

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

TAI CHI CHUAN & INTERNAL ARTS

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Ba Duan Jin

The great art of
qigong

Tai chi – what's the
point?

Mental health

A tai chi journey

Tai chi combat



Phil East takes a warm up session. The event was funded by a Gerda Gedes grant. Report page 19



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Comment



They say all good things must end. Well, this edition of TCC&IA ends my tenure as editor.

I was originally asked by Mark Peters who was, at the time, chair of TCUGB, to create a digital version of the magazine. Publishing costs were getting out of control and a change was needed. After a couple of editions I was asked to become editor.

The magazine has always been an important part of the union and, although I took over from Mark Langweiler, I was aware that, in reality, I was inheriting Ronnie Robinson's legacy. Ronnie founded the magazine and was a founder of the union. Regrettably we lost him shortly after I joined TCUGB. And, soon after I took over as editor, we also lost Dan Docherty, not only a founder but a driving force behind the union.

And here it gets a bit spooky: we had planned to publish a major interview with Dan. He was in poor health and was giving up many of his commitments so it seemed timely. My colleague Suse Coon wrote the article following a number of interviews with him and with people who knew him. It was a fine piece of journalism which, quite unexpectedly, turned out to be Dan's obituary. Like I said: spooky.

Editing TC&IA has been a privilege. I have worked on some great stories, insights into the art, written by top teachers and practitioners, some very experienced people. But I couldn't have done it alone. Suse Coon supported me from the beginning. (Suse actually edited the edition produced after Ronnie died.) I must confess that I have been a bit of a tai chi recluse but Suse's knowledge of people both inside and outside the union resulted in some quality material. Also Mark Peters who, after he appointed me editor, pointed me in the right direction and also sourced some terrific copy for me.

I also want to thank some of my regular correspondents. First, Robin Gamble who is responsible for the combat series we have been running. Robin suggested the idea and, at a time when it all seems to be about health, has reminded us what tai chi was at its roots. And, as strange things turn out, we discovered a mutuality in our day jobs and I was able to publish him in one of my business magazines as well.

Others I should mention are Christopher Handbury who has provided a number of articles in the past and is currently writing a series on ba duan jin. Also Peter Deadman who had a series of articles in my first magazines and is back in this edition with his new book.

So here we are. I hope that we have produced an interesting read for members of TCUGB. We tried to cover tai chi and qigong in every aspect from health to history, from simple exercise to martial art and combat. I wish my successor, whoever he is, the best of luck in the hope that Ronnie's great magazine continues to go from strength to strength.

John Roper

TAI CHI CHUAN & INTERNAL ARTS

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Working for members

It's good to see the days getting longer and hopefully Spring is showing signs of new life wherever you are. As the new year moves on so the union continues to evolve in line with the strategy and commitments made at the meeting in November.

We said that we would engage more with our members and we are grateful to all of you who completed our first comprehensive membership survey which gave us clear direction of the support you would like. We were delighted that around 20% of you responded and we will set out the findings in the next edition but it's clear that more of you would like training and advice whether as ordinary members looking to become Instructors or those who are more experienced looking to develop. As a first step, the technical panel is looking to see how it can have small sample videos on YouTube to demonstrate key principles.

Another finding from the survey is that we need to do more to promote the benefits of membership to you so we will undertake to do this over the next few months and more regularly as people join. As an example, not everyone understood that practical support is available for such things as example risk assessments and pre-assessment questionnaires. Remember that you can find all your benefits at the new members only page: www.taichiunion.com/members-only/

It is clear from your feedback that you would like the union to promote tai chi internal arts to a wider audience and we couldn't agree more! We are already talking to marketing, PR and social media professionals about how we can raise the profile of the union and play our part in educating the public about all the arts including baguazhang and xing yi chuan as well as the more familiar tai chi chuan and qigong. Discussions are at an early stage but if you are a proven expert in marketing or PR who is willing to roll up your sleeves and do the necessary work then please let us know at enquiries@taichiunion.com with a brief description of your experience and examples of recent work. We are looking for professionals in these areas who can complete one off projects or take on regular work in full collaboration with the board; these are NOT simply advisory roles to say what needs to be done.

Promotion of the union and all the internal arts is good for our members as we establish the union as the place to go for credible information and instructors who specialise in these areas. Creating a brand that encompasses all the

arts is an important first step and we are well on the way with this work. We plan to finalise designs and announce the new logos etc. in the next magazine. This is an important first step that needs to be completed before we engage more with the public.

The project to change the location search to 'find the nearest class' using postcode of the class location is now in its final stages. The volume of data and the technical requirements have made this a challenging piece of work but steady progress has been made throughout.

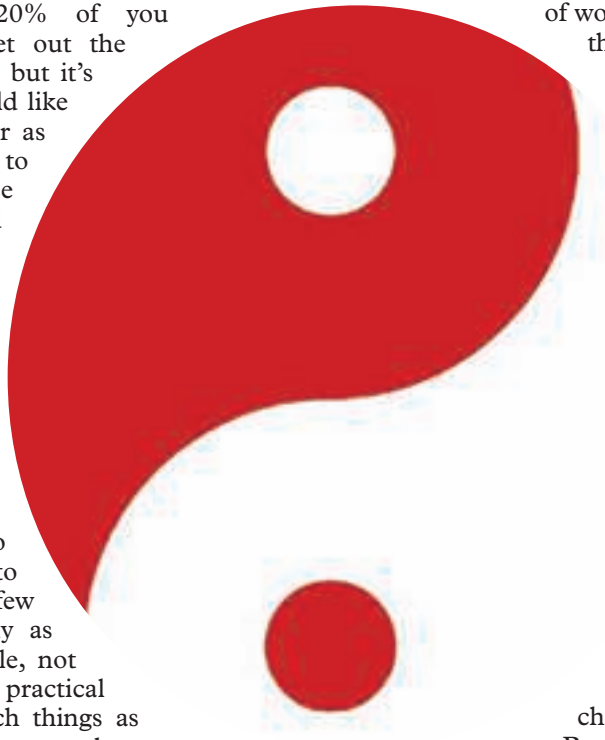
In November we said that to continue to deliver and particularly to engage the necessary professional help we would need to increase prices by £5 pa for the first time in 10 years. Hopefully you all received the email in January informing you that the change would take effect from late March. These renewals started to go out in February; please remember to amend your standing order if that is the way you pay.

Last but definitely not least, we are very sad to announce that Ben Morris has stepped down from the board due to time commitments. The last two years have seen considerable change in the union and we are grateful to Ben for helping to steady the ship and see us through. His humour and common sense as well as his martial arts experience alongside his strong academic background are very much valued and we will miss his contributions. All the board would like to thank Ben for his support and wish him all the best for the future. We would also remind him that he will not be allowed to escape completely and we are sure to be in need of his expertise over the coming year.

In line with the commitments made at the November meeting we will be advertising a board vacancy in due course once we have finalised the board structure. We will be looking for members who have specific skills and whilst we expect them to be knowledgeable in the arts we do NOT need experts. Remember that to be on the board you must be in the full class of membership.

www.taichiunion.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/23.10-Membership-Types-and-Rights-v03.pdf

By the time the magazine arrives with you, we will be past the spring equinox and hopefully the rains will have dried up somewhat. With longer, warmer days ahead we hope this gives you more time for your practice and all things that you enjoy. 🍵

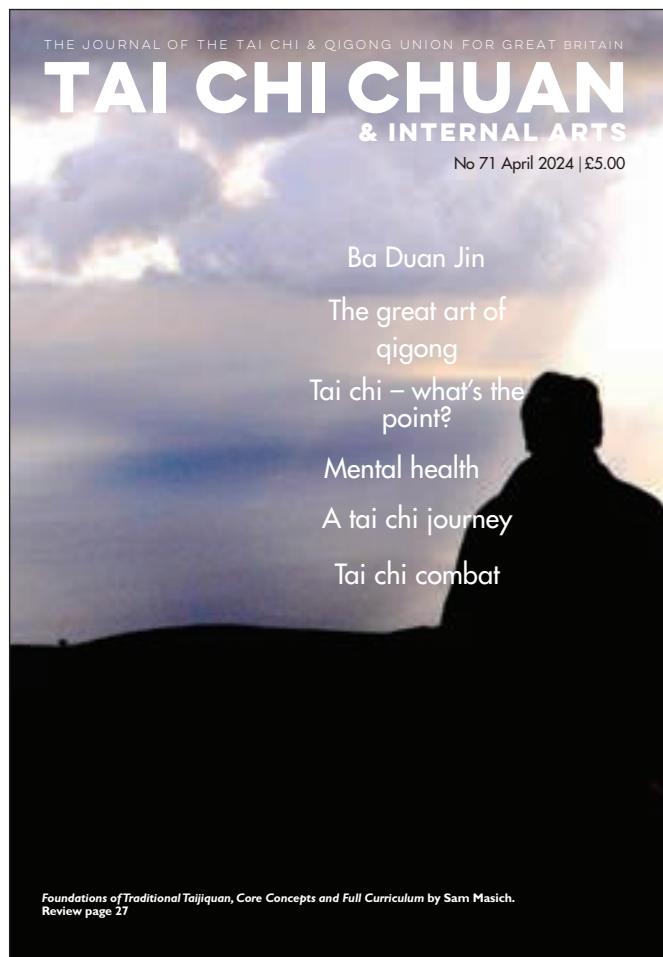


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It takes 1,000 to start for one to finish
so says the old Chinese proverb about tai chi chuan

Well, three times each year 1,000 members of TCU receive a copy of TCC&IA and every month around 1,000 people log onto the TCC&IA website to read the magazine online
So it looks like we are getting something right

Reach these tai chi and qigong practitioners, advertise your events, workshops and martial arts equipment in *your* magazine
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Our journey of the energy circuit begins with the lungs. Fresh qi enters the body with each inhaled breath to assist in nourishing the flesh, transporting the various cells and nutrients throughout the vessels and combining with the foods we consume to create what we feel as energy

In many cases, the lungs sit at the top of the table when it comes to qi. With every breath we take, air energy is drawn into our lungs, providing our bodies with the oxygen we need for all the functions that keep us alive every day.

In traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), the lungs are often thought of as the delicate organs, like the leaves on the tips of a tree's branches, taking in air, light, warmth and water to help process the toxic gases in the atmosphere and recycle it, sending out new and usable air for us to breathe. Through this exchange we are entwined with the world around us, we all breathe the same air. Through this process we take in the new and release what is no longer required for life.

When we exhale, the lungs expel toxic gases and compounds, but also excess water and heat. This uncomplicated process helps to support the functions of the bladder and kidneys to eliminate fluids. When the qi of the lungs is abundant and functioning efficiently, the pores of the skin can 'breathe', opening to release fluids as sweat to cool the body and release excessive heat. When necessary, they close to retain heat and ward off the cold. The skin is also our physical protective layer against the outside world, much like the respiratory pathway to the lungs is our first line of defence against external pathogens and bacteria.

Through the practice of the second *ba duan jin*, *archer draws a bow*, we can help to reduce tension around the lung cavity and strengthen the respiratory muscles enabling our breathing to become deeper and more efficient. Improved respiratory tone and attention to using the diaphragm can increase our capacity to expel stale air and replace it with fresh, the air needed for optimum health.

Why you should practise the archer

In TCM, the lung energy can be easily damaged by excessive heat, dampness, and dryness. Living or working in dry environments and modern central heating can dehydrate the lungs, causing or aggravating dry coughs, lung or throat irritation. This leads to increased water retention and of course, general dehydration in the skin and tissues.

Damp environments can cause phlegm to accumulate in the lungs, leaving us hoarse or congested. Dampness also allows the growth of bacteria and fungus so environmental dampness can irritate mucous membranes. Dampness from overly processed foods, sugars, dairy, excessive raw foods and heavy, fatty foods may reduce the body's ability to move and transform fluids, placing more burden on the lungs and other organs to bring balance.

Aside from the immediate benefits to energy and lift in mood, this qigong movement may help those with weak lung energy, who suffer with asthma, dry skin conditions, fluid retention in the skin (oedema) or even emotional problems like depression and sadness. Regular, daily

practice could be a very valuable remedy. If the functionality of the lungs becomes weak through overuse (excessive talking, shouting, singing) or shallow where the emotions are overly vocal (sobbing, crying, angry outbursts) there is an immediate reduction of available, fresh oxygen. The mind may become anxious for the body as a whole, there could be palpitations or feelings of low mood as the body slows down in energy and a deficiency of yang presents.

If heat increases, through lack of fluids, dryness, heat exposure, tobacco or smoked herbs, a cough could be loud and barking, the throat sore and scratchy, as the body does its best to release the excess yang heat and bring balance to the receding nourishment of yin.

Feelings of restlessness and irritation are common signs you need to move the body AND mind. Physical exercise to increase the functionality of the lungs and increase oxygen levels for more oomph! can be a remarkably simple remedy for many low mood disorders. When the flesh of the body has a sufficient supply of oxygen, the muscles become more pliable and relaxed, so our sense of physical tension resolves.

The archer posture is *ba duan jin*'s 'power move'... and rightly so! It looks powerful and feels powerful too. Like the historical bowmen that forge into battle, pointing their long bows into the sky, drawing the energy from the earth to support their weight as they pull back with mighty strength and 'loose' their arrows into enemy territories. With each invitation of breath, we flood the vessels with fresh qi, igniting the power within. 'Out with the old and in with the new' is the intention of the archer. Expel the stale qi from the lungs and restore vibrant energy to the blood. A constant cycle of acceptance and renewal, courage, and solidity.

In TCM the lungs relate to metal yin, its movement is inward, gathering and condensing like our inhalation. Their partnered yang organ is the large intestine that expels and releases. In unison, the lungs and kidneys help to balance fluids within the large intestine so stools can be passed comfortably. A general lack of qi can result in constipation and abdominal pains. The lungs receive and the intestine eliminates.

