

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

# TAI CHI CHUAN

**& INTERNAL ARTS**

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Tai Chi Caledonia

Walking the labyrinth

Qigong – a history pt2

Tai chi styles

Spirals in qigong

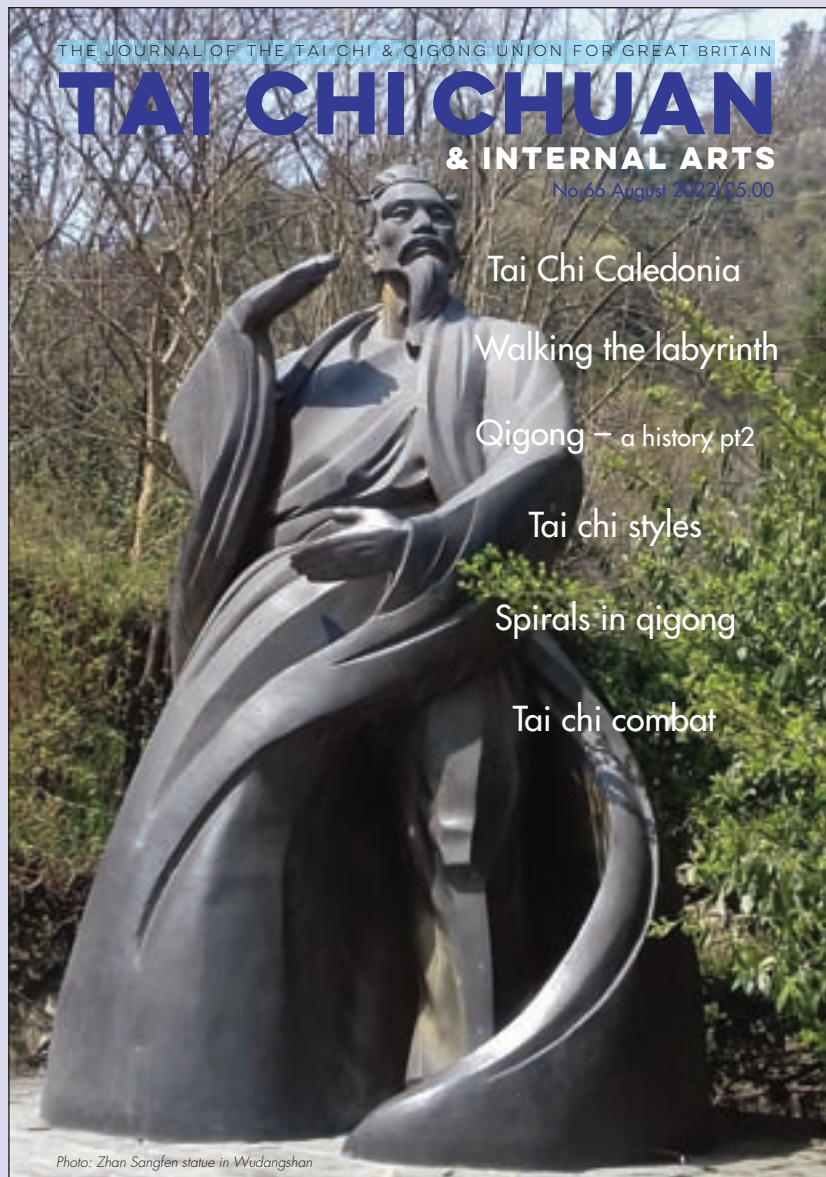
Tai chi combat



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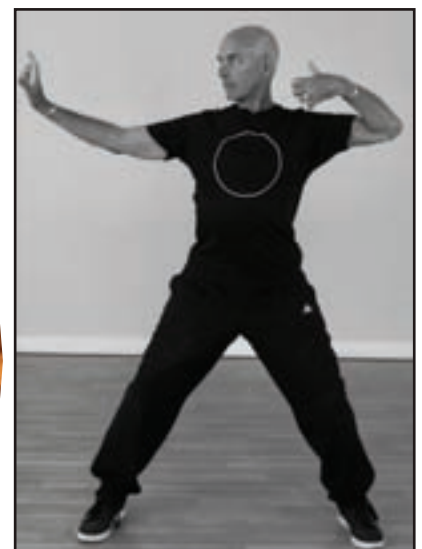
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# Comment



Journalists call this time of year ‘the silly season’. Parliament is not sitting, people are on holiday, in the main there is nothing happening. Even if there is there aren’t many politicians to question about it. Something for which they are all grateful, I am sure.

Of course, this year there seems to be lots going on: still a war in Ukraine, heatwaves and drought, (at least if you live in the south). As if that were not enough a cost of living crisis with inflation at a level that many people will not have seen in their lifetimes.

As teachers, our problem is the effect this might have on our classes. Even if venues do not increase prices to cover rising energy costs, students, some of whom will be away on holiday right now, may be reluctant to return especially if we, in turn have to raise fees to cover. For some of us there is a day job to pay the bills so the problem should be minimal but many of you who are running classes as a source of income will suffer. We need to hope things will settle down in the autumn but I have not seen any proposal from the government that made the slightest sense. Shaking the magic money tree can only ever work in the short term.

On the up-side, for tai chi people there should be lots happening right now. 2022 is the first full year since 2020 that we have been able to get together without breaking the law. Classes are meeting again and we can do partnerwork, full-contact, some proper training. The weather means that we can practise outside, (not forgetting the sun-screen.) And teachers are able to hold workshops.

In this edition we are reporting on Tai Chi Caledonia, back after a two-year break. Suse Coon reports for TCC&IA. It seems that it was a great event and, as always, there was international attendance. We have a lot of other good stuff this month: tai chi combat reveals the need for the right attitude and the right training. My original master moved over from shaolin to tai chi and boy could he fight. And if you are looking for a new spiritual experience how about walking the labyrinth? Don’t worry about your claustrophobia, it is all above ground.

And from the regulars Marnix Wells discusses the various tai chi styles while Gordon Faulkner concludes his history of qigong and Peter Deadman discusses spirals in qigong.

*John Roper*

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## TAI CHI CHUAN & INTERNAL ARTS

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Editorial address: 14 Greenstead Gardens, Woodford Green IG8 7EX  
editor@taichimag.org 07967 666794 www.taichimag.org

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# Matters to consider

It is hard to believe that this is our 6th issue since going digital, starting with the 30th anniversary edition (issue 61). The new format from issue 63 was in response to members requests for clearer sections. John Roper and Suse Coon took over at issue 63, using more images and adding hyperlinks which I feel is really bringing it alive. Please do let us know your thoughts.

## AGM live on zoom Saturday 8th October

We've held off announcing an AGM as we had hoped to offer it face-to-face this year. The last AGM was the first ever live on zoom and had 70+ attend which is large by any AGM standards. The aim was to offer a mix of face-to-face and zoom, but it seems most sensible to just run zoom only again. Members will receive a mailshot to formally announce the date and to ask members to submit questions and interest in attending.

## We are a Community Interest Company

The 'community interest' part of our CIC status means we are not style specific nor attempting to set one above another but are focused on quality improvement as a whole. Meaning we support our members' needs and those of the public. The CIMSPA project is part of this as it will increase the public's awareness of tai chi and qigong in the areas of wellbeing and rehabilitation. It is not intended to restrict traditional practitioners rather support development in a sector prone to poor understanding. Next will be the addition of tai chi and qigong to the CNHC and further TCUGB-led research.

We are looking to offer TCUGB member-led workshops and CPD events; some areas suggested are intro to TCM, anatomy and physiology, safeguarding and cross-style events. We would be interested to hear members' views. What do you feel would benefit instructor members and students?

## Encourage students to join the TCUGB

The TCUGB has long been just for instructors. Students only really benefited from buying the magazine which you may sell in class. But our students are the future of the arts, and their input and experiences can benefit everyone. We believe now is the time to encourage students to join and play their part. They can join as 'student members', ordinary membership is open to those practitioners who are not instructors, as the site states in the 'how to join' section.

## TCUGB event 2023

Feedback from a number of members is that they have missed us running TCUGB-led events and workshops so we are looking to 2023 to resume some of these. Bob Lowey has taken on the role of regional officer coordinator and has been in contact with those expressing an interest. Bob can be emailed at [qiongtauk@btinternet.com](mailto:qiongtauk@btinternet.com)

## Website updates

I'm not sure how often you visit the TCUGB website.

We do listen to your feedback and have made some site updates for ease of access, including a newsletters page to catch up past issues, a resources page – with Par-Q forms and more. Please let us know what you'd like adding. Also a past articles section from magazines before we went digital.



**Mark Peters**

A new qigong section has been added and the tai chi section is about to get a full refresh.

## A deeper, more interactive, experience

Members may know that, in recent years, the union has run at a loss. It has been living beyond it's means and magazine-related costs were the biggest part of this. The move to digital has helped the union to stay in business and achieve its goals. But, it's not just about cost cutting (although that is necessary). It is also about bringing the magazine and newsletter up to date to better serve our members in the 21st century.

How many times have you read an article and thought "Ooh this is interesting! I must do a bit more reading on this"? But you never get around to it. Or thought "hmmm...I'm not 100% sure what these photos are showing me" and so, lose interest in the article? We are excited that our move to digital is changing this.

