



TAI CHI
INTERNAL ARTS

Tai Chi Chuan Booklet



TCIA Tai Chi Chuan Booklet

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Introduction

We owe Marnix Wells a debt of gratitude for the material in this booklet which covers many aspects of Tai Chi. It would be impossible for this to be a definitive article covering everything but rather it aims to introduce just some of the many and varied concepts and ideas.

About the author

Marnix studied tàijíquán and internal martial arts in the Far East from 1968, with Master Wángshùjīn and his disciple Zhang Yizhong; Gan Xiàozhou; Hóng Yìmián; and others. More recently, in this country, he has been learning Zhàobào tàijí with Liú Yāz' '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.

About us

Founded over 30 years ago, the Tai Chi Union for Great Britain (Union) is for everyone interested in Tai Chi Chuan and other Internal Arts of which the best known are Qigong (Chi Kung), Baguazhang, Xingyiquan.

We welcome all styles and all levels of ability in these arts from the simply curious to highly experienced teachers. Whatever your understanding we are here to support you with information including where to find classes from one of our approved instructors.

We set the standards for teaching Tai Chi, bringing health and well-being to hundreds of thousands of people throughout the UK.

We are a not-for-profit organisation run by members for members. We are volunteers supported by just one part-time employee.

We are a Community Interest Company (C.I.C.) and this booklet is produced as part of our commitment to provide information about Tai Chi Chuan and other Internal Arts freely available to all.

Find out more about us here: www.taichiunion.com/

Further reading

On our [website](#) you will find our Qigong Booklet with material by [Gordon Faulkner](#).

You may also like to look at our [website](#) for books and DVDs by our members.

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What is Tai Chi?

The terms Tai Chi and Tai Chi Chuan are often used interchangeably. Tai Chi Chuan is a martial art and fitness regime using the principles of Yin and Yang to develop a healthy body and tranquil mind.

The “Chi” in Tai Chi is different from that in Qi Gong although most of us pronounce them the same. Qi means breath whereas Tai Chi Chuan can be translated as “*supreme ultimate fist*” referring to the martial elements of Tai Chi Chuan.

Brief History

The most widely held belief is that Tai Chi Chuan was devised by Chang San-feng, a renowned Taoist teacher who is thought to have lived during the 13th Century, spending part of his life in the remote Wudang Mountains. Today Wudang mountain is a pilgrimage destination for Taoists and tourists and there remain statues of Chang San-feng in temples on the mountain. In more recent times it has been suggested that the art was actually developed by the Chen family. Although we can never know the source of Tai Chi Chuan, there are some well-documented facts about the history and development of this art through to modern times.

The most famous practitioner of Tai Chi Chuan was Yang Lu-Chan (1799-1872) who learnt his art from Chen Chang-xing (1771- 1853) while living in the Chen family village. Yang Lu-chan took his art to Beijing where his fighting ability was in great demand and resulted in him being appointed combat instructor to the Royal Court.

Over the years Yang Lu-chan taught many students and from those students new styles developed, the five main styles are Chen, Yang, Wu, Sun and Hao, with variations including the widely practised Cheng Man-Ching style, and Wudang (Cheng Tin hung - Hong Kong).

As society became more settled and the state took on greater responsibility for personal security and military power the need for martial arts among the population diminished. Tai Chi evolved to the new situation with the emphasis moving to the physical, mental and health benefits of practising the forms.

Today

Tai Chi Chuan is accessible to people of all ages and physical abilities and can be practised on many levels, from a simple 'meditative' exercise to a realistic martial art. With the rise in popularity of Tai Chi Chuan, we also see many interpretations of the art. There are teachers who cover the full curriculum with form, pushing hands, self-defence applications and weapons, and others who are predominately interested in developing the health aspects of Tai Chi Chuan. These may concentrate more on the hand form, Qi Gong exercises and meditation.