The dynamics of the archer's application

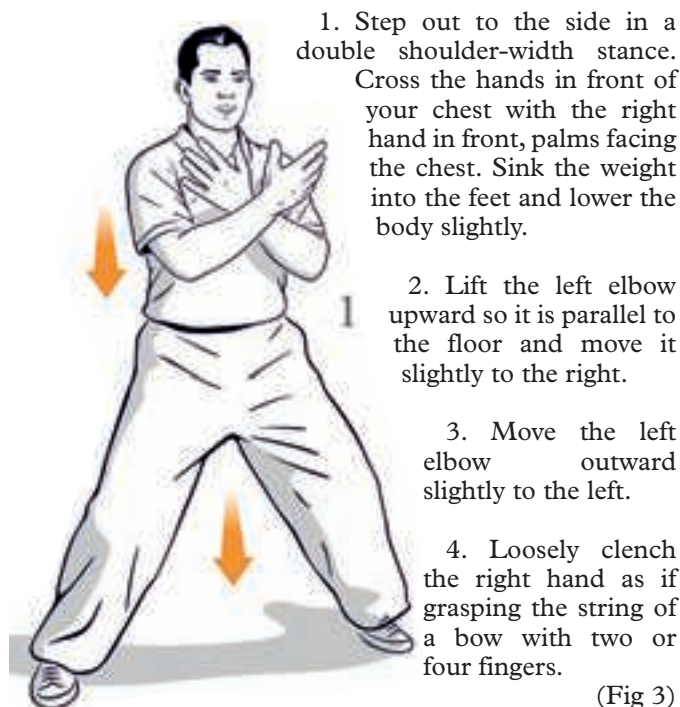
Like most of the *ba duan jin*, archer has elements of muscle-tendon conditioning through the expansion and release at the transitions of each movement. We are, in effect, using the body to pump the blood and fluids through the tissues to reduce and resolve stagnation, a primary cause of many emotional illnesses and physical pain. The elbow pulls and the palm presses to open the energy vessels. The lung 'shu' points are stimulated. The chest cavity opens, and the diaphragm pulls air into the lungs like opening the handles of bellows. The body sinks into the legs to increase pressure in the blood pathways.

The structure expands to bring space to the internal organs. The head turns to gaze through the 'tiger's mouth.'

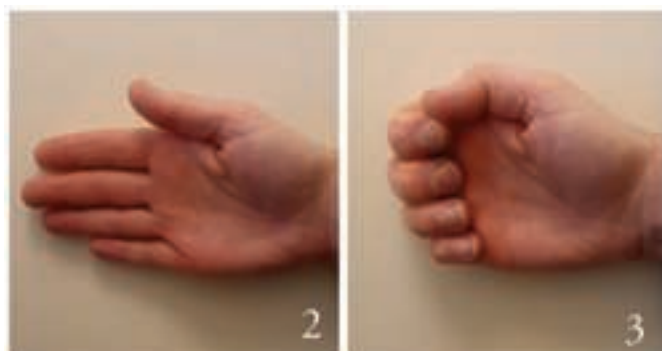
Timing with such a proud and dynamic posture is paramount for cultivating the physical body and internal functions. The elbow, palm, head, and feet meet at the same time and then linger for a whisper of a breath before the qi is ready to return back to the earth. Correct application of the movement and adhering to the principles of structure and breath bring many physical and mental benefits.

Give this movement a go every day for a few weeks and feel the difference in your daily life. Be gentle if you have additional tension in the neck and shoulders, allow the body to change without pressure. Be careful not to lift the elbow into the neck too much as it may cause headache. Do not sink the body if there is weakness in the knees and lower lumbar area, softening the knees and 'finding the feet' is enough to begin with. Strength will grow through connection.

Archer draws a bow - application



5. Rotate the forearm of the right hand and move the arm outwards so the palm is facing forward.



6. Push the L hand out to the side forming an 'L' shape with the index finger and thumb at the extension. (Fig 4-5)



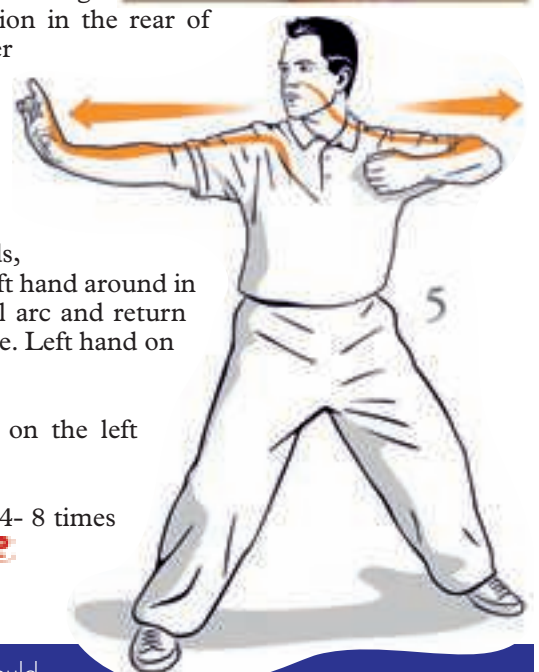
7. Simultaneously pull the left elbow backwards until the arm stops naturally without causing undue tension in the rear of the shoulder or neck. (Fig 5)

8. Pause.

9. Relax both hands, bring the left hand around in a horizontal arc and return to the centre. Left hand on top.

10. Repeat on the left side.

11. Repeat 4- 8 times each side. 🏹



If you would like to learn a simple ten minute 'metal element' qigong routine that incorporates the archer posture, you can find this on my YouTube channel at Chris Handbury Qigong. Try it and enjoy the process of transformation. There is also a free A4 poster of the ba duan jin to download at www.chi-fit.uk. Illustrations taken from the book *What is Qigong?* By Christopher David Handbury



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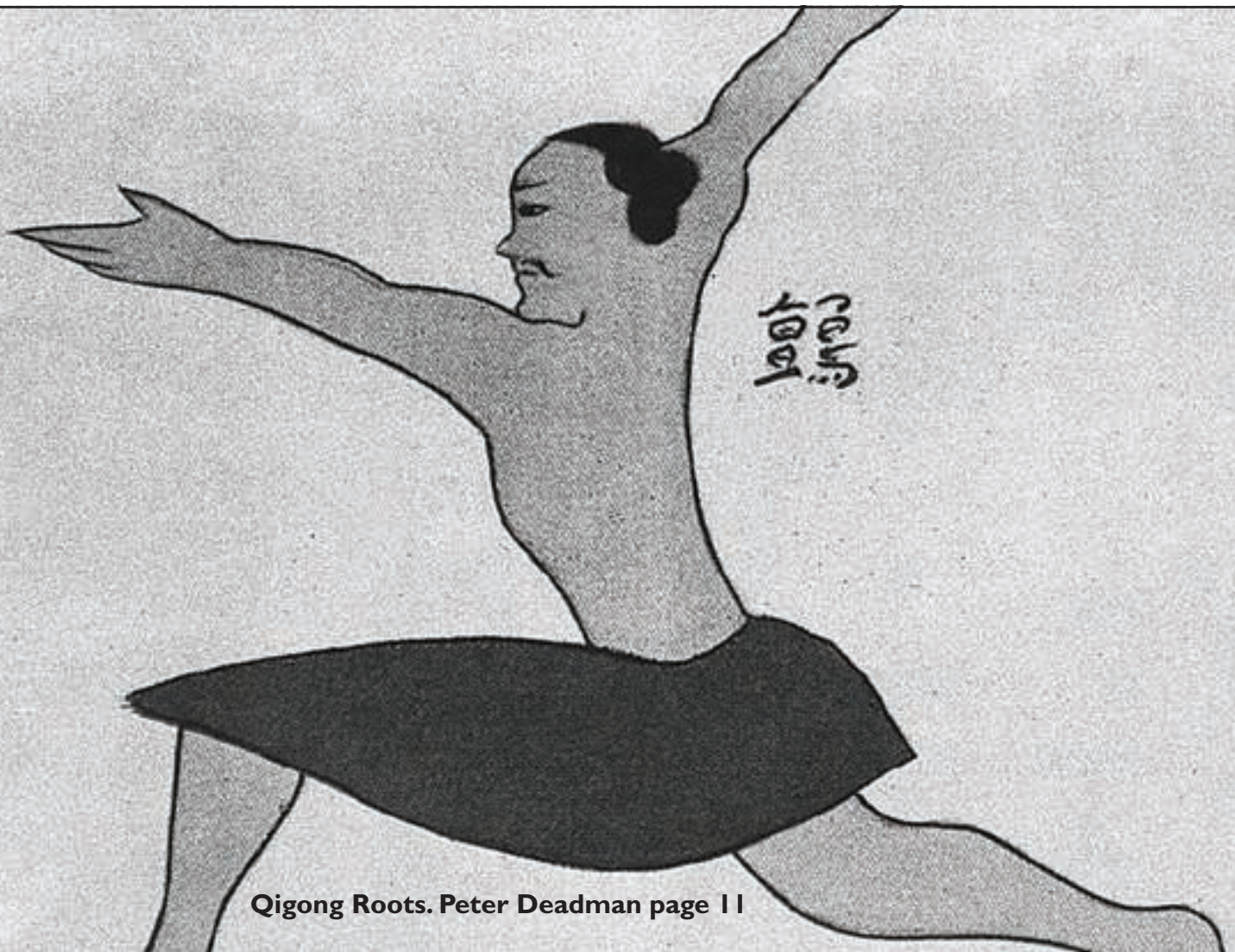
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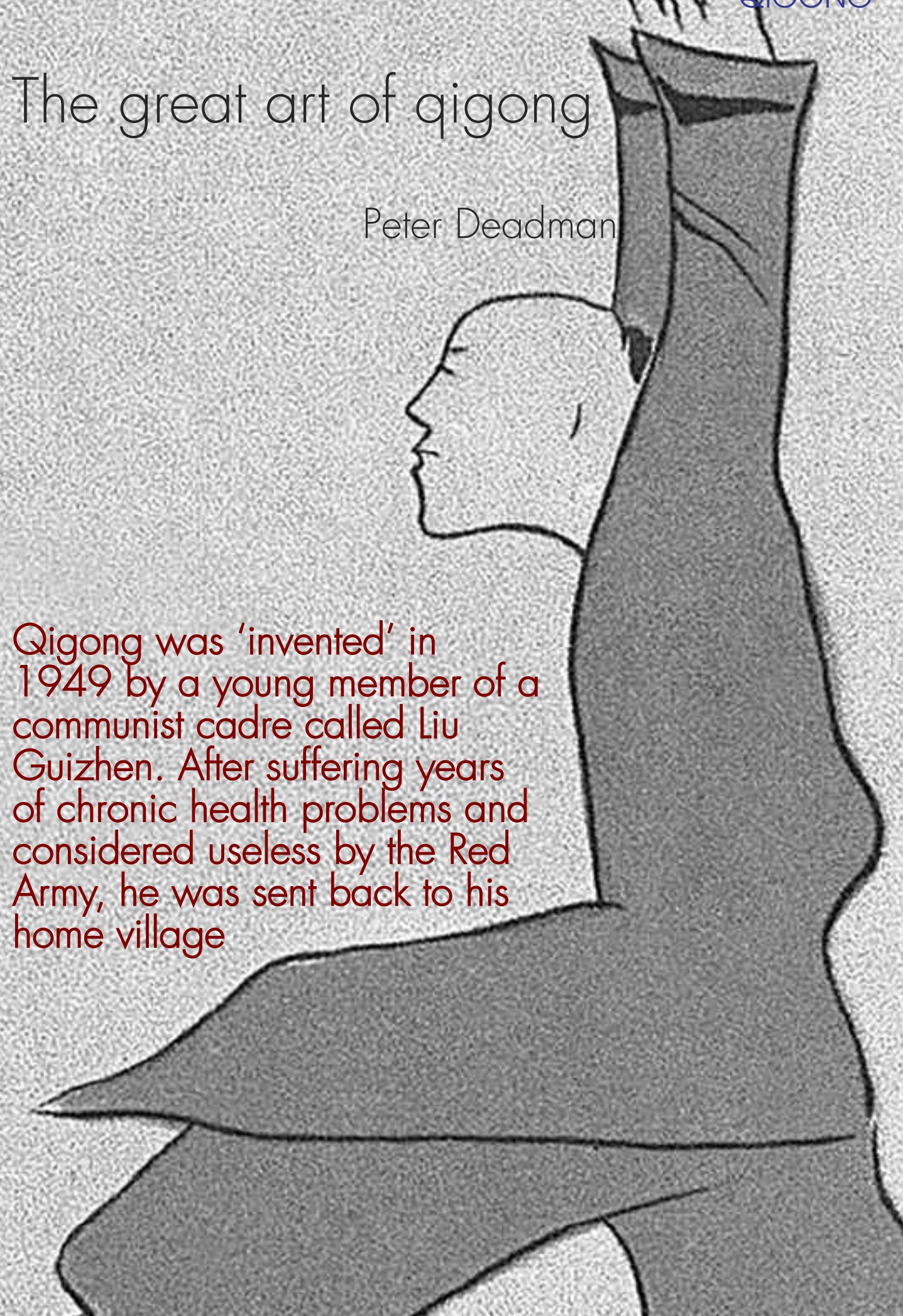
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The great art of qigong

Peter Deadman

Qigong was 'invented' in 1949 by a young member of a communist cadre called Liu Guizhen. After suffering years of chronic health problems and considered useless by the Red Army, he was sent back to his home village



There he was taken under the wing of his uncle who taught him a neiyanggong (inner nourishing qigong) practice. For 102 days Liu stood for hours in silent meditation, focusing on the yongquan (gushing spring) point on the soles of his feet and mentally repeating calming and health-enhancing phrases. He recovered his health and when he returned to his unit his superiors were so impressed by his transformation they allowed him to start teaching. In order to avoid any association with neiyanggong's Buddhist roots, they adopted the term qigong (which now includes many forms of energy work) and before long it was being practised widely in clinics and sanatoria until the Cultural Revolution put an end to it for the next few years.