We encourage authors to include hyperlinks in their articles which then become 'live' in the digital version. For example: maybe a link to a video of a technique or a form. Or a link to more information for a deeper understanding. The chance to read about something in the magazine – follow a link to practise it – come back to the article and continue.... We hope this will be of benefit and add value for the reader. We are looking forward to finding out together. 🌐

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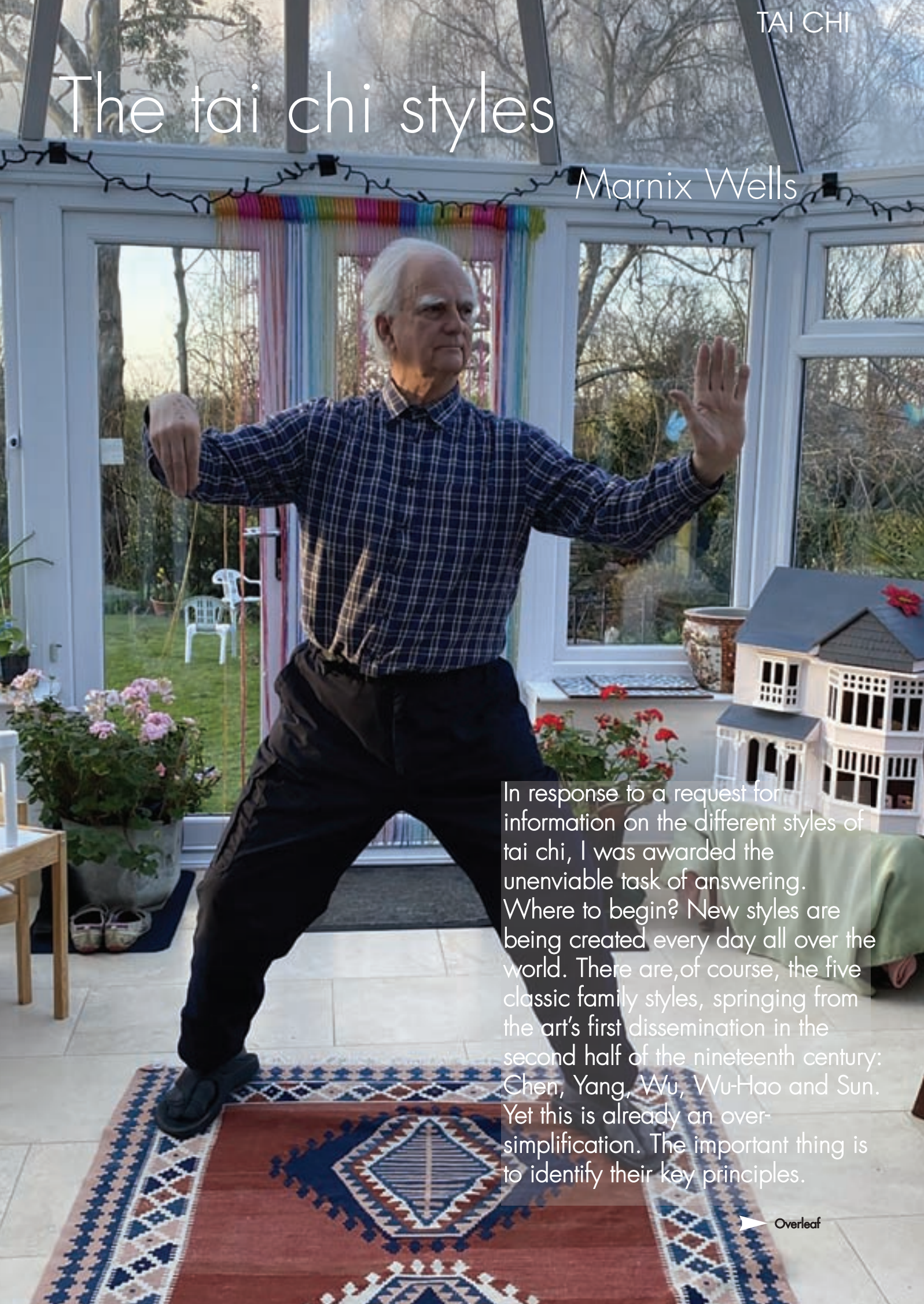


Photography: Jennifer Scott. #taichicaledonia2022



# The tai chi styles

Marnix Wells



In response to a request for information on the different styles of tai chi, I was awarded the unenviable task of answering. Where to begin? New styles are being created every day all over the world. There are, of course, the five classic family styles, springing from the art's first dissemination in the second half of the nineteenth century: Chen, Yang, Wu, Wu-Hao and Sun. Yet this is already an oversimplification. The important thing is to identify their key principles.



## 1. Martial Medicine

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

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

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

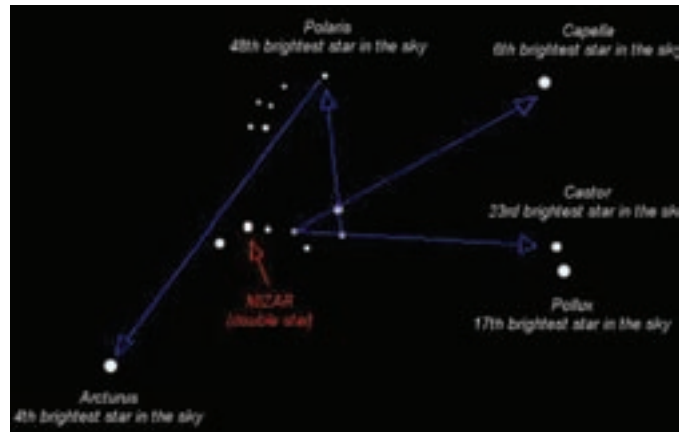


**Figure 2a. Chén style Tàijí Standing Meditation posture, clearing the mind for infinite potentiality; and erect starting posture ‘Vajrapāni Pounding Mortar’, facing the North Pole Star reverently to receive ‘central energy’.** (Chén Xin prefaced 1919. i: 2a-3a, 177-179; 3b-4a, 180-181)

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

## 2. Taichi and the Cosmos

The art of Chen, modified by Yang, was first taught as ‘soft boxing’ at Yōngnián where it was identified with an earlier ‘internal school’ of boxing, attributed to syncretistic Daoist recluse Zhang Sanfeng (ca. 1400?) of Mt. Wudang (Húbèi). It was reputed to have overcome the crude force of the Buddhist Shaolín ‘external school’. Then *Tai Chi classics*, by an unknown Wáng Zongyuè, were



**Figure 1. The Dipper/Plough constellation’s seven stars, pointing north to the Pole star, and approximately aligned with bright stars Arcturus on its west and Capella on its east. Taiji is a symbol of the Pole Star as representing the Earth’s central axis.**

allegedly discovered ca. 1854 at Wúyáng (southern Hénnán) and grafted by scholar Wú Yúxiang and Lǐ Yiyú onto Yang’s art and repackaged as ‘tàijí boxing’.

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

Thus, it is an apt description of this art which, though martial by nature, is a tried means of improving health, mental and physical, and strengthening the immune system. It offers a full range of practices for this purpose, all of which are integral to a deeper understanding of the self and body. Abbreviated versions need to be evaluated in terms of a complete ‘work-out’ within the restraints of time and individual capacities. Supplementary qigong ‘warm-up’ exercises are generally combined with form practice.

## 3. Practical Examples

For example, we may compare different versions of the same move as illustrated in the manuals of different schools. As it happens, none are found in Qi Jiguang’s manual but are great resources for qigong. A signal move, used to open and conclude its set is unique to Chén Jiagou (and its off-shoot at nearby Zhàobào), except possibly for Sun’s ‘Crotch Pounding’ (Dāngchuí, no. 85). Its title ‘Buddha Warrior Presents Club’ (Jīngāng Xiànchū) has distinctively Buddhist aspects which may point to a Shaolín origin. It is also known as ‘Vajrapāni Pounds Mortar’. (Figure 3)



**Figure 2c. Qigong ‘Vajrapāni Presents Club’.** (Wéituó Xiànchū, *Yijin Jing*, Meir Shahar 2008: The Shaolin Monastery, University of Hawaii, 161-162)





**Figure 3a. Shàolín's Gold Cock on One Leg, a.k.a. Drunken Immortal Step, with Buddhist monk tonsure. (Xuánji Héshàng, Zhang Kōngzhào: Quán Jing, Quánfā Bèiyào. Shahar 2008: 122)**

A move common to all tai chi styles, is 'Gold Cock on One Leg' (Jinji Dúli), also illustrated in an old Shàolín boxing and acupuncture manual. It is valuable for training balance and in defence a platform for knee strikes, kicks and throws. (Figure 4)

One of the most iconic tai chi moves is 'Waving Hands in Clouds' (Yúnshòu). It is performed with multiple repeats by all styles, in parallel-feet stance by Chén and with side-stepping by others. It is a vital qìgong exercise for directing the arms from the dantián. It can help induce peristalsis bowel movement. "Ankles and knees provide the spring to keep the hips and head

level, the waist provides the ability to turn to the left and right." Carl Bateman 2021: *Sun Style Tai Chi Chuan i.* 133-136) At a recent London workshop, visiting master Chén Xiàowáng taught a full gymnasium to train 'reeling silk' technique in it for a whole hour. (Figure 5, cf. Kinthissa 2009: *Turning Silk, Lunival*, Oxford, ch. 8)

#### 4. The Whole Art

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

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

The earliest five schools share the same basic movements. Yet each reveal considerable divergences of



**Figure 4a. Cloud Hands, Chén Xin ca. 1919.**

interpretation within the same named movement. Every teacher, even of the same lineage, will project their own character in response to their deepening level of understanding and that of their students. Furthermore, each named movement contains a multitude of potential macro- and micro-dynamics which can scarcely be captured on film.

