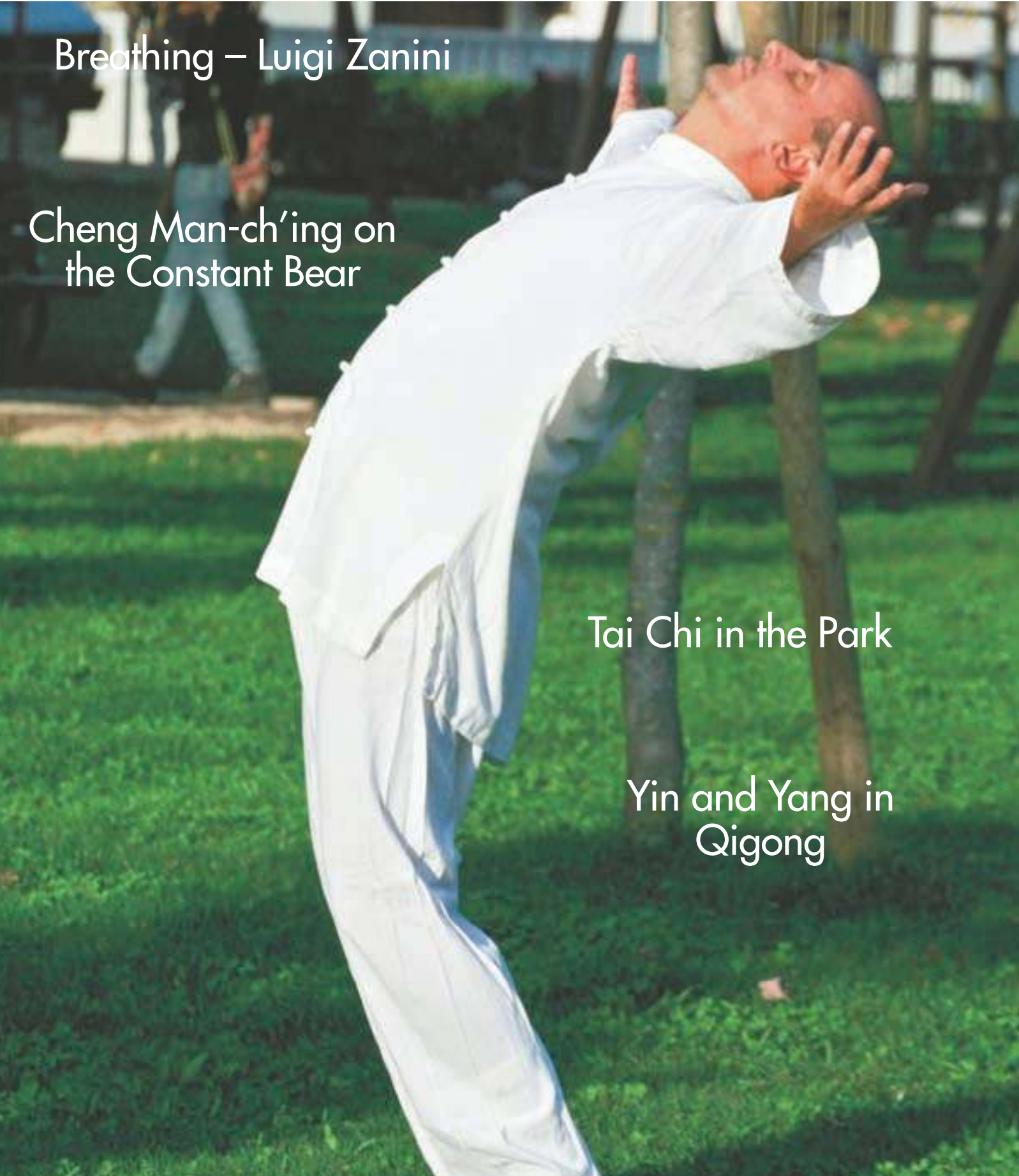
No.63 August 2021 | £6.00

Breathing – Luigi Zanini

Cheng Man-ch'ing on
the Constant Bear

Tai Chi in the Park

Yin and Yang in
Qigong



TAI CHI CALEDONIA 25



A week of
**Tai Chi & Chinese
Internal Arts**
in the heart of
Scotland
Friday 15 - Friday 22
July 2022



The Location



Tai Chi Caledonia
takes place at the
gateway to the
Scottish Highlands,
near Stirling in
Braveheart country.

The Venue

This 25th event is also our 23rd year at Stirling University Campus which is set in a spectacular woodland, with lakes and acres of open green space which abound with wildlife. This fresh environment is perfectly suited for training.



The Programme

We offer a range of options for attending Tai Chi Caledonia, making it accessible to all. You can attend on a day, a weekend, whole or part week basis, residential or non-residential.

Weekend Sessions

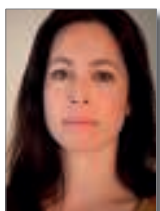
Our teaching programme starts on Saturday morning at 10.00 after our introductory meeting. The weekend sessions include a choice of 48 x 45 minute sessions allowing you to get a taste of a variety of approaches to tai chi & chinese internal arts.

Week-long Sessions

Monday to Thursday you will train 2^{1/2} hours each morning and afternoon, over the four days allowing 10 hours intensive training, working on 2 separate disciplines (1 each from A and B) for 5 hours per day in total.

Booking Options & Programme Details visit: <https://www.taichicaldonia.com>

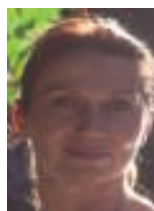
The Instructors



Wudang 8 Powers Taijiquan
Tina Faulkner-Elders



Nei Gong
Gianfranco Pace



Meditation & Movement
Margret Stürz



Practical Aspects of Taijiquan
Sasa Krauter



Taiji Thirteen Power Sword
Sam Masich



Baguazhang Fan
Sonja Schillo



The Mother Sequence
Margherita Padalino



Sensing Hands
Ben Morris

Guest Instructors

Visit our website for fuller descriptions: <https://www.taichicaldonia.com>



Bartosz Samitowski



Wilhelm Mertens



Pim Van Der Broek



Javier Arnanz

Barry's Boot Camp

07.30 - 09.30 Sun till Thursday

Back, by popular demand. If you need a kick start to your day, this is it. Barry WILL waken you up.

Qigong Training

08.30 - 09.30 Sun till Thursday

Early morning Qigong sessions will be with a different teacher each day.

Push Hands

In addition to the structured classes there will be time for both formal and informal push hands training.



Cally Ceilidh - Wednesday

Always a popular evening, even if it is just to watch the 'non-Scottish'.

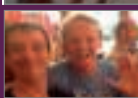


Testimonials

"As a newcomer to the event I would especially like to thank you and everyone else involved for organising Tai Chi Caledonia and for making me feel relaxed and welcome. I found it the most inspiring week and one that will stay with me for some time. The tuition was outstanding and I learnt just as much from everyone else - they were all so kind and helpful. I'm so glad I came and hope to come again next year."

"I wanted to thank you because I spent a week a little magic! I knew no one (except Annie and Daniel) and yet I felt good. Classes were exciting and the time passed very quickly. Bravo for the impeccable organization and with all my heart, thank you! The work continues! and next year!"

"I had a great time on Saturday thanks very much. It was shaping up to be another fantastic TCC. I was sorry to have to leave after one day and sorry I couldn't stay for the demonstrations - hope the rain stayed off, there was a biblical downpour on the way back to Glasgow! But blazing sunshine today so I hope you've got that in Stirling too - it's always a treat to train outside."



Ronnie Robinson
1953 - 2016
Always missed

Get in touch: bookings@taichicaldonia.com



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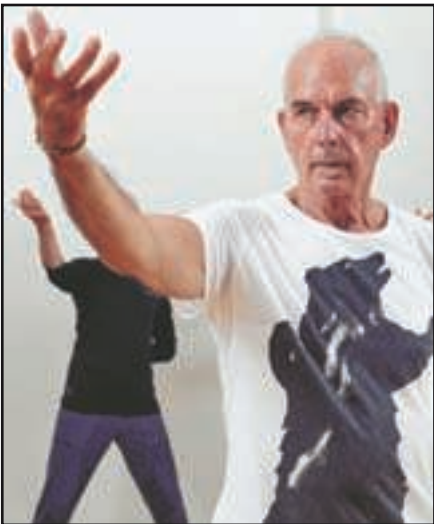
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Comment

Welcome to the new look Tai Chi & Oriental Arts magazine. The board has asked me to take over from Mark Langweiller who is moving on to other projects. Mark is due a big 'thank you' for his work on the magazine. He took on the job at short notice after Ronnie Robinson, who launched TC&OA, passed away suddenly. Ronnie left a strong legacy and a big pair of shoes to fill. Indeed, from some aspects I still feel Ronnie's presence and that it is his shoes I will be trying to fill as editor. I am pleased to say that I am assisted by Suse Coon, a Wutan tai chi practitioner and qi gong teacher and an experienced journalist.

There are big changes happening in the union and the changes to the magazine are reflecting this. My first task has been to create a digital version of TC&OA – you can find this at: www.taichimag.org. We are in the process of building an archive of back issues on the site for members to access. The survey which we conducted recently showed that, in the main, members are open to reading the magazine on line and the PDF version, as a whole or by individual articles, can be downloaded and printed.

Members who prefer paper copy have not been forgotten but there is a charge. We have arranged a print-on-demand service at £6 per copy with discounts for multiple buys. Click the link for a magazine on demand. www.askonline.shop/collections/tai-chi-qigong-union-for-great-britain

As members of the TCUGB this is your magazine. We will be working in your interests to support chairman Mark Peters in the changes he is making. We also want to hear from members: tell us about your classes, give us your opinion; martial arts was ever political so get it off of your chest here. We have brought back 'Meet the Teacher'. If you would like to be profiled let us know.

As an instructors' organisation there is a huge amount of knowledge stored in the union. TC&OA would like to pass some of this on. Continual professional development (CPD) is something we should all be keen to pursue and we will be publishing technical articles on aspects of the form. With your contribution we can make this a two way street.

TAI CHI & ORIENTAL ARTS

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Union moving on

Such a lot has been happening since I was handed the baton of chairman by Dan. We have published policies to support our members regarding COVID and their classes, we have setup social media channels, both members only, and opened Facebook groups, reviewed and tidied up instructor listings to better represent what our instructor members are offering specific to tai chi, qigong and internal martial arts. This is an ongoing project with plans to introduce a clearer section specific to qigong.

Publishing online

A big step has been moving the magazine digital which is much greener and has received a very positive response. How many times have you read an article and thought "Ooh this is interesting! I must do a bit more reading on this"? But you never get around to it. Or thought "hmmm...I'm not 100% sure what these photos are showing me". And so lose interest in the article? We are excited that our move to digital could change this. Members can access online and expand the value of the content via hyperlinks. As this develops, the magazine will feel more like a live product. Printed copies are still available for those who prefer that option via our 'print on demand' partner at our online shop:

www.fluidic.co.uk/c/6143/tai-chi-qigong-union-for-great-britain

They will be printed in the UK on 100% recycled carbon neutral uncoated paper.

Please let us know your thoughts on the new look magazine and what you would like included if we have not already done so. You can email me at

enquires@taichiunion.com

So what next?

The boring bit behind the scenes is keeping us busy with improved policies for standards and ethics, disciplinary, trademarking, risk assessments etc. To aid this, we have reformed the health committee

www.taichiunion.com/tcugb-health-sub-cttee/ which will have a section in the new magazine to share useful information, research and more.

The CIMSPA project is still developing with the aim of standards being issued this year. The partnership between



Mark Peters

the union, CIMSPA and the BCCMA is designed to ensure the improved quality control in training and delivery of tai chi and qigong for well-being, fitness and rehabilitation. The project was never intended to cover the whole martial art and will prove beneficial for TCUGB members interested in working or continuing to work in the health area.

We're more than just a group of instructors

Our students are the future so maybe now it's time to encourage more to join as associate members and to contribute to the magazines and more. As we develop the website, social media, links to the press and organisations, our members can really help by becoming more involved. Do you or your students have skills and a passion to help us all develop? Email me at enquires@taichiunion.com

Never stagnate

Confucius is quoted as saying, "It does not matter how slowly you go as long as you do not stop". Slow is a subjective term; in the last issue I listed short, medium and long-term aims. We are on track for most of these. The next steps are to develop regional officers to contact current and potential members, develop and offer training for our members (CPD's) e.g. first aid, coaching, TCM, A&P etc. We are also looking at a national event project to engage and support our members. To encourage our members to engage with their community. To generate and raise the awareness of TC&QU nationally. Exciting times ahead. 🌱

“

Our students
are the future

Dance with the bear

Someone asked Professor Cheng Man-ch'ing (郑曼青) while he was in Taiwan for his insights on 'Constant Bear' (熊经 xiong jing). James Chan translated that section of the discourse from the original Chinese into English

Question: You say that constant bear is the simplest and easiest ingenious exercise of ancient China. It wards off illness, makes a weak body strong, helps with self-defence, and promotes longevity. Please tell us what do you mean by "help with self-defence"?