Liu's qigong was essentially a quiet internal healing practice but in the decades that followed, qigong began to serve as a broad umbrella term for a much wider range of historical and modern self-cultivation practices. These were mainly drawn from Daoist, Buddhist and Confucian roots, the martial arts and Chinese medicine. They ranged from quiet meditation and visualisation practices to more powerful physical training and had been practised under a great variety of names: *daoyin* (guiding and pulling), *neidan* (internal alchemy), *neigong* (internal skill), *xingqi* (circulating qi), *zhan zhuang* (standing meditation), *tuna* (exhalation and inhalation), *tugu naxing* (expelling old energy and drawing in the new) and *lianyang* (refining and nourishing). Many were passed on in secret, handed down only to disciples or within families until they first came to light during the twentieth century.

Given these multiple influences it can be challenging for a student seeking a qigong teacher since they can easily become confused by the multiple options on offer, especially since many teachers are not shy about touting their own approach as the best and truest. However it also has one great strength; it means that qigong can absorb the wisdom of all these different traditions in its cultivation of the three treasures of body, breath and mind.

Body

Body skill is drawn from the neijia (internal arts) schools, especially taiji, bagua and xingyi. While qigong itself has no martial application, the core training methods of these martial schools inform qigong body cultivation. These include mental and physical song (softness), rooting and grounding, suspended head top, unbroken movement through the whole body, spiralling and wrapping of soft tissue, the understanding that neigong (internal skill) is more important than mere form, 'stopping before completion' (for example not lengthening to one hundred per cent, not training to the point of exhaustion), and much more. And in a virtuous circle, the practice of qigong can enhance martial skills, as well as those of sport, dance

and daily life.

Modern exercise science has been slowly coming round to these core movement principles, especially since the discovery of the fascia and its ever-evolving science.

The fascia, long-ignored in anatomical studies, ranges from thick and resilient supportive structures to soft and fluid-filled spaces. It wraps and penetrates whole muscles, individual muscle fibres, nerves, blood vessels, organs and even bones, connecting every part of the body into an integrated whole. It is involved in a multitude of physiological processes and is thought to function as a body-wide signalling network and part of the body's immune and tissue-repairing systems.

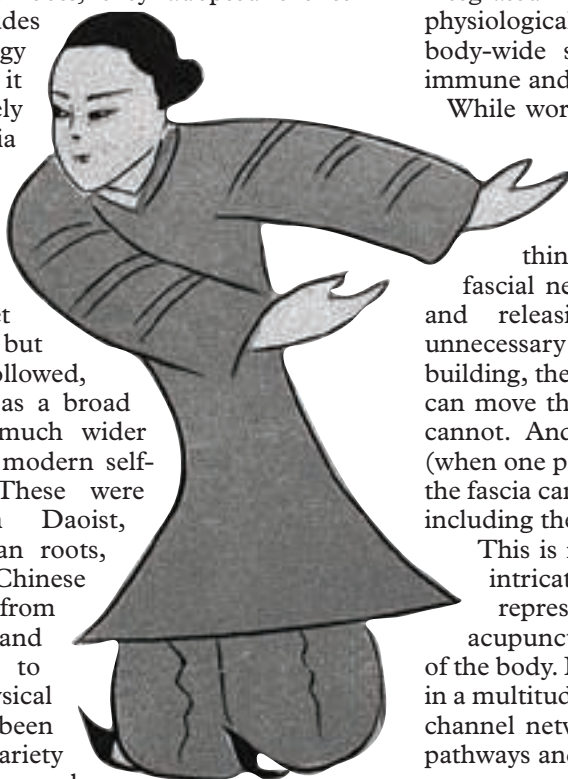
While working isolated muscles or muscle groups may play a part in rehabilitation, professional sports training or vanity, if we want to maintain the most enjoyable and long-term optimally functioning body it is better to think in terms of moving fluidly through the entire fascial network. Smoothly and elastically lengthening and releasing, wrapping and spiralling, avoiding unnecessary tension, focusing on flow rather than muscle building, the body skill found in the internal arts tradition can move the fascia in ways that simple linear stretching cannot. And since fascia forms a tensegrity structure (when one part moves, everything moves) skilfully moving the fascia can improve the condition of all body structures, including the internal organs.

This is reflected in Chinese medicine's complex and intricate web of channels/meridians (simplistically represented as narrow lines on a typical acupuncture chart) which also reach every single part of the body. From this perspective when we move the body in a multitude of different ways we can stimulate the entire channel network as well as focusing on specific channel pathways and acupuncture points.

Breath

The second of the three treasures is the breath. Drawing from Daoist cultivation practices, we learn to move beyond chest breathing and instead descend the breath into the dantian (field of elixir) in the depths of the lower belly. This nourishes essence (jing) – our deepest level of energy – and helps root the qi.

Chinese medicine teaches that when qi rises excessively it can cause both physical and psychological disorders. On



a physical level this mostly happens with age as declining yin loses its ability to secure and ground yang qi. This can lead to what is known as ‘fullness above and emptiness below’. Fullness above leads to problems such as dizziness and tinnitus, headaches, strokes and high blood pressure. Emptiness below results in disengagement from the lower body which may become weak, uncoordinated, painful or



cold. We lose leg and foot agility and confidence, quality of life is reduced and we are more likely to fall – often with long-term consequences.

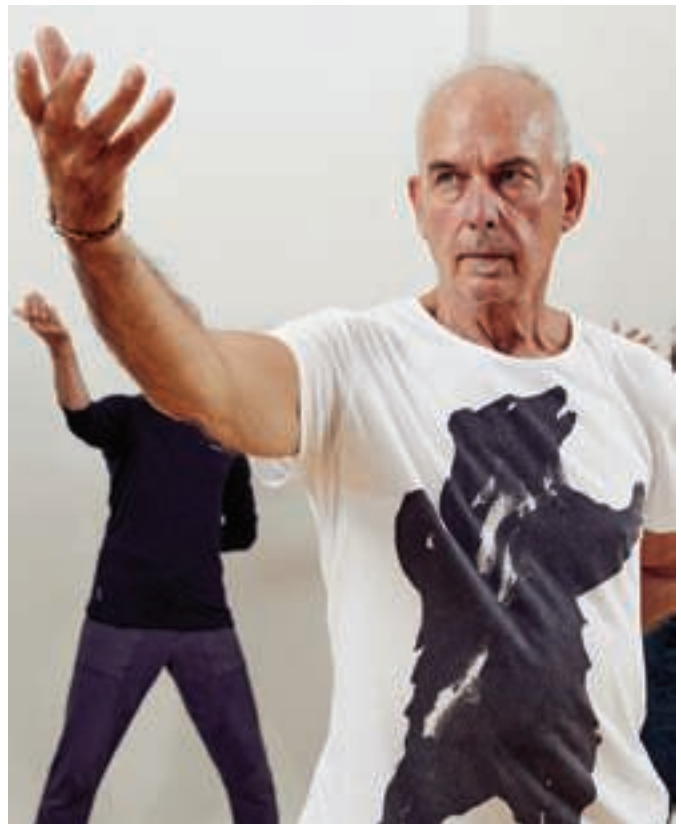
On a mental and emotional level, untethered qi (often associated with heat) can rise to disturb the mind. As a result we become more easily agitated, restless, scattered, nervous, fearful and anxious and may suffer from palpitations and difficulty sleeping. This pattern can be seen at any age, although sleeping problems tend to worsen in later life.

To counter this tendency and help restore yin-yang balance, we take the breath down to the dantian while rooting and releasing downwards through the body.

Physiologically, lower abdominal breathing – also known as diaphragmatic breathing – triggers a host of beneficial reactions. The vagus nerve is stimulated, shifting us into a restful parasympathetic state. Cell inflammation is reduced, the body starts to heal and the mind is calmed. We experience greater openness, trust in the world and ability to enjoy real intimacy and connection.

Mind

The third treasure is the mind. Buddhist and Daoist meditation practices encourage us to train our fretful ‘monkey mind’ (jumping from one tree, one piece of fruit to another). We become able to spend more time in the present moment rather than the past or future and this allows us to ever more deeply dwell in the body and the breath. The three treasures are then wrapped up together,



Peter Deadman

like water into a sponge, and we enter what is called the ‘qigong state’.

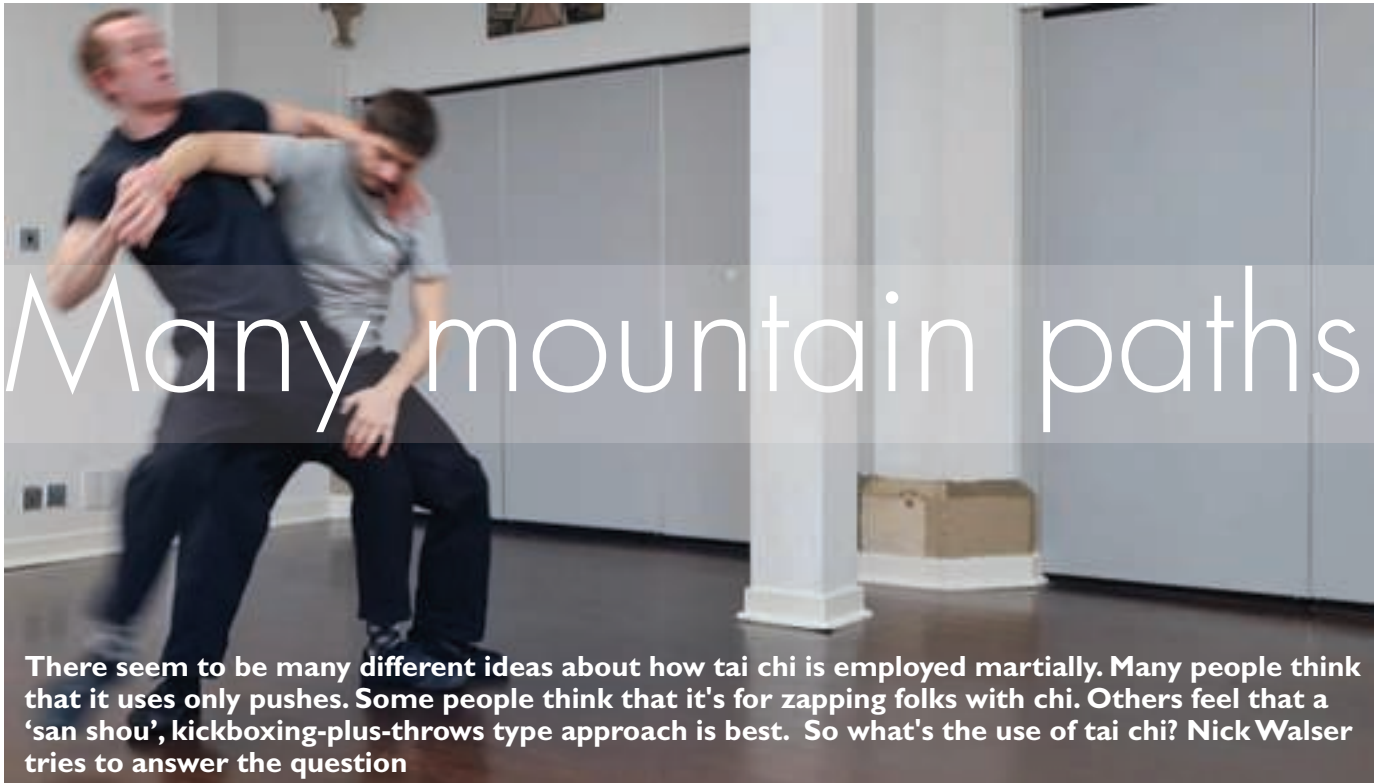
Meditation is a formal practice, usually carried out sitting or standing, for example in the qigong practice of zhan zhuang (standing like a pole), while mindfulness carries this enhanced experience of the present moment into the rest of our lives. We become more aware of our trigger emotions, less distracted, less caught up in fears and worries and endless thinking. Instead we find greater joy in some of the simplest activities of everyday life – walking, being in nature, sharing friendship and intimacy, enjoying food, working at something we love (if we are lucky enough).

Physically speaking, meditation has been shown to change the structure of the plastic brain, growing regions associated with emotional self-control, slowing down age-related neural decline, reducing anxiety, depression and stress and increasing cognitive abilities.

Hope for the future

Compared to yoga, qigong has a relatively low profile in the Western world. The name is hard to pronounce from its written form (why oh why did the inventors of pinyin decide that qi should represent the sound chee!) and its unique approach to practice sets a higher bar to entry. While we were all probably told to stretch to the max and touch our toes in pre-school, asking people to stand completely still, move very slowly and only extend to eighty or ninety per cent can seem alien. And while the relatively modern (1980s) association of qigong with paranormal powers may have attracted some, it probably alienates even more.

Yet I do believe qigong’s time is coming. A better understanding of how completely it can cultivate this human organism we are lucky enough to have been gifted will hopefully assist this process. 🧘



There seem to be many different ideas about how tai chi is employed martially. Many people think that it uses only pushes. Some people think that it's for zapping folks with chi. Others feel that a 'san shou', kickboxing-plus-throws type approach is best. So what's the use of tai chi? Nick Walser tries to answer the question

Our own teacher Dan Docherty certainly used tai chi in the ring, as did his teacher Chen Tin Hung. But Dan also used his tai chi in street confrontations, especially during his time in the Royal Hong Kong Police.

Like every art, tai chi has its strengths and its weaknesses. No one art is martially complete: the Ultimate Fighting Championship has shown us this most clearly.

What therefore does tai chi do well? And what does it lack, or do badly? What does it share with other arts? And what makes it unique? These questions will help lay bare the function of tai chi, and illuminate the martial purpose of our training.

What is missing in tai chi?