To sum up: Chén Chángxing (1771-1853)'s system is characterised by a greater number of forms, low postures, twining-silk energy (chánsijìng), leaps and explosive releases of power (fàjìng). Yáng

Lùchán (1799-1872) has most emphasis on softness and relaxation with effortless 'uprooting' techniques. Wú Jiànquán (1870-1942) is characterised by a forward leaning, wrestler-like posture. Wú Yúxiang (ca.1812-1880)/Hào Wèizhen (1849-1920) and Sun Lùchán (1861-1933) have a concentrated narrow stance with small movements. Sun related it to Buddhist cultivation in a threesome with the 'internal arts' of straight-line zig-zag advancing xíngyìquán and circle-walking baguàzhāng.

The Yáng solo form has 42 sections, excluding repetitions, of which some comprise two or more parts. Sun has a 97-posture form that includes repetitions. Post-1949 China promoted a 24-move short form. At an advanced level partner forms are taught, both static and stepping (dàiyù). Yáng has an 88-step 'sparring form' (sànshòu). 'Weapons' forms include straight-sword, broadsword, pole, and fan among others. ☯



**Figure 4b. Yáng style Cloud Hands. (cf. Chén Yánlín: Tàijiquán Zhenchuán 104-33)**

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

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



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# The yin-yang in qigong

Peter Deadman



Yin yang in qigong, coiling  
and uncoiling  
"For all [to practise] this Way:  
You must coil, you must contract,  
You must uncoil, you must  
expand,  
You must be firm, you must be  
regular [in this practice]  
*Nei-Yeh* (Inward Training),  
China, 4th century BCE[1]



One of the key characteristics of the Chinese ‘internal’ mind-breath-bodywork tradition, is the practice of lengthening or uncoiling (yang) and settling back or coiling (yin). These movements are performed through the whole elastic body, slowly (in synchronicity with lower abdominal breathing), mindfully, with the minimum of muscular tension and not to our full stretched capacity. Indeed stretching feels like the wrong word since stretching to the limit starts to generate tension. Like many things this follows the Daoist idea of ‘stopping before completion’ (for example stopping eating before we are full or stopping exercise before we are exhausted). As the Daodejing says, “Better stop short than fill to the brim. Oversharpen the blade and the edge will soon blunt.” When teaching qigong, I find the images of the ‘elastic body’, an accordion expanding and closing, or soft waves washing onto and retreating from a sandy beach useful to convey the idea.

**The fascia**

‘Fascia forms a continuous tensional network throughout the human body, covering and connecting every single organ, every muscle, and even every nerve or tiny muscle fiber’.

*Fascia: The Tensional Network of the Human Body, 2012[2]*

Until the latter part of the twentieth century, anatomists tended to consider the animal body in terms of a machine, made up of individual parts that performed specific functions. Nowhere was this more evident than in its perception of body movement, where individual muscles – alone or in combination – were seen to move individual bones and joints. In athletes and body builders, muscular training increasingly sought to isolate these muscles and find ways – using tailored techniques and machines – to train and strengthen them.

“... there is no part of the body, no kind of tissue, no single cell, that is not supplied by the channels [meridians] ...”

In anatomical studies, it was taken for granted that in order to isolate the really important structures – muscles, organs, nerves, blood vessels, bones etc. it was necessary to cut through and push to the side the webby layers of elastic connective tissue that surround every one of these, and indeed permeate every part of the body.

Yet in an astonishing turnaround, this largely ignored, discarded material – the soft fibrous connective tissue within the body that goes under the broad title of the fascia – has become one of the most studied anatomical and physiological phenomena of living bodies.

Fascia has been defined as the ‘biological fabric that holds us together’[3]. It enables the body to respond as a ‘tensegrity structure’ (when one part moves, every other part moves in response), to maintain alignment, balance and structure. This underpins the growing realisation that



**Peter Deadman**

the kind of exercise which best maintains the health of the fascia is one which moves the body as an integrated whole.

When we are young, the fascial tissues show clear folds or undulations which have been compared to elastic springs (or an accordion). This elasticity – which is unrelated to simple muscle strength – gives young humans and young animals springiness and bounce (think of a gazelle’s astonishing leaps on the most delicate and fragile looking legs). As we age, the fascia lose this springiness and the undulations flatten. And when we sit for long periods, or distort our physical alignment and structure through poor posture, repetitive work or leisure activities, patterns are imprinted on the fascia. They no longer glide against each other but form adhesions and become matted, firm and overly dense. This is like the transition from bouncy new wool to thick and tough felt. The consequence is pain, impaired movement, stiffness and poor health. It could therefore be said that as far as movement is concerned, our bodies are as young as our fascia[4].

The good news is that – like muscles – the condition of the fascia can be improved by movement. But the kind of movement that maintains the flexibility of fascia is of a particular type. Pumping iron or cycling will have relatively little effect, and while aerobic exercise will influence the fascia more, the best exercises incorporate fluid, slow, dynamic movements, rhythmically coiling and uncoiling the connective tissue, using a wide variety of movements (rather than one-dimensional ones such as on a rowing machine), spiralling and twisting inwards and outwards, upwards and downwards through the whole body. The aim is a strong, flexible, youthful body that is



less likely to be injured when we play sports, lift and carry, and perform normal daily activities and work[5].

Regularly practising these ways of moving can re-programme the fascia but it is not a fast process and can take up to twenty-four months[6]. This might explain the relatively low take-up of qigong and the internal martial arts in Western countries. It takes time to experience the rich rewards of these traditions – at least compared to the rapid and more immediate payoff of strength training, aerobic training and other forms of exercise, including yoga.

of acupuncture points that lie along them. In this endeavour, however, we risk losing the forest for the trees and forget the entire, complex web of primary, connecting, extraordinary and minute channels and vessels. The image of the body as an elastic web of fascial tissue can be very helpful in understanding the otherwise strange practice of attuning to yinyang by softly lengthening and contracting through the whole body – sometimes for hours on end. But for acupuncturists (for whom invigorating the channels is their daily bread and butter) the image of activating the entire channel/vessel network in the body through mindful movement can be even more profound. 🌀

...like muscles – the condition of the fascia can be improved by movement. But the kind of movement is of a particular type

### The acupuncture perspective

“... there is no part of the body, no kind of tissue, no single cell, that is not supplied by the channels [meridians] ... The channels penetrate the zangfu and the extraordinary fu [i.e. the organs] in the deepest levels of the body and connect with the skin, muscles, flesh, tendons and bones, the head, body and limbs, and the sense organs, linking all the tissues and structures of the body into an integrated whole.” *A Manual of Acupuncture, 1998*[7]

When prospective acupuncturists begin their studies, they can be overwhelmed with the task of learning the pathways of the many different channels and the hundreds

[1] (trans. Harold D. Roth).

[2] Schleip R et al. (Editors), (2012). *Fascia: The Tensional Network of the Human Body. The Science and Clinical Applications in Manual and Movement Therapy* Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh.

[3] *Fascia & Tensegrity Anatomytrains*. Available: <http://www.anatomytrains.com/fascia/>

[4] Barros EM et al. (2002). *Aging of the elastic and collagen fibers in the human cervical interspinous ligaments* The Spine Journal, vol 2(1), pp57-62.

[5] Schleip R and Müller DG (2012). *Training principles for fascial connective tissues: Scientific foundation and suggested practical applications* Journal of Bodywork & Movement Therapies, vol 17(1), pp1-13.

[6] Schleip R and Müller DG (2012). *Training principles for fascial connective tissues: Scientific foundation and suggested practical applications* Journal of Bodywork & Movement Therapies, vol 17(1), pp1-13.

[7] Deadman, P, Al-Khafaji, M and Baker, K (2011). *A Manual of Acupuncture* Journal of Chinese Medicine Publications, Hove, p11.



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# Qigong roots – a history

Gordon Faulkner

In his second article on qigong Gordon Faulkner covers its history and development from the Qin dynasty in BCE 221 to the modern day People's Republic of China, its inclusion in modern day medicine and the PRC's restriction on teaching by masters

## Qin (221-206 BCE)

The first dynasty was very short and little happened, in terms of innovation, in the qigong world that has yet to be discovered.

## Han Dynasty (206 BCE - 20 CE)

The Han dynasty is normally divided into two parts: the Western/Former Han (206 BCE-9 CE) and the Eastern/Later Han (25-220). For simplicity I have treated them as one long dynasty.

In 1983, at the Zhangjiashan burial site in Jiangling county, Hubei province, in tomb number 247, archaeologists excavated the resting place of a Han official who was interred in 186 BCE. Among the many texts recovered in this tomb was a bamboo-strip document, the *Yinshu* (Pulling Book), which is the earliest existing text specifically on qigong. This document, with a step-by-step guide to movement, illustrates how using qigong through daily and seasonal exercises was a key regimen to build strong healthy bodies and self-treat illness.

In 1963 at Mawangdui, near Changsha, Hunan province, three tombs were discovered, but it was not until between 1972-1974 that archaeologists explored these tombs.

Tomb number three, dated to 168 BCE, was a treasure trove of military, medical, and astronomical manuscripts. These texts, written on silk, were of major historical significance. The medical category contained the now famous *Daoyin tu* (Daoyin Diagram, also known as the Guoyin tu).



Another text found here was Quegu Shiqi Pian, a book that is mainly concerned with breathing methods.

The famous doctor, Hua Tuo (141-208), was the creator of the wuqinxu (Five-Animal Play), a qigong set based on the movements of tigers, deer, bears, apes and birds that, over almost the next 2,000 years, spawned hundreds of variations. Fortunately, most of the poor versions died out and we are left with probably a few dozen effective variations today. These variations may also contain a completely different set of five animals!

Another famous doctor from this period who recognised the value of qigong was Zhang Zhongjing (150-219), who wrote in his *Jingui yaolue* (Essential Prescriptions from the Golden Cabinet), "...When our limbs feel heavy and uncomfortable, we should do some qigong exercises to get out the stale and take in the fresh ..."