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Tai Chi Roots – Part 1

If China's four thousand years can be taken as one hour of a clock, the documented history of taijiquán under that name may be timed under two minutes. How then did it evolve and why suddenly appear at sunset of the Forbidden City, in the last gasp of the Qing empire?

Foreign encroachments, military defeats and massive rebellion undermined the complacency of the Manchu elite and the ascendancy of conservative Confucian with their ingrained disdain for the physical and martial arts. On one level this time of cultural crisis spawned the 1900 Boxer Rebellion. This marked the first occasion in which martial arts actually led a rebellion and challenged modern firepower with the supposed invulnerability of qigong. The outcome was predictable but all was not lost.

Western ideas of physical culture and sport were taking root. This presented an opening for traditional martial arts and qigong for health on a national front. No longer the 'sick man of Asia', the time was ripe for taijiquán to take its place as part of the 'self-strengthening' movement. Offering benefits of enhanced self-defense, longevity and resistance to disease this 'soft' martial art was amenable for young and old, male and female in China, and eventually the whole world.

With the founding of the Republic in 1910, two giant stars emerged to found the most popular taiji schools, called by family names, which in Chinese come first. These were Yáng Chéngfū, grandson of progenitor Yáng Lùchán, and Wú Jiànquán, retired from the Manchu imperial guard, whose rivalry culminated in a well-publicised 'pushing-hands' (tuishou) duel that ended in a draw. A third strand came from Sun Lùtáng who combined three – taijiquán, circle-walking baguàzhāng and straight-line xíngyìquán – into a theory of 'internal martial arts' which he taught from 1914 to 1924 at Beijing military academy, where he received the rank of captain. Sun was a prolific writer and chief philosopher, promoting the unity of Daoist spiritual training with practice of martial applications.

Each of the above-mentioned grand masters claimed semi-divine origins for their arts in legends of the elusive Zhang Sanfeng, a Daoist 'saint' believed to have lived around 1400, from the late Yuán to early Míng period. His sect is centred on Wúdang mountain in Húbèi province, sacred to Xuánwū, the 'Dark Warrior'. This narrative was challenged by scientific historiographers, notably researcher Táng Háo whose field-work led him to the Chén family home, north of the Yellow River at Chénjiagou and the nearby town of Zhàobào in Hénán province. At the former location, in the second half of the nineteenth century during the closing years of the Manchu Qing dynasty, an employee of the Chén pharmacy named Yáng Lùchán, staying in the household of Chén Chángxing, one night overheard strange noises (of heng and ha). Peeping through the paper windows, in use before the advent of glass panes, possibly by wetting his finger to make a small hole, he was able to spy into the central courtyard.

There we can imagine he was able to make out the source of the grunts and bumps. Two murky figures in close contact were pulling and pushing each other in the darkness, uprooting, throwing and catching bodies in the air with continuous motion so that no one ever hit the ground or sustained serious injury.

I once had an experience, about the year two-thousand, slightly reminiscent of that told of Yáng Lùchán.

It was at the elegant princely palace of Gongwángfū in Beijing, where a Chén-style teacher was instructing his teenage son. I was doing standing meditation under a tree, not wearing my short-sight glasses, while the master was teaching pushing-hands to his son who was almost continuously exclaiming with pain. Though I could not turn to see exactly the cause, it must have been due to grappling techniques (qínná) for which Chén-style is known.

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At any rate, if we are to take tradition at its words, the Chén family jealously guarded their family art, which they refused to transmit to outsiders. It was only by this clandestine method, that Yáng Lùchán was able without detection not only to observe, but somehow memorise and master, their entire system, including weaponry, which he then taught after his travel to Beījing. In support of this version of the art's first release to the Chinese world, there is ample evidence in Chinese history for intra-family exclusivity. It can be likened to trade-mark protection in the pre-modern age. On the other hand it seem certain that Chén Chángxing must have somehow made an exception in teaching Yáng Lùchán and so lost his family monopoly. Chén-style taijǐ only regained its leading role after the communist revolution.