Cheng Man-ch'ing: Constant bear strengthens the body and wards off ailments. It is a yin move of taijiquan. 'Brush knee' is a yang move. Years ago, when I was director of the Martial Arts Academy of Hunan Province in Changsha City, I walked to visit a friend at his house. Before I got to the door, the family's dog attacked me abruptly from behind. I had no idea what was going on. Before I could fully initiate a brush knee move, I brushed off the dog reflexively with my hand. Instantly, the dog stopped barking, went silent, and went away. The next day, when I went to my friend's house again, he said to me: "The dog can't open its mouth to eat." This is an example of using constant bear for self-defence.

Daily practice

Question: You say that if we persevere in practising constant bear daily for 100 days, we'll be able to channel our qi (运气) and turn a sickly body back to health. In so doing, we need not worry about ailments and illnesses. What do you mean by channeling qi for 100 days?

Cheng Man-chi'ng: The whole point of channeling or guiding your qi in constant bear is to achieve the key skill of connecting the five centres (五心相通 wu xin xiang tong). It means channeling (transporting) qi to flow through the body and connect to all five acupoints in the body. These five acupoints include the two bubbling well acupoints of your feet (涌泉 yong quan); the two acupoints in the centers of your palms (劳宫 lao gong); and the acupoint at the top of your head called bai hui (百会) or ding xin (顶心). Doing this assures good health. Additional point #1. As you turn your waist and torso from left to right, relax the instep of your foot. Your foot, light as cotton, gently touches the ground. It draws the qi from the earth and transports it to the center of your right



James Chan

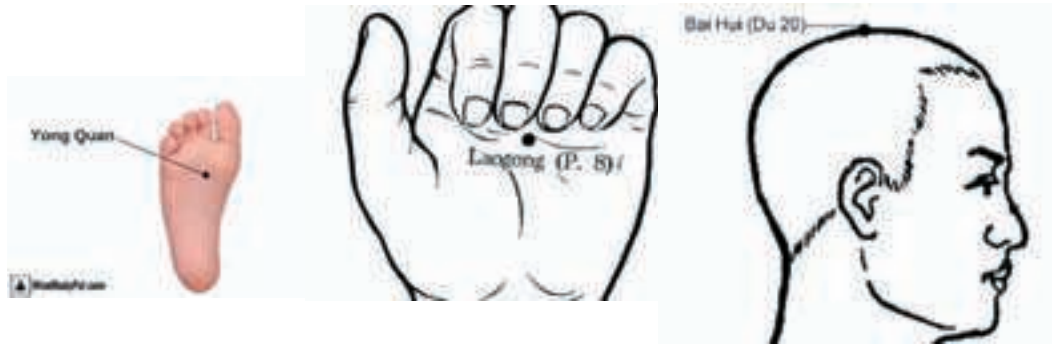
palm. When you guide your qi to flow this way, you'll get a soothing sensation with varying degrees of heat, expansion, numbness, pain and even itching in the center of your palm.

Mental image

Additional point #2. When you make left-right or right-left turns, you need to have a mental picture of what your turns look and feel like. You are not turning your waists and torsos mindlessly. Rather, you should turn as if you were rotating around the axis of an imaginary root that comes in from above the top of your head and which traverses through the center of your body and into the earth. This imaginary root may feel like it suddenly appears and then, just as suddenly, disappears. You must channel the qi that travels down this imaginary root to connect to the five centres mentioned in the above. Pay attention to channeling the insubstantial qi to the apex of your head (虚灵顶劲 xu ling ding jing). Simultaneously, keep your sacrum and coccyx vertical and in alignment with the spine. As your qi rises to the top of your head, you achieve perfect connectedness and qi flow (尾闾中正神贯顶 wei lu zhong zheng shen guan ding).

“
Breathing helps you
guide the flow of qi in
your body

The illustrations right show the location of the acupoints



Question: You've not mentioned breathing. How should we breathe?

Cheng Man-ch'ing: Breathing helps you guide the flow of qi in your body. Remember: you are transporting your qi. You are not creating or refining qi. For beginners in constant bear, breathe normally and naturally just as you do in practicing tai chi. Breathe in a quiet, slow, fine, and long manner (静慢细长 jing man xi chang). After you gain experience in doing constant bear, breathe in when you shift your weight and breathe out as you turn your hips.

How a bear walks

Question: You say that constant bear is thus named because that is how a bear constantly walks. You have not mentioned what to do with our hands and arms? Would you please elaborate on this?

Cheng Man-ch'ing: The movement of your arms in constant bear should conform to the basic principles of tai chi. In constant bear as in taijiquan, one does not move one's hands and arms (太极拳不动手 tai ji quan bu dong shou). Let your arms embrace the insubstantial, primordial energy (yuan qi 元气). You know, the word yuan 元 (primordial energy or chi block) was the old pronunciation of the word yuan (圆 circle or sphere). Embrace qi as if it were a ball of intangible vitality. The key is to keep both your mind and qi centered in your dan tian.

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The key is to
keep both your
mind and qi
centered in your
dan tian

Translation and interpretation by James Chan Ph.D., Asia Marketing and Management (AMM) www.asiamarketingmanagement.com



Below is the Chinese original. Google any paragraph below and you will see this section of the interview with Professor Cheng Man-ch'ing on many web postings

问：「熊经为至简至易之上古妙法，岂止却病延年，反弱为强而已，进而求自卫，与臻上寿之方垂手可得。」。「进而求自卫」请再示其详。

答：熊经除强身却病之外，亦为太极拳之阴，搂膝拗步是太极拳之阳手。余昔年在长沙，任湖南国术馆长时，曾一日行至挚友处，未至门口，忽有家犬突击背后，当时不知何物，未及走化，只顺势一掌，狗未吠而自去，次日登门，友说：「该犬已难张嘴食物」，此即熊经之自卫也。

问：师说：熊经倘能持之以恒，得能运气百日自其病体与羸躯，必有显著之进步，一切疑难之症无足虑也，其中「运气百日」未悉如何？

答：熊经之运气，乃是练五心相通。五心者，涌泉「脚心」，劳宫「掌心」，与百会「顶心」之合称，相通即气机相通而连贯。

(1) 腰臀左右振转时，脚跗放松如绵，脚心贴地，得地气(按地之力)，导引向右掌心，使右掌心在振转时，有一种气机通顺之感觉。这种感觉，有热、胀、麻、痛，甚至痒。

(2) 左右振转时，振转之意境，非凭空旋转，而是指上下有根的旋转。故振转时，顶心有似有似无的根，必须与掌心脚心相吻合。故须注意虚灵顶劲，尾闾中正神贯顶。

问：熊经师说要领，未提呼吸，应否注意。

答：呼吸为帮助行气，非炼气。初习时，应以自然呼吸，以太极之理，静慢细长，熟练之后，重心移动时，宜吸气，振转时为呼气。

问：师说熊经仅提为熊之经常之动作，未提手该如何？未悉其然，请再示其详。

答：妙手之动作，亦为太极拳之理也，太极拳不动手，熊经亦是，习熊经双手不动，宜虚抱元而守一。元「圆」之古音，守一，乃心与气相守於丹田。

Critical connections

If you practise Taiji, Qigong or any internal art, then it comes as no surprise that connectivity is important; but why? Tina Faulkner Elders explains

I believe it's worth exploring this to better understand and better implement connectivity in our practice.

Firstly let's look at the human body. We know we are made up of various systems within the body: the respiratory system, the circulatory system, the nervous system etc. We understand that they all have connectivity throughout the body to keep us healthy; movement is life after all. If movement is life, then disruption or stagnation must cause the opposite!

Ok, well what about the nuts and bolts of the body.

The structural system

Physical tension causes physical stresses on the joints and muscles. Those stresses will cause weaknesses, especially if they become habitual.

Try putting stress on a dry twig. Where there is tension, it will snap. Try putting the same stress on a sapling. Movement flows. The difference? Connectivity. The suppleness of the sapling is able to disperse the force applied to it so it is not concentrated in one place.

What does that mean for us? The main force we interact with is gravity, obviously pulling downward. The other main force on you is called the normal force. It is a force opposing to gravity, to the surface that supports you, like the ground or the seat of your chair. You compress this surface and it acts like a spring, pushing you up. If you push against the ground, the normal force will move through the body to propel us in the direction we want to go.

Working together

Now we're beginning to sound a bit tai chi, looking at downward and upward forces working together!

In order to stay upright we need a good connection to the ground.

Here's where balance comes in. Let's start with good alignment. Better still, let's start with bad alignment! If you push against a wall, you automatically feel as though you need to ground yourself, to connect to the ground. If you do it badly, for example by leaning to one side, you are still obviously physically connected to the ground but the strain of trying to stay upright is causing a lack of connectivity and a lack of strength.

Compared with better balance, bad balance causes physical stress.

Listening practice

How do we know we can feel this? Because we are paying attention. We are LISTENING.

The key is to practise listening. This is where your internal practices are so good for you, whether you are standing still in zhan zhuang or moving in tai chi.

First of all, just breathe. When we breathe in, we increase the volume in the upper (thoracic) cavity as the diaphragm and intercostal muscles contract, so it expands



Tina Faulkner Elders

and when we breathe out we relax and sink. Pay attention to the forces acting on your body. Release tension so the forces acting on you can disperse smoothly.

This training of listening helps develop better mental discipline which, in turn, develops the quality of focus to be able to better guide internal movement through a body without tension blocking the way. Relaxing requires us to lose tension by doing nothing.

Try changing the weight from foot to foot and as you settle onto the other foot, breathe out, pause and feel the new connection to the ground. We're not sinking, just softening and opening so that the normal force from the ground can move up through us.

Follow this exercise with something a bit more energetic – jumping. It feels natural to swing your arms as well because the energy moves right through the whole body to your fingertips. The sweet spot is the point where we release the qua. It's also a key part of pushing hands. And, incidentally, it is often the first part of our tai chi form. 🌀

You can watch Tina's lesson here www.facebook.com/watch/?v=378520050371880 and follow her in a guided meditation and in the exercises.

Tina Faulkner Elders was taught by her father Gordon Faulkner from the age of seven. Following study in Beijing she is now director and principal instructor of Ruyi School of Taijiquan & Qigong, 16th Generation Wudang Pai, and TCUGB health committee team leader
www.ruyischool.com
www.facebook.com/RuyiAberdeenshire
www.youtube.com/c/ruyischool

Journey to the park

Mark Peters' tai chi journey started one summer lying on a sun lounger, drinking Buck's Fizz and flicking through a night school booklet. He had dabbled with a few tai chi classes but nothing really met the quality and depth he was looking for...

After a bit of research I found Nigel Sutton who taught a hsing-i (xing yi), bagau and tai chi course in Manchester. On arriving Nigel's assistant John Higginson took us for a run in the park followed by some tai chi practise. My first tai chi in the park and I was hooked.

Manchester to Malaysia

I continued to train with John on a monthly basis, as it's an hour and half drive each way from my home in Birmingham. In 1991, Nigel Sutton invited a small group of us to train in Malaysia and Singapore. At the same time I became a 'closed door' student (bai-shi) which opened up training beyond regular classes. I went each year for about three weeks and am so thankful my soon-to-be-wife was so understanding. We trained hard, up to ten hours a day, starting around 5am through the afternoon and evening into the night. I trained with master Wu Chiang Hsing for tai chi and qigong, including one-to-one. I took part in his 5am qigong classes in a local park. He would arrive to collect me, in his Proton car with the aircon on 14°C which was quite a shock in the 30+°C heat. I set up his huge cassette player and attached it to a car battery. As the music started, students would start to appear as if from the bushes. He would teach for a few hours working through various qigong sets, tai chi forms and weapons. This was my first training in the shibashi set as master Wu had trained with prof. Lin Housheng.

Another 5am tai chi in the park was with master Liang He Qing. He actually arrived at 3am but kept that time for his personal training. From him I learnt kwai taiji, swimming dragon qigong, original 13 qigong and much more. Even when he came to the UK, and stayed at our home in Birmingham, he still insisted on training in the early morning outdoors.

With master Tan Seow Theng we would meet to train in Fujian yongchun wuzuquan and qigong at a local park and children's playground. Master Tan would stand on a concrete post and teach xiang-gong (fragrant Buddha qigong).

Taiwan beckoned

My teacher, grand-master Tan Ching Ngee (Singapore), once contacted me in England and asked me to accompany him to Taiwan. Not only couldn't I say no – as he was my teacher – but Taiwan was the home of prof. Cheng Man'ching so it was an opportunity not to be missed.

Grand-master Tan introduced me to many of prof.