### Six Dynasties period (220-589)

Also commonly known as the period of disunity as it covers the Three Kingdoms (220-265), the Jin Dynasty (265-420) and the time of the Northern and Southern Dynasties (386-589).

As mentioned in Part 1, the Daoist priest Xu Xun (239-374) is believed to have been the first to use the term qigong in its modern sense in his book *Ling jian zi* (Miraculous Swordsmanship). He was a regular practitioner of qigong exercises and is said to have lived to the age of 136. However, it is also said the book was not written by Xu Xun himself because many qigong terms in the book were only used after the Song Dynasty, so the book could not have been written earlier than that dynasty. This text now only exists in the compendium *Jingming zongjiao lu* (Record of the Lineage and Teachings of [the School of] Purity and Brightness), which was printed around 1691 in the Qing Dynasty. Because of this, some researchers place the first use of the name in the Qing. Whatever the truth, the document states that qigong is used to regulate the body, adjust the breath and align the unity of mind and body—three keys to practice.

Xi Kang (223-262) wrote the *Yangsheng lun* (On Nourishing Life) and although this document is now lost, it is cited over a hundred times in other texts. The *Yangsheng lun* was also known to Zhang Zhan (early 4th century), who wrote *Yangsheng yaoji* (Essentials on Nourishing Life), which is thought to have been one of the main qigong text books during the Six Dynasties. Unfortunately, this text was also lost and survives only in fragments and citations.

The philosopher, Ge Hong (283-343), author of *Zhouhou beijifang* (Handbook of Prescriptions for Emergencies) and the *Baopuzi* (Book of the Master Who Embraces Simplicity), was very influential in neidan (internal alchemy) and medicine. Qigong became very important to both disciplines. He said "qigong exercises were meant to cure diseases beforehand [prophylactic] and achieve harmony among all elements".

In the 4th century, the first text dealing systematically with qigong is the *Taiqing daoyin yangsheng jing* (Great Purity Treatise on Healing Exercises and Nourishing Life) attributed to Master Jingli or Jinghei. This manuscript is generally referred to by the shorted name of *Daoyin jing*, and is the only text in the Daoist Canon that deals exclusively with qigong.

Although the work consists of qigong techniques of Daolin (Zhi Dun, 314-366) and those ascribed to the



### A statue of Zhang Sanfeng in Wudangshan

legendary practitioners, Chisongzi, Ningfengzi, Pengzu, Wang Ziqiao. Many scholars believe the text is not earlier than the 6th century.

The age of the text is largely irrelevant to modern practitioners, as it is one of the primary sources of qigong study because it contains a wide range of information about several schools within the tradition.

*The Yangxing yanminglu* (Record on Nourishing Inner Nature and Extending Life), attributed to Tao Hongjing (452-536), was based on the *Yangsheng yaoji* mentioned above. This text is notable for the association of qigong with anmo (massage). Indeed, the fifth section of this volume is devoted to qigong and anmo. This book also contains the earliest surviving text of the liuzijue (Six Character Formula, also called Six Healing/Secret Sounds) of the popular qigong exercise set.

### Sui Dynasty (581-618)

China was re-unified under the short-lived Sui Dynasty. This dynasty only had two emperors, but they were both enthusiastic supporters of qigong. In fact, Emperor Yangdi employed a large number of qigong practitioners – who were also massage teachers – at the imperial court, with the objective of establishing qigong as a major component of state medicine.

This led to a major innovation in therapeutic qigong in 610 when Chao Yuanfang (550-630), a doctor of the Imperial Medical Academy, compiled the *Zhubing yuanhou lun* (Treatise on the Origin and Symptoms of Diseases). This encyclopaedia, apart from containing 1,739 medical discussions, prescribes 213 different qigong exercises for 110 different symptoms. It is this compendium that includes many of the qigong exercises from the previously mentioned lost texts.

### Tang Dynasty (618-907)

In 652, Sun Simiao (581-682), a renowned physician often called the king of medicine, compiled the *Qianjin*



**Copies of this chart of 44 qigong exercises now hang on the walls of qigong training centres all over the world. Its importance to qigong history is immense and many modern qigong routines are named after this chart**

yaofang (Prescriptions Worth a Thousand in Gold) in which he introduced many therapeutic exercises based on qigong, notably a version of the liuzijue.

Sima Chengzhen (647-735), the 6th patriarch of the Shangqing school of Daoism and neidan proponent, wrote the *Xiuzhen jingyi zhalun* (Miscellaneous Discourses on the Essential Meaning of Cultivating Perfection) which gave exercises to be practised daily and required them to be performed in the correct sequence if they were to be effective in curing disease and maintaining health. This was a new development in qigong.

During the Tang dynasty, qigong continued to be an official part of the Imperial Court Medicine and was generally in the hands of the *anmo* (massage) specialist.

### Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period (907-960)

This was a chaotic time of political upheaval and division and while there were no new notable developments in qigong, its practice continued and the knowledge was maintained.

### Song Dynasty (960-1279)

Qigong and its parent yangsheng practices underwent significant changes from the Song period onward, which integrated the elements drawn from neidan methods. The introduction of woodblock printing in this period also meant that many of the classical medical texts were rewritten or revised and disseminated.

Zhang Junfang (961?-1042?) compiled the *Yunji qiqian* (Seven Slips from a Cloudy Satchel, c. 1029), a collection of Daoist scriptures that contains several qigong routines including wuqinxi, xuanjian daoyin, Pengzu's qigong and many others.

Qigong found a place in many medical documents written in this period and thereafter. The *Shengji zonglu* (Sagely Benefaction Medical Encyclopaedia, 1117), compiled by staff of the Imperial Medical College, contains two chapters on qigong.

One of today's most popular form of qigong which began in this period was the creation of the *baduanjin* (Eight Pieces of Brocade). This is ascribed to General Yue Fei (1103-1142) who, according to legend, learned Buddhist Emei mountain style qigong and Daoist Wudang mountain style qigong. Now, there are many versions of *baduanjin*: hard, soft, seated and standing.

*The Daoshu* (Pivot of the Dao, 1136) is a 42 volume compendium of texts compiled by Zeng Zao (fl. 1131-1155) dealing with neidan and yangsheng, keeping the qigong movement very active and expanding.

### Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368)

This dynasty (overlapped the Song) was known for its religious tolerance, but this period also saw many disputes between Buddhists and Daoists aiming for emperor's patronage.

The notable legendary figure from this period is Zhang Sanfeng, who is credited with creating tai chi chuan.

### Ming Dynasty (1368-1644)

Li Shizhen (1518-1593), the eminent physician famous for compiling the monumental *Bencao gangmu* (Compendium of Materia Medica) also emphasised the importance of co-ordinating qigong practice.

Illustrations in books became a major feature in Ming publishing and the text entitled *Chifeng sui* (Marrow of the Red Phoenix, 1578), is an illustrated manual on qigong, by the scholar, Zhou Lujing (1549-1640 or 1542-1633). The text contains many qigong routines including wuqinxi, *baduanjin* and liuzijue.

Zhou Lujing also compiled the illustrated encyclopaedia *Yimen guangdu* (Extensive texts from the Peaceful Gate, 1597) which likewise contains several qigong routines.

In this period Wang Qi and his son Wang Siyi also compiled an encyclopaedia the *Sancai tuhui* (Illustrations of Heaven, Earth and Man, 1609) which contains drawings of qigong exercises originally devised by Chen Xiyi, (Chen Tuan 871-989), to be carried out at different hours in different periods of the year.



## Qing Dynasty (1644-1912)

Although Shen Jinao (1717-1776), an outstanding doctor, devoted exclusive chapters of his book *Sheshizun shengshu* (Shen's Experience on the Conservation of Health, 1773), to the treatment of disease through qigong exercise, the Qing Dynasty produced no important works on the subject and the popularity of qigong declined.

## Republic period (1912-1949)

Few books with qigong were published in this period and except for *Yinshizi jingzuofa* (Master Yinshi's Quiet Sitting Methods, 1914) by Jiang Weiqiao (1873-1958) and *Weisheng shenglixue mingzhi* (Clear Explanations of Hygiene and Physiology, c.1930) by Daoist master Zhao Bichen (1860-1942) most were of little value.

## People's Republic of China (1949-present)

As a whole, qigong was neglected and on the verge of extinction. Fortunately, it was brought back to life in the 1950s when Liu Guizhen opened the Qigong Rehabilitation Hospital at Beidaihe, in Hebei province, the first clinic to standardise the use of medical qigong. Liu Guizhen is also responsible for the name that came to be used most frequently around the modern world: qigong. After the success of Beidaihe, over 200 hospitals added qigong to their therapies and the Chinese government organised comprehensive research into the subject. Qigong became popular again, various styles began to be taught openly, and many old books were re-published.

The Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) created chaos throughout China on many levels, including banning of all qigong.

After the end of the chaos, in the late 1970s, qigong regained importance in improving and maintaining health, which led to a boom in the practices in the 1980s and 1990s with over 2,000 organisations and anything up to an estimated 200 million practitioners.

However, several of these organisations, like Zhangmi Gong, Zhong Gong and Falun Gong were thought to be turning into cults that threatened the Chinese government – China has a long history of disastrous millennial cults – which, in 1999 started a crackdown on qigong organisations that were perceived to challenge state

control, including prohibiting mass qigong practice, shutdown of some qigong clinics and hospitals, and banning groups headed by grandmaster gurus claiming supernatural powers.

For a short period, the name qigong was not used, but in 2000, in an attempt to regulate qigong practice and exclude masters, the Chinese Health Qigong association was established with the aim of promoting qigong exercise without cults developing around masters. The Association regulated public qigong practice, restricting the number of people that could gather at a time, requiring state approved training and certification of instructors. Initially, only four standardised forms were included, but today that has expanded to nine.

