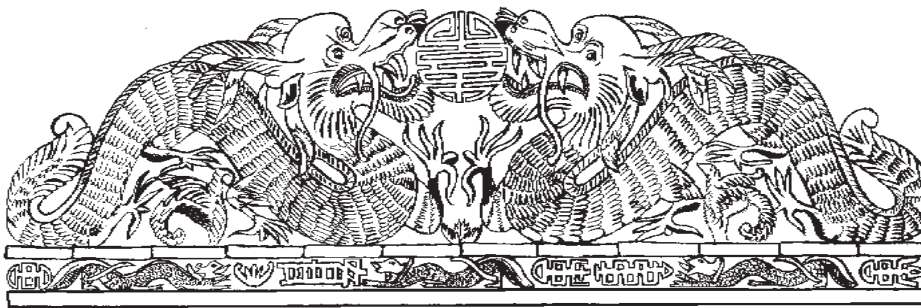


Please note, next issue will be September so submit your articles now..!



Kai Ming Association Newsletter

call: 07831 743737

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Life is about appreciating all experiences equally:
 not feeling excited by good experiences,
 not feeling downcast by bad experiences,
 not feeling disappointed by neutral experiences,
 but feeling an equalness to all experiences.
 Whether you judge it good, bad or neutral is irrelevant;
 the important point is to rest in the nature of experience itself.

Rigdzin Shikpo



KEEPING THE ("YOUR") BALANCE

I read a long time ago that research had found everyone over the age of 55 became more prone to falls. The ability to stay in balance degenerated after this age.
 Never thought about why really, but probably due to muscle wastage I would presume. (Hence the need to keep up exercise even before retirement)
 All down hill after 40 used to be the joke, seems to have moved to the big 50 now.
 This led me to ponder will this still hold true in my case, after 20+ years of Tai Chi.

I did find after the first few years I was much more aware of pulling back my centre of gravity when slipping on wet leaves or ice and did have less falls in these circumstances than previously. That was however before I reached the age in question.

So I decided to take more notice when I climbed on chairs (yes I know, should have used the steps) to change the curtains etc.

To take more care on the steps going down to the garden, and really any situation where I was more at risk from "biting the dust".

This focus on not falling over or missing a step, and keeping in balance had a really strange effect. I FELL OVER!

Even practicing the form, on the kicks especially, I felt the need to sink lower into my leg (thought I always did) to feel grounded and hold the posture for longer without having to do a quick kick and move to next posture to prevent "wobble" and feel well balanced.

I had not had problems before, but I suddenly developed them.

It was as if the "balance fairy" had cursed me!

So I thought, be logical about this, why should this happen when in actual fact I am focusing far more than usual on "not falling over".

Then as so often happens you are leafing through a book and I saw this sentence ** "The mechanisms that create muscular tension and mental tension work in exactly the same way. Tension depends on the existence of two or more forces or tendencies that continually oppose each other. Move, or stay still? Hang on, or let go?" (this is split in action)

Not rocket science you say, just what we have been told by our teacher from the very first training session, let go of tension in the muscles, sink into them, if you notice tension returning relax more, let go more, enabling you to find your natural root and connection with the ground

beneath you, in front of you, behind you and both sides. When you move you move into balance every time. Seek stillness within movement.

I was a Ward Sister on an elderly patient's rehabilitation unit and day hospital and looking back I realise why once they had had one fall my "ladies" seemed to have more.

The fear of repeating their accident and injuring themselves again created massive tension in their wasted muscles, the centre of gravity was difficult to control and leaning forward or more often backward to try and prevent falling was a major problem for the physios and nurses.



It sometimes took them a long time to regain their confidence and accept that fear created tension and anxiety in the body and this led to being prone to falling again.

In a not to dissimilar way I was creating tension by focusing too much on "keeping" my balance instead of moving naturally as I had been during all my years of Tai Chi practice.

So the secret is don't analyze too much, just **BE** - trust in your Tai Chi practice and principals.