Mark Peters: tai chi rain or shine

Cheng's seniors. When he introduced me to William CC Chen he was surprised to find we already knew each other. The private classes were amazing but my fondest memories are of training in Chiang Kai-Shek Park.

The bug for the great outdoors

Back in the UK I yearned for training in the great outdoors, and regularly practised in a park near my home in Bournville. I was once stopped by an off duty policeman for wielding a dangerous weapon. I was actually practising with a telescopic straight-sword (jien). He was fascinated to find out more and let me off with a warning. Over the years I continued to practise in local parks for my own training, but kept classes indoors. In this video, the weather made it quite dramatic.

www.youtu.be/tpGerg73sc0

In around 2000 I became involved with 'world tai chi day' which aimed to connect practitioners worldwide with public events. My largest event was in 2008 which was held as part of the climate change festival in Birmingham city centre. We had over 100 people taking part and it can be seen on YouTube at www.youtu.be/nP25TZtqOfE

Coming home to Cotteridge

There are festivals all over the country and a growing one, local to me, is CoCoMAD which stands for Cotteridge Community Festival of Music, Art and Dance. In 2010 I asked if they'd like some tai chi. The next thing I know I was up on stage rallying the crowd to join in. I thought it would be a little class in the orchard, but hey-ho.

There was such a lot of interest that, working with the Friends of Cotteridge Park (FOCP) we started a weekly Thursday morning class at 10.30am (not so many people keen on a 5am start in Birmingham).

FoCP believe that access to physical activity sessions should not be limited to those that can afford them so we worked with them to raise grant funding so the classes could be free.

As the weekly classes developed, I would introduce them to tai chi walking stick form using NHS walking sticks as a number of those attending already used one. We practised a mix of qigong, tai chi form and mindfulness, with the occasional martial application thrown in for good measure.

The key elements of these park sessions that led to their success were:

- Free at the point of delivery – cost was not a barrier to trying something new
- Local – in familiar parks and open spaces so that going somewhere new was not a barrier
- Designed to be suitable for 'permanent beginners' – the classes repeated the basic elements of practice and



form over and over again. This meant that new people could join the class at any time and not feel too far behind

- If people wanted to progress they were signposted to other classes
- Welcoming – meet and greet and a cup of tea at the end with chat are as important as the exercise

Birmingham City Council (BCC) heard about the class and wanted to expand the idea, using these principles.

BCC’s Wellbeing team worked with Birmingham open spaces forum (BOSF) to co-produce Active Parks.

BOSF is the network organisation of volunteer groups that look after the city’s parks and open spaces – of which Friends of Cotteridge Park is a member.

Active Parks added sessions of Zumba, park fit, walking groups, cycling and dance to the original tai chi classes.

In the pilot year of 2013 there were 25 activities over six parks. By 2014 there were 39 activities in approx. 50 parks across Birmingham, with tai chi available in at least 10 of them.

At this point the project came to the notice of Coca Cola and their ParkLives programme. With funding from them the project expanded to cover over 80 sites with 50,000 participants in the following years.

This video shows what a great mix of people took part in the different activities. www.youtube.be/lbteoOaQHhk

Coca-Cola formed ParkLives in 2014 and after seeing what we were doing (2015/6), offered to sponsor us through to 2020. We just had to wear branded clothing. The funding enabled us to start tracking data better, buy equipment if needed, and connect up more groups across the UK.

Visitors from councils across the UK and from different countries came to see how the project worked with a view to replicating the success elsewhere.

To help connect more people, I opened a Facebook group ‘Tai Chi in the Park’ which now has over 800 members sharing details of their tai chi and qigong in the park sessions. We were also featured on Birmingham Live TV, a clip of which can be seen on YouTube.

The impact of Covid through 2020-21

We were going from strength to strength, giving presentations at the Move Congress in 2017 and the CLOA conference in 2019. Then 2020 hit and Covid stopped everything for everyone. All classes closed and the world locked down.

I continued to offer sessions for free on Facebook live, some of which I uploaded to YouTube. When lockdown eased later on in 2020 we were able to return to tai chi in the park for a short while with a maximum group size of



30 people. It was wonderful for both physical and mental health to get outdoors and exercise again. Human interaction is a powerful thing. Unfortunately, the UK had to lockdown again, and I went back online.

March 29th 2021 was the date in England to be able to return to outdoor classes (Scotland 12th March, Wales 15th March, Ireland 5th April). The Tai Chi & Qigong Union for Great Britain started a page on Facebook to keep people informed of the requirements as well as a specific Covid page.

The Coca-Cola funding ran out at the end of 2020 and the pandemic meant that the planned search for co-production funding didn’t happen.

But there was so much interest in continuing sessions, particularly as the safest activities are outdoors, that BOSF took the project on and worked to identify funding that local communities could apply to keep the tai chi in the parks going.

In 2021, 11 groups have successfully applied for grants from the Neighbourhood Network Schemes, Sport Birmingham and Sport England. By June 2021 we had opened 11 classes with many more planned.

Weather never stops people attending. Somebody even gave me a hat umbrella so no excuses.

Working with BOSF and the ‘friends of’ groups has really pulled the community together. *Tai Chi in the Park* can only go from strength to strength. It has bought people together before and during the Covid pandemic. I’m sure it will continue long after.

Health practitioners from primary to tertiary care in both physical and mental health, refer patients and staff to Tai Chi in the Park. It serves to increase public awareness of tai chi and qigong. Long may it flourish. 🌈

Video links

- Facebook group ‘Tai Chi in the Park’ www.facebook.com/groups/parktaichi
- Clip from Birmingham Live TV www.youtube.be/KBW7fuZl3pE
- Free on Facebook sessions on YouTube www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLwefce31dNALO9lEyxIXE2CQp_nzdlsu4b
- The Tai Chi & Qigong Union for Great Britain Facebook page www.facebook.com/TCUGBHealthCommittee-103961201747938
- And Covid page www.taichiunion.com/coronavirus-covid-19
- Tai chi in the park www.paintingtherainbow.co.uk/park-tai-chi-classes.php

The author, Mark Peters, lives and teaches tai chi and qigong in Birmingham. Mark is chairman of the Tai Chi & Qigong Union for Great Britain. www.kaiming.co.uk www.paintingtherainbow.co.uk

Tai chi in Hawick

Having returned from Orkney where he established Orkney Tai Chi, Mike Henderson is chief instructor at the newly formed Borders Tai Chi Chuan.

Mike has studied tai chi chuan for over 25 years, is a senior instructor of Wutan tai chi chuan, and holds a qualification from the British Council for Chinese Martial Arts. He is qualified to teach all aspects of the art including hand forms, weapon forms – spear, sabre and sword – as well as self defence. He has been a judge and referee at the British Open Internal Martial Arts Championships held in Newcastle and his students have won two gold medals at this event. He now lives and teaches in Hawick.

How long have you been practicing tai chi?

Over 30 years.

What stimulated your interest?

I was looking for a suitable martial art that was practical but also health based. I was a pub manager at the time and came across a lot of aggression that had to be dealt with. A friend recommended tai chi and I saw a demonstration by Ian Cameron at the Do-Su Festival Of Martial Arts in Edinburgh. I was hooked. I later left pub management and went into school teaching but tai chi has always been a part of my life since. I fully believe that tai chi is a complete art in itself. You never stop learning.

What does tai chi mean to you?

I suppose tai chi is a touchstone in my life. It's always been there to help and support me and, most importantly, for me to enjoy.

Who or what inspired you, both in the beginning and now?

Ian Cameron, James Connachan and Dan Docherty have all had a great influence on me. I was also privileged to attend the seminars and workshops of Cheng Tin Hung when he visited Edinburgh. My students have always been a constant source of inspiration to me.

What is the most important aspect to you?

I used to think that it was the martial side but over the years the health side of training has become more important. In other words, I've come to see that they go hand in hand.

Do you have any personal goals?

To keep on discovering and learning. I am extremely proud of the way the Orkney club has developed and thrived and continues to grow even though I now live in the Borders. I hope I can continue to help the growth and development of the art in this part of the world.

What do you make of tai chi's current popularity?

People recognise that tai chi is the real deal. It is based on a solid tradition. In these troubled times it is getting

easier for people to see the benefits of this practice. A good standard of instruction is fundamental.

What are your views on competition?

Although I have been a judge and referee at the United Kingdom Internal Martial Art Competitions (where one of my students won a gold medal) I have never personally been that interested in competing. I fully support students who want to do so. They can be a good motivation factor and the intensity of the training is good for students and teachers alike!

What direction would you like to see tai chi taking in the future?

I would like to see standards continue to rise. It's still too easy for someone with a genuine interest but superficial knowledge of the art to set themselves up as a teacher and this can have a damaging effect on students and tai chi as a whole. I would like to see tai chi become a major factor in helping to improve the overall health of the population. I would also like to see more young people taking up the art seriously in classes that reflect their enthusiasms and motivations. Styles and approaches within tai chi may differ yet they should all have the same common goal. There is so much more that unites us than separates us.

What are your interests outside tai chi?

When I'm not practising or teaching tai chi...
I play the guitar and am a keen photographer.



www.facebook.com/Borders-Tai-Chi-111557881185334

email: mjkhenderson@gmail.com

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The art of breath

When Covid hit his native Italy Luigi Zanini put his passion for martial arts and qigong teaching to practical use running breathing seminars for his company

Overleaf 

TAI CHI

Besides my passion for martial art and qigong teaching over 40 years, my daily job is global business developer for a multinational company based in Europe. Last year the Covid-19 virus hit our country quite heavily and my company decided to invest time and energy in the welfare of its employees. I had already been teaching breathing techniques once a week in the company, so in May 2021 we decided to have a go via Teams. We held eight one-hour sessions on breathing basics and opened it to all colleagues.

As in my contribution to Tai Chi Caledonia 2021, I used a short Powerpoint presentation during our working time, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. It covered an introduction to the benefits of proper breathing and a four-point practical approach for effective breathing work. Of course using body and spirit together with conscious breath – as it is in qigong practice – would have had an even greater impact, but this webinar was meant to show what can be practised at one's desk, anytime, with any level of experience.

The official invitation stated:

“In 2020 we suddenly had to change the way we worked: relationships became complicated, the world will never be the same again. In 2021 we thought we had seen the worst, and instead of this we continue to have deadlines, strong commitments, customers calling, colleagues who interrupt, telephone ringing all the times: we are still under stress.

“But now we can learn to slow down, to get better, to restore calm inside, have greater mental clarity and perhaps even a pinch of serenity. Let's take this opportunity, let's love ourselves and take back control of our lives, stop the carousel when it runs too fast. We can slow down at any time, it's a simple thing, suitable for all ages, it costs nothing and it's really natural, like breathing. We can feel good when we want, just breathe. I wait for you to breathe together.”

Four languages

I repeated the same training twice, in four different languages (Italian, English, French, Spanish), with peaks of 50 to 60 people, sometimes with only a handful of co-breathers who attended the remote seminar, but the reactions have been quite enthusiastic and always very positive. People had immediate feedback in their bodies



Left: lungs and trees
Above: qigong earth
Right: standing
Top right: breath
Bottom right: closing



and enjoyed the two sessions, sending me messages that witness how simple tools can have a great impact on quality of life in a short time. Also, managers recommended that their staff follow the webinars and one branch of the group even closed down for the duration of the webinar, so that everybody could benefit from focusing on breath.

Lungs are like trees

In my presentation I started from the amazing and close analogy between lungs and trees and their functions, asking my colleagues to reflect on this similarity. I then introduced breath as THE bridge with awareness, as it works in meditation and in all flow states. Breath is involuntary, but also voluntary, and we can influence it; we breathe from birth to death, and it changes according to emotions, to moods, to shocks, exactly as changing the

breath can change the mood, and here lies the key. Moreover, breathing heavily influences the immune response, and this is very important in this Covid era. I mentioned also the very positive effects breath has on the whole body, its connection with the circulatory and nervous systems, with muscle performance and mind freshness, to mention only some of the beneficial aspects.

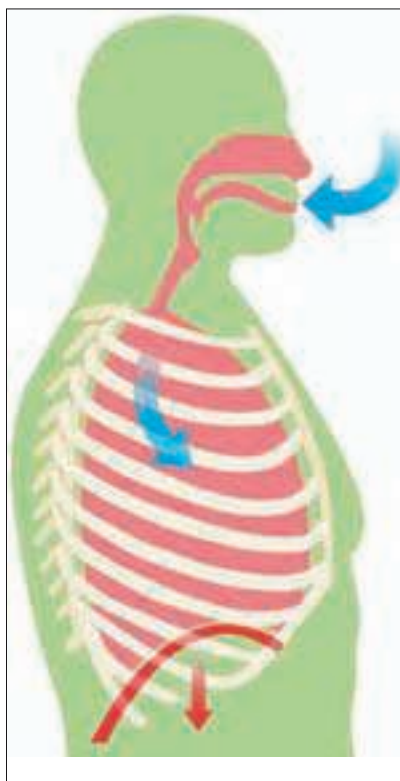
The four main practices I presented and worked on with my colleagues for over 40 effective minutes were:

- Exploring our current respiratory capacity, which is very short and shallow, and starting to extend inhaling and exhaling times, counting seconds. The resulting relaxation and feeling of well-being on the whole body were immediate and welcomed by everyone. Using belly and diaphragm to extend and deepen the 'air' intake was the takeaway of this first phase.

