



Tai Chi & Qigong Union for Great Britain

www.taichiunion.com



Chinese New Year 12th February

Chinese New Year festival period lasts up to 16 days, starting from Chinese New Year's eve to the Lantern Festival. In 2021, it is from February 11 to February 26th. 2021 is a Year of the Ox. In Mandarin, “**Happy Chinese New Year**” is “xin nian kuai le” (pronounced shin nee-an kwai le). The most popular is “Happiness and prosperity” and is “Gōngxǐ fācái” (pronounced gong-sshee faa-tseye, or Kunghei fatchoy in Cantonese).



New director

As part of our ongoing development we would like to welcome a new director into the leadership team. Jane (Launchbury) is known to many of you and brings a wealth of experience.



Health committee

The new Health Committee of the Tai Chi & Qigong Union for Great Britain has started with one main aim:

to bring Tai Chi and Qigong into the health and social care environment.

There are a whole range of environments that fit into health and social care, from community classes to working in hospitals and care homes and a whole number in between. I feel that one big step is to raise the profile of Tai Chi and Qigong so we as a community can be helped in promoting the arts and improve the health, wellbeing and resilience of our nation.

One area the team is working on is to make a collection of mainstream scientific research papers that are already in circulation and putting them in one place, accessible to you. We do want to try to make a clear distinction here between mere anecdotal evidence, pseudoscience and actual scientific research. We hope that this will help qualified teachers to promote the numerous health benefits of TC&Q and also to help encourage everyone else as to why they should be practicing. For now, this is available at:

<https://www.networks.nhs.uk/nhs-networks/tai-chi-chi-kung-for-rehabilitation>

Another goal is to build links with universities and teaching hospitals to develop our own research projects. You probably all have fabulous stories of how Tai Chi and/or Qigong helped you or someone you know. I would love to see this glorious colourful array of anecdotes turned into something that proves how amazing TC&Q is.

We of course cannot talk about health these days without mentioning COVID. Our frontline workers are so enormously overworked and under a huge amount of stress. Everyday people at home need to stay on top of their physical and mental health and there is the very real issue of long COVID. In this the Health Committee wants to promote all that is already available and accessible from our

community. We are also looking into how to target some of these more specific needs. We all know that Tai Chi & Qigong has all manner of health benefits, but we want everyone to know! If there is anything you would like to contribute, please contact Tina at ruyischool@gmail.com



Help build our Union

As part of the TCUGB's ongoing commitment to reflect and express the aims and wishes of its membership, the board of directors are continuing to gather and collate as many thoughts and views from its members as is practicable, so as to guide and inform the short, medium and long term goals of the union going forward.

To that end, board member Wes (Mollison) is hoping to hear from members who are willing to contribute constructive thoughts and ideas on a number of topics as we move forward. Currently, we are looking at the question of: How can we make being a member of the TCUGB a more positive investment for its members?

It's an open question and all replies will be welcomed. Please consider what is currently on offer (Instructor listing, Magazine, Newsletter, Insurance options, being part of an organised national collective, t-shirt etc) and either amend, add or re-evaluate what is currently on offer and how you think we can improve.

Please email Wes with any suggestions you may have to: equinoxtaichi@gmail.com



Thought for the month

The higher the rank I attain, the more humbly I behave, the greater my power, the less I exercise it, the richer my wealth, the more I gave away.

Thus I avoid envy, spite and misery.

Sun Shu Ao, Zhou Dynasty.

Magazine clearance sale

Grab yourself a bargain and catch up on back issues of the Union magazine. We are selling back issues at cost, and the more you buy, the better the deal.

<https://www.taichiunion.com/magazine-shop/>

Membership payments & renewals

we are moving the accounting operation on to a new cloud based system that, in time, will include a number of options to simplify the renewal process.

Any member with a renewal date from April onwards will start to receive an email reminder 30 days before the due date, so the first reminders will start to be received in March.

The email will come from QuickBooks but will have been copied to the treasurers email address so Aileen knows it has gone out and she can expect to see a payment!

As you can appreciate this has been a major task as 1200 plus records have had to be set up. Every effort has been made to minimise any errors and we hope you will bear with us, and when you receive your reminder, let us know if any information is incorrect.

Trademark info page

To help make the situation clearer and support our members, we are building a page with information, who to contact, common terms etc. Please take a look at:

<https://www.taichiunion.com/trademarking/>

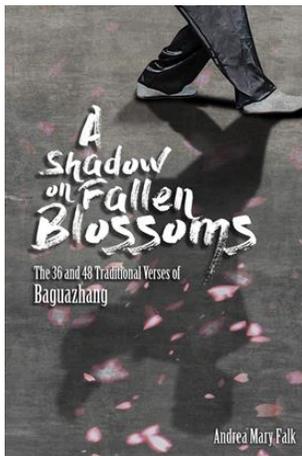
It seems trademarking is becoming more popular and although we hadn't kept our eye on the ball in the past, the baptism by fire has focused us to be proactive moving forwards.