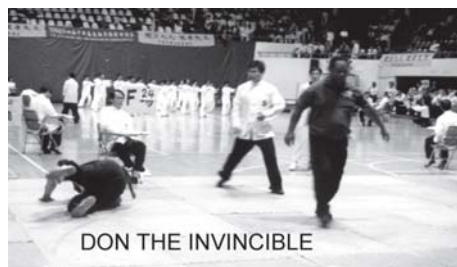
If it's not broken why try and fix it?

** Sentence taken from *A TAI CHI IMAGERY WORKBOOK* by MARTIN MELLISH

article by Jenny Peters



ELEMENTS OF COMBATITIVE TAI CHI CHUAN



Tai Chi initially became widely noted as a combat art when Yang Luchan brought it to Beijing where he taught at the imperial court.

Yang was challenged many times, but no one ever came even close to defeating him. His skill was so great that the martial artists bestowed on him the title "Yang the Invincible"

His grandson Yang Chengfu continued to promote the art until it spread far and wide. He taught his art in a combat style which also can be used to strengthen the body.

In his book *THE PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF TAIJQUAN* he wrote—

In taijiquan, the ability to cultivate oneself physically and spiritually, but not to defend oneself, is civil accomplishment. The ability to defend oneself, but not to cultivate oneself, is martial accomplishment. The soft taiji method is the true taiji method. The ability to teach the art of self-cultivation and self-defence, both cultivation and application, is complete civil and martial taiji

Adapted from Douglas Wile's translation.

As we all know Taiji is very different from the hard-hitting, external martial forms. So what is combat taiji? It is not about great power even though it is capable of generating great power.

The Classics state clearly that the art is not based on great power.

Once when Yang Banhou had bested an opponent and was proud of himself because of it, Yang Luchan, his illustrious father, pointed to Banhou's torn sleeve and said that he was happy that Banhou had won but had he used taiji taiji to win? The implication is, of course, that a torn sleeve is a sign of inappropriately used power. Yang Luchan's own boxing was so soft that it was nicknamed "cotton fist" or "neutralizing fist."

It was once berated as not being combat effective because of its softness, a point which Yang refuted by promptly defeating the antagonist!

The anatomical weapons in taiji are not rigorously hardened as in external styles of martial arts. This is because it is not hardness of the weapon but the energy within it that is the effecting component.

If the correct structure of the anatomical weapon is maintained, then structurally it will be substantial and able to deliver telling blows with much power without recourse to hardening.

The appropriate and efficient use of strength usually does not require great excess to obtain the desired effect.

The principles behind the adage of "deflecting a thousand pounds with four ounces" hold true in taiji.

The aim of Taiji as a martial art is to stop violence conclusively without recourse to more violence.

Most of the time, violence is redirected against itself or rendered ineffectual. Hence, taiji practitioners usually overpower their opponents by just turning their own violence against themselves, educating them rather than hurting them. Violence begets violence. In taiji practice it is shown that violence acts against itself.

Can taiji therefore be used as an attacking art? It can, but violence should only be the last recourse, never the first.

Ego has no place in taiji as it gets in the way of efficient practice and usage of the art.

Taiji is an art to prolong life and health in peace and combat.

In its practice as combat, peace is learnt and cherished.

We learn the art in the hope that we never have to use it in a violent situation.

Our knowledge of violence and the consequences of it hopefully have made us choose to avoid the destructive paths in life.

DISCIPLESHIP IN TAI CHI

From time to time members of the Association ask about Discipleship, what it is and its origins, so I thought it may be of interest to students and instructors to give a short overview of the history of this traditional honour.



Knowledge, skills, and arts have been traditionally passed down from father to son, generation to generation. Master to disciple.

For a master to bestow discipleship on a student, it is said is the highest honour he can give, as this carries with it great responsibility.

BAI SHI describes a bond that has been formed between the chosen student and the Master.

It shows that the relationship between them has reached a high level of understanding.

Some level has been reached that goes beyond mutual respect, admiration, dedication, and duty.

It is an honour that is not available to all.

Masters consider carefully many facets of a student's personality and ability.

