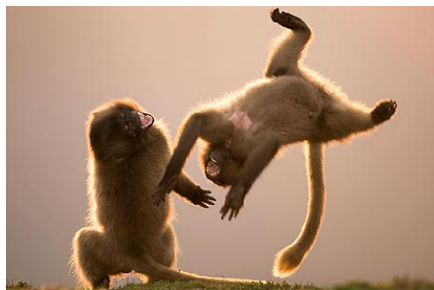


## Kai Ming Association Newsletter

call: 07831 743737

<http://www.kaiming.co.uk>

e-mail us: [markpeters@kaiming.co.uk](mailto:markpeters@kaiming.co.uk)



The Song of Push Hands (*Da Shou Ge*) is a Taiji Quan classic written in the form of a traditional style poem. Describing basic push hands principles and skills, it is among the earliest writings on Taiji Quan and respected by all practitioners.

### *Da Shou Ge* of Wang Zong Yue

Wang Zong Yue is widely believed to have made major and lasting contributions to the development of Taiji Quan principle. His Discussion of Taiji Quan Theory (*Taiji Quan Lun*) is generally regarded as the foremost classic on Taiji Quan principle. Besides that article, he is also believed to have written “On the Various Names of Taiji Quan (*Taiji Quan Shi Ming*)”, “The Song of Thirteen Postures (*Shi San Shi Ge*)”, as well as “*Da Shou Ge* (The Song of Push Hands).” Although today we do not know the details of his life, he is believed to have been an excellent Taiji Quan master.

The Manual of Taiji Quan of Wang Zong Yue was found in Wuyang County of Henan province in 1856.

Wu Chen Qing, the county governor at the time, discovered it in Yandian, and gave this copy to his younger brother Wu Yu Xiang, a student of Yang Lu Chan and Chen Qing Ping.

Wu later passed it onto his nephew and student Li Yi Yu. Li made four hand-written copies and distributed them to his brother and students.

Today these copies are the only versions available. Wang’s 6 sentence version of *Da Shou Ge* goes like this:

*“Peng (Ward off), lu (rollback), ji (push), and an (press) should be practiced seriously. Follow your opponent whichever direction he is heading, making it difficult for him to find an opening for attack.”*

#### **Note:**

1 *Peng*, *lu*, *ji*, and *an* are the basic push hands skills. Sometimes they are called *si shou* – four hands (it is common to call each skill a “hand”), or *si zheng* – four cardinal directions (the four basic directions in Bagua, which is part of the Taiji principle).

There is a practice routine for these four skills in every style of Taiji Quan.

People believe it to be a classical form passed down from a very early time. From practicing this form one can understand the essence of basic applied Taiji Quan skill. *Peng*, *lu*, *ji*, and *an* are the most basic Taiji Quan tactical skills, so here they stand for Taiji Quan skills in general.

2 Specifically the Chinese words used here are “follow up and down”, some interpret that to mean “when the movements of upper and lower body are linked together.” However, in classical Chinese, the phrase refers to all movements in general, regardless of direction.

#### **Analysis:**

Together *peng*, *lu*, *ji*, and *an* form the basic push hands practice routine, the most common and at the same time the most important applied practice in Taiji Quan. Although the movements themselves are not very complex, correct practice of these skills brings great benefits. Usually people say hard practice of these

movements will lead to the beginning of one’s understanding of Taiji Quan, so every group pushes their students to practice this routine long and hard.

It is said one should do a thousand circles of *peng-lu-ji-an* push hands per day for three years before learning any other skill. (of course you have to go to work as well!)

During practice, you should pay great attention to all of the details. Be especially careful about the application of internal components – *shen*, *yi*, *qi*, and *jin* with your movements. Usually there are several stages to the practice: First, you should learn to do all movements correctly, before practicing long and hard. You should concentrate on relaxing and making the movements smooth. Maintain constant but light contact with your partner, **do not use brute force. Please remember this is not a real fight but practice**, where the objective is to acquire basic skills.

The emphasis is not on winning or losing, but on using Taiji Quan principles in all your movements.

Training this way will help you develop sensitivity and the ability to relax deeply. That in turn will help you develop a true ability to follow. If you can really feel and follow your opponent, he will have a difficult time finding a chance to get you. Then you will have a greater chance to get him. This is a very important concept in Taiji Quan.