Finally a quick mention of the early days in the West



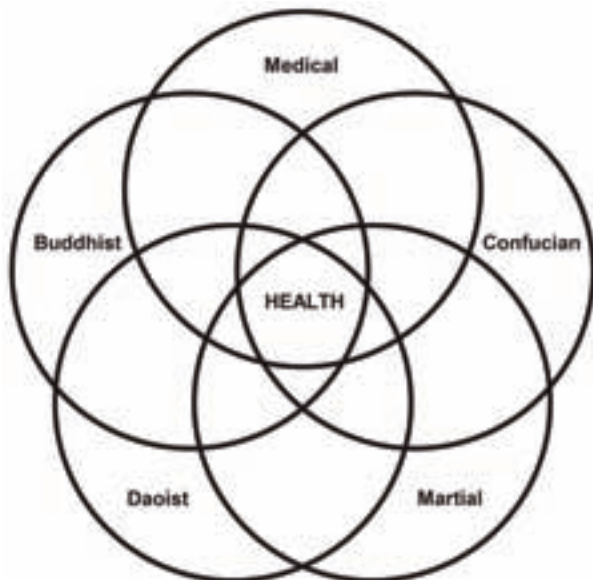
The first mention of qigong in the West was in French by Pierre-Martial Cibot (1727-1780), a French Jesuit missionary who introduced qigong, which he called Cong-fou (Kung Fu) to the West in a text written in 1779.

The first mention of qigong in English was in 1895, by a Scottish missionary doctor in China, John Dudgeon (1837-1901), who wrote the book *Kung-Fu, or Taoist Medical Gymnastics*.

A full history of qigong would require several volumes. Therefore, compressing several thousands of years into this short history means that there are many omissions. However, one thing that stands out from this summary is that despite the various traditions of qigong, Medical, Buddhist, Confucian, Daoist and Martial, the central tenet has always been an individual's health and most qigong texts are preserved in medical literature. This shows that to understand how the mechanism of qigong works, a basic knowledge of traditional Chinese medicine is fundamental.

Qigong is now popular throughout the entire world. The Tai Chi Union for Great Britain has recognised the importance of qigong in this modern world and is now called Tai Chi & Qigong Union for Great Britain to encompass those practices. 🇬🇧

Gordon Faulkner has had a keen interest in Chinese culture for over 60 years. He is a Fellow of the Royal Asiatic Society and a member of the Society for Anglo-Chinese Understanding. He started his martial training in 1968 and eventually switched to the style he does today, Chanquanshu, in 1972 while serving with the RAF. In 1999 he became a closed door disciple of daoyin master Zhang Guangde and in 2003, Master You Xuande at Wudang Shan accepted him as a 15th generation disciple of Wudang boxing.



Qigong Traditions



# Caledonia 2022:- we're back

by Suse Coon

Photography: Jennifer Scott. [#taichicaledonia2022](https://twitter.com/taichicaledonia2022)

The history of Tai Chi Caledonia is well documented in a booklet written by Bob Lowey, joint founder along with the late Ronnie Robinson, but the legacy Ronnie left is very much alive and well

The history of Tai Chi Caledonia is well documented in a booklet written by Bob Lowey, joint founder along with the late Ronnie Robinson, but the legacy Ronnie left is very much alive and well. Losing a good friend as well as such an inspiring 'man of taiji' has been painful for everyone who knew Ronnie, but for Aileen Mandic and Al Scott it has been particularly so, as they are the ones who stepped into Ronnie's shoes and kept Cally going. As treasurer of the TCQUGB and one of Ronnie's senior students, Aileen was known to be a superbly efficient organiser. Al, a long-time enthusiast of the event, had been a student of Bob and was a close friend of Ronnie, accompanying him to many events in Europe.

For many punters, Tai Chi Caledonia, better known as 'Cally', is their annual fix – an opportunity to meet and mingle with like-minded people, sharing skills and finding teachers to broaden and deepen their knowledge of our art.

“Our ethos,” Al says, “is that we want people to enjoy themselves, to learn, to get enthused, even if they were before, it gives you a boost.”

“The weekend is a good introduction for beginners or first-timers,” Aileen says. “The week is for studying something you want to take away. We try to keep it open to all styles.”

The format consists of a weekend of 24 taster sessions on Saturday and 24 on Sunday. Trying to choose feels like being a child in a sweetie shop. The teachers give demonstrations in the road between classes and dinner on Saturday and Sunday and this also gives students a chance to see something different. Students then choose two



teachers to work with more intensively during the week. In addition there are extra early morning options. This year there was a choice of Barry's Boot Camp or qigong before breakfast and in the evening the casual push hands sessions begin with some formal tuition. In the past, one night was spent going out to a Chinese restaurant but this has been replaced by an optional buffet and a ceilidh.

Cally has its home in the Sports Centre at Stirling University. Classes used to be taken in the sports halls – but this often resulted in disruption of one kind or another. Nowadays, one large and two small marquees are hired for use in bad weather, with most teachers and students preferring to work outside. Accommodation is in single room chalets with a communal kitchen. Breakfast is provided in the chalets (cereal, fruit juice, bread, jam and marmalade) and fruit and teas and coffees are available in the large marquee. Midday and evening meals are taken in the student union at the university, itself a bustling place with summer camps and sports training. The campus is beautifully located beside a large lake on the edge of the innovation centre.

Finding teachers was never a problem for Ronnie, who travelled widely for his own interest as well as for the TCU, of which he was secretary. This is the challenge for Al and Aileen who are now going to other tai chi events in search of teachers who can offer something different. Not that they will have any problem – other than pinning all the popular teachers down to that one special week in the middle of July. The event's reputation is such that any teacher who is available will jump at the chance if invited, despite the lack of a 'proper' fee.

New teachers are usually invited to teach some weekend sessions in exchange for food and accommodation – for the rest of the week if they wish. Should the event suit them and they suit the event, they will be invited back to teach a half day workshop each day for the four-day week, Monday – Thursday, for which they receive expenses. Teachers can only attend for a maximum of two consecutive years to keep things fresh.

Before the 2022 event was over, Al and Aileen had already begun booking marquees, chalets and meals for 2023. “We also check before we leave that our helpers are willing to come back.” Helpers include several of Ronnie's former students as well as Al's and Aileen's daughters. “They just pick up the jobs they like and somehow everything gets done.”

Jobs include, collecting teachers from train stations and airports, registration and giving out keys, shopping for supplies and distributing them to the chalets, dealing with missing or broken equipment, manning the shop and making a photo and video record of proceedings and uploading it to Facebook every day. As well as tee-shirts, mugs and pens, the shop contains second hand books and new books, DVDs and items of equipment brought by teachers. They would never consider investing in and selling kit, as storage would be a problem.

“Our ethos is just to keep Ronnie's memory alive, not to make a million. If I made a lot of money from Cally I'd feel guilty,” Aileen says. “We agreed that when we took it on.”

But every year, there seems to be some refinement, be it a buffet, a ceilidh, electronic purchasing apps in today's cashless world or the purchase of weapons to enable students not to have to bring their own. Not that there has ever been a problem with weapons as the police know the event and aren't concerned, though on one occasion Ken Van Sickle brought swords from the U.S. and customs wouldn't allow him to take them. They had to be delivered



Aileen Mandic (top) Al Scott (below)



directly to Cally.

Every time something or someone new has to be considered, the mantra ‘Would Ronnie approve?’ is used. It hasn't been easy taking over but Aileen says: “It's nice that Ronnie's legacy is still here, though I don't feel his energy here any more.”

“In a practical sense, Ronnie gave us a standard to maintain,” says Al. He always tried to improve things and was interested in feedback. That's what we try to do.”

“We didn't know how we would do it,” Aileen says. “But when Ronnie was in hospital and he knew he wasn't going to make it to the one he had booked and prepared for, he said, ‘Cally is bigger than any one person,’ so we just had to.”

And thank goodness they did. As well as offering inspiring sessions in real life, during the two Covid years, teachers gave their time freely in zoom sessions which kept us all sane. Nonetheless, this year many people spoke emotionally of how great it has been to come 'home'.

Thank you to everyone (too many to name) involved. 🙏

# Around the workshops

## Neigong solo and partner internal work Gianfranco Pace

It was a great feeling to be back at Caledonia after a two year enforced break. My first class was on a sweltering hot day with master Pace. We were extremely fortunate to have the services of senior instructor Margarita Padalino to act as translator and assistant teacher.

The first day consisted of learning specific exercises designed to isolate the hips and to allow the student to turn using the lower dantien. master Pace then introduced a form that he described as 'functional' and not particularly aesthetically pleasing. (A few of the students were in disagreement with this given the teacher's cat-like grace.) He described it as a form that students at his school in Sicily



learn in preparation for learning the lao jia yi lu form.

Master Pace also advised against simply learning the choreography of a form without considering internal aspects of the practice.



The beginners' form involved aspects of opening and closing the kua incorporating energy in both horizontal and vertical figures of eight. This aspect of practice helps avoid any abrupt changes when weight is being transferred.

On the final day we studied four silk reeling exercises (also known as chan si gong). Emphasis was placed on directing movements from the lower dantien and on developing elasticity in the body.

I had expected Gianfranco Pace to be a formidable and demanding teacher as he has wonderful fajing skills. However, he proved to be an enthusiastic, patient and surprisingly gentle individual. I would therefore have no hesitation in recommending him to anyone should Tai Chi Caledonia be hosting him in the future.

William Webster

## Nine steps tai chi chuan Tina Faulkner Elders

This year we travelled to Tai Chi Caledonia for the first time. Tina Faulkner Elder's workshop on the Wudang nine step tai chi form was one of our choices because the topic interested us and Tina's reputation precedes her.