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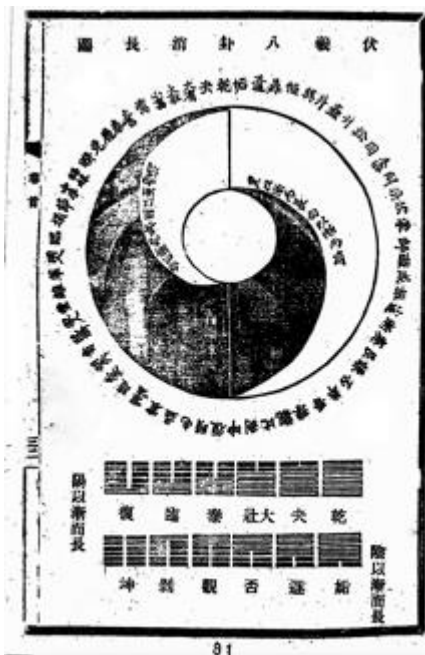
Tai Chi Roots – Part 2

All Tai Chi is Qigong, but not all Qigong is Tai Chi

A Central Axis

Tai Chi, pronounced *Tàijí*, (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 *qì*’ to this point, promotes balance and calm. It is the focus of Tai Chi Chuan, (*Tàijíquán*), ‘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.

The concept of *tàijí* 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 ‘*tàijí* diagram’ which evolved into the circular *yin-yáng* icon familiar to us today.



The system of exercise we recognise as *tàijí* only acquired this name after it spread to Beijing from the Chén Family Village (Chénjiagou) in Hénán during the nineteenth century. Yet the art had already been linked to a highly sophisticated Book of Change philosophy. After the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1912, liberalisation allowed Chén Xin (1849-1929) to publish in a book the secrets of his family tradition (*Chén-shì Taijiquán Túshuo*, prefaced 1919). These included a *tàijí* 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)

Hexagrams are figures of six lines, whose halves of three lines are called trigrams. The internal martial art of Baguàzhàng, ‘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 Naìzhou (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).

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A Martial Art for Health

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 4 | 9 | 2 |
| 3 | 5 | 7 |
| 8 | 1 | 6 |

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 fifteen (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 taijǐquán it illustrates 'winding-silk power' (*chánsījìng*, 纏絲勁). 'Springing power' (*jìng* 勁), a key taijǐ concept, is often written as 'essence' (*jīng* 精) 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...

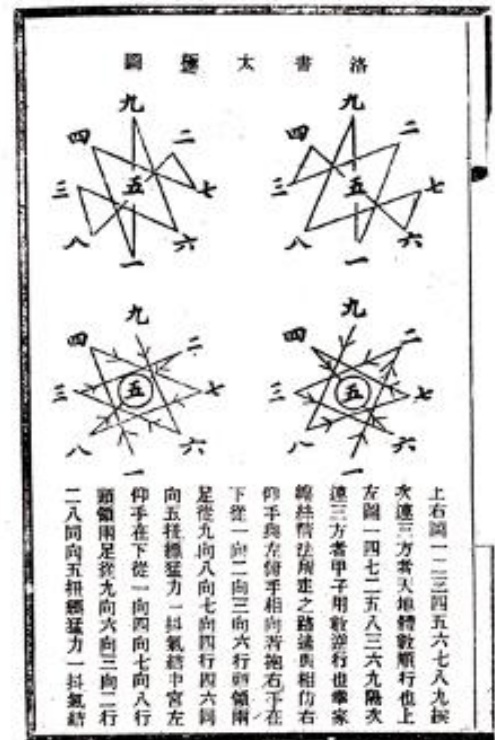
The opposition of clockwise and anti-clockwise power concentrated at the centre is thus released with explosive vibrating force. The same process is to be performed in different sequences as shown in each of the remaining diagrams.