We are building a list of common terms plus working more closely with the IPO. **Chris Thomas** is taking the lead on this, as a director of the TCUGB. If you have any questions he can be contacted [via the link above](#).

A Shadow on Fallen Blossoms

The 36 and 48 Traditional Verses of Bagua Zhang

By Andrea Mary Falk



From an age when many internal martial artists in China did not write things down, we are fortunate that these verses have survived from the late 19th and early 20th century. That these verses have been translated in such a scholarly and contextual way by Andrea Falk we are very fortunate. This book presents the traditional 36 verses and the 48 verses of Bagua Zhang. These 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.

Briefly Dong brought his art to Beijing having synthesised his previous martial training with meditative circle walking methods 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. Bagua Zhang has branched out with a number of styles (Cheng, Yin, Liang, Fan, etc), usually named after those disciples, who taught and further developed their Bagua. These styles do have differences and distinctive characteristics but it was also not uncommon for people to train and learn from one another.

The verses presented reflect this; in that they are general enough to cover differences in styles, yet give a sense of the uniqueness of Bagua Zhang. 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. This aspect of course is lost partially in translation, but the author does provide pinyin translation for the lines and the adventurous would-be chanter!

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 Gumín 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 some readers through an interview in the TCUGB magazine (issue 36), and from her previous translations and 'Falk's Dictionary of Chinese Martial Arts'. However, in this book she not only translates but brings the text to life with her knowledge gained through her training in Bagua, Xingyi, Taiji and Wushu in China. There is much contextual material in this book drawing on Chinese linguistics, philosophy, history, and sociological aspects to enlighten the reader. 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. The book contains 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. This is followed by a meticulous commentary on each line, with supplementary information and discussions. The

author does not shy away either 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, one I'll share here as it gives 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.***

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 Bagua Zhang 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.

Reviewed by Malcolm Davy-Barnes



Rose Coloured Glasses, Or How To Unwrap A Brick !!!!

Those of you who have read my articles associated with Tai Chi may have noticed the lack of them over the last year (some may feel this to be a bonus!) however good things don't last forever and I'm back.....

I can only explain my absence by saying the time has been spent reflecting on my Tai Chi journey, and where I am 'at'. Writing about the art has never been a problem for me in the past, but because of certain instances and attitudes I have discovered in the world of Tai Chi Chuan, I felt the need to step back and reassess my own feelings and try to understand these people I have encountered. I have had to

acknowledge that even Tai Chi cannot escape the internal problems of all Martial Arts i.e. the wrong people in the wrong art at the wrong time for the wrong reasons. The following article may reflect some of my disappointments, but also my hopes for the road ahead, and the need for us all to sometimes be still, and reflect before moving on again. Before someone trod on my rose coloured glasses, I had a long honeymoon with Tai Chi.

Like most beginners my husband and I looked with awe and admiration at our teacher and his masters. We were inspired by their dedication and skill, and felt that they opened many closed doors of ignorance to a better understanding of what the art held in store for us, if we worked hard and had the desire to want more than the average night school class could provide.

I thank them for implanting that vision, but I now realise, some years on, although their exterior packaging was excellent, **HOWEVER YOU WRAP A BRICK, IT IS STILL A BRICK!!** (one of my favourite sayings at the moment)

It's understandable that when we first commence training, in anything, we are susceptible to this outward appearance of worth, otherwise we would not start at all. We value our instructor's expertise and hopefully they have a reputation as a good and reliable person.

If I say when we formed our club KAI-MING (open-minded), the other choice of title was **BEWARE THE BRICK!!** need I say more. If we could have translated it into Chinese, there would have been no contest for the title

Tai Chi seems to have within the art, many pedestals, with "Masters" teetering on them, elevated there, by various avenues. Possibly the main misleading factor is the mystical propaganda surrounding it. We have come to believe that anyone involved for a long period of time, will have a definite understanding of the essence, plus the "GOOD HEART" of the Taoist and will guide us with skill and humility, in the hope that one day we can attain their level, and in time pass it on to the next generation.

Forget it! Unfortunately, this does not apply to some. The general rule appears to be, if they started out on the Tai Chi journey, as an arrogant self-worshipping waster, you can bet your life they still are. The art can do many things for you, but a personality transplant is not one of them!!

To the average student who may only stay for a while, this person may do no lasting damage, but if, as we did, you want a lifelong relationship with the art, it would be devastating to one day “unwrap the brick”.

Fortunately, I now realise that these people are eventually of no consequence. You hopefully find them out, and move on. Thankfully there are Masters I have met, who by their sheer goodness, inside and out, have made me feel humble in their presence.