Ability to absorb and understand refined concepts at the highest levels. That they have a good character, excellent morals, and their manner is professional.

They must realise that they are carry the responsibility of being the representative of their teacher, his ongoing well being, to protect his reputation and all he holds dear within the art and traditions he is passing on to them.

"Student" in Chinese Arts has a deeper meaning. Those on the path to discipleship are

Initially called "Moon San" in Cantonese.

Newsflash

we are currently working on a new tai chi & chi-kung DVD for rehabilitation. This DVD will focus on working with people with life-long conditions including but not limited to cardiac failure, MS, CFS/ME, chronic pain. The DVD will include - mindfulness based Chi-kung, fa-soong gong and relaxation. for details keep your eye on www.paintingtherainbow.co.uk

In ancient times they were taught by senior students and only occasionally by the Master.

As they progressed they would spend more time with the Master, slowly increasing their levels of ability and understanding.

In more recent times the teacher is constantly assessing their commitment, dedication, ability to absorb increasing levels of training, and importantly character.

The teacher is also very aware of his responsibility to only honour worthy students with the "gifts" that have been passed to him from his Master. Many martial art families in the past only passed down their secrets within the family, father to son, and therefore "outsiders" however keen stood little chance of gaining the whole transmission.

However, some modern masters now take a more enlightened and practical approach, and although still very selective realise the need to pass down the treasures of Tai Chi Chuan to ensure future generations can benefit.

They will become a member of his "family" just as important as blood family and accept in full all that entails.

Disciple in the English dictionary — a follower of the doctrines of a teacher or a school of thought.

In Chinese, its meaning is more specific and focused.

Also known as "Bai Moon Di Zi" (indoor/inside disciple)

The "Bai Shi" ceremony of acceptance of becoming a disciple and a member of the Masters "family" is therefore an important occurrence in your Tai Chi journey.

In Chinese the word disciple comprises of two characters.

"Di" meaning younger brother and "Zi" meaning child.

The master is now taken as your martial arts "father" and the disciple will now be shown the finer points of the art ("Dim Jing").

Blockages in their earlier training unlock themselves as they gain a deeper understanding.

A disciple carries the knowledge that they have been chosen by their teacher to have passed to them "his treasures", trusting them to continue the transmissions to future generations and hopefully enhance them by new ideas and philosophies which will bring new insight and change so that the art is preserved and sustained.

WHAT IS SAN SHOU?

In addition to the Yang tai chi Shou Shou we practice, there is a wider system practiced that is sometimes referred to as San Da (free fighting) or San Shou (free hand) which originates from China. It is a full contact fighting art incorporating punching, kicking, locks and takedown techniques.

It appears to have been developed because of a need for a common set of rules to enable practitioners of China's many wildly different fighting styles to have a fair contest.

At first these were brutal bouts sometimes ending in death or at least serious injury to the combatants. Over many years these rules have evolved in order to bring more civilised norms of behaviour.



These days although San Shou bouts can still be very hard, they are rigorously organized to hopefully minimise the risks of serious injury as previously happened. Combatants wear gloves and are prevented from attacking vital parts of the body. The traditional raised platform (lei tai) upon which the bouts are held has remained. This is one of the distinctive features of the art. There are no ropes around the platform, which means that firstly there are no corners to hide in, and secondly that removing the opponent from the platform becomes an objective.

As a consequence of San Shou's original role as a set of

compromise rules, is that the number of techniques that can come into play is very wide.

Kicks range from low to high with extra points awarded for straight back kicks to the body. Throws come in an even wider variety of forms. Events have seen a plethora of dumping techniques using legs, hips, body.

Opponents now have to be very alert at all times, ready to expect the unexpected!

Whilst San Shou incorporates a wider variety of techniques than most martial arts competitions, it is not literally free fighting. There is no ground fighting or submission and takedown techniques (which must be executed with gloved hands and therefore no grip on the opponent) are rewarded most when executed cleanly. This reflects the ancient wisdom that it is better not to go to ground in a real fight!