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 hyper-tension and 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' (Jiji, 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



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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. Qì is the Chinese word for 'air', and by extension 'energy', generated by burning oxygen; Taijiquan 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 Theravâda) consists in concentrating on every in- and out-breath, a life and death in miniature, to the exclusion of all distraction. Zen (dhyâna, chán) may focus on a single word or problem 'case' kô'an (gong'àn).

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 (Kuì) 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' (jin'dan) 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 Zhangjiashan (Húbeì), 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 sixteenth 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 Shòu) 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 Xìnshu) by Qi Jìguang (1528-1588). Piracy fronted by Japanese swordsmen was ravishing the eastern sea coast. This necessitated the learning a new type of amphibious warfare and recruitment of irregular troops, which included Shàolín monks' expert in staff fighting.

Qi Jìguang's 'long boxing' form of thirty-two named moves, selected from different schools as he tells us, is the ancestor of our *taijiquán* 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 nineteenth century from 1820, it was learned by Yáng Lùchán (1799-1872) from a medicine firm in the fortress town of Yōngnián in southern Hébeì. In 1854 Yáng travelled to Beijing with champion Wú Banhóu, to teach this art under the new name of 'taijiquán' whose source he declined to reveal.

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The art was presumed derived from an otherwise extinct 'internal school'. Yáng's fellow townsman had chanced to discover some sheets of 'taijǐ classics' in a salt shop while on an official posting to Wúyáng, just over two hundred kilometres from Mt Wūdang (Húbeī). 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 Níngbo (Zhèjiāng), in the sixteenth 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, fantasizing Admiral Zhéng 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 taijǐquán remained obscure until the 1930s discovery by Táng Háo of the Chén Family and Qi Jìguāng connection, together with the writings of Chén neighbour Cháng Nàizhou. These background materials enable a fuller appreciation of the current wealth of *taijǐquán* 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 Quánzhen 'Complete Truth' Daoism of Qiu Chūji 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 the popular practice of martial arts and qìgong. Their association with messianic cults and rebellions was endemic. In the twentieth 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 Man-ching (Zhèng Mǎnqīng) Yáng-style taijǐquán, 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 Fálúngōng, 'Dharma Wheel Cultivation' teaching qìgong arose. It spread globally but was banned in China in 1999 following public demonstrations. In the U.K., it appears that the Chinese government supported the creation of a Health Qìgong institute who trade-marked the generic term 'health qìgong', which was already in use by local independent schools.

The Union, by contrast, aims to promote the practice of "Tai Chi Chuan and Qigong" within a loose framework of internal martial arts. The term 'Internal martial arts' was defined by Sun Lùtáng over a century ago to include the kindred disciplines of Baguàzhāng and Xíngyìquán to train in self-defense 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, Taijǐquán and Qìgong are one.

Taijǐquán as a martial art is not less concerned with health than 'health qìgong' (qìgong for health). If anything its inherent dynamism and highly developed structure makes it more, not less, relevant to health. It is likely to prove especially beneficial to metabolic health in the prevailing crisis of obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, atherosclerosis, fibromyalgia, and cancer. Taijǐ 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 that increases adrenalin production, spatial awareness, and balance. All this has been my personal motivation and

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experience of over fifty 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.

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Tai Chi Chuan – styles and history

In response to a request for information on the different styles of Tai Chi, I was awarded the unenviable task of answering. Where to begin? New styles are being created by individuals everyday all over the world. There are of course the five classic family styles, springing from the art's first dissemination in the second half of the nineteenth century: Chén, Yáng, Wú, Wú-Hào and Sun. Yet this is already an over-simplification. The important thing is to identify their key principles.

Martial Medicine

In China civil and martial (wén and wū) have been seen as complements as yin and yáng, minus and plus, female and male, dark and light. The earliest recorded 'boxing form', from which the Chén family form can be traced, is that illustrated by late Míng General Qi Jìguāng when training recruits to combat Japanese and local pirates by, he tells us, improving their health.