- Exploring inhalation and exhalation cycles, going quickly through a 'fire breathing' session and seeing the effects, then moving into the three characteristics of a good, whole breath: long, intense and deep. The second takeaway: use the whole body to breathe, not only lungs or belly, expand your imagination and your feelings.

- The third point of work was the use of apnea, or holding the breath, be it in full (inhaling) or in empty (exhaling) phases, using the so called triangular ('in, hold, out', or: 'in, out, hold') and square ('in, hold, out, hold') breathing methods. There, we can make some very important discoveries about ourselves and our fears, about asthma and or panic attacks among others. For that reason I invited everyone to explore the depths of holding empty and holding full lungs.

- The fourth phase was actually a recap on the previous points, where I asked my co-breathers to use breath for deep relaxation, managing all the previous aspects, and adding a new one, which is using the breath to cleanse the mind, just inhaling through the nose and being aware of



the contact between air and brain in the forefront of the head. Cleansing the mind, listening to the breath was the last takeaway.

As I said, nothing special in the end, but even at our office desks, sitting in front of a notebook, amidst the hurricane of a working day with stress charges, we can carve out some very relaxing moments where we can continue to do our jobs but add quality and value via breathing.

Apparently this approach has been very welcome at all levels in the

company, both from people already experienced in yoga or tai chi chuan and from absolute beginners, so much so that we are replicating the lessons in September with a dedicated seminar over six days, touching some formative points. ☺

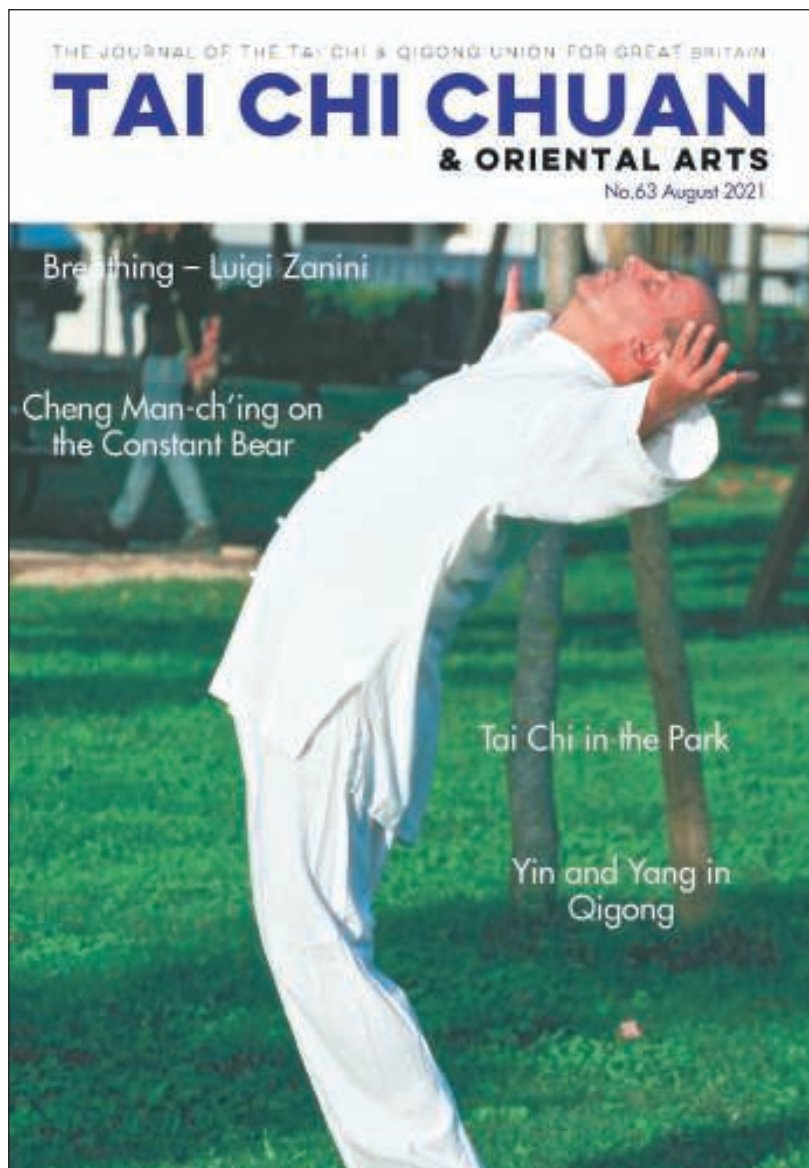


You can watch the session that was presented to Tai Chi Caledonia here www.facebook.com/watch/?v=242658514115158

Did you know...

You can read

TAI CHI CHUAN **& ORIENTAL ARTS**



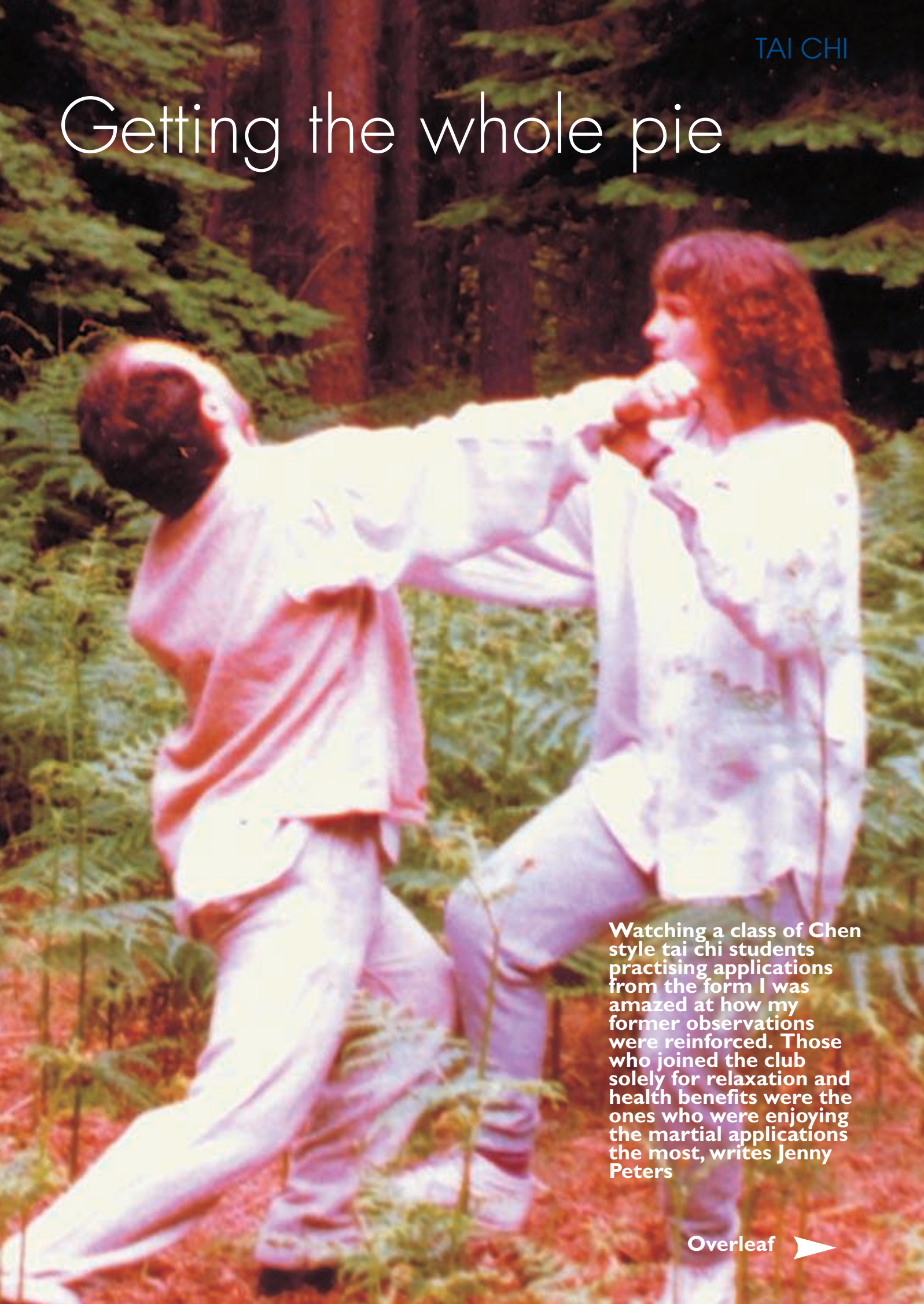
Online - at www.taichimag.org

You can also order your personal print copy from:

www.askonline.shop/collections/tai-chi-qigong-union-for-great-britain

The Tai Chi and Qigong Union for Great Britain
www.taichiunion.com Email: enquires@taichiunion.com

Getting the whole pie

A photograph of a man and a woman in white Tai Chi uniforms practicing in a forest. The man is on the left, leaning forward with his arms extended towards the woman on the right. The woman is in a defensive stance, with her hands raised. The background is a dense forest with tall trees and green foliage.

Watching a class of Chen style tai chi students practising applications from the form I was amazed at how my former observations were reinforced. Those who joined the club solely for relaxation and health benefits were the ones who were enjoying the martial applications the most, writes Jenny Peters



Jenny Peters

Why is this? Have they suddenly developed an aggressive streak? or is it, as I think, that whilst training with others, they have come to realise the principles of tai chi really work. What I mean is that the self-defence aspects are accessible to most people regardless of age, sex or brawn. Unlike many external martial arts, tai chi, if taught correctly by a reputable teacher, will not cause joint damage or broken bones and can even alleviate existing injuries. Due to its non competitive nature, the ever present ego can also stay intact. The practice of push hands is based around the golden rule of invest in loss and therefore even if you do decide to enter a competition, and don't win the gold medal, but take back the learned experience, are you not still a winner?

Moving to teach

There should be no pressure put on you to perform forms in front of the class, and no rainbow of belts to work your way through. If you decide to become a teacher yourself, with the permission of your own instructor, then that's a different matter and entirely of your own choice. This concept makes tai chi a very social thing where

students help one another and pass on their own personal pearls of wisdom. There is no rush, learn at your own pace and enjoy the experience.

Having said that, make no mistake, tai chi is not being taught properly, if it is not being taught as a complete art, both martial and meditative. There are self proclaimed sifu's who devalue the martial aspect and promote it purely as a healthy exercise. Could this be because stress relief and health promotion can be very profitable? Don't get me wrong, I am not opposed to this area of tai chi but if it is to be passed on in such a clipped fashion will this not eventually cause it in it's entirety to be lost? To truly teach and practise this art it must embody yin and yang, soft and hard; to teach one without the other is like having steak and kidney pie without the kidneys. Why call it tai chi chuan (supreme ultimate fist) why not call it qigong (breath exercise). A martial understanding is necessary to understand correct posture; you are being robbed, if you paid for a whole pie and only got half, wouldn't you demand a refund? Bear in mind you need the relaxation/meditation to develop internal power which in turn strengthens both your health and fighting skills (you need to master the fighting skills to stop people laughing at you when you're moving so slowly.)

Tai chi confidence

I myself looked at karate, aikido and wing chun, and yes all of them had something to offer. Unfortunately when push came to shove (no pun intended), if my opponent was bigger and stronger than me, in a true attack I felt I'd lose. Tai chi chuan was the one that gave me the confidence to believe, if I used the principles correctly and developed my natural sensitivity, I would at least stand a chance. I felt I could avoid serious injury and equal if not overpower my seemingly stronger attacker. This is what any martial art's self-defence aspect is all about, having faith that it will work for you.

At a seminar, held by master Nigel Sutton, on tai chi chuan for self-defence, the first portion was not spent learning techniques as you might expect, but working on the mind. We discussed and practised relaxation, meditation and the mental attitude necessary to develop the required state of mind.

The mental aspect of self-defence is the most important. Research over the last few years, in the criminal assault area, has shown time and time again that the person attacked usually has a victim's demeanor and body language.



I think we all have this within us – luckily, the majority of us keep it there, and outwardly remain confident when out and about. This does not mean we swagger around the streets or a night-club with the words “fancy your chance mate?” emblazoned on our chest, in fact, the majority of people never think about the danger they may be in but they are sub-consciously alert and keep good eye contact with anyone within their range; this is their first line of protection, and as a general rule, they do not attract the unwanted attention of a would-be attacker.

Body Language

The victim's body language, in contrast, exudes nervousness, with low eye contact, unease and poor posture, all highlighting his or her vulnerability to the professional criminal, 'the easy mark'.