I would say the most telling lack is that of real medium or long-range offensive techniques.

There are kicks and there are punches, but they almost always appear in conjunction with some sort of controlling, grabbing or parrying motion. Dan Docherty

used to characterise tai chi as a counter-attacking art, which is to say we have already closed distance (or the opponent has) and absorbed some kind of attack.

The eight forces are universal across tai chi. They are manipulations of the body, our own or the opponents, in a manner reminiscent of grappling. Hand strikes are not featured in this tactical scheme. But shoulder and elbow strikes are.

All of this indicates the effective range for tai chi: close-up, closer than boxing and kickboxing. However tai chi also lacks groundwork, so we will not be getting horizontal, in the manner of jiu jitsu: we want to take our opponent down, without going down ourselves.

We can sensibly suggest then, that tai chi is an art rooted in what might be called infighting. A definition of infighting is 'fighting at closer than arm's length'. In this limited environment, some standard techniques will not flourish: a boxing jab, for example, is just too long a technique at this range. Striking has to be done with forearms, hammer fists, chops and elbows. Kicks exist as knees, trips and stamps.

Once at the correct range, tai chi is not fussy about what to employ.

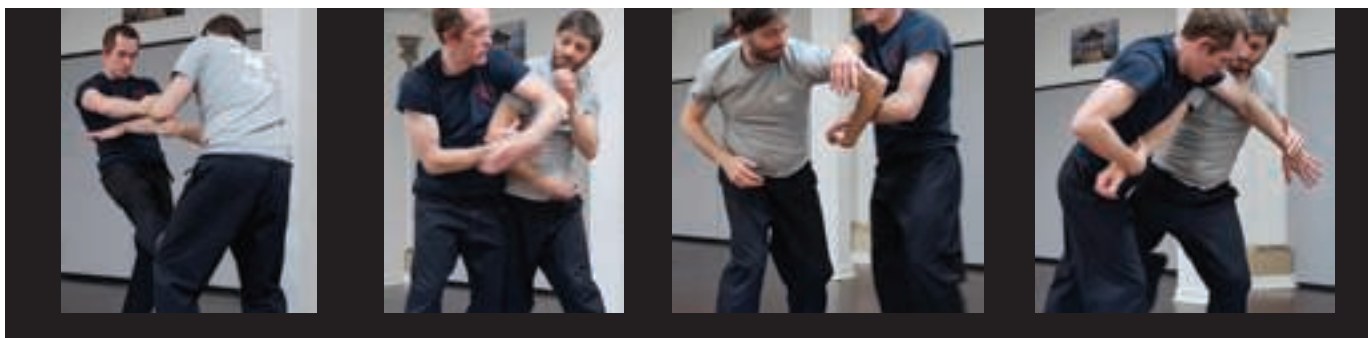
When we cast an eye over the techniques preserved in our (Wudang) handform, it is a strange menu, albeit one beautifully strung together.

There is a bit of everything: punches, kicks, throws, counters to kicks, locks, counters to locks, entries, neck and head manipulations and more.

Our tai chi is very much 'a jack of all trades, and master of none'

As a jack-of-all-trades, the key attribute for employing tai chi is opportunity. The *Tai Chi Classics* state 'many err by forsaking what is near to pursue what is far' (The *Tai Chi Chuan Ching*). The right technique is the one that is at hand, so to speak. The motifs in the *Tai Chi Classics* of the hovering hawk, and the waiting cat, also suggest the spirit of seizing the opportunity.





This makes the setting up of the technique of primary importance. But because this ‘setting up’ is not easily categorised, it is easily overlooked.

Getting into the right position, at the right range, is the speciality of tai chi

We see this clearly in the concept of chin zi, ‘reeling silk’. In our style, this takes the form of circular movements in a figure eight in front of us, both clockwise and anti-clockwise. The formal drill uses it against a slap to the face. It works better as a method to drill through/under/over an opponent's arms or past and behind their centre of balance.

We like to say that tai chi is ‘the intelligent and sensitive use of simple tools’

Tai chi does not have the elegantly deadly kicks of muay thai, the blistering combinations of boxing, or the complex transitions of jiu jitsu.

It spends its energies in absorbing attacks, clearing a path, and applying something short and simple in the gap created. It is not exactly defensive, because that would imply passivity: in tai chi we pro-actively create gaps in our opponent's defences. Maybe we could say it is anti-martial: designed to nullify other arts.

All of this is quite abstract compared to other martial arts, and it is perhaps this that creates the misunderstanding of tai chi's purpose, and leads to odd and unsure interpretations of its functions.

The above is our interpretation of tai chi, based on our style and studies, and a play-based training approach which we use to investigate our theories.

What do you think? What is your tai chi for? 🇨🇦



27 April	World Tai Chi Day - Yorkshire	Yorkshire
Following the success of the past few years, we shall be holding another day's workshop in Yorkshire, inviting students from across the county to get together to share our practice and experience. We have a varied programme that will be suitable for beginners and those who have been practicing for years. There will be something for everyone. <i>Contact: Betty Sutherland, betty@uktaichi.com</i>		
27 April	World Tai Chi Day 2024 with Lighthouse - Free Event	Online
Join Helena & David at Lighthouse Tai Chi on YouTube for a free live tai chi session at 10am UK time for World Tai Chi Day 2024; from our home to yours. This will be live on our YouTube Channel at 10am. Anyone watching takes part at your own risk. <i>Contact: Helena Kean, lighthouseaichi1@gmail.com</i>		
27 April	World taichi and qigong day	Northamptonshire
Tai Chi is one of the most famous and best practices for mastering harmony and balance. It is universal: by mastering Tai Chi, we train the brain, attention, perception, consciousness, body. In other words, we change our quality. And we can apply it in any kind of activity. Don't miss out on this opportunity to improve your health and well-being. <i>Contact: Dmitry Fedyanin; mail@thetaichipavilion.com</i>		
27 April	Kai Ming Association – World Tai Chi & Qigong Day Celebration	Staffordshire
A celebration of World Tai Chi & Qigong Day. All Members of the Kai Ming Association & Painting the Rainbow Community Tai Chi groups in the area, and their Instructors, are invited to gather for a public Celebration, sharing the Day worldwide. <i>Contact: Heather Lomas; hbluelilac@gmail.com</i>		
27 April	Kai Ming Association – World Tai Chi & Qigong Day Celebration	South Derbyshire
A celebration of World Tai Chi & Qigong Day. All Members of the Kai Ming Association & Painting the Rainbow Community Tai Chi groups in the area, and their Instructors, are invited to gather for a public Celebration, sharing the Day worldwide. <i>Contact: Heather Lomas; hbluelilac@gmail.com</i>		
12 May	Advanced Training Day (monthly)	Birmingham
Sessions are held monthly for 3 hours at to enable instructors time for their own training and for more advanced students to gain the time to develop a deeper understanding of the application of tai chi. <i>Contact: Mark Peters, markpeters@kaiming.co.uk</i>		
13 – 14 May	Tai Chi and Qi Gong for Rehabilitation & Well-Being (8-day course)	Worcestershire
This 8-day course runs over four 2-day modules throughout the year. You will learn tai chi and qigong, both seated and standing, to help people with Chronic conditions. The course is CIMSPA accredited. <i>Contact: Mark Peters, markpeters@kaiming.co.uk</i>		
13 - 14 May	Tai Chi Qigong (TCQ) for Well-Being (2-day course)	Worcestershire
The program includes both seated and standing tai chi qigong (shibashi) designed to improve mobility, balance, and confidence. <i>Contact: Mark Peters, markpeters@kaiming.co.uk</i>		
19 - 23 May	Summer Retreat Day 5 Element Fire Spirit Day	Flintshire
Next 5 Element seasonal retreat day, held throughout the year in our lovely location in North Wales. As we are in Summer, this practice day will focus in more depth on the Fire element and the fortification of Heart energy and helping to resolve elements of Arrogance & Jealousy within the body, enabling us to experience deeper levels of Love, Joy and Happiness. <i>Contact: Ben Calder, ben@bencalder.co.uk</i>		
27 - 28 May	Week of Meditation and Qigong	Northumberland
<i>Contact: Iain Naylor, handsoflight@live.com</i>		
6 June	Tai Chi Ruler Qigong	Online
The Chi-kung set is designed to improve coordination and strengthen the body. It comprises relaxed, fluid, circular fluid movements synchronising the whole body, and they require a calm, quiet and meditative state of mind. The main difference is that the ruler is ideal for beginners, movements are fewer and easier to learn; less space is also required to practice. <i>Contact: Mark Peters, markpeters@kaiming.co.uk</i>		

8 - 11 June	Taijiwuxigong Teacher Training UK – Review session	Winchester
Karen is organising Master Shen Jin's courses in the UK (within the umbrella of Dr Shen Tai Chi UK). The training will take the form of 8 components, taught during 2024 and 2025 over a total of 20 days..		
Contact: Karen Ferris, allofus@drshentaichi.co.uk		
9 June	Advanced Training Day (monthly)	Birmingham
Sessions are held monthly for 3 hours at to enable instructors time for their own training and for more advanced students to gain the time to develop a deeper understanding of the application of tai chi.		
Contact: Mark Peters, markpeters@kaiming.co.uk		
21 - 23 June	Tai Chi and Meditation Weekend Retreat	Kent
Following the success of previous Oxon Hoath retreat weekends, Tai Chi Way is offering a weekend of Tai Chi, Qigong and meditation with a chance to muse on the philosophy of Tai Chi through discussion on the Tao Te Ching. Oxon Hoath is a stunning country estate in Kent. You will learn short sequences of slow, flowing movements and breathing techniques to help relax you.		
Contact: Tamar Hirschfeld, tamar@taichiway.co.uk		
27 & 30 June	Lighthouse Summer Tai Chi 2024 - Rossendale	Lancashire
Free tai chi in Whitaker Park, Rawtenstall, Rossendale Lancashire. Enjoy the fresh air, the fabulous views in this beautiful Rossendale Park and try tai chi with David & Helena from Lighthouse Tai Chi®, professional instructors who work for Rossendale Leisure. Suitable for complete beginners, just come along and do as much or as little as you wish		
Contact: David Pelling, lighthousetaichi1@gmail.com		
6 - 7 July	Weekend Taiji Training	Devon
A full weekend to dive deeper into the principles inside the form. Expect lots of push hands and correlation between push hands and the form movements. This brings the principles to life as we see how to apply them. Push hands gives us the sensitivity and timing to use them accurately.		
Contact: Luke Shepherd, lukeportrait@gmail.com		
7 July	Advanced Training Day (monthly)	Birmingham
Sessions are held monthly for 3 hours at to enable instructors time for their own training and for more advanced students to gain the time to develop a deeper understanding of the application of tai chi.		
Contact: Mark Peters, markpeters@kaiming.co.uk		
12 - 19 July	Tai Chi Caledonia	Stirlingshire
A Week of Tai Chi, Qigong & Internal Arts in the Heart of Scotland. In our 27th year, we continue to offer a variety of highly experienced teachers from across Europe. The weekend offers 48 varied 45 minute sessions allowing a taste of what's to come during the week.		
Contact: Aileen Mandić, bookings@taichicalledonia.com		
26 – 28 July	Les Recontres Janieres 2024	France
Great annual event that we know many people enjoy!		
Contact: https://taichilemans.fr/les-rencontres-jasnieres-2024/		
28 July	Late Summer Retreat - Earth Spirit Day	Flintshire
Next 5 Element seasonal retreat day, held throughout the year at our location in North Wales. As we are in Late Summer (from a Chinese 5 Element perspective), this practice day will focus in more depth on the Earth spirit and the fortification of Spleen energy and helping to resolve elements of Worry & Pity within the body, making sure we stay grounded.		
Contact: Ben Calder, ben@bencalder.co.uk		
10 - 13 August	5 Section Taijiquan Masterclass, with Master Sam Masich	Winchester
A four-day, all-inclusive event, where you can meet, practise, and share together with taijiquan enthusiasts and experts from around the world! We will explore 5 Section Taijiquan core-principles through solo and partner training.		
Contact: Patrick Foley, patrick@5-section-taijiquan.co.uk		

11 August

Advanced Training Day (monthly)

Birmingham

Sessions are held monthly for 3 hours at to enable instructors time for their own training and for more advanced students to gain the time to develop a deeper understanding of the application of tai chi.

Contact: Mark Peters, markpeters@kaiming.co.uk

15 – 18 August

Three Masters, Three Styles: Chen, Yang & Wu Taijiquan

Winchester

A four-day, all-inclusive event, where you can meet, practise, and share together with taijiquan enthusiasts and experts from around the world! Explore the Universal Taijiquan with three of today's most highly dedicated and skilled experts. Coming from Italy, Canada, and Sweden, Gianfranco, Sam, and Paul will share practices and insights into the three major styles of taijiquan.

Contact: Patrick Foley, patrick@5-section-taijiquan.co.uk

1 September

Advanced Training Day (monthly)

Birmingham

Sessions are held monthly for 3 hours at to enable instructors time for their own training and for more advanced students to gain the time to develop a deeper understanding of the application of tai chi.

Contact: Mark Peters, markpeters@kaiming.co.uk

2 – 6 September

Waking the 5 Element Spirits: A Light of the Inner You

Gwynedd

Discover the transformative power of Qi, the vital life force that animates every aspect of your existence, at our 5-day LIFE Force QiGong retreat, "Waking the 5 Element Spirits: A Light of the Inner You." Hosted by the renowned Sai Calder and Ben Calder, this retreat is an invitation to embark on a profound journey of self-exploration and personal growth.

Contact: Ben Calder, ben@bencalder.co.uk

24 September

Ba Duan Jin Instructor Course 2024/25

Online

Ba Duan Jin Qigong Instructor Training Course – one year course. Endorsed CIMPSA. Predominantly based online with final assessments in person. There are three units to complete over twelve months. This includes sixteen tutor sessions, access to 20+ online video tutorials, student training manual, email and phone.