Nowadays, we hear a lot about Tai Chi and Qigong for 'health', as if this was not always their chief goal. In China this aim would have been called 'longevity' (chángshòu), implying an active and happy retirement. In traditional China, medicine shops (yàofáng) sold an array of dried herbs and animal parts designed to restore virility and supplement qì energy (būqì). They might also double as bone-setters (diédâ) and, to demonstrate the efficacy of their wares, featured street displays of martial prowess, involving acrobatic feats and imperviousness to assault by fist or weapon.

I witnessed an example of this, fifty years ago, in the person of a famous 'Monkey Boxer' in the Wànhuá (Bangka) district by Dragon Mount Temple of old Taipei. Amongst his other amazing accomplishments, he could, when not dispensing prescriptions, fold himself up flat in a rice-basket.

The process by which Tai Chi (tàijíquán) became in the 1920s a national, and from the 1970s an international, art started from the fortress city of Guāngfū (in Yōngnián, southern Hébêi). There, the Chén family of Chénjiagou, Hénán, now famous as 'Tai Chi ancestors', in 1820 recruited Yáng Lùchán into their pharmacy, the 'Grand Harmony Hall' (Tàihé Táng). (cf. Barbara Davis 2004: *The Taijiquan Classics*, North Atlantic Books: 9-14) Thus this art, while martial, has a history of linkage to medicine and health.

Tàijí and the Cosmos

The art of Chén, modified by Yáng, was first taught as 'soft boxing' at Yōngnián where it was identified with an earlier 'internal school' of boxing, attributed to syncretistic Daoist recluse Zhang Sanfeng (ca. 1400?) of Mt. Wūdang (Húbêi). It was reputed to have overcome the crude force of the Buddhist Shàolín 'external school'. Then 'Tai Chi classics', by an unknown Wáng Zongyuè, were allegedly discovered ca. 1854 at Wūyáng (southern Hénán) and grafted by scholar Wú Yūxiang and Lǐ Yìyú onto Yáng's art and repackaged as 'tàijí boxing'.

The term tàijí has been translated as 'Supreme Ultimate'. It represents the union of opposites, yin and yang from the philosophy of the ancient *Book of Change*. It is literally the polar axis at the centre of the Earth's rotation. Chen Xin (*Tàijíquán Illustrated and Explained*, prefaced 1919) says, when practising, it is not necessary to physically face north, but to do so mentally to connect to its 'true controller' zhenzâi. (Figures 1-2) In the sky, it equates to the Pole Star; in the body, it is the dantián point, about an inch below the navel, about which the waist turns and where we focus abdominal breathing.

Thus, it is an apt description of this art which, though martial by nature, is a tried means of improving health, mental and physical, and strengthening the immune system. It offers a full range of practices

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for this purpose, all of which are integral to a deeper understanding of the self and body. Abbreviated versions need to be evaluated in terms of a complete 'work-out' within the restraints of time and individual capacities. Supplementary qìgong 'warm-up' exercises are generally combined with form practice.

Practical Examples



For example, we may compare different versions of the same move as illustrated in the manuals of different schools. As it happens, none are found in Qi Jìguang's manual but are great resources for qìgong. A signal move, used to open and conclude its set is unique to Chén Jiagou (and its off-shoot at nearby Zhàobào), except possibly for Sun's 'Crotch Pounding' (Dāngchuí, no. 85). Its title 'Buddha Warrior Presents Club' (Jin'gang Xiànchū) has distinctively Buddhist aspects which may point to a Shàolín origin. It is also known as 'Vajrapāni Pounds Mortar'.



Figure 27. The Golden Parasant Stands on One Leg, Left Style.

金鷄獨立左式 (Chin Chi Tu Iá Tao Shih).

The explanations are the same as for Figure 26 except that your hands and feet are changed alternately.