So your first and most important self-defence, is your mental attitude.

The ability to stay relaxed mentally and physically is the basis of most martial arts and definitely tai chi. The problem for westerners is that tai chi chuan is not an instant self defence system, it

takes years for most students to attain the level of relaxation needed to adequately defend themselves. So, in this day and age of action movies and flash external martial arts tai chi has largely lost its chuan and become widely practised as the slow Chinese calisthenic exercise that gets constant media attention.

Half the alphabet

If that's all people want, fair enough, but why not try yoga; do they really not want the whole art or are they just unaware of its existence? If you only learned half the alphabet at school, what happens when you need to use all the letters? It is really quite similar to just practicing tai chi for health and relaxation. I think this is what most serious students find out during the first few months of their course and then come to realise they want more. Some have tried other external arts and because of injury or permanent damage to joints cannot practise them any longer. They come to my husband's classes and are encouraged to find they can continue with a martial art as soft and yielding as tai chi. The mechanics of the art alone are usually enough to ease the injury.

Every student of tai chi chuan should be offered the chance to learn the whole. Their teacher gives them an

instrument whether the student plays heavy rock or a lullaby is their choice, but at least they should know there is a choice.

It never ceases to amaze me when people phone, inquiring about lessons, the high percentage that know absolutely nothing about the art. It's perfectly understandable that little is known about the martial aspect for unless you read the martial art periodicals, the only exposure it attracts on TV and your local press, is its supposed health improving properties. It is constantly left to the minority to wave the banner.

Find a teacher

In my opinion, the first point we should all start at, before even searching out a reputable teacher, is read a good book; we are all influenced by our first impression. I myself began the quest for enlightenment after constantly seeing the words tai chi crop up in night school brochures. (I hasten to add, this is not the best place to begin your classes, most students you meet there will have taken cookery the preceding term and probably flower arranging the next, not really the stuff serious quests are made of.) I booked out *Tai Chi* by Danny Conner from the local library, sat on my patio on a summer's evening and read the whole book, unable to put it down. I turned to my husband (who at that time, after trying Kung Fu, Akido etc, was still martially unfulfilled) and told him to read it. An hour later he turned to me and said: “This is the one for me.” Thank goodness we chose the right book the first time or our tai chi trail could have been vastly different. Even then it

took about six months of searching to find a teacher who fulfilled the criteria he was looking for. We were lucky, we knew at the beginning there was a whole pie to be found. ☯



Jenny Peters is an instructor for Kai Ming Association for tai chi chuan. The club website is www.kaiming.co.uk Jenny is a nurse (SRN) in the NHS, working in hospitals for 18 years and GP practice for 25 years. She found she really enjoyed to write and has written for *Fighting*

Arts, Martial Arts Illustrated, Combat magazine and others. She has trained in tai chi and qigong for around 30 years. Not always by choice but necessity; otherwise she would never see her husband Mark Peters.



The most informative easy read, for a complete novice, I have come across is *An Introduction to Tai Chi* by Alan Peck. It gives a brief overview of different styles of the art as well as a list of recommended instructors (of which I am glad to say my husband is one). From there it is a steady climb up the ever-increasing pile of hundreds of available titles; my personal favourites are *There Are No Secrets* by Wolfe Lowenthal and *Tai Chi Supreme Ultimate* by Lawrence Galante. Steer clear of any books stating that their's is the only true style or that drift off into the obscure (I'd be more specific but for fear of reprisals). My husband can get most titles and if not, he can recommend other sources.



Taiji Qigong Shibashi (18 movements) is one of the most popular Qigong forms today. Very popular in the UK, its simplicity make it easy to learn and practice. Surprisingly, very little information about its creator, Professor Lin Housheng, or the depth of the system is available in the west. Since 2012 Prof. Lin tasked his indoor student, Fabrice Piché to share the details of his system. Its relationship to the Yang style of tai chi chuan is well known but its link to the Shaolin Neijin Zhan Zhuang system is not. Often used as a warm up practice to tai chi chuan, the depth of its medical qigong is lost. Used in the hospitals affiliated with the Shanghai University of Chinese Medicine and its Qigong Research Institute, of which Prof. Lin was the director, the details that make it efficient were well studied and refined since its creation in 1979.



Starting September 18-19, 2021 (4pm to 8pm) Fabrice will lead a series of 10 seminars on set one, the most popular form of the system. This 100h certificate programme is the entry level for the 300h Qigong Teacher Diploma offered by qigong18.com and one of the only two teacher training programmes recognized by Professor Lin Housheng. To register go to:

www.qigong18.as.me/QTT2021

Bagua and tai chi links

**Dov Weisenberger explores
the connection between the
bagua and tai chi chuan**

TAI CHI – BAGUA

The cosmological model of the bagua has two basic patterns: the pattern attributed to Fu-Xi (Yellow Emperor) and that of King Wen. The trigrams that appear in the two patterns are the same, but differ in their internal arrangement and therefore in their internal relations and their derived meanings.

If we compare the two patterns, we will discover not only discrepancies in the meanings of the identity trigrams, but also contradictions. These things may be due to a lack of knowledge, trends of interpretation, poor translation or all these issues combined. Even among tai chi chuan practitioners, there is no consensus on the applied meaning of some of the trigrams.

However, beyond the controversies, there is agreement between the schools, either at the therapeutic / medical level or at the martial level, regarding the centrality of the bagual theory in general for understanding physiological, mental and energetic processes.

Two patterns

Emperor Fu-xi, followed by King Wen, created a template to explain the cyclical nature of the phenomena. These two patterns are archetypal representations of the cyclical processes in nature, one (Fu Xi's) is the way that traditional Chinese medicine views and explains life (destructive and constructive cycles), and the other (Wen's) is perfectly suitable for tai chi chuan martial theory as it is described in the tai chi classics.

The martial aspect of tai chi chuan theory consists of the '13 tactics,' which includes the 'eight gates' and 'the five steps.' The eight gates refer to the eight basic hand techniques. The five steps are the four basic directions of movement (north / south, east / west), with the fifth being the centre, the meeting point of the four. That aspect is shown in King Wen's model.

Two ways of looking at the bagua model

The first way is to look at it as if there is a stationary centre which the trigrams rotate around. This is the way of classical Chinese medicine.

The second way is to look at it as a moving centre capable of responding in correlation with the change of the trigrams. This way correlates with the practical use of tai chi chuan.

In this article we will mainly discuss the second option, namely the pattern as presented by King Wen. Only then can we understand why, for example, in King Wen's pattern, the relationship between the kun trigram (earth) and the chien trigram (sky) is different than it is in the Fu Xi pattern, and why the transition from one trigram to the



Shay applies cai on Matan, Matan replies with sidestep and uses an push

next is inconsistent. For example, chien (sky) represents the north-west direction (and not north, as in the Fu Xi arrangement), while the kun (earth) trigram represents the south-west direction (and not south, as in the Fu Xi arrangement).

The fundamental difference between the Fu Xi pattern and the King Wen pattern can be described as this – the circular pattern is maintained in both, but its internal movement varies. While the original trigrams remain the same in both cases, their meanings vary. The result of this is that it is possible, and makes sense, to look at the circular representation of the bagua in a more flexible and complex manner:

1. As a cosmological model (the five elements)
2. As a medical model (energetic)
3. As a martial model (practical)

The 13 tactics, eight gates, four directions, four corners, five steps, and nine palaces

As mentioned, the thirteen tactics or techniques consist of the eight gates and five steps. The five steps are the four basic directions of movement plus the center, and these five are related to the eight gates which are basically the hand techniques.

Four corners

The eight hand techniques are divided into the four directions and the four corners, which are diagonal. In such a circle, every one of the eight gates is located 45 degrees from the center. In tai chi chuan, the center and its eight gates are called the nine palaces. In Wudang system there are a number of pushing hands that implement bagua theory:

1. The first pattern is the essentially stationary practice called the 'four directions'. Its execution illustrates the four basic directions of movement from the eight hand techniques (peng, lu, ji and an), while at the same time applying two aspects of the five-element model by moving weight from foot to foot (front and back).

2. The second pattern is a moving pattern called the 'nine palaces,' which is a more complex version of the previous pattern. During nine places practice, the partners move, synchronised with each other in zig-zag steps, drawing the nine palaces on the floor with their steps, an exact square that includes the sum of its sides and diagonals.



3. A third pattern, also moving, is called the eight gates and five steps or da-lu (which means the big round) or the four corners (kao, zhou, cai and lie) alternately. In this pattern, the partners move in a continuous circle of eight steps around a centerpoint, all the while changing directions and weight at will. While on the move, each of the partners apply the four-cornered hands techniques in turn.

4. The fourth pattern is freestyle push hands (either fixed steps or moving steps), in which all 13 techniques are implemented and their myriad combinations.



Matan applies peng to Shay's ji, Shay sidesteps and uses zhou



Interpretations

Suffice to refer to the names of the patterns for an initial impression of the close relationship between the models described above and their martial application. For example, the martial aspects of the five steps, in the four directions pushing hands have the following meanings:

Center is identified with the earth element = central equilibrium.

West is identified with the metal element = step forward.

North is identified with the water element = look or move to the left.

East is identified with the tree element = step back.

South is identified with the fire element = looking to or moving to the right. The martial aspects of the trigrams, of the eight gates, when applying to the four directions pushing hands have the following meanings:

North is represented by the kan trigram (great abyss) = peng technique, i.e., upward and sideways.

West is represented by the tui trigram (lake) = ji technique, that is, strike forward.

The east is represented by the Chen trigram (storm) = An technique, that is, strike or press down.

South is represented by the li trigram (fire) = lu technique, i.e. downward and sideways.

In martial aspect, the four corners will have the following meanings:

Northwest is represented by the ch'ien trigram (Sky) = lie technique, i.e. spiral movement.

Southeast is represented by the hsun trigram (wind) = cai technique, i.e. uprooting (up/down).

Southwest is represented by the kun trigram (earth) = zhou technique, i.e. using



Shay starts with lie and pushes forwards, Matan replies with lie while shifting his weight



the forearm or elbow.

The northeast is represented by the ken trigram (ka) = kao technique, that is, shoulder or body technique.

From interpretations to practise

Following the described above, countless variations can be created during which the actions and reactions are conducted in sequence and in combination with some or all of the principles as they appear in the bagua. For example, a strike or push forward with or without a step can follow with an upward deflection. This deflection may be followed by a downward uprooting, which is immediately answered by an elbow or

shoulder strike, which is in turn countered by a circular deflection, and so on. The continuous nature of tai chi chuan techniques is why the art has been called 'Long boxing', figuratively describing the long and continuous like the flow of the Yellow River, in which the water's volume, force and direction constantly change along the river's route.

Further dimensions

It can be said that, although the bagua model is a predefined model with predefined interpretations, there is within its framework a freedom of action via a multiplicity of possibilities. The bagua model as a circle or square contains complex patterns of internal relationships between the trigrams. These relationships can be linear, a vector or straight line, like the saying 'seek the straight amidst the bent'. They can also be circular, as expressed in the line from the *Song of Sparring*: "Achieve it inside a circle, not with hands and feet disorganised."

Bagua theory attributes a number to each trigram, these numbers form a magic square. These relationships express an idea of symmetry at a given distance on the one hand, and an idea or principle of infinite reversibility on the other. The distance symmetry is reflected in the classic phrase "When my opponent advances the distance between us seems bigger and when he retreats the distance looks shorter". Whereas the inverse principle embodied in the classic phrase "In the straight there is the round and in the round there is the straight".

The sums of all the connections between the

TAI CHI – BAGUA

trigrams numbers will give the same and perfect relationships in a circle, for example:

The sum of all trigrams equals 50, and each vertical or horizontal half in a circle equals 25. All the squares within the circle have precise and symmetrical relationships between them.

The sum of two diagonals is always the same and equal to 15, and the sum of each trigram in each direction is also 15.

And this is the meaning of the nine palaces, which is the eight gates plus the centre point, in the following magic square:

	North				
	chien	kan	ken		
		6	1	8	
West	tui	7	5	3	chen East
		2	9	4	
	kun	li	hsun		
	South				

Summary

There is a direct and practical connection between the bagua theory and the tai chi chuan classics, which describe the martial art that makes use of the theory. This special connection is an example of a connection that must exist between theory and practice. In our case, the tai chi chuan practitioner combines theory and practice like heaven and earth. Indeed

Since tai chi chuan as a martial art is based on the principle of yin-yang, which is clearly expressed in the bagua model. In practice the relationships between each trigram and its number has three main meanings:

1. The yin and yang states of the trigrams kan, tui, li and chen foil and encircle the yin and yang states of the trigrams ken, kun, chien and hsun. That is, the four directions techniques apply to the four-corner techniques.