Contact: Christopher David Handbury, courses@chi-fit.uk

Waking the 5 Element Spirits 'A Light of the Inner You' with Sai Calder

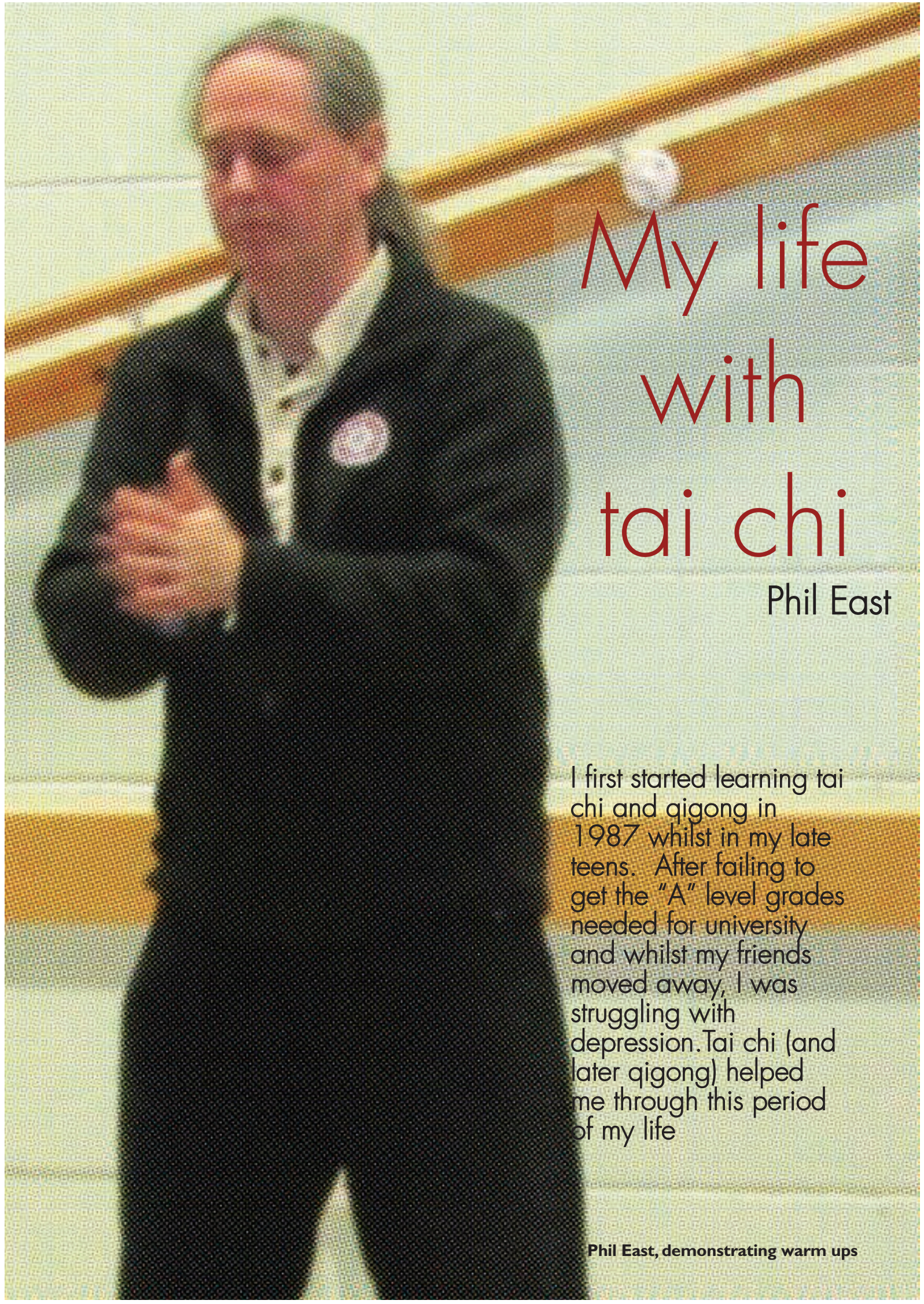


2nd-6th September 2024

Trigonos - Snowdonia - North Wales

<https://bookwhen.com/integralhealth>



A man in a black martial arts uniform is performing a warm-up movement, possibly a Tai Chi or Qigong exercise. He is standing in a room with a wooden railing in the background. The image is a halftone print.

My life with tai chi

Phil East

I first started learning tai chi and qigong in 1987 whilst in my late teens. After failing to get the "A" level grades needed for university and whilst my friends moved away, I was struggling with depression. Tai chi (and later qigong) helped me through this period of my life

Phil East, demonstrating warm ups



A few years later I was able to access Warwick University as a mature student and studied psychology and sociology. This eventually led me to a 16-year career in mental health. During this time, I continued to learn qigong and, following a supervision session with my occupational therapy manager, began to deliver sessions to our client groups in a hospital setting. When I moved to Wales in 2007, I continued to offer classes for the charities I worked for.

In 2020 I left my career in mental health. I set up the Three Deep Breaths School Of Qigong and as we entered the first lockdown I began to grow my business, on Zoom and then in community settings in Conwy County.

While visiting relatives in Canada I attended a tai chi Class in Oakville, Ontario. One of the enduring aspects of this class was that they stopped halfway through to share a cup of tea and chat.

After Covid, as my classes developed in the community, I built on my experiences of working in mental health. I realised that a core component of a good qigong class is the connections we develop between our teachers and students. Most of my classes now include the opportunity for this social connection. To sit and talk. To listen and be heard. To slow down and observe.

Weaving the web

In 2023 all these strands began to weave together. I met with several people I had supported in my past career. They mentioned the decline in local support for their mental health and the feelings of isolation and difficulty moving forward after Covid. I met with a new, local

charity in Llandudno, and reached out to contacts I had worked with in the past. They were all keen to assist in a new event. The final thread was seeing that the Tai Chi and Qigong Union had a fund (the Gerda Geddes Fund) that might support this event. Applying for the funding was simple and the TCUGB were very supportive, before and after the application.

The organisations attending the event:

- Wellness and Walking Holidays: offering local wellbeing breaks.
- Adferiad: supporting mental health and substance misuse.
- Conwy Community Wellbeing Team: providing activities in the local area.
- Teuluoedd Canolog Conwy Family Central: facilitating information and support for families in Conwy.
- Infinity Cymru: free counselling services.
- Artlysparklydesigns: upcycling materials into arts and crafts.

The event

We started with a brief introduction from each of the organisations about what they could offer. The organisations were set up in a separate room where people could go and chat and find out about the services available.

In the main hall, Three Deep Breaths School of Qigong offered a session focussing on Wudang Mountain qigong and shibashi set 1. I had learned the Wudang Mountain set when I visited Australia in 1996. At the time I wasn't



Introduction



particularly impressed; it seemed too simple after the Cheng Man Ching Form. However, since then, it has become invaluable to many people due to its simplicity. Firstly, in 2019 when I was going through depression, anxiety, panic attacks and paranoia, Wudang Mountain with its emphasis on 'letting go' was my daily qigong practice. Then, during the first lockdown, I shared it on Zoom and many people reported it was helping them with the fear surrounding the pandemic.

The shibashi set 1 is my 'go to' for beginners and for taster sessions. During my career in mental health I found it to be extremely useful for anxiety and stress. Like Wudang Mountain, the simple, repetitive movements are easy to follow and it can be offered as a seated practice, making it accessible to all.

This session was followed by a refreshment break, an opportunity to chat and mingle, before a second session of qigong. Some people engaged in both sessions, whilst new people joined for the first time.

In this second class, I offered Wudang Mountain and the nine forms, which I learnt while studying shiatsu at the Shiatsu College in Manchester. My understanding is that this form is taught to therapists in China to prevent burn-out. I thought it would be particularly helpful for the employees of the organisations attending our event. Between 2016 and 2019, both financial resources and staffing levels in local mental health services were reduced. During this particularly stressful period of my career, I was practising the nine forms on almost a daily basis. I feel that combining Wudang Mountain qigong with the nine forms is a great way to leave behind the stress of work, thus allowing for a restful sleep.

Conclusion

Three Deep Breaths School of Qigong would like to say, 'thank you' to all those that made this memorable event



possible. It was an opportunity to introduce qigong to a wider audience; to demonstrate its potential benefits; to showcase the valuable work of charities, statutory services and private businesses, and the need for community events to bring people together. None of this would have been possible without the TCUGB Gerda Geddes Award. 🇬🇧



Feedback

"As a charity providing help and support for people with mental health, substance use, addiction and other complex needs, it was a pleasure to be involved in this event. At Adferiad, as part of the holistic approach that we take in supporting people, focussing on a client's health and well-being is a key part of their recovery. By learning and understanding more about the benefits of qigong we have been able to promote and share this with our clients and encouraging them to take part has been really valuable and something we hope that we can develop further in the future."

"Thank you for inviting us (Conwy Community Wellbeing team) along, it was a great morning and very beneficial as we spoke to a number of people on the day, including connecting two ladies with a local singing group that they were both keen to join. I was also able to book a gentleman on one of our own art sessions and I gave another lady information about some Dance for Parkinson's sessions running locally for her mum. I spoke with around 14 people – who all took copies of our various community timetables."

"Thank you so much for arranging such an interesting day. Well organised, warm welcome. Wish, I'd invited some friends to come along too. Anyway, I handed out some leaflets, so they might want to attend one of your classes, which are so much in demand."

Traditional Yang

At age five years, grandmaster Yang Jun began his study of traditional Yang family tai chi chuan under the tutelage of his grandfather, grandmaster Yang Zhen Duo, 4th generation, and son of grandmaster Yang ChengFu. This year we have a rare and exciting opportunity to learn and practise with him when he visits Cambridge in September, writes Mike Taylor

Grandmaster Yang Jun has been teaching overseas for a number of years and is the 5th generation Yang family lineage holder and president of the International Yang Style Association (www.yangfamilytaichi.com). He is certified as the highest level judge in China.

Having attended a number of Grandmaster Yang's seminars over for the last 18 years, I have been able to significantly develop my tai chi chuan knowledge and skills, whilst learning from a very warm, jovial and humble teacher. Grandmaster Yang Jun speaks very good English, and is able to explain the intricacies and subtleties of this art in a practical and informative manner. This is a great opportunity to develop your practice and receive expert instruction in traditional Yang family tai chi chuan.

Seminar Details

Grandmaster Yang Jun will be in Cambridge to teach traditional Yang family tai chi chuan 103 long form and push hands from Friday 27th September to Sunday 29th September 2024.

The hand form seminar will take place over three days. The daily session details are as follows:

- Friday 27th – push hands (9.30am – 12.30pm)
- Saturday 28th – 103 long hand form (9am – 12 noon, 3pm – 5pm)
- Sunday 29th 103 long hand form (9.30am – 12.30pm, 3pm – 5pm)

The push hands session on the first day will be limited to 20 students and is only open to members of the international association who have signed up to participate in both the Saturday and Sunday hand form sessions.

Registration

The full details, including pricing, are shown in the registration form. We have added an early sign-up discount (available until 1st June), and also given non-members the opportunity to become members of the international association and receive further discount.

If you would like to participate, please complete page two of the registration form, paying your deposit and registration fee (via internet banking, if possible) and return to the address on the form. For anyone travelling and requiring overnight accommodation I have also provided a document showing local hotels and B&B establishments.

If you are not an international association member (\$30, approx £25) and would like to participate in the push hands session, receive seminar and product discounts, a 200 page plus *Student Guide – Essentials of Tai Chi Chuan* (pdf), and an excellent twice yearly journal, then this is a very good time to join, as the UK seminar fee

Grandmaster Yang Jun
Traditional Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan
103 Long Form & Push Hands Seminar

Fri 27th to Sun 29th September 2024
Cambridge UK

Grandmaster Yang Jun (5th Generation family descendant) started his training, at the age of 5, with his grandfather Master Yang Zhen Duo. He is certified as the highest level judge in China, and served as head judge for the 1998 National Tai Chi Competition in China.

This is a rare & exciting opportunity to learn & practice the Yang Family 103 long form and Push Hands from an English speaking world famous master.

- Friday 27th - Push Hands (9.30am - 12.30)
- Saturday 28th - 103 Long Form
- Sunday 29th - 103 Long Form cont..

Sat & Sun Schedule: (9am - 12 noon, 3pm - 5pm)

Chesterton Sports Centre, Gilbert Road, Cambridge, CB4 3NY

This Seminar will appeal to Beginners, intermediate and advanced Tai Chi players. Teaching includes essential principles, form instruction and applications.

To guarantee your place on this rare event enrol early to avoid disappointment.