The form is lovely, but challenging. But in her exact, entertaining and very friendly way Tina managed to introduce the group to the basic Wudang movement principles, observe and deal with individual difficulties and also adapt the course structure to external challenges like heat, construction noise and wind. In this she was ably assisted by her student Matthew Knight who himself started teaching IMA about six years ago.



Master Chen, Tina's longtime teacher in Wudangshan, has said that heroes have 'stinky' feet and at the end of the workshop we not only had learned a lovely new form that integrates elements of bagua and xingyi but our feet were also good for *two* Chinese operas.

We thank Tina and Matthew (again, and certainly not for the last time) for their time, effort, exactitude and humour and are looking forward to seeing them (and the Cally team) again.

Klaus Beck-Ewerhardy and Tanja Ewerhardy

## Taking the push out of pushing Hands Emma Lee

This year I had the privilege of being invited to teach from Saturday to Thursday at Tai Chi Caledonia. I taught taster sessions on pushing hands for beginners, the ten tai chi principles and an introduction to fa jin exercises.



During the week I taught *Taking the push out of pushing hands*. The participants in my group were so generous with both their physical and emotional contributions to the sessions. There were tearful moments as we explored ways of connecting with our training partners from a place of respectful gentleness within a safe and supportive space.

After the last two years of isolation this was precious practice. Aside from feeling massive love and respect for those participating in my group I came away from the sessions with the view that partner work has a great capacity to heal us from a psychological perspective.

Thank you to all who contributed to this year's Tai Chi Caledonia, and to Bob Lowey and the late Ronnie Robinson for creating Tai Chi Caledonia.

Emma Lee





# Around the workshops

Tai chi 13 power sword

Yanira Jigetsu Rodriguez

Yanira brought both vitality and generosity to her teaching and perfectly paced her delivery to match the ability of the students.

The workshop combined the structures of the bagua and the five elements as a framework which emphasised the need for both precision and flow. In addition to the intricate teaching of the sword movements, a detailed handout brought clarity to the underpinning principles.



Yanira layered her teaching of the square gates of the bagua and then the diagonal gates before introducing the five elements. Utilising a combination of set pieces as a guide, Yanira enabled students to discover potential movement through each of the energies. In this manner, students were encouraged to explore a

dynamic partner sword exercise in the warm Stirling sunshine. 🌞

*Carolanne Mainland*

Interpreting the tai chi classics through sensing hands Ben Morris

I enjoyed the sessions with Ben as usual, and it is nice working with people from far and wide.

Ben is a very good teacher and speaks clearly and with sufficient volume which is good for me as I have problems with my ears. He is very knowledgeable on a wide range of martial arts. His explanations of what he wants us to do are clear. Ben always puts some humour into his classes which I appreciate as it creates a nice environment to practise in.



I like the way he links the sensing hands to real life situations though I confess that I do not always understand everything he says but I get most of it so that's ok for me.

Ben always has our welfare in mind and reminds us to have some water during the hot days and mentions other health and safety issues. 🌞

*Kevin Wilson*

The early bird Barry McGinlay

Woke up around 5:30 again and thought about how the day would go then off to Barry's Boot Camp. I had already heard about this at the push hands meeting in Hanover a few years ago. Now I found my way to Barry McGinley's



morning training that is a voluntary addition to the workshop programme of the Cally, just like the beginners' push hand training in the evening. And it is great.

In a very nicely balanced mixture of cardio, stretching and all the other things Kungfu-people need in the morning, Barry prepared us for the day – especially in the last half hour in which he did a lot of partner and group work that prepared us for the topics of our workshops. I almost suspect a plan behind this.

Except for on one morning, when Barry asked me to play in the background. We got the music to the training from Barry's playlists, and they also worked very well. Not only in the boot camp, but also in the evenings as background to our free push hands, our conversations and as main motivator for our dancing. In the training, as in his presentations, Barry is a talented and experienced martial artist and trainer. He is always helpful, creates a positive atmosphere around himself and if the Cally could be said to have a heart Barry is one valve in it. Looking forward to seeing him again. 🌞

*Klaus Beck-Ewerhardy*

Baguazhang fan – Sonja Schillo

We had four days to learn how to use a Chinese fan in a bagua stepping form. The heat was on both in terms of temperature and learning. The skill set was hot. The teaching style was quietly determined with a friendly smile. The teacher, Sonja from Berlin, and her able assistant Anna, were both brilliant and engaging. How could we fail? Well, we didn't, we smashed it, we made it happen. We learnt the mud slide step, walking in steps of eight around a circle. We learnt the application of the kobu step, spiralling into the ground and twisting. We learnt to crack open the fan and be beautiful.

Despite record Scottish temperatures, after four days we were becoming bagua fans in more ways than one. I will hold in my mind Sonja's oft repeated mantra "And again".

I had begun my journey to become a bagua master. Hurrah.

*A celebration Tanka*

*Feeling the soft breeze.*

*Under the trees our fans flash*

*Stepping in circles*

*Mind, Hands, Earth and breath are 'One'*

*Embrace, above eaves rustle.*

*Clive Whittaker*



**Marna Howie (very carefully) waks the labyrinth at Tai Chi Caledonia 2022**

# The labyrinth discovered Marna Howie

Labyrinths have slowly been creeping their way into my subconscious for some years, writes Marna Howie. The very word resonates a mysteriousness of something ancient which I find captivating



# WALKING THE LABYRINTH

23

I am drawn to explore in a similar way to how I felt when first encountering tai chi and qigong in the 1990's. In a labyrinth there is a continuous spiral path that eventually leads to the centre. There is only one way in and one way out returning on the same path. The labyrinth acts as a metaphor for the path we walk throughout our lives, journeying to our own centre and back out again into the world. I have walked a couple of labyrinths so far. I enjoyed the experience of focusing on the path as it turns round and around. I also enjoyed that sense of being able to take time out for myself, to be with myself. This is so appealing in our busy lives, and is undoubtedly beneficial to one's wellbeing. Walking a labyrinth can be likened to a moving meditation, which in turn is like practising tai chi and qigong. I have heard the expression: 'in a maze you lose yourself, in a labyrinth you find yourself'. However I had no real understanding of the origin and history of labyrinths. "Okay," I hear you say, "look it up on the internet". Well, okay that is fine up to a point, but the internet is no substitute for 'in the flesh' learning, again like tai chi and qigong.

So, you can imagine my delight when earlier this year, out of the blue, as if by some magic, I received an email advertising a labyrinth workshop in Argyll, which is very handy to where I live. I signed up right away. This was just what I was looking for. Apparently this date was chosen because that is world labyrinth day. Who would have thought there was such a day?

The workshop was run in collaboration with Suse Coon of West Coast Wuji and Margaret Ker a local artist and jewellery maker who is also a passionate and enthusiastic labyrinth creator.

The workshop was held in the beautiful Glenan Community Woodland at Portavadie on the shores of Loch Fyne. The Glenan labyrinth, which we would walk later, was created by Margaret, using large stones gathered from the shore nearby. There were only eight of us at the workshop which made it more personal. Suse started the day with a short meditation and breathing exercises to root ourselves in the space. She then led us through the practice of taiji walking. At times this was quite challenging across the uneven grassy area. Everyone, whether familiar

with the practice or not, found this very calming and meditative.

As well as creating labyrinths, Margaret had done a lot of historical research into their origins. She had set up a gazebo tent displaying lots of photographs and beautiful images of all kinds of labyrinths including prehistoric rock art, which is likely to be the source of the first labyrinths from around 5,000 years ago. Labyrinths are found all over the world in many cultures. It is fascinating to note that researchers have found that even though early civilisations were isolated from one another, over thousands of years only one design of the labyrinth emerged, based on the classical seven circuit.

It is believed that these designs evolved out of the spirals found in nature. Labyrinths can be made with rock, mosaics, turf, anything really. They can even be traced out on the sand when the tides goes out. There was a great selection of books for us to browse on labyrinths and their history. These included how to create your own labyrinth for meditation and enlightenment: landscapes of the soul and the spirit. Labyrinths were walked in medieval times, the most famous of these being the Chartres labyrinth of 11 circuits, laid down in around 1201. It is still intact on the floor of the nave of Chartres Cathedral in France, and is probably the most walked labyrinth in the world.

We were told there is currently a growing revival of interest in labyrinths. This is largely due to the work of Dr. Lauren Artress of the Grace Cathedral in San Francisco. It has been suggested that this revival comes at a time when there is something in the collective unconscious of mankind in this 21st century that recognises a need for spaces like labyrinths and how they can help us in recovering a more balanced, reflective and inclusive way of living together in these troubled times. The workshop was led in a discussion about the benefits that are being experienced for adults and children with mental health issues, general anxieties and attention deficit disorders. It would appear that walking a labyrinth can help them find answers to problems, release thoughts and feelings, clear the mind and feel more at peace with what is going on in





their lives.

At 1 o'clock we all began to walk the labyrinth joining a worldwide wave of peaceful intention for World Labyrinth Day. With guidance from our workshop leaders before entering the labyrinth, we each paused, grounded and centred ourselves, focused on our breathing to relax, release and receive as we each took it in turn to begin our journey to the centre. Once we all reached the centre of the labyrinth we joined hands in a circle.

This proved to be a moving experience for us all and afterwards we had the opportunity to be still and quiet and to reflect on our experience of walking the labyrinth.

The workshop ended with Margaret showing us how to draw a labyrinth from a very simple three circuit to the more complex seven circuit. It was great fun for us all to practise this.

By the end of this very lovely and successful workshop I



was fired up with even more enthusiasm for labyrinths and came away keen to create a labyrinth and share the experience with others. Suse and I then had a light bulb moment. Tai Chi Caledonia was coming up in July at Stirling University, this could be an ideal opportunity to create a small 'taster' labyrinth for participants. Of course it would be available for anyone on the campus to walk.