2. The yin and yang states of the ken, kun, chien and hsun trigrams foil and encircle the trigrams kan, tui, li and chen. That is, the four-corner techniques are the counter-reaction to the four-directions techniques.

3. All eight gates or techniques are combined and integrated into one system.

Prolonged, consistent and accurate practise of the pushing hands drills and applications guided by classical principles according to the above models will provide good proficiency and deep understanding of the martial aspect of tai chi chuan.

the tai chi chuan form begins with wu ji, the standing or empty meditative or yet tai chi, which starts the movements that create the multitude of phenomena. The form then returns to and ends with unity-style (union), which signifies the highest level the practitioner should aspire to, namely - being one with heaven and earth; the circle is closed and reopened... endless...

I would like to thank Tomer and Eliyahu for translation and editing, Shay and Matan for feedback and participating as models

www.youtu.be/lpekc1szUv0
www.youtu.be/fXul1PLM-UJ
www.youtu.be/dFXhZyUySd8

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Chew Your Dates

Gordon Faulkner is a 15th generation disciple of Wudangquan and one of the first Westerners to train in Daoyin Yangsheng Gong

One of the constant refrains today is: "I've done my research."

The internet and social media have given us great tools to enable us to do this. Unfortunately, there is a yang and yin aspect to this. The positive is the wealth of data that enriches our understanding of the object of our search. The negative, to paraphrase Abraham Lincoln: "Do not believe everything you read on the internet."

For the vast majority of us, our research is very positive. However, to use an actual quote from the colophon to the Neijing tu (internal pathway diagram):

Dùn g n rén wú cóng l ngq 鈍根人無從領取。

"There are obtuse people who do not have the ability to grasp it."

These are people who swallow whole dates, a Chinese idiom that perfectly sums it up goes:

Húlúnt n z o 囫圇吞枣

One day, a doctor spotted a young man gorging himself on dates and told him: "Eating dates is good for the spleen but too many is bad for the teeth."

The following day, the doctor saw the young man again and this time he was gorging himself on pear. The doctor explained: "Eating pears is good for the teeth but too many is bad for the spleen."

The next day the doctor saw the man with both dates and pears. The man, who considered himself clever, said: "This is the answer. I can chew the pears without swallowing to protect my spleen, and I can swallow the dates whole to protect my teeth."

Today to swallow whole dates is an idiom used to describe a person who accepts information without really understanding it.

Bottom line—chew your dates!

Gordon Faulkner

The yin yang in qigong

Peter Deadman



“Flowing waters do not stagnate because they move. The qi and the body are also like this. If the body does not move the qi will coagulate” *The Annals of Lu Buwei, 3rd century BCE*
“Moving, be like water, still, be like a mirror” *Zhuangzi, 3rd century BCE*

This is the first in a series of articles about yinyang in the practice of qigong. Though outwardly simple, yin yang theory offers meaning and insight into almost every aspect of our existence and it could be argued that the whole of qigong is an exercise in understanding, embodying and playing with it. (At the end of this first discussion I have pasted a passage explaining general yinyang theory from my book *Live Well Live Long: Teachings from the Chinese Nourishment of Life Tradition*).

In this first article I want to explore the relationship between nourishing (yin) and moving (yang) in the practice of qigong.

Qigong draws from many different sources – Daoism, Buddhism, martial arts, Chinese medicine, folk practices and more. It therefore covers a wide range of practices from quietly standing or sitting with a focus on internal softness, slow deep breathing and quietening the heart/mind, through to powerful moving and strengthening forms such as the five animal frolics and the baduanjin (eight silken movements). If we extend our practice into the internal martial arts

of xingyiquan and baguazhang especially, we add in swift, vigorous and moderately aerobic movement.

Nourishing

Traditional Chinese self cultivation practices (of which qigong is one) are designed to maximise health and wellbeing, stabilise and expand the heart/mind and increase longevity, and can be included within the term yangsheng/nourishment of life – the two and half thousand year study of how to achieve these aims.

The very act of living gradually consumes our essential energies (jing) until they eventually run out and we decline and die. However, with the right lifestyle we can delay this process. This is why yangsheng teachings first of all emphasise the basics of good dietary habits, ample rest and sleep, and nourishing ourselves through intimacy with fellow humans and animals as well as contact with nature, art and music. At a deeper level, practices such as holding a stable and aligned posture and releasing tension through the body, breathing deeply and slowly into the dantian (‘field of elixir’ in the lower belly), and stilling

the mind can build and restore what is called our essence (jing) – the strength of which ultimately determines how well we age and how long we live.

Nourishing methods of this kind should form part of any balanced qigong practice. They are especially important if we are exhausted, ill, convalescing or suffering from problems like anxiety, insomnia or worry. For extreme fatigue (for example post-viral syndrome, ME, fibromyalgia, long Covid, cancer etc.) we may need to avoid moving practices altogether and start to add them only gradually and patiently to avoid exhaustion.

Healthy or sick though, we can get profound enrichment on every level of our being from nourishing practice. However, we should also be aware of some possible pitfalls.

Dietary caution

Chinese dietary theory offers one good example of why. Rich and nourishing (wei) foods are an essential part of the diet. They include oil and fat, dairy, fish, meat, nuts, strong flavours and so on. If we do not eat enough of them we can suffer from malnourishment. However, if we consume too much (as in most modern Western diets) and especially if we lead a sedentary life, they can cause stagnation and give rise to all manner of diseases.

In the same way too much still, yin practice risks causing weakness of the body, excessive inward focus and internal stagnation. This is especially the case if we suffer from depression – usually characterised in Chinese medicine as due to stagnation of the qi and blood, in which case we should do more moving and outward-going practices, rather than still internal ones.

Difficult yin

Young people also often find that yin practices such as qigong standing, meditation and slow mindful-movement are difficult to tolerate as their yang energy is strong, and they usually need to do more vigorous, external, moving exercise such as sports and martial arts.

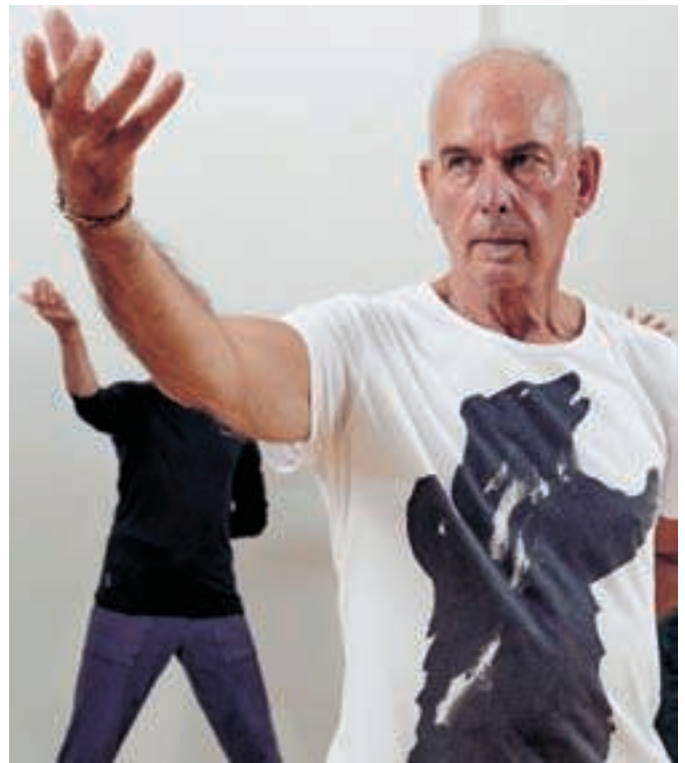
And it's not just young people who may find this work challenging. For those unused to stillness, even a few minutes of qigong standing can give rise to feelings of frustration, anger or resentment as well as physical discomfort and pain, and there may be an uncontrollable desire to move. This reveals layers of body/mind stagnation that underlie our normal state and which we are accustomed to ignore. Sometimes other powerful feelings can bubble up and give rise to weeping, laughter, or the unexpected upsurge of memories. While we should never force ourselves to endure any of these challenges to the point of putting us off practice altogether, it is good to persist – observing, not getting caught up in them and always aiming to soften and release.

Moving

One of the simplest definitions of health in Chinese medicine is 'free flow'. This describes the uninterrupted movement of qi, blood and body fluids through the body (as well as a free and easy state of mind).

Remember that there are 100,000 miles of blood vessels in the body, and the blood needs to flow to the most distant and minute capillaries in order that every single cell can be nourished.

Drawing from the traditional Chinese internal martial arts, qigong takes the body through its entire range of natural movement – lengthening, releasing, opening, closing, spiralling and twisting – mobilising all the body



Peter Deadman

tissues while always maintaining release and softness. This will help develop broad physical skills and keep qi and blood flowing so that all bodily processes can perform to their optimum.

Nowadays we all know how important regular movement is for mental and physical health and wellbeing, right through into old age, and in normal times gyms are packed with people running on treadmills and pumping weights, while streets and parks are full of joggers. Aerobic exercise, is especially popular. It promotes flow of qi and blood by increasing the pumping action of the heart, does so more rapidly than any other method, and can be achieved with minimal skill or practice. However, as with yin stillness practices, there are some potential pitfalls to be aware of with unskilled or excessive movement.

Overtraining

The most obvious is the risk of injury found with many sports, including running – especially if running style is uncoordinated and misaligned.

Over-training can also weaken the immune system and impair the body's self-repair mechanisms. This happens when it is too forceful – tipping the autonomic nervous system into an almost permanent yang, fight-or-flight, sympathetic-dominant state. This gives rise to cell inflammation and failure of the normal cell repair that comes from a return to a yin parasympathetic-dominance. Hyper sympathetic stimulation can also affect us emotionally and lead to greater hostility, fear and lack of trust and emotional connection.

Vigorous exercise (whether strength-training or aerobics), while a valuable form of self-medication for many kinds of emotional stress, can also obscure the need to address the root of the problem. In Chinese medicine, stagnation lies at the root of much depression, frustration, resentment etc. and working out in the gym or going for long runs can rapidly move and break through this stagnation, leaving us feeling more at ease. But since it treats the symptom, not the cause, the dose has to be



repeated – more often or more intense – to get the same effect, leading to exercise addiction. In this case, the right amount of internal practice, emphasising mindfulness, relaxed movement and mental stillness can help dispel the stagnation at a deeper level.

Finally, modern exercise science is increasingly coming round to echoing the words of the great 7th century doctor Sun Simiao: “The way of nurturing life is to constantly strive for minor exertion but never become greatly fatigued and force what you cannot endure,” and, “The way of nurturing life consists of ... never sitting nor lying for a long time ... extended lying down damages the qi ... extended sitting damages the flesh.”

Over the past century or so we have abandoned nearly all the natural evolutionary movements that helped shape our human bodies – walking, squatting, chopping wood, hunting, digging, carrying, dancing and running. We have farmed most of these out to machines and have created deliberate exercise routines to replace them. Yet it is becoming clear that even the most vigorous daily workout cannot substitute for the qi and blood moving benefits of constant minor movement and a relaxed body/mind. In fact one consequence of hard training is that we may end up feeling tired – satisfied that we have satisfied our movement needs for the day – and are less likely to walk rather than drive, or climb stairs rather than take the elevator.

The optimum amount of exercise is invigorating and makes us want to move more throughout the whole day, and the evidence is clear that those who do moderate exercise achieve more overall daily movement than those who go for the burn. It is also clear that the health benefits of moderate exercise combined with steady movement through the day (i.e. less sitting) are greater than a single concentrated hard workout.

Yang within yin and yin within yang

So both yin stillness and yang movement are essential parts of qigong self-cultivation. How much we emphasise one or the other will depend on many factors – our age, health, mental state, our needs on a particular day and so on.

Yet yin yang theory teaches us that there is always yin within yang and yang within yin, hence, “In all stillness there must be movement and in all movement there must be stillness”.

This means that during quiet standing qigong we softly open the body vertically and horizontally while releasing the soft tissue. When there is minimal holding or tightness (physical or mental/emotional), then qi can follow its nature and flow through the body without obstruction, carrying blood and body fluids with it. This is movement within stillness. And by contrast, even in the most vigorous

qigong forms we try to hold a quiet mind and remain as soft and released as possible, maintaining stillness within the heart of movement (and in the internal martial arts within the heat of battle).

About yin yang from *Live Well Live Long: Teachings from the Chinese Nourishment of Life Tradition*:

Yin `yang is a binary theory which posits two complementary forces (yin and yang) manifesting throughout existence. They oppose yet restrain each other, control yet give birth to and support each other.

Yang is associated with qualities such as fire, heat, brightness, light, the sun and sky, movement and action, ascending, the upright position, hardness and masculinity. In the body, it describes function (e.g. the beating of the heart, the peristalsis of the intestines, metabolic activity, vitality etc.) and in the natural world, dawn and daytime, spring and summer.