For seminar fees & to enroll please visit www.yangfamilytaichi.co.uk or contact Mike Taylor at miketaichi@gmail.com or 07540 735401

YANG FAMILY TAI CHI CHUAN

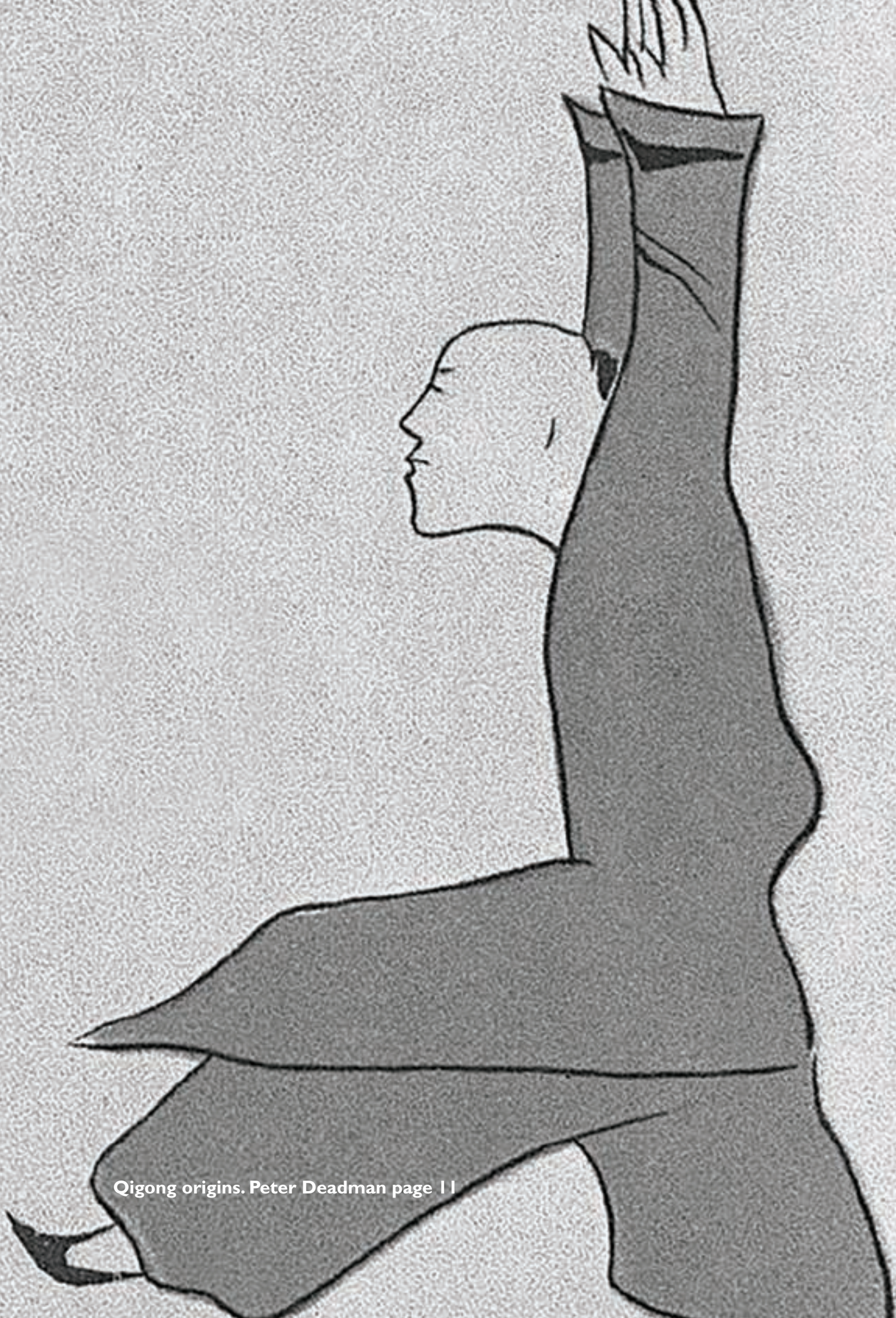
is also discounted for members.

To become a member please go to the 'members area' at www.yangfamilytaichi.com and follow the simple online sign-up process. On receipt of your membership number please add it to your completed registration form and return to myself with your deposit and £15 registration fee.

If you have any questions please contact me via email: miketaichi@gmail.com or call me on 07540 735401. Alternatively, all docs and details can also be found at www.yangstyletaichi.co.uk

The grandmaster Yang Jun seminar takes place at Chesterton Sports Centre, Gilbert Road, Cambridge, CB4 3NY. 27th – 29th September 2024

Download a registration form here www.yangstyletaichi.co.uk



One World, one breath

I began my tai chi and qigong journey in the mid 1990's when enduring two and a half years as an expat in Saudi Arabia. Upon returning to the UK, I suffered a heart attack and decided to join Wutan International where I attended weekly classes for over eight years, writes Keith Sharp

The instructor, They Soon Tuan asked me why I showed no interest in the martial aspects so I explained that, as I was in my late sixties, I was more interested in my health and wellbeing.

Vision

I became committed to seeing appropriate tai chi combined with other mind, body and soul modalities working in harmony for the benefit of communities across the world and first came across Bill Douglas, the originator of World Tai Chi and Qigong Day, in late 2003. His leadership and devotion to improving the world's health, wellbeing and lifestyles is admired in over 80 nations.

Teaching

I began teaching at adult education facilities using the warm-ups from Wutan combined with Cheng Man Ching 37 postures, some basic qigong and other forms.

Southampton has a population of 265,000 with around 23,000 aged over 65. During 2002 and 2003 I was engaged on a contract to bring the social services and the NHS primary care work together in accordance with the 2001 Health and Social Care Act. Both sides just played along without commitment, but I gained tai chi and qigong contracts from a combination of funding from Social Services and the Primary Care Unit.

The city council has numerous regulations related to the use of public spaces, such as city parks and shopping centres. Around 2005, I organised tai chi and qigong demonstrations in the West Quay shopping complex with representatives from some of my over 50s players. Some of the council requirements came to the fore when I wanted to demonstrate tai chi with my lightweight, very flexible sword but, as it looked like steel, I was told to use my wooden sword, which was actually a much more dangerous weapon. An example of jobsworth, more of which was to follow.

World Tai Chi and Qigong Day 2015

World Tai Chi & Qigong Day has been held each year in over 80 nations on the last Saturday of April since 1998 and in 2015 I decided to join in. Approval to use Watts Park for World Tai Chi and Qigong Day in Southampton required contact with the relevant council department. I knew from my project time with the council that it would be a bureaucratic nightmare requiring numerous visits to their offices, explaining what tai chi was and the intention of the event.

Formal requests were submitted and forms duly completed to ensure all processes were recorded for traceability purposes. Fortunately, my many years of experience in the field of technical manual documentation production and sales and marketing came in handy.

The risk assessment involved inspections of the Watts Park area designated for our use, by my colleague Malcolm Calvert and myself to ensure there were no objects which could cause harm. We also had to make sure it was completely safe for the public following the event.

I had to request the department handling appointments of the mayor to seek her availability for the morning of the last Saturday in April to open



Bill and Angela Douglas, founders of WTCQD



the two hour event I had planned. I had had the privilege of meeting the mayoress, councillor Sue Blatchford, at one of my over 50s communities' tai chi sessions so there was already a connection. Completing the necessary forms was becoming a never-ending process but perseverance is the key when wishing to raise the profile of events. I gave her a copy of Bill Douglas' opening statement to present at the opening of the event.

Saturday 25th April 2015
Opening Statement from Bill Douglas read by
the The Right Worshipful Mayor of Southampton
Councillor Sue Blatchford

"Dear World Tai Chi & Qigong Day supporters and Participants, This global wave of goodwill provides a vision of hope and healing to a world hungry for such visions. Each year to view the photos of people from different cultures, religions, and every corner of the earth . . . breathing together . . . in this global tai chi and qigong movement . . . is profound.

"When you look through the photographs and videos you see that look on people's faces, a look that conveys a feeling that all of us who have experienced the well-being that qi, or life energy, expands through our mind and body when we make the space to breathe . . . and to let, calm, and wellness expand through us.

"When you see that look in all these diverse faces, from so many different lands, you can't help but deeply realize that we are indeed 'one world . . . and, . . . one breath'. We are all connected by the field of life energy that physicists are now discovering permeates all existence.

"By immersing ourselves in the field of life energy again and again, we become more and more grounded in the absolute reality that . . . we are all connected . . . all part of the web of life. And, by cultivating and growing the realisation personally and globally, we may help in a subtle quiet way to usher in a more elegant future that nurtures us all in ways we cannot yet even imagine.

"Again, thank you for making this extraordinary event and health movement possible through your organising and participation each year."

Sincerely,

Bill Douglas & Angela Wong Douglas, Co-Founders of World Tai Chi & Qigong Day

As the event was to be over a two-hour period I was delighted when Costco agreed to provide energy bars and soft drinks at no cost. (Yes, I am a member of Costco, so it helped.)

As well as announcements it was necessary to display a banner to explain what was going on so I arranged for the production of two WTCQD banners with a local company, the finance of which was provided by a garden fencing company.

I held one day sessions at Nursling Primary School and the school kindly agreed for me to use their quick assembly

staging. Malcolm borrowed a van and we loaded the platforms and transported them to Watts Park where we assembled them, dismantling and returning them to the school after the event in good condition.

Meanwhile, preparation for the event also required a detailed programme with a schedule of timings, with Malcolm providing a PA system. Yours truly, with the white hair, tried to act as the MC.

I contacted local newspapers and BBC Radio Solent who sent their outside broadcast unit to provide live coverage on the day. They began to interview me just prior to the start time, so I handed over to Jane Launchbury to emphasis the point of WTCQD.

Although some announcements were included in a couple of local newspapers there was no real take up or follow up. However, I conducted numerous talks, demonstrations and conducted my own marketing and publicity and within six months, I had 13 classes a week with funding either from social services or adult education while others were self-funding.

Over the years, Malcolm, Brenda Davies and I ran numerous health and wellbeing programmes in and around Southampton including a couple of tai chi in the park events in Romsey Town. Both events were well attended (we even managed to encourage the town mayor to attend one year.) and the three of us led the gathering through a variety of tai chi and qigong routines.

I decided to let things run down just prior to the pandemic, as I approached my 80th birthday, which was celebrated on the first day of lockdown at Lee on Solent with a sandwich and an ice cream.

In conclusion, at the age of 84, I wonder who has the structure and succession processes in place to ensure tai chi and qigong in the UK is at the forefront to benefit health, wellbeing and lifestyle throughout the population.



I would like to mention the following:
 The late Linda Chase Broda – Tai Chi for Special Needs
 The late Ronnie Robinson for his dedication and leadership and TC Caledonia now run by Aileen and Alisdair.

The late Dan Docherty whose involvement and contribution to the TCUGB was exceptional. I also worked with Dan on initiatives such as the anti - virus committee and the BHQA conflict of interest complaint.

Mark Peters for his unwavering support during the eight years of working toward H & W TCQ being accepted by the NHS and all other organisations. I highly value Mark's guidance and friendship.

James MacRitchie for stating that I had been 'assigned' to follow my initiatives for the benefit of our communities.

And to those health and wellbeing tai chi and qigong instructors who have taken and adapted their skills to suit the public needs and proving that an income can be achieved.

A valuable addition

The author is not a new-comer to the subject of promoting health the oriental way. As well as being a qualified acupuncturist and Chinese medicine herbalist, he founded *The Journal of Chinese Medicine* 45 years ago, and started his qigong journey over 30 years ago, writes Gordon Faulkner

This book is a companion volume to the earlier *Live Well, Live Long*, his yangsheng, nourishing life, book.

This new book, *Qigong: Cultivating body, breath and mind*, is with the aim of making this self cultivation practice more well known.

It is an 189 page, large format, softcover quality product with a pleasing layout of text and illustrations, and contains links to 42 videos totalling around 12 hours of viewing.

Written in an easy-going style, there are 11 chapters covering a wealth of information on all aspects of qigong theory and practice.

The first chapter deals with fundamental theories and besides usual ideas of jing, qi, shen, yin yang and the five phases, he expands the basics in a thought-provoking way to include such things as water, free flow, the middle way, wuji, wuwei, and the beauty of contradiction.

The book's subtitle 'Cultivating body, breath and mind' is introduced in the next three chapters. This is the core of the book. And because of the unity of the body, breath and mind, these chapters overlap each other. They are replete with information, valuable not only for qigong and taijiquan practitioners but also for athletic endeavour or anyone trying to stay healthy.

The body chapter is the longest of the three, with 47 subsections containing valuable information for any practitioner of the internal arts.

As there is a great emphasis on breathing in an efficient manner in qigong practice, the next chapter on breathing is short but includes the actual science of breathing.

The last of these three is about the mind and emotions. Emotional balance has been at the centre of this self-cultivation practice for over 2,000 years, with meditation and mindfulness being the common core practice for the mind.

Chinese medicine recognises seven emotional causes of illness. These are examined considering how qigong movement can restore emotional balance in both body and mind.

In fact, these three chapters include many references to modern western studies that align and add weight to the ancient qigong practices.

The subjects in the remaining chapters of the book start

with yin and yang and their constant interplay and expression throughout qigong practice. This is followed by the history of self-cultivation, which is a short piece but does include the salient points.

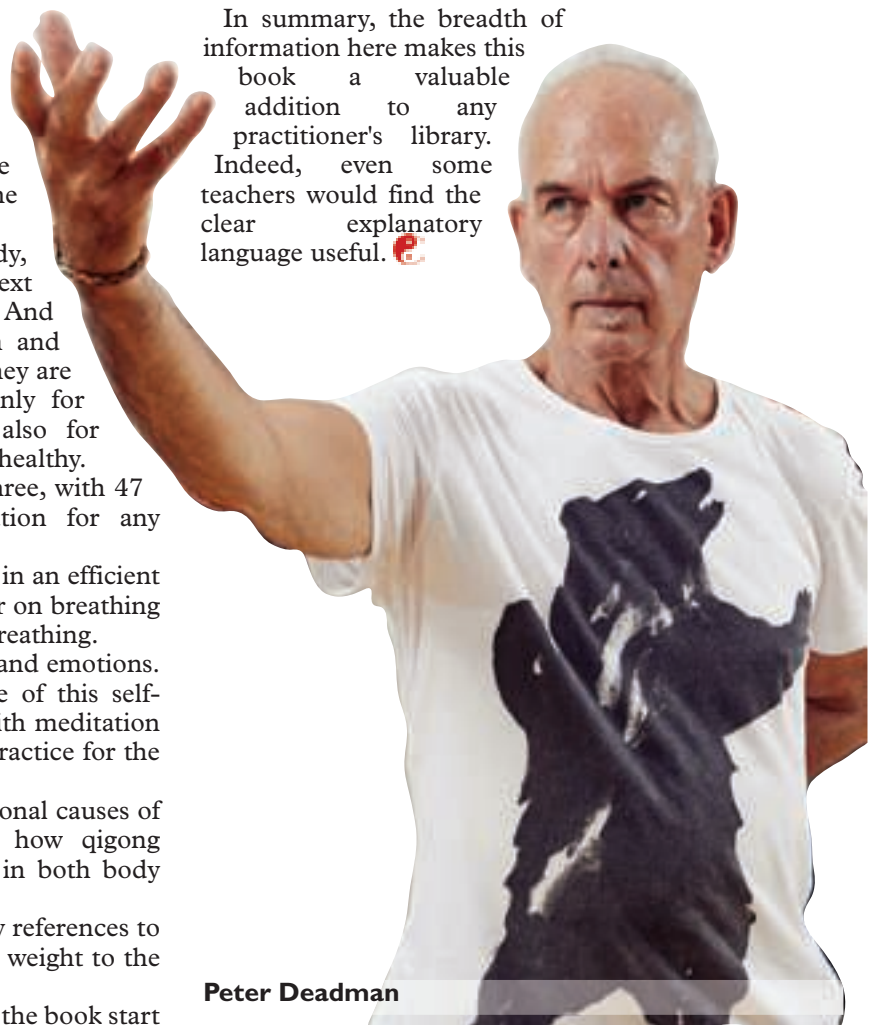
The next chapter gives a brief introduction to several of the most well-known and popular qigong routines practised today. This leads onto practical information on how to perform, such as when and where, regular practice, how long to practise, etc.