A move common to all Tai Chi styles, is 'Gold Cock on One Leg' (Jinji Dúli), also illustrated in an old Shàolín boxing and acupuncture manual. It is valuable for training balance and in defence a platform for knee strikes, kicks and throws.



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One of the most iconic Tai Chi moves is 'Waving Hands in Clouds' (Yúnshǒu). It is performed with multiple repeats by all styles, in parallel-feet stance by Chén and with side-stepping by others. It is a vital qìgong exercise for directing the arms from the dantián. It can help induce peristalsis bowel movement. "Ankles and knees provide the spring to keep the Hips and Head level, The Waist provides the ability to turn to the left and right." Carl Bateman 2021: *Sun Style Tai Chi Chuan* i. 133-136) At a recent London workshop, visiting master Chén Xiāowáng taught a full gymnasium to train 'reeling silk' technique in it for a whole hour. (Figure 5, cf. Kinthissa 2009: *Turning Silk*, Lunival, Oxford, ch. 8)



The Whole Art

Let us examine the common nature of *tàijí*, both as a mental and physical concept from which its exercise as a system for health and defence originated. It may be practised ideally outdoors but if necessary indoors and even in a very confined space, to be like Hamlet as if 'bounded in a nutshell' yet 'king of infinite space.'

In the human body, the most obvious manifestation of *yin* and *yang*'s opposing yet complementary forces is in breathing, exhalation and inhalation, the interchange of carbon-dioxide and oxygen. Air, *qì*, as oxygen is carried by the blood through arteries and hair-like capillaries to nourish every cell in the body. This process is enhanced in *qìgong*, the cultivation of deep, slow and relaxed breathing in meditative stillness and mindful movement to boost the immune system, which is at the heart of Tai Chi practice.

The earliest five schools of Tai Chi share the same basic movements. Yet each reveal considerable divergences of interpretation within the same named movement. Every teacher, even of the same lineage, will project their own character in response to their deepening level of understanding and that of their students. Furthermore, each named movement contains a multitude of potential macro- and micro-dynamics which can scarcely be captured on film.

To sum up: Chén Chángxing (1771-1853)'s system is characterised by a greater number of forms, low postures, twining-silk energy (*chánsījīng*), leaps and explosive releases of power (*fājīng*). Yáng Lùchán (1799-1872) has most emphasis on softness and relaxation with effortless 'uprooting' techniques. Wú Jiànquán (1870-1942) is characterised by a forward leaning, wrestler-like posture. Wú Yùxiang (ca.1812-1880)/Hào Wèizhen (1849-1920) and Sun Lùchán (1861-1933) have a concentrated narrow stance with small movements. Sun related it to Buddhist cultivation in a threesome with the 'internal arts' of straight-line zig-zag advancing *xíngyìquán* and circle-walking *baguàzhāng*.

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The Yáng solo form has forty-two sections, excluding repetitions, of which some comprise two or more parts. Sun has a 97-posture form that includes repetitions. Post-1949 China promoted a 24-move short form. At an advanced level partner forms are taught, both static and stepping (dàlyū). Yáng has an 88-step 'sparring form' (sànshōu). 'Weapons' forms include straight-sword, broadsword, pole, and fan among others.

Fundamental is whole-body engagement, flow and roundness of limbs, knees and hips (kuà) kept slightly flexed to protect joints as suspension shock-absorbers and protection against arthritis and falling. Its essential components may be summarised under ten heads:

1. Straight back in erect posture by 'sitting the hips' with vertical pelvis.
2. Meditative focus.
3. Relaxed flexibility.
4. Abdominal breathing.
5. Smooth centre movement.
6. Set forms practised daily.
7. Internal power (nèijìng).
8. Partner work, 'pushing hands', sticking and following.
9. Applications, for defence, integrated action, and joints protection;
10. Weaponry and props, sticks, fans etc.