The one who springs to mind at times of disillusionment, and there have been many, was a Master who I met, on the occasion of his first trip away from Malaysia where he was born.

He trained every day for hours in the early morning when it was cool, and again in the evening after work, before retiring around 9pm, to rise at 5am to begin again.

Above his bed was an iron bar to reach up and grasp, as a conditioning aid for extra training. In the daytime he had a heavy metal bowling ball on a stand, that he picked up and put down constantly when not busy, even his feet were not idle, as he had a device to exercise them whilst sitting!! He did not hold open classes, and had only one private student, he had no desire to become revered by others, he trained for himself, and the benefits he believed he could obtain from his art. Then the news came that his elderly teacher had died, and as former disciples met each other again after the funeral, he was deeply worried when he heard them discussing how much of their master's teachings they had forgotten. It was at this moment that he realised, he could remember it all. He also knew then that if he did not pass it on, it could be lost forever. He came

thousands of miles to England leaving his village for the first time, because of his love and belief in his art.

The other side of the coin is the Master who although has many skills and has trained with many teachers, sells his art at greatly inflated prices, keeping the best for him, and using the money to avert the need for a “real job”.

Neither my husband or any of the instructors in our club teach for a living, because to do this and support a mortgage it is inevitable that you have to “Prostitute” yourself to a certain degree, by the need to obtain sufficient funds. Suffice to say the only one of our instructors who told me at the onset of his training that he could see a good living to be made, once he had obtained his grade, has been voted out of our association because of his bad attitude and other deeds. He is now teaching for a club where some of the members are like minded. What was it I said about Wasters?

I suppose it's being too idealistic to have expected Tai Chi to escape the politics that other martial arts attract, the secret is not to get caught up in them, and allow it to detract from the pleasures you are obtaining in training, something that I have not always found easy.

Teachers who have no confidence in their skills or worse, those who have too much, would eventually be found out one hopes. I once heard it said that Great Masters Go Unnoticed which can be translated to mean that they have no need to be flash, no need to prove anything to themselves or anyone else. It saddens me how people are so easily misled, and this does not only apply to newcomers to the art. One of our students who had trained with us for some years, but due to work commitments had to leave, eventually found another class nearer his home, which had not long ago been set up. When my husband saw him a few months later and asked how he was getting on, he was told he hadn't been able to “sit in” until he had made a commitment by paying £100 term fee, and added that some of the exercises he had been show made his knees hurt. These exercises were in contradiction to those a teacher

had taught him in our club, a club recognised by the governing bodies for Tai Chi Chuan. When we suggested that he should know good from bad by know, he amused us by saying his Sifu must know what he is doing “because he is CHINESE”. How long must this cultural blindness go on? If my son went to China would he be regarded as a Cricket Master, just because he played a little in his youth There are well known cases in England, one where a guy who worked in a Chinese restaurant spotted an opening in the Tai-Chi market, and developed his own system, which should be known as Infinite Rubbish!!! although he did initially claim it was a “Family System”. Maybe I should be an authority on Fagots and Peas as I live quite near to the “Black Country” where they are a choice dish.

Whenever we begin new classes, we have found it to be good policy to invite prospective students to a free demonstration class. They can see what they will be getting or at least the potential of what they can hope to achieve. Questions can be asked, credentials checked, misconceptions cleared and medical problems discussed. Those who were unsure will now be able to make an informed decision, and others will have saved themselves money by attending.

By Jenny Peters



Benefits of Breathing Exercises

Deep breathing can help restore diaphragm function and increase lung capacity. The goal is to build up the ability to breathe deeply during any activity, not just while at rest.

Deep breathing exercises can also lessen feelings of anxiety and stress, which are common for someone who experienced severe symptoms or was admitted to a hospital. Sleep quality may also improve with these breathing exercises.

Diaphragmatic Breathing (Belly Breathing)

Deep breathing restores lung function by using the diaphragm. Breathing through the nose strengthens the diaphragm and encourages the nervous system to relax and restore itself.

When recovering from a respiratory illness like COVID-19, it's important not to rush recovery

Anyone can benefit from deep breathing techniques, but they play an especially important role in the COVID-19 recovery process. The exercises can be started at home during self-isolation and easily incorporated into your daily routine.

Humming

Humming while exhaling helps increase nitric oxide production in the body. Nitric oxide helps with neural plasticity (building and repair of the nervous system) and it dilates blood vessels, enabling more oxygen to be delivered throughout the body. Humming is also calming and soothing, it reduces stress and it can help the patient remain in restoration mode.