Finally, there is a well-illustrated list of the acupuncture points mentioned and it concludes with the author's own entertaining short story of the black and white pearl.

Further reading list, reference and index pages bring the book to a close.

In summary, the breadth of information here makes this book a valuable addition to any practitioner's library.

Indeed, even some teachers would find the clear explanatory language useful. 🐼



Peter Deadman

A gift that keeps on giving

How exciting to now have Sam Masich's long-anticipated publication in my hands! This hardback book, beautifully illustrated by Sam himself, is entitled *Foundations of Traditional Taijiquan, Core Concepts and Full Curriculum* and comes in the form of a series of essays which have developed over Sam's many years of training and teaching, writes Suse Coon

We begin with several pages of acknowledgements and forewards by grand masters before a lengthy introduction in which Sam explains why the book is set out in the way he has chosen. This is Sam slowing us down, insisting that we curb our impatience and take note of every tiny detail. His is a journey of many years of study and practice and is not to be rushed, but rather the elements should be chewed carefully, tasted and savoured before swallowing and absorbing.

Sam is also quite clear that theory alone is not enough. Reading is not the same as acquiring knowledge. Practising and testing the theory is an essential aspect of our personal learning journeys.

The first part, *The Core Concepts*, consists of five essays, namely: *The Thirteen Powers Theory*, the *Five Stance-Phases Theory*, the four-squares and four-corners martial-kinetic energies, the deep-sticking passages, including a new translation of part of *The Yang-family Forty Chapters* and lastly *Understanding the Hips and the Waist*. (Those who worked with Sam at Tai Chi Caledonia some years ago will remember the importance placed on identifying the hip-track. Not only is this last aspect of key importance to martial balance, it also offers a helpful tool for avoiding injury should anyone be working with elderly learners.) The thoroughness with which this one example is examined is typical of every section. Most practitioners will have some knowledge of these skills but having them all laid out in one place, with such detailed explanations and references, is pretty awesome.

The second part, *Full Curriculum Taijiquan*, comprises three essays:

The first, *Taijiquan Study: The Full-curriculum Approach*, "takes the focus away from the specific contents of particular styles or lineages, concentrating instead on the traditionally held importance of complete, integrated programmes". The second, *Yang-family Taijiquan Yang-*



Sam Masich, silhouette 'Discover the meaning'

style Taijiquan examines the difference between family and style and encourages readers 'to examine their own curriculum and practice in light of historical conditions and current contingencies'. The third essay goes through Sam's own Masich Internal Arts programme, which he describes as a "specimen of a full-curriculum approach that is rooted in a traditional lineage and supported by over four decades of research and evolution". The programme includes foundation work through physical improvements, neigong, qigong and breathwork, then solo form, push hands and weapon forms.

This is a scholarly approach, the text using accented pinyin and Chinese characters the first time a word is used,

to help us with pronunciation, and the second time, simple pinyin. This again slows down the reader, encouraging a mindful approach. But this scholarly approach is not prescriptive. Sam understands that life happens and students and teachers must constantly strategise to permit training opportunities.

As one might expect, the wisdom is in the detail. Much of the theory prompts the reader to stop and test it through practising either specific moves from the text or from one's own form. You don't just read this from cover to cover and indeed, at the time of writing, I have not read the book in its entirety. I suspect it will prove to be one of those books that you never 'finish' reading. There will always be another layer to explore, 'when the pupil is ready'. 🍵

Foundations of Traditional Taijiquan: Core Concepts and Full Curriculum. Essays by Sam Masich.

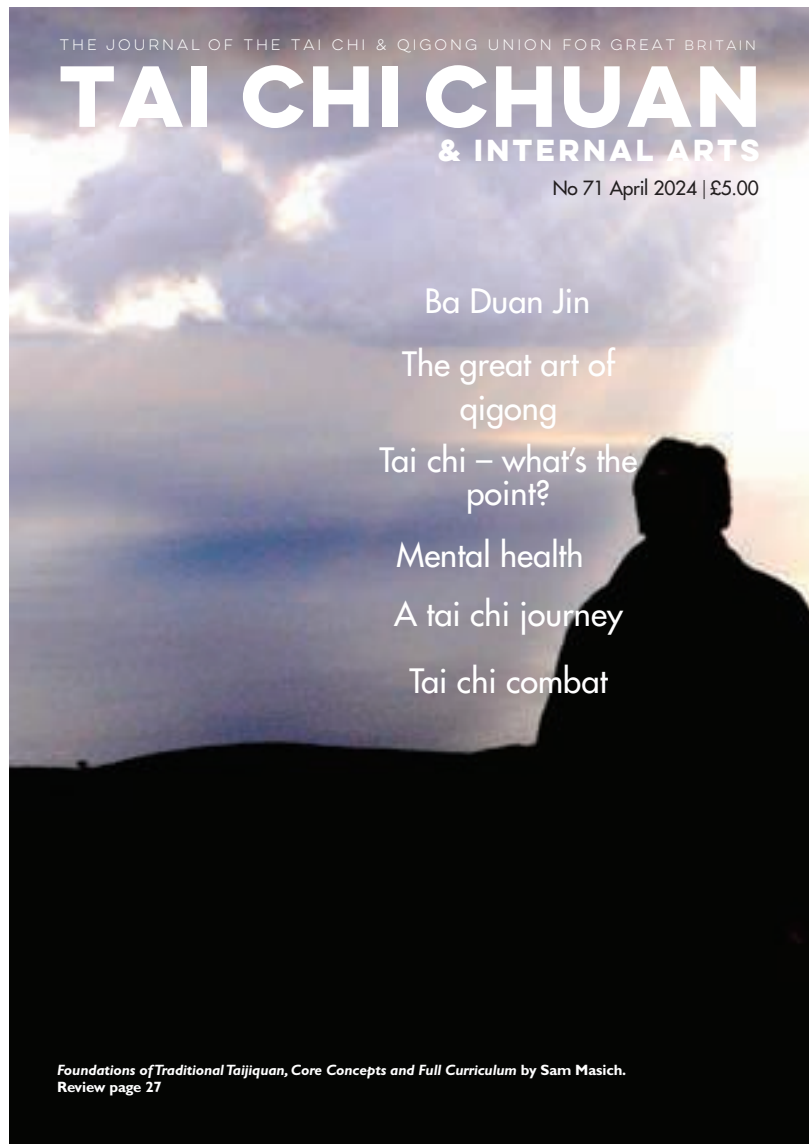
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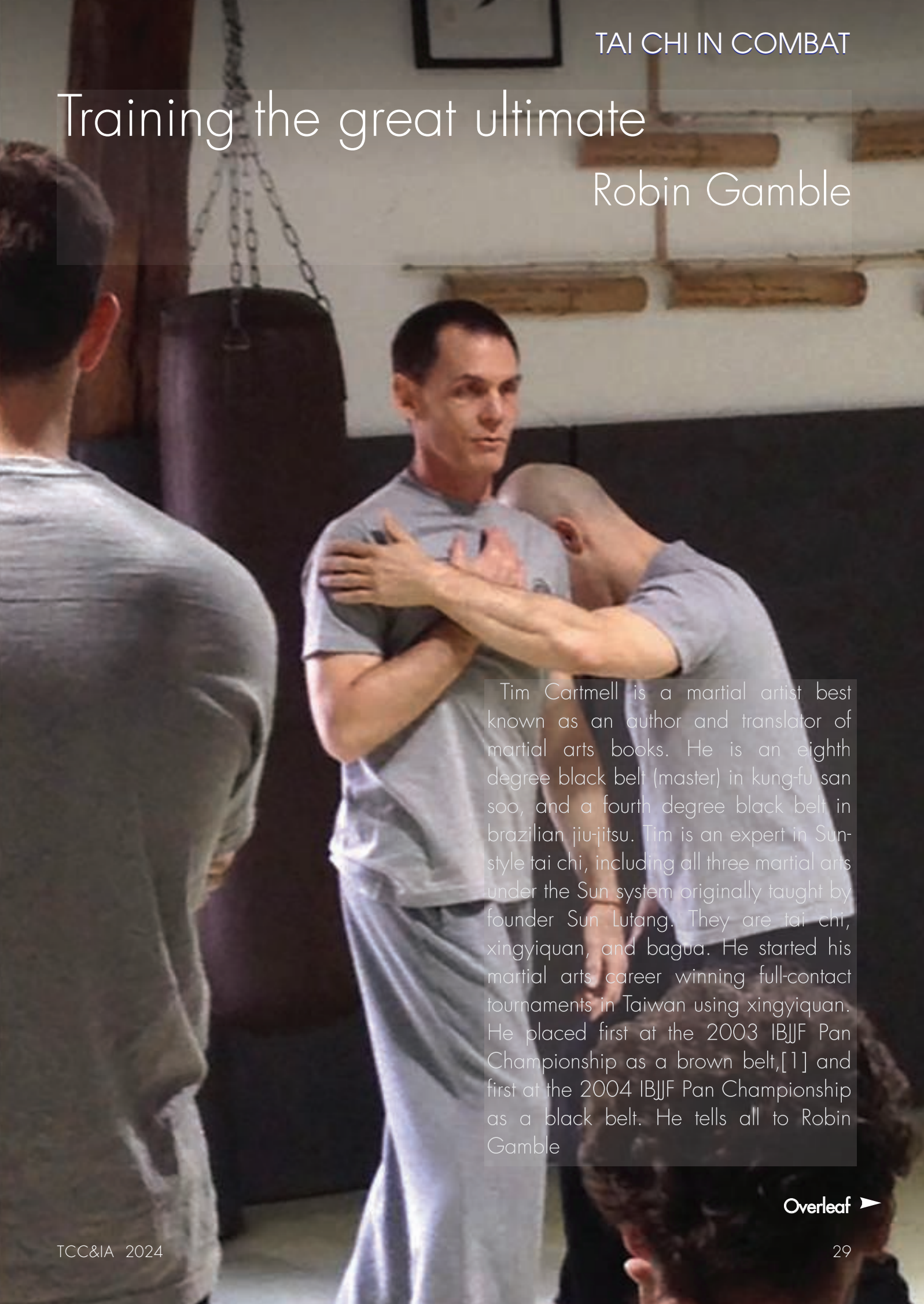
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Training the great ultimate

Robin Gamble



Tim Cartmell is a martial artist best known as an author and translator of martial arts books. He is an eighth degree black belt (master) in kung-fu san soo, and a fourth degree black belt in brazilian jiu-jitsu. Tim is an expert in Sun-style tai chi, including all three martial arts under the Sun system originally taught by founder Sun Lutang. They are tai chi, xingyiquan, and bagua. He started his martial arts career winning full-contact tournaments in Taiwan using xingyiquan. He placed first at the 2003 IBJJF Pan Championship as a brown belt,[1] and first at the 2004 IBJJF Pan Championship as a black belt. He tells all to Robin Gamble

Tim has had a long and varied experience in combat. Competing has given him wide experience and brought him to where he is today.

“So I started practising Chinese martial arts when I was 11, I think. And when I was 23, I moved to Taiwan.

I trained there for a year, and then I started to compete in Sanda – the Chinese Sanda tournaments. That was my first actual martial competitive experience. Eleven years later, I came back to the States. I started practicing Brazilian jiu jitsu and, almost immediately, started to compete.

“I competed all the way up from white belt through black belt. And then as nogi became more popular, I started to compete in nogi's submissions wrestling tournaments. I did a little amateur MMA (mixed martial arts) at that time. And then most recently, in the last 10 years, I started to train and compete in sumo. And now mostly, I've retired from jiu jitsu competitions. I just coach. And I'm the grappling coach for some professional MMA fighters.”

MMA challenge

I didn't know that Tim had competed in MMA so I asked him to explain: “It was just amateur,” he says. “It was mostly a small event. When I first started Brazilian jiu jitsu, they still had the Gracie Challenge. I don't know if you ever came across that but people would come into your school and fight. A lot of us that were into MMA had participated in that.”

That was Tim's early experience with MMA. In Chinese culture, that is called kick school. People would come to your school and challenge you. The old idea in China was that if someone showed up and wanted to fight, they would fight one of the teacher's senior students. If they beat him they would fight the teacher. I asked Tim to explain. He says: “If they beat the teacher, they could, quote-un-quote, ‘take the school over’. I don't think that happened as much as you might think. I think a lot of it was people just wanted to go in and see how they would do. So even if they won the fights, they'd leave. But then they could say: ‘Well, I beat so and so’. But that *was* an actual thing back in the day. Somewhere around the Qing Dynasty time. And jiu jitsu was basically: ‘if you think you can beat BJJ, then you can come in and fight with us’.