Yin is associated with water, coolness, darkness, receptiveness, the moon and the earth, night-time, rest and nourishment, descending, the lying down position, softness and femininity. In the body, it describes structure and materiality (flesh, muscle, blood, fluids etc.), and in the natural world, evening and night, autumn and winter.

Yinyang theory observes that:

- When either yin or yang reaches an extreme, it transforms into its opposite in an ever-flowing cycle. As dawn breaks, yang (light, warmth and activity) grows and reaches its peak at midday. Then it must inevitably decline as yin (darkness, cold and quietness) starts to grow, at first imperceptibly but soon into the extremity of yin in the middle of the night. We see the same process in the slow turning of the year – spring, summer, autumn, winter – and in the cycle of human life – birth, maturity, ageing and death. This awareness of extremes inevitably turning into their opposite also guided early Daoist philosophy. As the 4th century BCE Daodejing says, “Better stop short than fill to the brim. Oversharpen the blade and the edge will soon blunt,” and in a passage that also serves to illustrate the power of the soft martial arts, “Yield and overcome; Bend and be straight; Empty and be full. [ii]”

- Yin and yang are opposite yet complementary and each contains the seed of the other. This is expressed most clearly in the famous yinyang symbol (known as the taijitu – supreme ultimate diagram). A circle is divided into two flowing parts, one black one white, each containing a dot of its opposite colour. One example of the way this understanding is used is in the practice of meditative qigong standing. The body is completely still (yin), yet through the practice of softening and relaxing, internally everything (qi and blood) flows more freely. By contrast, in the practice of moving qigong or tai chi, there must be internal stillness – a calm, unmoving centre. ☯

[i] In Graham, AC (1989). *Disputers of the Tao: Philosophical Argument in Ancient China*. Open Court Publishing, Chicago, IL.

[ii] Daodejing, 5th century BCE
Tao Te Ching, Lao Tsu. Trans. Gia-fu Feng and Jane English, Vintage Books 2011. Verses 9 and 22. Bio:

Peter Deadman has worked in the field of health promotion for fifty years, first in the natural foods business. He has studied, practised and taught Chinese medicine, yangsheng (nourishment of life) and qigong for many years. He is co-author of A Manual of Acupuncture and author of Live Well Live Long: Teachings from the Chinese Nourishment of life Tradition. www.peterdeadman.co.uk

Marnix Wells with Wang Shujin 1974



Reaching the source

“All tai chi is qigong, but not all qigong is tai chi.” Marnix Wells continues his series *Tai chi roots*

Tai chi, pronounced Taijǐ, (ty jee) means ‘grand pole’, the central axis around which the earth rotates. It is the union of yin and yáng, dark and light, female and male, minus and plus. It reconciles opposites, wherever they are found. In the body it is located at its gravitational and energetic centre, the dantián spot just below the navel. Deep breathing, by sinking the qi to this point, promotes balance and calm. It is the focus of tai chi chuan, (taijíquán), ‘grand pole boxing’, once known to Westerners as Chinese shadow boxing, a system of exercise for body maintenance, built around principles of self-defence and health.

Tai chi concepts

The concept of taijǐ was first described in appendices to the *Book of Change* over two thousand years ago. Much later, Sòng dynasty neo-Confucian reformer Zhu Xi (1130-1200) adopted it as the core of his rationalist philosophy. To illustrate the idea that opposites form an integral unity, he borrowed a ‘taijǐ diagram’ which evolved into the circular yin-yáng icon familiar to us today.

The system of exercise we recognise as taijǐ only

acquired this name after it spread to Beijing from the Chén family village (Chénjiagou) in Hénán during the 19th century. Yet the art had already been linked to a highly sophisticated *Book of Change* philosophy. After the fall of the Qīng dynasty in 1912, liberalisation allowed Chén Xin (1849-1929) to publish in a book the secrets of his family tradition (*Chén-shì Taijíquán Tǔshuo*, prefaced 1919). These included a taijǐ diagram encircled with the *Book of Change’s* sixty-four hexagrams, arranged to mirror the progression of ‘sunny’ yáng to ‘shady’ yin and back again. (Figure 1)

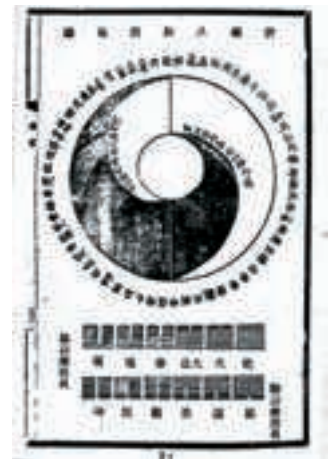


Figure 1

Trigrams

Hexagrams are figures of six lines, whose halves of three lines are called trigrams. The internal martial art of *baguàzhāng*, ‘eight trigram palms’, names its routines from these eight trigrams, each describing a compass point on a circle. Originally used to foretell the future by divination, they combine all possible combinations of yin ‘shady’ and yáng ‘sunny’ by broken or unbroken lines. They are mirrored by Leibniz’s binary mathematics, which uses just ones and zeroes to form all numbers, and in computer engineering encodes electrical combinations of ‘on’ and ‘off’ states to store data.

Yet Chén Xin was not the first to apply the dialectical principles of the *Book of Change* to the bodily mechanics of martial arts and physical exercise. These had earlier been described by the ‘scholar boxer’, Cháng Naizhou (1724-1783?), who resided in the neighbourhood between Shàolín monastery and Chén village. Cháng’s book was now, at last in 1933, posthumously published. (Scholar Boxer, tr. Wells, North Atlantic Books, 2005).

A martial art for health

Both Chén and Cháng utilised another taijǐ concept from the *Book of Change*. This was expressed in the Luò River diagram, from Chinese prehistory, in which the numbers one to nine are balanced in a ‘magic square’ so that their lines in any direction – vertical, horizontal or diagonal – always total 15. (Figure 2)

4	9	2
3	5	7
8	1	6

Figure 2

This diagram provides a template for interlocking zig-zag movement in exercise and martial applications. Lines between numbers in order of magnitude result in alternating spirals in threes, first anti-clock wise (1>2>3) and then clockwise (3>4>5). In other words, a double helix, like that found to be the underlying structure of DNA:

In Chén-style tai chi chuan it illustrates ‘winding-silk power’ (chánsījīng). ‘Springing power’(jīng), a key taijǐ concept, is often written as ‘essence’ (jīng) here. Hands and feet thereby turned in mutual opposition generate spring. In the top right-hand diagram of Figure 3, the Chinese numbers linked by lines equal those of Figure 2. The underlying text, translated, explains:

In boxing, winding-silk power runs a path with matching right-hand facing up and left-hand facing down as if embracing (holding a ball). The right hand from below goes from one to two to three towards six, leading the two feet from nine to eight to seven towards four, four and six both facing five (in the centre). They twist and turn with ferocious force in one vibrating energy converging at the central palace...

The opposition of clockwise and anti-clockwise power concentrated at the centre is thus released with explosive vibrating force. The same process is to be performed in different sequences as shown in each of the remaining diagrams. (right)

Contrary to popular belief, the slow movements of taijǐ practice are more than pure relaxation. Relaxation is indeed their starting point and basic premise. Yet it is just the start in a daily exploration of discovery for the body’s potential energies. It is a means of listening to the body, feeling and harnessing the constant interplay of action and reaction within its every movement.

Its regular practice counters raised blood pressure. In

traditional medical theory, the brain is the home of the fire and the belly that of water. *The Book of Change’s* penultimate hexagram ‘Completion’ (Jǐ, no. 63, not 64, since change is unending) depicts fire under water, like a saucepan on the stove. By reversing positions, fire tending upwards, placed under water tending downwards, dynamic interaction is achieved, namely cooking. In the body, the result is health.

Meditation and movement

By this method, with correct posture, meditation directs energy downwards to calm the mind and integrate it with the whole body. Breath energy circulates through the body creating a feeling of well-being and relaxation. As muscles relax, blood circulates more freely, capillaries (minute hair-like blood vessels) open up, carrying oxygen with a flow of warmth to body peripheries. The other circulatory systems of digestion, lymph in the muscles, and synovial fluids in the joints are likewise benefited.

All this is achieved by abdominal or ‘diaphragmatic’ breathing in sitting or standing posture. Qi is the Chinese word for ‘air’, and by extension ‘energy’, generated by burning oxygen; tai chi chuan is thus aerobic. In vigorous exercise, whole body breathing occurs spontaneously but exhaustingly. Meditation consciously by diaphragmatic breathing opens the lungs from the back, engaging abdominal muscles in whole-body action, from the tips of toes via the tip of the spine (perineum) to the crown of the head.

In meditation breath-energy is cultivated through mind control, usually in static postures, as famously in Indian yoga, and chiefly in sitting meditation by Buddhists but also in lying, standing and walking. The basic Buddhist method of mindfulness (vipassana in Theravāda) consists in concentrating on every in- and out-breath, a life and death in miniature, to the exclusion of all distraction. Zen (dhyāna, chán) may focus on a single word or problem ‘case’ kō’an (gong’an).

Dancing beasts

Yet static postures require the supplement of moving exercises. Shamans practised trance dance and impersonation of animals to acquire their powers. The

Documents Classic records a ‘Hundred Beast Dance’ led by a monitor dragon (Kuǐ) in the time of primordial Emperor Shùn. Their movements evolved into stretching and breathing exercises associated with Daoism and the quest for longevity and the ‘golden elixir’ (jīn’dān) of physical immortality. This gave the name ‘elixir field’ (dantián) for the point just below the navel on which, as we saw, breathing meditation focuses.

Examples on silk manuscripts have been recovered, at Mâwángduì (Húnán) and Zhāngjiāshān (Húběi), from water-logged second century BC tombs. They illustrate breathing and stretching exercises to restore sexual virility in ageing patients such as the mythical Yellow Emperor. The tradition was further developed in the ‘Five Animal

Sport' (Wú-Qín Xi) of tiger, deer, bear, ape and bird of physician Huá Tuó (ca. 200) as mentioned in the *Three Kingdoms Record*. Versions of it continue to be practised as qigong today.

Buddhist monks at Shàolín, by China's Central Mountain Range (Zhongyuè) in Hénán province, became famous for physical as well as meditational prowess. Legend tells how Indian monk Bodhidharma sat facing a cave wall there for nine years until his legs atrophied. Despite this, or maybe because of it, he became credited with introducing the monks' martial arts for which, by the 16th century, its monks were renowned. Gongfu was a term first used in Zen (Chán) meditation training. 'Gong', meaning 'work', 'effort' and 'training', became fused with 'internal' as neigong, and with 'breath-energy' as qigong. Their qigong 'Eighteen Arhat hands' (Shíba Luóhàn Shǒu) eventually spread to the general population.

Creation of a 'boxing form' (quántào) of exercise, with weapons forms, in a series of continuous movements, like a cartoon strip or roll of film, was first printed in a military training manual (Jìxiào Xīnshū) by Qi Jiguang (1528-1588). Piracy fronted by Japanese swordsmen was ravishing the eastern sea coast. This necessitated the learning of a new type of amphibious warfare and recruitment of irregular troops, which included Shàolín monks' expert in staff fighting.

Tai chi ancestor

Qi Jiguang's 'long boxing' form of 32 named moves, selected from different schools as he tells us, is the ancestor of our tai chi chuan form. It was transmitted in Hénán, across the Yellow River from Shàolín, by members of the farming Chén clan as a moving meditation exercise for health and defence. There, in the 19th century from 1820, it was learned by Yáng Lùchán (1799-1872) from a medicine firm in the fortress town of Yōngnián in southern Hébei. In 1854 Yáng travelled to Beijing with champion Wú Bànhóu, to teach this art under the new name of 'tǎijíquán' whose source he declined to reveal.

The art was presumed derived from an otherwise extinct 'internal school'. Yáng's fellow townsman had chanced to discover some sheets of 'tǎijí classics' in a salt shop while on an official posting to Wúyáng, just over 200km from Mt Wúdang (Húbei). This houses the shrine to the god of war and Daoist Zhang Sanfeng, accredited founder of 'internal school boxing' (neijia quán). By this skill, boxer Zhang Songqi of Níngbō (Zhèjiāng), in the 16th century, was recorded to have defeated 'external school' Shàolín monks. Details of Zhang Sanfeng's links to boxing are described in *Xiyángjì*, an 'epic novel' of 1597, fantasising Admiral Zheng Hé (1371-1433) and his voyages to the Indian Ocean (Scott Phillips 2019: *Tai Chi, Baguazhang and the Golden Elixir*, 41-48).

Yet, beyond such historical romances, the tangible sources of tai chi chuan remained obscure until the 1930s discovery by Táng Háo of the Chén family, a Qi Jiguang connection, together with the writings of Chén's neighbour Cháng Naizhōu. These background materials enable a fuller appreciation of the current wealth of tai chi chuan literature from every school and their wider relationships.