San Shou has progressed since 1999 when San Shou London commenced staging organized competitions open to practitioners of all arts with agreed rules.

散手

The hope was to eventually develop full contact in the UK to internationally competitive standards, with the philosophy of "more than just a fight". Not just another brutal UFC or showy WWF.

The Weak
wait for opportunity to arrive

The Strong
search for and grasp opportunity

The Wise
create their OWN opportunity.

Meditation part 2



It is at this stage that we start to experience the physical discomfort, the wandering 'monkey' mind, shopping lists, previous hurts, future fantasies etc. A long time ago, the Buddhists outlined a helpful system for understanding and working with these phenomena, collectively known as the 'hindrances'.

They are grouped in to five:

1. Desire for sense experience (Craving):- food, sex etc
2. Sloth and Torpor:- sleepiness, heaviness, can't be bothered...
3. Doubt and Indecision:- Sceptical, doubt regarding ability...
4. Ill Will:- Irritation, anger, hatred.
5. Restlessness and Anxiety:- Physical inability to settle, mental worry...

We all experience these from time to time, sometimes we just can't let go of something, can't relax, sometimes we fall asleep, sometimes we keep being distracted by cars or coughs or other people shuffling. One needs commitment and perseverance! It helps to have a 'point' – a reason for doing it and we'll discuss how complex and paradoxical this is in a future article.

Meanwhile, there are 'antidotes' to these 'hindrances'. However, ideally, you would undertake a 'course' or an apprenticeship and work for many years on these as one is never truly 'free' of them. Even if you attained 'enlightenment' (a Buddhist concept and aim of meditation if done for spiritual

development) you would still have a physical body to work with, relationships to manage and washing up to do!

This is summed up in a wonderful book entitled 'After the Ecstasy, the Laundry' by Jack Kornfield – and Buddhist Psychologist and teacher.

The antidotes are:

1. Awareness – Noticing the problem/hindrane, acknowledging it.
2. Sky like attitude – Allowing your awareness to be bigger than the hindrance so that it just fades or passes by (like a cloud).
3. Cultivating the opposite – compassion to challenge ill will, resolve and commitment to challenge doubt and indecision.
4. Consider the consequences.
5. Suppression – conscious will.

None of this is easy, in fact this may just be one of the hardest things you ever do! Be a 'Human Being, not a Human Doing!

However, if you want to steer clear of any 'ism' – then there are many wonderful books and teachings by Jon Kabat-Zinn – author of 'Full Catastrophe Living' – he developed a stress management clinic in the USA – his work is well researched and is now influencing Psychotherapists here in the UK.

Next month I'll discuss how we can incorporate this into our Qigong practice and talk about the Daoist perspective on meditation.

I am happy to answer any questions, sign post people or provide references etc.

Mark Walker
Instructor (Sutton)

Following the introductory article in a previous newsletter, I would like to discuss some of the most common difficulties people have when starting a formal meditation practice. In future articles I will explore some of the spiritual systems underpinning the practice (Buddhist, Daoist, Hindu) and their links with Qigong, (Neigong), Taichi and Martial Arts in general. Before that however, it is really worth 'getting a feel' for the practice.



So, after you have spent time finding an appropriate place to sit, organising your time, buying some incense, set up a shrine and told the family (all optional – you really can do it anywhere with no special objects – but sometimes a little ritual helps!) then it is time to actually just do it!

TAI CHI

Training Weekend
23rd July - 25th July 2011

Hopwood Community Centre - Redditch Road, Hopwood, Alvechurch

You can attend one, two or three days to enable you to focus on your areas of interest.

Booking form in the May newsletter or ask your instructor.

This years focus will be on **Gettin' the TRUE measure of it all** as this has been the most requested across the classes; understanding correct form movement to truly apply form and function.

We will work on not just the shape of the postures but the underlying function. We will look at the tai chi classics and apply them to whole body movement, intrinsic strength, kinetic and potential energy, spatial awareness, agility and mindfulness. The weekend is open to all levels and will give everyone a chance to deepen their knowledge and love for the art of tai chi chuan