“But for the most part, they would send someone who was more of a beginner, they would have him fight the guy just to prove how good jiu jitsu was. Nowadays that doesn't happen, everybody knows and there are a lot of venues to fight in. But it used to happen and with other styles too. I remember when I was a blue belt my teacher calling me to spar with some judo people.

“Sometimes people would come in and challenge with a bad attitude, but mostly they just wanted to fight and see how they did. It wasn't malicious.”

A constant question in tai chi is whether a tai chi practitioner who is only interested in health



Robin Gamble

benefits needs to learn the fighting aspects. Tim says: “I'd say yes and no. So I'll preface it by saying this: when you look at tai chi in China you see that old masters and people who have practised tai chi their whole lives are healthier than average. They have maintained their flexibility and their strength. But the people you are looking at, for the most part, are guys who had done tai chi as a martial art. Probably their whole life.

“So if you want those benefits, you need to do it as a martial art or else you're just waving your arms around in slow motion. That is not really tai chi. So you need to learn it as it was designed to get the benefits that it's potentially capable of delivering. On the other hand, do you actually have to go in the ring and fight anyone? No, of course not.

“So the forms in the systems, the supplementary exercises, the standing should be taught as it was designed. And that will require correct instruction and also some kind of pressure testing to make sure that the form is done correctly. “You don't have to glove up and punch each other. But you do have to be learning the principles of the martial art if you want to get the health benefits.

“The forms in the systems, the supplementary exercises, the standing should be taught as it was designed. And that will require correct instruction and also some kind of pressure testing to make sure that the form is done correctly. The pressure testing can be as simple as pushing and pulling on people, or testing their alignment, giving them some resistance and letting them move against it so they understand where to focus their intent.

“You could go from that level. Once you learn the basics in the form and your teacher pushes you, allows you to push them back. They show you which way your intent and your force is supposed to be focused, and you can do the form correctly and get the benefits. Then if you want to go up another step you could do some kind of push hands where there's a little competition. Most people that play push hands play that game. Freestyle push hands





is wrestling and you throw each other.

“And then the next step above that is free fighting. It depends on how far you want to go with it.”

Fighting tai chi

This leads to whether tai chi techniques, skills, or tactics are useful in a combative environment or competition. Tai chi was developed as a standing, grappling based wrestling art that was backed up with strikes. And it did have a competitive side to it.

“First off, there's nothing magic about tai chi,” says Tim. “Like any martial art it has a combative aspect. So the idea was that it was for self defence. They were assuming you can be struck. It was grappling based so that the strategy of tai chi is to not fight from a distance, is to close in with your opponent, ideally at a superior angle, and then project them away under the ground or throw them on the ground very hard. There's no ground fighting. That was the end of it. And the strikes were supplementary. You could strike your way in. You had to learn to deal with strikes.

“That's what it was developed for. And because it wasn't sportive, they didn't really have any idea of weight classes, now they do, at least in push hand competitions. You had to be able to maximize your body power because you might have to fight someone much bigger than you. This is why sensitivity is more of a factor than in a sports style martial art.

“I feel from my training that the throws I learned were pretty much the same as every other style that had throws. There are only so many ways you can throw someone down. There are a lot of leg grabs, hip tossing, tripping, foot sweeping, that's all fundamentally the same.

“The sensitivity training that I got was, I felt, very useful for me, not that the other styles didn't have it. I just got a leg up because I'd already done that kind of training. If you want to ask, is there some special technique? No. It was more about body use. Like the way you generate power, maintain your balance. And the great emphasis they placed on sensitivity, especially when you're grappling, that I found carried over pretty well when I did other martial arts.”

The Sun style tai chi that Tim practises is not, perhaps, as well known as other styles. The founder, Sun Lutan had a background in bagua chuan. This raises the question of its approach to combat. His original introduction to tai chi

was while he was in Taiwan where he learned Chen style from a man who had learned it during world war II.

“Yes, I learned the Chen style old frame from an old gentleman who had trained during World War II with a guy from the Chen family. His form was fantastic, but he really had no technique. He didn't really do anything martial. That was my introduction. And then later I learned Yang tai chi, the small frame.

“Now with that teacher there was a lot of martial application. We sparred, we would hit each other and we would wrestle. So I started to get the idea how it was really applied. It was after that I learned the Sun style. I went to Beijing, and I trained with madam Sun and Sun Lu Tang's grandson. The applications that they showed were pretty standard similar to the Yang style.”

The tai chi advantage

Tim was competing at the time and this gave him a big advantage with the opportunity to test out the techniques.

He says: “When I teach tai chi I teach it the same way I learned it. So you start off with alignment and stance holding, and then you move into the form. Then you drill individual movements or short sequences. After that come the applications. I get students to apply it against increasing levels of resistance. And when they get the idea, then I show them the next part of the form. If they want to learn it, ‘quote unquote’, for health, then we do more form. I test the form alignment and show some basic drills, but I wouldn't spend as much time on it because they're never going to fight. I just want to make sure they understand the actual structure and the intent of the form so they are doing actual tai chi. Fighting is more involved. If a student wants to learn that then we'd start with push hands.

“The problem is, you can feel each other's balance and push your hands in circles for decades and not learn how to fight. There is a place for it, but once you understand, it goes into greater and greater levels of force, trying to really push each other. I would have a tai chi student, if they trained a few days a week and they practice, start sparring in about a month.

“They start doing sparring drills and by the end of the year, they will be free fighting and they just get better from there. At least, that's how I would teach it.”

That is how Tim was taught. And he was taught to

aspire. He says: “We would work on our stance and we would work on forms, and there was pressure testing. Remember though, sparring doesn't mean we put on MMA gloves and just start beating each other.

“You have to have some kind of structure from standing. You have to have some kind of movement skill from the form, you're building patterns. Then there are drills for the specific families of techniques. They're usually like wrestling. And you practise those. And then, for example, early on in sparring I would make a ring, and I would say, look, you're only allowed to push each other out of the ring. So they have to watch their environment and their footwork.

“They can't really throw each other and they can't hit each other, but they will really put 100% of force into shoving and pulling. I've had people in seminars that have done tai chi for decades, and they're just horrible at it. They've pushed hands for decades but they've never had anyone, once in their entire career, actually try to push them for real. So it's a waste of time to do things without ever increasing levels of resistance so that they get used to it.

“I want to see that they can set their base correctly and that they begin to understand how to start to transfer or deal with real force coming in, and transfer the other person's force to their own force. Just simple stuff, just pushing and pulling. Then we go to the next level. We start with hand techniques and we go into actual throws. They do have to learn to fall first, of course. Anyone who hasn't learned how to break fall has no business doing martial arts because they are going to get hurt.”

What do you want?

People say that they want to take up a martial art for different reasons, often not knowing what they actually do want. Strangely, ‘because I want to fight’ is not often the first reason. Self defence is a more likely reason but even then most still don't know what they mean.

Tim says: “If you're going to consider training in any martial art, the most important thing to do first is be super honest with yourself and be clear about your training goals. And then choose one based on your research and your goals, whichever martial art is the most appropriate for you.

“When I first came back from China, people would contact me and ask about different martial arts they had read about.

They would want to know where they could train. This is in the middle of nowhere in the Midwest in the States. They would expect me to know someone that could teach them some specific rare style of Baguajiang for example. Something they would have a hard time finding in Beijing, let alone in the middle of Iowa. When I asked ‘what is the appeal?’ the answer was invariably: ‘I read these articles, and it's a great fighting style’. My next question was always the same: ‘is your goal, self defence?’ And they'd say, ‘yeah’. When I suggested they would do better to go to the local judo gym or boxing gym they'd be insulted. But why do you need to learn an obscure bagua style that you can't find, when you can find other styles that are going to teach you really how to fight?

“In reality they didn't want to learn how to fight. They



wanted to learn something exotic. Now while that may be perfectly fine, they are not being honest with themselves. So if you say to me, I want to do MMA, I would never recommend doing tai chi. You'd be a wasting your time. You'd go to an MMA gym and you'd learn jiu jitsu and boxing and wrestling. If you said, I need to learn self-defence I would recommend you learn some other style where they do realistic self defence."

The tai chi concept

"If on the other hand you said: 'I really like the idea of tai chi, I like the culture, I like the forms, I like the health aspects, and I can actually learn some standup self defence skills'. I would tell you: 'Tai chi is great if you find a good teacher.' But bear in mind, if a guy who's wrestled to your level, changes and double legs you onto the ground, you'd be as helpless as anyone else. So you'd still have to learn some ground fighting.

"But it still depends what your goal is. You have to be realistic as well. You might get good at tai chi and get good at some standing grappling, but you are unlikely to go on to learn some BJJ, and then maybe kickbox a little. You're not going to be as well rounded as you need to be if you want to really fight unless you do MMA or styles that are combined. People don't like to hear that but it's the truth. So I think tai chi can be a fantastic martial art and a fascinating study.

"As much as preparing people for grappling and competition is my job, I think tai chi is a great study. But, as I keep saying, you have to be clear on your goal.

"When you are a little older or you don't want to fight but you want to do it for exercise, you find it is a tradition, and there's a whole culture involved, and you can do whatever, like.

"We just talked about, various levels. Maybe you just want to push hands a little. It's fantastic. And if you take it to a high enough level, you will learn some really effective self defence skills. Somebody grabs you, and you'd be able to defend yourself and throw them on the ground. But, you know, I feel a lot of times people are misinformed and misled by propaganda.

"It sounds bad to say this but a lot of people that are attracted to these more exotic internal styles just want to say that they 'practise a martial art' without really fighting. And then they want to believe that they can learn how to really fight without ever really fighting or sparring. And that's never going to happen. It wouldn't happen if you did MMA or Brazilian jiu jitsu either.

"People can get a little self deluded into these ideas. They think: 'If I just do these forms enough and I kind of push hands enough, if I'm really attacked, I'll be able to spontaneously defend myself'. But that won't happen. You can't learn to fight without fighting."

When asked whether it is possible to learn real fighting skills from doing tai chi as a martial art Tim says that 'you can and you can't'. He says: "OK if that's what you want to do, but you're going to have to put the time in and you're still going to have to have to fight. There's just no way around it."

Looking like tai chi

He says that tai chi looks like advanced standup wrestling. "Could I differentiate it from other styles of really good standup wrestling? Probably not. You might see an occasional technique that's tai chi specific, but no, it'll look like guys who have a really good base, have really good body control and sensitivity, and they're able to use their mass and their power and leverage to throw another guy on the ground. That's what it looks like.

"Here's, the bottom line: The human body is the human body. In my opinion, there's one best way to use it, and when you discover that for yourself, everything will fall into place. There are different ways to generate force. Different martial arts have different force generation principles. Northern Chinese martial arts are pretty ubiquitous. They're pretty much the same across the board. That's why they grouped them into families like internal, xinjia, baguajiang, and tai chi quan." 🇨🇳



Odds at the end

And the things people say...

Charity volunteers

We know many taiji and qigong teachers offer classes on a voluntary basis to charities or local groups they choose to support, with training and insurance costs being covered by other paid classes. But here's another take on the benefits of our arts.

A group of classes which runs on a non-profit basis decided over 20 years ago to support various charities. Each year and following payment of all expenses the teacher and participants select either one charity or a group of charities to whom they send a donation. Training weekly the group gain further experience from an occasional visiting teacher and also enjoy getting together for a scrumptious buffet twice a year.

The group meet in the Clyde Valley and following the retirement of their original teacher, Allison Plenderleith now leads the group.

Allison said: "We chose 14 charities and have so far donated in total £1,700 which has been disbursed between them. Some are local, Cancer Research, children's ward Queen Elizabeth, MND, Parkinson's, animal shelters and Smalls for All to whom we donate underwear. This is ongoing."

Well done to all involved. 🍵



At 104 years old Master Ding Houtao considers the purpose of tai chi quan today

What is the purpose of tai chi quan today? The purpose is to nourish one's health; to cultivate one's mind and improve one's character; and to ward off illnesses.

Tai chi quan can help you achieve these goals. By practising tai chi quan, your moral character will improve. Your ability to manage your work and daily life will increase. Tai chi quan can help raise the level of your health and wellness.

I am a living example. I was 104 years old as the Chinese New Year approached. I recently tripped over something and fell. Yet I could stand right back up. How many people who are one hundred years old can fall and stand right back up? I was able to do so. I attribute my ability to do this because of my long-term practice of tai chi quan.

Because I practise tai chi quan I can recover from my fall more quickly than other people. My injury is different from that of people who don't do tai chi quan. Long-term practice of tai chi quan gives me better blood circulation and greater resistance to illnesses than otherwise. I recover from my fall faster than other people.

This is why I want to assert that the purpose of tai chi quan today is to cultivate our original nature; to cultivate our mind and improve our character/ and to ward off illnesses and lengthen our life span. 🍵

Master Ding Houtao 丁吼涛, born 1921 in Zhejiang Province, is a decades-long Yang-style tai chi quan expert and trainer. He was vice chairman of the Shenyang City Taijiquan Research Academy in Northeast China. He is the author of the book *An Introduction to Yang-style Taijiquan*.

Translator James Chan, PhD 陈华江, lives and works in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA. Email him at: ichanamm@comcast.net.

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● Quarterly Thursday afternoon 3-hour qigong training via zoom

● Advanced monthly training for instructors and senior level students: £30.

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● April 18th - Yang family qigong

● June 6th - Tai Chi Ruler

● November 14th - TBA

Classes run 1pm to 4pm for £35

Contact Mark Peters 07831743737

● Master Yang Jun will be hosting a seminar at the Yang Chen Fu Centre in Cambridge. 27th - 29th September. Chesterton Sports Centre, Gilbert Road, Cambridge, CB4 3NY Details www.yangstyletaichi.co.uk 🍵

Tai chi moves...by Neil Bradley



Ok, so you can teach a dog tai chi, but it's not really what we're after

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