Happily, permission was granted to allow us to set up a temporary labyrinth during Tai Chi Caledonia week. So on the first day armed with white cord and galvanized pegs we set out to find a suitable spot in the campus to locate the labyrinth. We found the perfect spot en route from the

tai chi chalets to the MacRobert Centre. My husband carefully measured and helped us set out the labyrinth. We put up a notice on a stake and propped it against a tree. This gave suggestions and information about walking the labyrinth.

We let people know at the briefing session at the start of the Cally week and by word of mouth. Gradually through the week as more and more people walked the labyrinth there was a palpable feeling of growing energy around the area. The three big oak trees surrounding the labyrinth stood guard giving a sense of protection. From the centre of the labyrinth the view across to the beautiful Dumyat hill was very calming but also empowering.

The feedback is always very personal from labyrinth walkers, but even the slightly sceptical ones all said they had a positive and enjoyable experience. One lady from Glasgow who had never walked a labyrinth before said she had no expectations but decided to give it a go, and found she was able to switch off and take stock of her life in a very meditative way with no stress.

To conclude, it feels like this has been the start of a new journey, finding out more about labyrinths at the workshop day, then creating one and sharing the experience with others. So, if you have not already tried labyrinth walking, perhaps find one near you via the world wide labyrinth locator and start your own journey; who knows, it could be life changing.

Remember there is no right or wrong way to walk a labyrinth. To quote Dr. Lauren Artress from her book *Walking a Sacred Path* she says: "The best way to learn about the labyrinth is to walk one with an open heart and an open mind. Then allow your experiences to guide you."

*Walking a Sacred Path – Rediscovering the Labyrinth as a Spiritual Practice* by Dr. Lauren Artress.

<https://labyrinthlocator.com>

Marna Howie is a member of the Longfei Taijiquan Association of Great Britain and is a student of the Daoyin Yang Sheng Gong system. She is a regular attender at Tai Chi Caledonia. Marna teaches qigong and assists in teaching tai chi to OIR (Opportunities in Retirement) students.



Margret Stürz teaching a class of students at Tai Chi Caledonia on the two aspects of quietness: the external inactive state of the body and the inner mental quietness.

The term 'movement' refers to external movement as well as to the inner movement of the qi. Quietness and movement are always to be looked at in terms of their relationship. There is no change without movement – and movement finds only complete expression on condition of inner ease/quietness. The inner ease is the basis of each qigong and tai chi practice. Each qigong exercise regulates the system of meridians and recovers the flow of blood.







## The tai chi rough stuff

Interview by Robin Gamble

David Rogers has trained in Chinese martial arts since 1984. He is a disciple of master Deng Jan Gong, one of the most renowned kung fu masters in Southern China. Fluent in Cantonese, he regularly returns to further his studies in hap kune, tai chi, and hung kune. In 1995, he opened the Rising Crane Centre where he taught for 25 years until recently moving his teaching online and to teach international seminars. He tells Robin Gamble some of his combat secrets

**D**avid Rogers has coached both national MMA and tai chi champions. I was curious to know how this came about. He told me: “I started a full time kung fu academy (Rising Crane) in the 90s and was a member of BCCMA. I was teaching hop gar and tai chi and we would go to regional and national competitions. Over time we had a national forms champion and national push hands champion. But the format of forms competition shifted to more acrobatic/gymnastic movements which was not the direction I was interested in.

“Then MMA hit in the ‘90s and I got into it pretty early on and when I restarted competitions with my guys rather than the san shou (Chinese full contact) we tried MM. It was difficult at first. We went to some venues where there were often more fights in the stands than the cage.

“But it was a terrific chance for us to test our skills. Over some years, we developed a method that worked. I trained four-five amateur national champions, regional champions and even a guy who competed in a world amateur championship and won. I must add, I’ve never coached pro fighters or genetic freaks, I’ve always been interested in



taking normal people and in a reasonable time frame teaching them how to fight. It worked, we did it repeatedly and successfully.”

There is always controversy about whether it is necessary for a tai chi practitioner only interested in health benefits to learn the fighting aspects of tai chi chuan. When I asked him whether he feels it is necessary he was unequivocal: “You absolutely should learn the meaning behind the postures, especially if you are training for health. If you are doing movements without any intent, you are not even going to get the real health benefits. The health benefits largely come from the unity of intention, consciousness and physical movement. It is guided by the intention first.

“If you don’t know the intention of the movement and don’t know what it is for how can there be any real intention? You won’t lead the qi, you won’t get the health benefits from it. However, that doesn’t mean you have to fight or compete – absolutely not. Most people have no

“You absolutely should learn the meaning behind the postures...

reason to compete if they are training for health but you should have some sense of the basic movements being punch, kick, takedown etc. If you don’t, it is too abstract, you can’t have a feeling or sense of the movement.”

So what is the problem that impedes the combat efficiency of so many tai chi practitioners?

“Trying to make their fighting look like a form,” says David. “Trying to use the postures of the form as a literal movement within the chaotic environment of a sparring scenario. You have to look at the form as being an ideal structure for the body for the development of force and you make the movement fit as best as you can to that ideal in terms of timing and distance.



**Pictures show page 28-29 : an applications of cloud hands. Page 30 bend bow to strike tiger**

“For example, if you’re doing applications from the form and the person is taller or shorter the form will be higher’or lower but tai chi people spend a lot of time saying “no, the hand has to be exactly here or there’. You can become obsessed over the detail, instead of asking ‘Why?. Well, this is going to hit someone’s face,’ so you are practising hitting something. Always come back to the form and say: ‘Why is the hand there, what was the idea of that? What’s open? What’s mechanically efficient about it?’ And then ask: ‘Well in the real world if I can’t get that position, how can I optimise it?’

Trying to make the fighting look like a form, or for kung

“...the technique comes spontaneously in relation to your opponent...

fu people trying to make it look like a Shaw Brothers movie is a big mistake. If you think ‘I’m going to try and use single whip, or play the lute.’ It’s completely backwards, the technique comes spontaneously in relation to your opponent, you can’t force that. But if you trained right, it will happen, it will come out. So get out of the way and stop trying to ‘make’ it happen would be my advice.”

If that is the case I asked, will it help tai chi practitioners to improve their combat efficiency or is there something else they should be doing? David’s response might put off some people: “You probably know what I’m going to say.

“Only training in your own system you become over specialised

It would be sparring. But people have the wrong idea about sparring. They think sparring is fighting. The ego takes over, they tense up and people get injured. No, you have to learn how to play.

“Tai chi is supposed to be based on animal movements, right? Well, animals play fight. Tiger clubs roll around. Animals learn by play. Human beings are the same. The reason that it is fun is that there are neurotransmitters that make us happy in play, our brains are rewarding us for being in the learning zone. So, my philosophy is that playful fighting is the best way to learn and then occasional pressure testing to make sure it is not veering far off the path of reality. You don't need to do lots of hard or full contact sparring. Say you are doing push hands. Start off by taking away the routine, and freely move, try and take each other's balance, allow your partner to come in a bit more freestyle, a bit harder, and learn to deal with that. Then maybe mix some strikes in. If you are lucky enough to have some protective equipment you add more striking. If you've got mats, you can add the takedowns.

“Gradually make it more combative. In modern times we have pads and mats so why the heck wouldn't we use them? The reason there was a focus on push hands was because you didn't get injured doing it. But now we have safety equipment. So, play fight, use as much protective equipment as you can. Keep it safe and enjoy it, get experience.

“Also, don't always play with other tai chi people. If you are fighting against your own style all the time, you only get good at countering yourself. The average boxer is very good at slipping punches, but not good at defending



takedowns. Wrestlers are good at defending takedowns but throw an upper cut and a hook and they're not so used to it.

“By only training in your own system you become over specialised. You're fighting for the same thing, you want the same thing. I think of martial arts as rock, scissors paper or like the five elements. You're always aiming for the thing that counters their method which is not the same thing all the time. Remember, you need to practise with people you can trust because going to a rough gym, if you don't know what you are doing, getting mauled isn't going to be a learning experience it's going to be an unpleasant experience.

“You need to find where your level is and then play at about 10% above your level so that you learn and grow. You can learn to enjoy that challenge, you don't need to jump in at the deep end. You'll find after a couple of years

“You don't need to do lots of hard or full contact sparring.

of practise, you'll be doing stuff that before you wouldn't have been able to handle. Very natural, very playful.”

Which brought us to which style David practises and how it approaches combat?

“I practise the Yang style,” he says, “and I practise my sifu's own style of tai chi which he calls Deng family tai chi. One of the things about his form is that when he started creating it he thought: ‘What are my favourite moves, what are my most common moves?’

“For example, one of his sets is very self-defence orientated, he's defending a headlock or a bear hug or various things but they are all things that he has used and then he has put them together into the set.

“So now what he is doing with the set is refining the movement, but he already has the movement combatively. The biggest difference is not trying to learn the set and take the movement and try and work out the combative





use, rather learning the combat and then integrating it into the set, which is the opposite of the way people do it now. I think results speak for themselves because there are not many tai chi people competing [in modern combat sports] and I think it is because they are trying to learn the form and hope that the form will make them into a good fighter. No. Become a fighter and then make the form really good. Do it that way round. So that's probably the biggest difference [with Deng family and how I practise tai chi].

“Further to that, if you look at the tai chi postures, they are all very effective, strikes, trips and throws. They are good fighting movements but the reason people can't fight is because they can't fight. They learn some movements but they still can't fight. If you had the combative application and understanding first, and then just did the movements slowly you'd refine it.