The whole art

Over the last two millennia, following the introduction of Buddhism from India, China has, with Confucianism and Daoism, followed three major religions or schools of thought which have tended to merge. They have produced

'three-in-one' religions, such as Quánzhēn 'Complete Truth' Daoism of Qiu Chūjī which rose to prominence under 'foreign' Jurchen and Mongol emperors eight hundred years ago. Other examples have been condemned as 'cults'.

Traditionally, Chinese governments have strictly controlled or banned popular practice of martial arts and qigong. Their association with messianic cults and rebellions was endemic. In the 20th century, Yiguàndào, the 'One Consistent Way' of the primeval mother goddess, achieved popularity in the 1930s during the Japanese occupation in China and East Asia. Though banned in 1949, it was practised by disciples of Cheng Mǎn'chíng (Zhèng Mǎnqíng) Yáng-style tai chi chuan, thinly disguised as a 'Confucius-Mencius Study Society', but received official exoneration by Taiwan in 1987.

On the mainland, during recovery from the Maoist 'Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution', a quasi-Buddhist movement named Fǎlúngōng, 'Dharma Wheel Cultivation' teaching qigong arose. It spread globally but was banned in China from 1999 following public demonstrations.

In the UK, it appears that the Chinese government supported the creation of a Health Qigong institute who trade-marked the generic term 'health qigong', which was already in use by local independent schools.

Internal martial arts

The Tai Chi & Qigong Union for Great Britain, by contrast, aims to promote the practice of tai chi chuan and qigong within a loose framework of internal martial arts. Internal martial arts was defined by Sun Lùtáng over a century ago to include the kindred disciplines of baguàzhāng and xingyìquán to train in self-defence exercise for spiritual, mental and physical health. The use of weapon or fan props can further enhance its exercise and aesthetic value in training and public performance. Within this synthesis, tai chi chuan and qigong are one.

Tai chi chuan as a martial art is not less concerned with health than 'health qigong' (qigong for health). If anything its inherent dynamism and highly developed structure make it more, not less, relevant to health. It is likely to prove especially beneficial to metabolic health in the prevailing crisis of obesity, diabetes, cardio-vascular disease, atherosclerosis, fibromyalgia and cancer. Tai chi has the additional advantages of social interaction, counteracting loneliness and isolation, through two-person exercises and friendly competition. Its martial focus adds an intellectual dimension which increases adrenalin production, spatial awareness and balance. All this has been my personal motivation and experience of over 50 years of daily practice (from 1968 at Tsim Sha Tsui park in Kowloon, Hong Kong).

I leave the decisions of how you choose to proceed in your studies, to your interests and motivations. ♣

Marnix Wells studied tǎijíquán and internal martial arts in the Far East from 1968, with master Wángshùjīn and his disciples Zhang Yìzhōng; Gān Xiàozhōu; Hóng Yìmián; and others. More recently, in this country, he has been learning Zhōu Yǒu's tǎijí with Liú Yǒu's 'master Yaz'. Marnix is a graduate in classical Chinese from Oxford and PhD SOAS. He has published interpretative translations from Chinese of Scholar Boxer, Pheasant Cap Master and Heguanzi: the Dao of Unity.

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Healing help

Tina Faulkner Elders writes: I have been a practitioner and teacher of qigong (Yangsheng) for many years. In the scheme of things I am reasonably well qualified and have a great deal of experience. For the past few years I have been teaching qigong professionally to cancer patients at a Maggie's cancer care centre

I can tell you categorically that I do not teach qigong to cancer patients in order to cure their cancer. Claims of curing cancer with qigong are not only bold but dangerous and irresponsible. They prey on the vulnerable and desperate. Even the more well known 'cancer curing' qigong methods like the Gui Lin walking qigong has no real scientific basis for claim.

So why would I teach qigong to cancer patients at all? Because I believe that qigong has a multitude of benefits that can have a huge positive effect on people's lives. It can, and it does. There are however a number of factors to take into serious consideration.

There is no such thing as a 'quick fix'. Anything worth doing properly takes time and one of the biggest factors in practising qigong is the time it takes to absorb and understand what qigong actually is.

Qigong is not just moving the arms and legs around in a 'soft and floaty' manner. In fact, it takes a great deal of time to retrain the body out of bad habits. It takes practice to release tension and regain strength and flexibility in the right areas thereby supporting the structure and internal workings.

Qigong is not just an academic knowledge of traditional Chinese medicine or an academic knowledge of where your energy is supposed to go to during any given movement. Time and effort are required to be still enough within the movements. We practise listening to the body and feeling the energy in order then to guide it.

And this is only the beginning...

Even with these things 'mastered' there is no real evidence to suggest that practising qigong alone, without the intervention of other medicines is going to cure cancer. Nevertheless, I do believe the benefits gained from practising qigong can be so enriching that it can form a vital part of your lifestyle. Benefits include:

Better sleep

Reduced symptoms of stress

Better circulation (of Qi, blood and the lymphatic system)

Improved balance

Improved posture

Greater core strength and flexibility

Over the years practitioners from all walks of life have stated experiencing a whole range of secondary results:

A more calm and focused mind

A sense of control over one's wellbeing

An overall improvement in one's health

With a good and responsible teacher who is able to recognise the limitations of the student and guide them accordingly, these benefits are seen fairly quickly. Over the long term qigong practice becomes a way of life, a way of finding balance and harmony between body and mind. This is when the effects can really be noted by the practitioner and an overall improvement in health and wellbeing can be experienced. ☺



Tina Faulkner Elders

The students say:

Healing qigong influence on his own cancer: "I was initially diagnosed with prostate cancer with metastasis in the spine in early 2014. At this point I was completely unaware of the existence of qigong. The following year was spent in and out of hospital. Progress of the cancer was halted thanks to medication and numerous radiotherapy sessions. However, some damage to the spine cannot be reversed by medical treatment. I truly believe that qigong has saved my life so far..."

Gaining post chemo strength through qigong: In June 2012 I was diagnosed with a squamous cell carcinoma on the oesophagus – considered at the time to be terminal. Now in my third year as a student in this class I can report that I could not have made a better decision..."

Personal experience with qigong and cancer: My name is Simone and I was diagnosed with CUP-syndrome in 2012 and with breast cancer with a genetic mutation in 2015. In convalescent care, I made my first contact with qigong and I realised that it is very good for me..."

Author: Tina Faulkner Elders director & principal instructor of Ruyi School of Taijiquan & qigong. Director of qigong, Chanquanshu School of Daoist Arts, Wudang Daoist Wuji Gongfu Academy, European Teaching Cooperation Organisation

Walking the circle

**Andrea Mary Falk, *A Shadow on Fallen Blossoms, The 36 and 48 Traditional Verses of Baguazhang.*
Review by Malcolm Davy-Barnes**

These verses have survived from the late 19th and early 20th century, an age when many Chinese internal martial artists did not often write things down. The translation by Andrea Falk is scholarly and contextual.

The book presents the traditional 36 verses and the 48 verses of bagua-zhang. They are attributed to Dong Haichuan (1813-1884), generally acknowledged as the founder of bagua-zhang, with probable contributions from the first generation of his disciples.

Dong brought his art to Beijing having synthesised his previous martial training with meditative circle walking that he learnt, most likely, from the Dragon Gate sect of Daoism. Employed initially as a servant in an imperial household, he gained favour for his martial skills, becoming a bodyguard, instructor and tax collector for the dynastic family. It is known that he took on disciples, teaching each according to their previous martial skills and character.

The verses presented reflect this in that they are general enough to cover differences in styles. They are written in the form of four line verses that could be memorised by practitioners and transmitted orally. Falk suggests that the verses employed rhyming, a length and a beat which allows for the possibility of lines used for qigong chanting. The author provides pinyin translation for the lines and the adventurous would-be chanter.

Energy structure

The verses were probably written down by Zengqi (1862-1951), who was a Manchurian scholar and a disciple of Yin Fu, Dong's first student. Not openly published in China until the 1980's they became known by some as the Liang lineage verses, partly as they were a gift by Zhenqi to Guo Gumin and published by Li Ziming; both students of Liang Zhenpu, founder of the Liang style. Although there is some cross-over, the 36 verses are more about body and energy structure and co-ordination whilst the 48 verses are more tactical.

Andrea Falk may be known to readers through an interview in the TCUGB magazine (issue 36), from her previous translations and *Falk's Dictionary of Chinese Martial Arts*. In this book she not only translates but brings the text to life using her knowledge gained through her training in bagua, xingyi, tai chi and wushu in China. There is much contextual material in this book drawing on Chinese linguistics, philosophy, history, and sociological aspects. Previous translations into English have appeared but this is the first book to be dedicated solely to the traditional verses. Researching in China and comparing a number of different versions, Falk offers a definitive translation whilst also giving us the divergences in the versions along the way. There is an introduction and helpful background, illustrations, a glossary and a quick guide to pinyin pronunciation. The verses themselves are

presented with the original characters, pinyin and an English translation. There is a meticulous commentary on each line with supplementary information and discussions. The author does not shy away from controversial aspects such as the relationship between bagua-zhang, the martial art, and the bagua of the yi ching.

The title of the book comes from a composite image from two of the verses that give a flavour of the translated verses. From 21/36:

*When you have gone to the fullest you must turn the body,
Shed the body and trade it for a shadow without leaving a
trace.*

*How we change unpredictably is all in the footwork,
Going in and out, back and forth – the waist first extends.*

*When the original qi is full then you can walk without
boundaries,*

*The truth of the eight trigrams is in our school.
Every single technique comes from changes in the feet,
If you stand still you are like fallen blossoms.*

Qi cultivation

One of Falk's comments to this latter verse is that original qi cultivation in Baguazhang is achieved through circle walking in postures. Qigong training is in the circle walking itself. She notes also to stand still suggests the stopping of the mind, not just the feet. Bagua is not only about change but continuous change.

Like the Taiji classics, this isn't a step by step guide to learning bagua, but rather the verses are there to remind the practitioner. For anyone interested in baguazhang it is a treasure to be consulted alongside one's own learning. For Taiji and Qigong practitioners it offers insights regarding posture, breathing, connectedness etc. Moreover for internal artists Falk's book, through the commentary of historical and social contexts, we get invaluable glimpses and an understanding of the milieu that Dong Haichuan, Yang Luchan, Guo Yunshen and their contemporaries lived in. ☯



Odds at the End

And the things people say...

Health committee changes

As the union continues to develop the health committee has been relaunched. During the Covid crisis much of its work was to inform members of working updates across the UK. To that end it launched a Facebook page as well as a Covid page on the union website.

The committee's main aims are now collating and generating information for the TCUGB website and magazine; working to increase public and medical profession awareness of tai chi and qigong as a health tool and building links with health organisations in both physical and mental health. €

TCUGB logo competition

To celebrate 30 years of the union we are inviting members to come up with a logo to mark the occasion.

The logo will appear on the union website, social media and press releases. The winner will be given full credit and the logo will also appear on commemorative merchandise such as T shirts.

email your entries to enquires@taichiunion.com

“We practise the form slowly so we get all of the details right: so we tick all of the boxes.

Then, if we have to make a move quickly the boxes will tick themselves.”

*Karn Holford
Senior student,
Bonsai Tai Chi Academy*

Tai chi moves



www.largecow.com

“All tai chi is qigong.
Not all qigong is tai chi.”

Marnix Wells

Letter to the editor

From Jane Lauchbury

One area that I think we neglect and I believe TC&OA should be covering is teaching tai chi and qigong to children.

Personally, I have done quite a bit of visiting schools, events and youth organisations, teaching children and young people tai chi and qigong. I found that qigong worked well and because the various schools, festivals, Guides, Brownies etc wanted something with tai chi in the title, I used tai chi-qigong Shibashi. Taught with appropriate language and humour for each age group, and more reference to tai chi for the older ones, it worked extremely well. It worked so well for teachers and teaching assistants that one boarding school invited me to run qigong sessions after school for the staff, for several months.

The older groups such as Guides and Rangers also enjoyed some sensing hands contact work and some meditation. The most challenging were key stage 1 (5-7 year olds) and I did 35 minute sessions every day for a week with the whole of KS1 (a group of about 90 children of this age group) in our village school, culminating in a ‘performance’ for parents to celebrate Chinese new year. The benefits for children and young people were clearly visible but there was no significant funding available for ongoing sessions.

In due course I'd like to see our internal arts community working towards popularising tai chi qigong for children and young people as well as the other end of the age spectrum. It should have mass market appeal for all sorts of reasons!

Highlighting this age group occasionally in the magazine and online would be a really good start. We can also draw it to the attention of the mainstream media.

Sincerely,
Jane

Jane Lauchbury is a director of TCUGB.

www.longwatertaichi.co.uk

For anyone interested in teaching children Betty Sutherland's book *Chi for Children: A Practical Guide to Teaching Tai Chi and Qigong in Schools and the Community* is available on Amazon: www.amazon.co.uk



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