According to the Daoist wuxing principle, when one stands stable and centered, one becomes like the earth. Everything comes from the earth, so the four basic skills are generated. Traditionally, the following attributes are ascribed according to wuxing: *peng* in north, its attribute is water;

lu in south, its attribute is fire; ji in east, its attribute is wood; and an in west, its attribute is metal. In this way the four basic tactics correspond to the primary Bagua, where *peng* is *kan*; *lu* is *li*; *ji* is *zhen*; and *an* is *dui*.

Accordingly, the technical attributes of the skills must follow their corresponding principles.

*"Let him bring overwhelming force against me, I will lure him to make the first move and then use only four ounces force to move a thousand pounds".*

#### **Note:**

1 The Chinese word here is qian dong, which means to use a small force to move a large object under specific circumstances. A good example for this idea is looping a ring through the nose of a bull, then even a small boy can control a large animal. The key is the placement of the ring, otherwise it will be very difficult to control the bull.

#### **Analysis:**

A common mistake for a lot of people is that they focus too much on the "using four ounces to move a thousand pounds" part. That alone is not sufficient, pay attention to the phrase "lure him to make the first move". Only when a large weight or force gets moving do you get a chance to find the weak point and move it.

This is what Taiji Quan skill seeks to accomplish.

An even worse case of misunderstanding occurs when people interpret this phrase to mean "use only four ounces to defeat a thousand pounds." That does not make sense and confuses people. In reality, only when you can apply your force at the right time in the right direction can you have a chance to use small force to defeat a large force.

*"Lure him in to fall into emptiness, then integrate and release your whole-body power (he) to throw him down. Use zhan (sticking up), nian (adhering to), lian (linking to), and sui (following with), and never do diu (lose connection) or ding (resist directly against a force or too much)".*

These last two sentences will be discussed in the next issue of the newsletter.....

My heart in middle age found the Way  
And I came to dwell at the foot of this mountain.  
When the spirit moves, I wander alone  
Amid beauty that is all for me.....  
I will walk till the water checks my path.  
Then I will sit and watch the rising clouds-  
And some day meet an old wood-cutter  
And talk and laugh and never return.  
WANG WEI



#### **Tai Chi Chainsaw**

I was holding the logs steady while Bob cut them into six inch lengths with the chainsaw. The logs had to be short to fit into a tiny wood burner, but this put my hands very close to the chainsaw causing some apprehensive tension. I needed to hold tight because the saw would catch the log and snatch it frighteningly fiercely. So... how does a tai chi student deal with tension? *Relax!*

So, I relaxed, held the log with *soft hands, dropped my elbows and my own weight...* and the next cut was cleaner and quicker, with no 'pulling' from the saw. I was still only six inches from a bad movie nightmare of an accident but the effect was so positive and I felt much safer. An interesting lesson.

The next chainsaw job was to cut my own woodpile. Circumstance had it that I was working on my own this time, but I thought I'd learnt the basics of chainsaw handling and with appropriate caution it should be safe.

However there was no one to hold the logs steady and no soft ground to cut down into. Two fat tree stumps positioned just so looked more or less good enough to hold a log steady... Mindfully the lone student took a good stance, slightly wider than usual, and lowered the blade into the log's *centre*. Not quite the same as *push hands*, but even a petrol driven 28 inch chainsaw can give feedback and any unwanted movement in the log could be felt and corrected. In only a couple of hours more than a ton of tree trunks and branches was cut into ten inch lengths (my wood burner is bigger!). Now they needed splitting.

A log maul is like an axe but with a 50% heavier and thicker head so that it opens the cut as a wedge would. *Huang's fourth loosening exercise* teaches us to drop our weight. (This is the 'warm-up' where we bring our hands together in front of the chest, and, 'rolling' the hands down, soften the knees and drop the whole body weight. If you don't know it, or need revision, ask your instructor – it is in the syllabus.) No arm circling with a heavy maul (please!), but dropping the whole body weight whilst standing square to the target, and with a keen eye on the 'centre', where I wanted the log to split, it worked *effortlessly*. Six pounds of sharpened wedge on the end of a metre long shaft doesn't need any extra effort to split a log if it is hit square in the right place... until I got to the knotty bits, where the grain is tighter and not straight. 'Mindfulness' turned into 'bloody-minded' and brute force took over but that isn't the point here...

With the yard covered in split logs the working conditions were becoming hazardous, but it is good to keep changing any repetitive activity, so I set to stacking them. Cut and split they are no longer heavy but there is a lot of bending and twisting in picking them up, not to mention avoiding tripping over them. Of course *Snake creeps down* to pick up the logs and turning correctly, without twisting knees, to face the pile squarely for stacking them was the solution to this problem.