“I think of tai chi for fighting like a post-graduate level of



study. You don't learn the form to learn how to fight but you can refine your understanding of combative application through form. That's my opinion. Most, though not all, of the great tai chi fighters had some fighting experience before their tai chi study.

“When it is applied in combat the tai chi form is nothing special. The biggest mistake is people trying to do ‘special stuff’. The person seems to do very little but *oops* you're off balance and *oh* they got you. It almost seems like, they got lucky; it is often very high-level skill at work.

“High level skill masters make things look easy. But someone else tries and it's really difficult. The highest level is natural movement. It's the same in boxing, the boxer slips the punch by a millimetre and counters and it doesn't even look like a hard punch, but the opponent still hits the canvas.”

So I finally asked David to tell me what is the one thing in tai chi fighting that nobody knows or talks about but everybody should know or talk about?

“You will get hit. Your technique won't work first time. You need to have a plan B,” he replied.

He says: “In the 80s, I remember talking to one guy, who was very good at tai chi. He showed me an application and I said, ‘Well it seems to me if this doesn't work you are left in a pretty bad position’. He said, “Well you need to practise so it always works’.

“My Sifu in China thinks differently. He says, ‘Well, try



this, it possibly won't work but then follow with this technique and also be ready with a plan C and D'. The idea that if an opponent attacks you will reply with a perfect technique is wrong.

“Boxers don't land every punch; wrestlers don't land every takedown. BJJ people don't land every submission. Why are tai chi people held to this ridiculous standard of doing this ‘one thing’ that will work perfectly? It's not the real world.

“So, my answer is, it won't work and you will get hit (initially) and if you are not prepared to get used to being hit, you have no business fighting.

“I would say Fa Jin (explosive force) is important. But equally important is resilience and conditioning. So you are going to get hit (be conditioned) and you need a follow up plan for every technique you throw.”







# Seeking the Emerald city

Tina Faulkner Elders

**So Dorothy never left Kansas. A tornado comes and wreaks havoc with her home. Before she knows it she is in a strange new place, confused, afraid and alone apart from her dog Toto. Tina Faulkner Elders on getting home**

Throughout most of the story Dorothy is on a journey to the Emerald City because she is told that the great wizard there has all the answers and will show her the way home. It turns out that the great wisdom she has been searching for was not with the all-powerful wizard in the shining Emerald City, Dorothy has had the power to find her way back home all along. As soon as she realises the truth she just clicks the heels of her ruby slippers and there she is, back home, as if waking from a bad dream.

## The reality

Well that's a very nice story with a happy ending but the reality is that most of us are living in a world where we often feel lost and confused causing us a great deal of anxiety. It can be frustrating which then leads to either anger or sorrow. It's exhausting. We are just reacting to events the best way we can but still looking for that great wisdom somewhere out there. Where is our Kansas? Where is our home from where we can wake up in our safe and calm space? Even if we are told that the answers lie within us, they still seem buried so deeply it feels impossible to find them.

## The need to find our home

I think that, as we have developed a better understanding about, mental health we have realised the importance of the need to 'find home'. There is plenty of talk about 'self care' and being kind to oneself, but what exactly does that mean? Let me ask you this: when was the



**Tina Faulkner Elders**

body had arrived at the destination they would sit and wait for their soul to catch up. In many ways I believe a lot of us live our whole lives like this. Our bodies are going through the motions but we haven't let the rest of us catch up. We have lost that part of ourselves and it is still looking for home.

## Being with yourself

To me this is what real 'self care' is about. Just being with yourself. Truly BEING with yourself for long enough that your soul can find its way back home. To me, my practice of tai chi chuan and qigong are my ruby slippers, giving me the way to train in how to really pay attention and to be with myself. The movements are present and give the mind a stillness whereas sitting still can be a struggle to stop the mind wandering off. The more often I bring myself back home the more I find I rarely wander far. I am never lost. I am here. In the words of Dorothy when she clicks her heels together, 'there's no place like home'. 🌿

last time you were truly with yourself in a kind and compassionate way? When was the last time you left all the outside noise behind and were really attentive just to yourself? We are often far too busy for it. We give our attention to work and to our loved ones and that alone can feel like a heavy burden.

## Waiting for your soul to catch up

I heard a story once that really stuck with me. There was a tribe somewhere that used to travel everywhere by foot. When railroads came and the tribe started to use this new means of transport they would get off the train at the end of their journey and just sit whilst others disembarked and went about their business. Their reasoning was that the train had travelled further and faster than their soul could keep up with. While their

“...tai chi chuan  
and qigong are my  
ruby slippers...”

Tina Faulkner Elders director and principal instructor of Ruyi School of Tai-jiquan & Qigong and TCUGB Health committee team leader  
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# The bagua transition

In his mid-sixties Malcolm Davy-Barnes is a retired NHS Jungian psychotherapist. He worked in mental health services for 35 years.

Currently he teaches bagua zhang in and around his home town of Maldon, on the Essex coast. Two of his three classes are in conjunction with a local 'falls prevention' scheme.

**How long have you been practising tai chi?**

I started learning tai chi in 1980 with John Hine in South East London.

**What stimulated your interest?**

Like many of my generation, watching the Kung Fu tv series as a 14 year old. This led to an interest in Chinese philosophy and history and later to tai chi.

**What does tai chi mean to you?**

The internal arts have a depth and breadth that I continue to discover. They have become a part of my life; from aiming for correct body structure and relaxation, to other physical, psychological and spiritual benefits. I marvel at the ingenuity of those before us.

**Who or what inspired you, both in the beginning and now?**

I would like to acknowledge my two main teachers. Sifu Jim Uglow from whom I learnt Yang style tai chi in the 1980s and 90s. Since 2014 I have been learning Fan family baguazhang from sifu Phil Morrell. Both, inspiring teachers. I am very grateful to them for sharing their knowledge and for their patience with me.

**What is the most important aspect to you?**

To keep going at my age. Continuing to learn and practise.

**Do you have any personal goals?**

I enjoy teaching and I am fortunate that Fan style bagua has a wide curriculum with a number of foundational qigong, jibengong exercises and forms that are suitable for beginners. Bagua is sometimes seen as a kind of post-graduate art, but I'm keen on spreading the benefits to



**Malcolm Davey-Barnes**

folks with different levels of fitness. For myself practising I love those rare and brief moments when everything clicks and you feel really connected in yourself and with what's around you.

**What do you think of tai chi's current popularity?**

I think it's a great thing, the blossoming of tai chi and qigong. I just hope those blossoms have good roots. I'd also like to see other arts like bagua included and promoted more for their benefits.

**What are your views on competition?**

My main competitive spirit is with myself. I can be very critical when seeing myself on video. However competitions seem a good place to share and meet with fellow practitioners.

**What direction would you like to see tai chi taking in the future?**

Many of the issues such as accreditation, working with professional bodies, diversity of lineage, etc are familiar to me from the psychotherapy world, and seem to be a bit of a minefield. However I'd like to see perhaps the TCUGB offering courses and assistance to instructors. I've found the couple of coaching courses I've done with the BCCMA (I'm not a member), very helpful. 🌱



Email: [barney@phonecoop.coop](mailto:barney@phonecoop.coop)  
Facebook: Maldon & Dengie Bagua



# Odds at the End

## And the things people say...

### Qigong for kids in BC

Health committee chair Tina Faulkner Elders has been offering qigong for kids sessions. She was thrilled to receive the following message from a school in British Columbia, Canada.

“Hello. My grade 5/6 class really liked your lessons. We created a small routine of doing qigong over a couple of months, trying to keep up with it daily. The kids really enjoyed learning qigong, especially 'lion plays with ball'.

“In the beginning, many of the students found it very challenging and painful. The most challenging part for them was moving so slowly which originally was the source of much complaint. As we proceeded and they got better at it, they were able to start to feel the movements, were able to move multiple parts of their body in synch, start flowing with their movements between stances, and many of them even started to feel the ball in 'lion plays with ball'. By the end of the 'unit', students were recognising they were more at peace, were calm, relaxed, and even more energised after doing a session of qigong. Their favourite time to do the full routine was after lunch.”

From Mr. Snider's grade 5/6 class in the Kootenay region of British Columbia, Canada, “thanks so much for teaching us qigong”.

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=E5ojv\\_v8fOY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E5ojv_v8fOY)



Tina Faulkner Elders

### Up for the job?

As part of the ongoing series of improvements to our organisation, the TCUGB is looking to recruit a volunteer to fill the role of membership services officer. This is anticipated to be a low usage role, so not too demanding on your time, and it fills a position in our new forward-facing structure. The role would involve following up any issues raised by members of the public or by the TCUGB membership. It will be the membership services officer's job to seek a solution and establish a satisfactory outcome. The role will involve consulting with, and reporting to, the board. Experience in a customer or membership facing or HR role within an organisation would be useful, as well as current knowledge and experience in the field of inclusivity, and social media.

The role's title is more positively intended than just a complaints officer so we look forward to the applicants' input.

Please apply with relevant details or CV to Mark Peters: [chair@taichiunion.com](mailto:chair@taichiunion.com)

“ If I only want to do tai-chi for the relaxation side of the art, do I really need to learn the self-defence? ”

*See page 27, you may find an answer*

### Un-bash practice

Training in a martial art does not require the smashing and bashing of others, but a peaceful mind under pressure. Prof. Cheng said: “Concentrate your spirit within and express total calm without, this is how one achieves perfection in both principle and practice.”

**Mark Peters,**  
Kaimingnewsletter  
June 2022



Tai Chi relaxes me.  
It's like Yoga except I get to hit something.

**There are many paths up the mountain**

When you get to the top you will find a crowd of martial artists arguing about which one is the only true path

Anon

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