1. Sit upright on the edge of your bed or in a sturdy chair.
2. Place your hands around the sides of your stomach.
3. With your lips closed and your tongue on the roof of your mouth, breathe in through your nose and pull air down into your stomach where your hands are. Try to spread your fingers apart with your breath.
4. Once your lungs are full, keep your lips closed and exhale while humming, making the “hmmmmmm” sound. Notice how your hands lower back down.
5. Again, inhale through your nose, then exhale through your nose while humming.
6. Repeat for one minute.

Cold Weather Qigong



More than ever we need to gather safely outside for companionship and health and more than ever Qigong, with its proven effects on immunity and wellbeing, can be the perfect practice for our locked down times!

Last year, as venues and participants responded to isolation guidelines and their own feelings as to what was safe and unsafe, the outdoor Qigong I offered... rain or shine...was described as "sanity saving" and "a blessing in times of trouble"!

I have taught outside before and my own practice always includes Qigong in nature, however as a Londoner, newly relocated in to the North-east of the Highlands, it was an enjoyable challenge!

Most immediately, I was aware of my concern that people would be safe from the climate as well as COVID.

Here is what the Yellow Emperor said:

"The three months of winter are called closing and storing.

Water freezes, earth cracks. Do not disturb the yang at all.

Early to bed, late to rise. (You) must await the daylight.

Make that which is of the heart/mind as though hidden, as though concealed,

as though (you) have a secret intention, already obtained.

Leave the cold, seek warmth.

Do not leak the skin.

Urgently hold onto the qi.

This is the winter compliance of qi;

the cultivation of the Dao of storage.

To oppose these principles injures the kidneys"

However, participants were insistent that they wanted to continue as far as possible into the cold weather and given that we were practicing at the Findhorn Foundation – a community in the Northeast of Scotland – many, like myself put great value on gathering together as tool for health and wellbeing.

So, with help from all the issues that voiced along the way, here is a summary of how I adapted what I teach to the very unpredictable Scottish weather. All sessions were physically distanced and within the changing guidelines given by the Scottish Government.

Pray - There is nothing wrong with asking.

Through respectful prayer or simple invocation, my belief is that a request for reasonable weather is always possible...and seemed to work!!!

Clothing

I wanted people to turn up in their warm clothes, unworried about having to buy special 'kit'.

Seasoned practitioners wore their loose layers.

Beginners often had tight fitted quilted jackets.

We decided to incorporate all clothing along with possible limitations into the practice.

Qigong after all can be effective even if one is still. Perhaps this way of working is more effective for some conditions.

So the saying 'let your clothes be your boundary' came into being!

This fitted the season. Qigong is perhaps naturally more contracted in the Winter. We respect the weather. We don't want to let it in to us too much.

The wonders of the kidney warming wrap were explored whether one is wrapped around the waist with a warm scarf or a Haramaki.

Leave if you are too Cold

There was a rule that one should leave if feeling too cold or uncomfortable. No-one should feel that they needed to 'push through'.

Tree Gong

If it did rain, I had negotiated with a tree nearby that we would shelter under it. Once there we practiced what has come to be known as Tree Gong. A simple exchange of energy through our feet intermingling with the tree roots and our crowns with the trees higher branches.

Short Sessions

The outdoor sessions including a substantial Daoyin warm up were 45 minutes and people were encouraged to bring warm drinks.



External Adaptation of the Form

(The movements mentioned below are from the Taiji Qigong Shibashi set 1), and used as examples.

As far as possible and after an appropriate warm-up and looking at precautions, we used Horse stance.

In other words, standing as if you were riding a short fat pony!

This is a great way to remain still and keep warm. The large muscles of the legs pump warm blood to the extremities in response to the positioning.

If you lift your arm as well. such as in the move Painting a Rainbow, then you will further heat-up!

Internal Adaptation of the Form

Integral Imaging is a big part of Qigong. For example, the title of the move '**Dove Spreads its Wings**' can suggest an expansion with gentleness. We often imaging water such as in the movement titled '**Pushing Waves**', however this might not be so relevant in cold weather.

When it's cold we can increase heat by using our imagination.

A starting suggestion may be reaching downwards to the hot rocks at the centre of the earth and pulling up fire into the lower belly. We can imagine this or emulate with a movement.

Likewise, '**Pushing Waves**' might become '**Warming Hands on a Communal Fire!**'.

References

- Chinese Medical Qigong by Tiunjun Liu O.M.D.
- Medical Qigong Exercise Prescriptions by Susanne B Friedman
- Yellow Emperor's Classic of Medicine (Neijing Suwen)

By Sally Ibbotson



Thank you for taking the time to read this and hope you find it useful and interesting.

Let's get back to being the key organization for Tai Chi, Qigong and Internal Martial Arts across the UK. I'm sure, with your help, we can do this. All the board are working together and making decisions together to ensure continued growth and success.

Best regards,

Mark Peters
Chairman
On behalf of the board of TCUGB