After half a day's work I had a very impressive stack of fire wood, a self-satisfied grin and no aches, pains or fatigue. A very useful reminder that Tai Chi principles can, and should, be applied to everything we do.

Nigel Holt – instructor Erdington and Handsworth



### **My Tai Chi Journey by Leigh Mathers (Little Aston student)**

“Foorwarrd...baackwarrd...ward off riiiiight!” Raj’s voice was as hypnotic and warm as the Indian Ocean lapping rhythmically against the surrounding beach, as he guided us through the rudiments of what I would come to know as The Form.

This was my first taste of tai chi.

My husband and I were on honeymoon in heavenly Mauritius. The wonderful Raj was quite possibly the most relaxed man I had ever met. He had a wise, serene, “guru” air about him, was stupendously supple (he also taught yoga), possessed a permanent smile, and chanted instructions to us in a very long-vowelled Indian accent.

We were, believe it or not, the only participants in his tai chi class. We occupied a private niche in the hotel gardens, where a heady brew of floral scents suffused the late afternoon air. I had never experienced such utter contentment.

It was over a year later, in August 2008, when I heard that a new tai chi class had begun local to me, in the somewhat less exotic surroundings of Little Aston Village Hall.

Now admittedly utter contentment had been very easy to achieve in Mauritius, but I did go some way towards replicating the sense of wellbeing during that hour in Little Aston.

People talk a lot these days about going on a journey, be it literal or metaphorical. I embarked on my personal tai chi journey that evening. To the regular soundtrack of soft Chinese percussion music, I began to learn the 37-stage Cheng Man Ching

Form – in obviously far more intricate detail than during half an hour with Raj among the jasmine flowers.

The standard posture took some getting used to initially: feet shoulder-width apart, knees slightly bent, pelvis tucked under, head lifted as if pulled upright by an invisible string. Some of the exercises involved adopting positions which probably looked extremely silly yet felt entirely comfortable. I was soon balancing wobble-free on one leg while twirling the other ankle for several minutes.

I remember the first time I rubbed my hands together then held my palms an inch apart to feel the flow of energy between them. Oh yes, there was a definite force, as though something tangible and spongy was held here, like a ball of dough. It was an electrifying and lovely feeling.

After the half-hour warm up the group split, with one instructor, Neil, taking us beginners (just two of us that week) aside to start the basics, while his colleague Mark progressed the more advanced members – who had been attending the class since April – further through the Form.

At the end of the class I felt so alive, yet in a different way to when I’m hiking over hills (I’m a keen walker too). These exercises were neither aerobic nor gymnastic; in fact I had barely moved from my spot, but it was all about internal energy. Mine was positively surging around my body.

It took a year to learn the form in full, averaging at one new step per week – steps which glory in such names as Single Whip, Repulse Monkey and Carry Tiger to the Mountain. Once learned, each move is repeated and repeated and refined to the nth degree, with the focus on different facets. Patience is not so much a virtue as a prerequisite in tai chi. This is an art that can take a lifetime to practise and perfect.

I have well and truly fallen in love with tai chi. The benefits to my health and general wellbeing have been enormous. It can’t be a coincidence that I haven’t (touch lots of wood) had a day’s illness in three years.

I also find I sleep much better on “tai chi nights” (Wednesdays), and that just 10 minutes of practice a day – a routine I try and adhere to – takes me out of myself and calms me beyond belief. The intricate moves require such intent concentration that all thoughts of everyday stresses are temporarily pushed out of the mind. I am forever discovering inventive ways to incorporate tai chi into my daily life (a spot of Standing Post while waiting for the kettle to boil). I am more conscious of my posture and balance; I feel physically stronger; I try, as often as I can remember, to “breathe abdominally!” I would like to say a huge thank you to Neil and Mark for being such inspirational instructors! Though I won’t be ruling out future excursions to Mauritius to revisit Raj



### ***Bring a friend month.***

Last year we offered bring a friend for free week and was well received so this year we are offering BRING A FRIEND FREE MONTH so they too can experience tai chi and share in your enjoyment and discoveries. This offer is valid for the month of May.

Quinoa (pronounced keenwah) is a small off-white seed, grown in South America. It is highly nutritious, contains more protein than other grains and all eight essential amino acids. It is also rich in iron, magnesium and Vitamin E, is low in fat and most of its oil is unsaturated, providing essential fatty acids. Which explains why it is regarded as a superfood. Quinoa is easily digested, having none of the bloating properties of wheat, and is usually eaten as an alternative to rice and pasta.

Now the political bit: "While demand for quinoa has given a lifeline to Bolivia's farmers, the native population, no longer able to afford a staple of the national diet, is facing the threat of malnutrition." writes Adam Sherwin in the Independent's i-paper (no.104). The solution: it grows in cold climates, such as Britain's, and costs considerably more than wheat to buy: approx £5 per kilo. Perhaps it would make a good diversification crop.

## COOKING QUINOA

Remember:

1. Quinoa increases in volume 3 - 4 times when cooked. 500g will feed the whole street!
2. Always wash off the bitter saponins coating the seeds before cooking.

Place 2 heaped tablespoonsful (50g) into a sieve and wash with boiling water.

Add to 200ml of water, bring to the boil, then simmer for 20 mins, stirring a couple of times to prevent sticking. Don't burn the pan!

When cooked the quinoa germinates (the little white germ is clearly visible) and the seed becomes transparent.

## USING QUINOA

Quinoa, in spite of being a superfood, does not look appetising and has little flavour, but it can be used in many ways:

Heat a little olive oil, add lemon zest and washed and drained quinoa. Saute until the aroma of lemon is strong and the seeds have 'popped'. Add dried fruit (e.g. raisins, currants, cranberries OR chopped pineapple, chopped mint and pine nuts) stirring to coat. Add orange OR pineapple juice and steep until all juice is absorbed. Serve for breakfast. Add yoghurt or cream and serve for pudding.

For savoury dishes cook washed quinoa in vegetable stock.

Add 1-2 tbs washed quinoa to soups and casseroles whilst cooking. It will absorb fluid and act as thickening.

Add previously cooked quinoa to home-made soups that take less than 20 mins to cook.

Mix cooked quinoa with salad vegetables for a satisfying lunch.

Mix cooked quinoa with winter vegetables for supper.

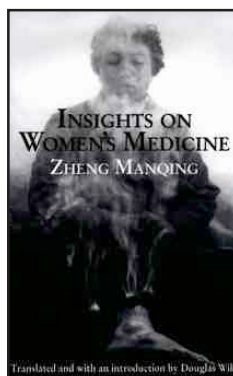
Spread cooked quinoa over the base of a small roasting tin, cover with a layer of sliced, chopped and blanched vegetables, drizzle with olive oil and roast.

Quinoa does not leave you feeling bloated the way wheat does; if you replace some of the wheat in your diet with quinoa you lose weight too. Do some experimenting. Bon appetit!!

All the best ~ Janice Rawlinson  
Bournville Student



*Cheng Man-ching  
on Women's Health*



The complete Insights on Women's Medicine has just been released, translated by Douglas Wile, who also writes an extensive introduction to the work, giving the historical context of twentieth-century Chinese medicine and Cheng's place in it. The book is published by Sweet Ch'i Press.

Visit the CMC biography blog at:  
<http://chengbiography.blogspot.com/>

## Training for 2011

Workshops are held in Hopwood Village Hall, Hopwood, South Birmingham unless otherwise stated.

As with all our workshops *we offer a £5 discount from the listed price when courses are paid in for full* at least a month in advance. Places are limited and a £10 deposit is required to book your place.

June 5<sup>th</sup> – **Fan Short form** – this form was developed from the long form as taught by Master Tan Ching Ngee. The form holds to the essence of the original but enables the learner to apply the skills in a shorter time. It is open to all; if you need a fan please order in advance. Wood and silk fans are £15, Metal and silk fans are £20. Please ask your instructor if you'd like to see a fan beforehand.

Spaces will be strictly limited so book and pay your deposit as soon as possible.

10am to 4pm £70 members and £90 non-members

June 19<sup>th</sup> – **Tai Chi Cane short form**  
There has been a great deal of interest in the tai chi cane (walking stick) but some worry that it is too long to remember and practice. With this in mind we have developed a shorter form that keeps to the essence of the original plus makes learning and applying more accessible.

Spaces will be strictly limited so book and pay your deposit as soon as possible.

10am to 4pm £70 members and £90 non-members

July 23<sup>rd</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> – **Tai Chi camp** – Last year's camp was a great success with people attending from other clubs as well as ours. The focus will continue to be deepening our application of Cheng Man Ching's approach to tai chi chuan. Other areas covered will include mindful walking and form, tai chi short stick, key principles (e.g. dong-dang and use of 4 ounces). More details to follow; again please ask your instructor as booking forms will be available in the New Year.