



Kai Ming Association Newsletter

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WE NEED YOU!



Every month we write newsletters for Kai Ming and Painting the Rainbow tai chi students. Some months we get contributions from the classes but most months it is down to myself and Jenny (my wife) to 'pull the rabbit out of the hat'...

What I'm saying is "We need you, please help". Send in articles, poems, pictures, recipes, funny thoughts (tai chi related hopefully). You all have stories to share of how training in tai chi and qigong has impacted you, what you enjoy, what you struggle with etc. so please share it. You can email to markpeters@kaiming.co.uk or give to your instructor or even post it the good old fashioned way. If you want a postal address, please call us on 0121 251 6172

Thank you in advance as without your help, these newsletters will be no more and that would be a sad loss
Regards

Mark & Jenny Peters

A State of Wholeness (Free of Conscious Thought)

These Newsletters contain a wealth of information, much of which directs me towards further investigation and research, assisting and leading to greater awareness and understanding.

For example, in the May 2019 Kai Ming Association Newsletter, Mark wrote: "When students ask what would you do if I hit you, I have to reply I have no idea but it is likely to hurt you".

Looking further into Mark's reply I can see that due to the natural spontaneity of combat, it is important to reach a point where our response to an attack becomes thoughtless (without conscious thought), where there is no separation between the action of the attacker and our reaction (the defender's action) – no separation between the fighter and the fight.

Learning to allow our mind to become free of thought of no particular thing (i.e. free of expectation or anticipation of the outcome; having no set plan/pre-arranged response to rely on – which would also mean relying on being attacked in a specific way) means that our mind (and body) can respond most efficiently to an attack, to "what is" rather than to "what if" or to "what should be". If we have to depend on techniques, we could get a 'log-jam' in our mind, resulting in a delay while we decide on which technique(s) to call upon. In reality, there will be no time to consider the type of defence to use, whereas, without conscious thought, the reaction is instantaneous, like an echo or reflection in the mirror.

Or unconscious instincts can be hindered by conscious thoughts. So, if we think less, we can do more. Thinking too much about a technique or a particular part of a technique, can disrupt the fine timing and overall performance. Therefore, greater efficiency can be achieved concentrating on the feeling of the movement rather than on a specific technique.

These concepts relate not only to responding more efficiently to a 'real life' physical attack but also to going from a high level of performance to an even

higher level of performance during athletic sport competition.

Some parts of the human brain have evolved to think and analyse – that is what makes humans so clever. However, in combat, that cleverness can work against us. While we are thinking, we could get hit over the head with an iron bar!



As Mark touched on in the previously mentioned newsletter (which prompted me to further explore), practitioners of external martial arts often get caught up in repetitious, mechanical and artificial drillings which serve no useful purpose or bear any resemblance to a 'real' fight. Drilling in the manner of "If someone attempts to hit me like this, I will do this (step 1/technique 1), then I will do this (step 2/technique 2) and finally I will do this (step 3/technique 3)" can lead to the practitioner becoming bound/confined by the techniques' limitations (as they 'cling' to the techniques). These types of routines often provide false security and distract from the realities of combat; combat which is unpredictable, ever-changing from moment to moment.

I have been directed towards the principle of No-Mindedness (Wu-shin), which philosopher Alan Watts described as "being in a state of wholeness in which the mind functions freely and easily, without the sensation of a second mind

or ego standing over it with a club” – so there is no interference by the separate thinker or ego within ourselves and absolutely no effort in letting go.

The disappearance of the effort to ‘let go’ is precisely the disappearance of the separate thinker. There is nothing to try to do, for when ‘being in the now’, free from conscious thought, whatever comes up moment by moment is accepted, including non-acceptance – and from a self defence perspective, it means we can adapt to combative situations!

I realise the truth in Mark’s message of the Tai Chi Chuan principles being over technique. When understanding the principles, such as receiving and redirecting, it does not matter even if attacked with a technique never defended against before – those principles can still be effectively applied – naturally and instantly. Technique are subject to failure, principles are not.

by Peter Jagger

Cotteridge Park student and lover of martial arts.

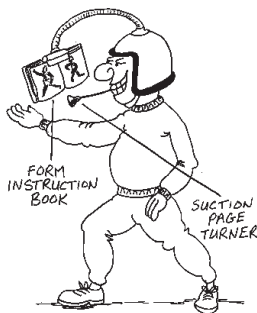


PATENT PENDING!!!!!!!

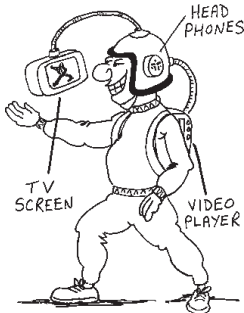
A recent invention has been proposed, by a member of the student body, to aid in practice of the form. It has been noted that training aids such as books and videos are all very well, but you have to keep referring back or looking over your shoulder.

WELL NOT ANY MORE.....

below are development sketches provided by Irvine Porter. There are two versions, standard and deluxe. Prices are yet to be confirmed, but we will no doubt be looking for guinea pigs for field trials.



The standard model comes complete with suction page turner and optional helmet light.



The deluxe model has a built in video player and black and white monitor. We are considering a super-deluxe model, which will include a camera to review your progress and a colour monitor with TV program capability.

WATCH THIS SPACE.....



The Importance of Weapons training in Tai Chi Chuan

Many students come to Taiji and believe all there is to the art is a slow form they’ve seen in the parks or on the TV. There is much much more; it’s a complete system including strengthening exercises, sensitivity exercises, philosophy and weapons. Different schools have various numbers of weapons but generally they all teach the straight sword (Jian). The reasons for this article is to explain their importance and the function of each weapon in their formation of the ‘Taiji whole picture’.

I have known schools that teach weapons as a kind of dance; an extra bolt on to make their system more interesting and lucrative. Lets consider the dictionary definition for weapon - an instrument of offence or defence [the Wordsworth concise English dictionary]; I suppose an extremely bad dance could be construed as ‘offensive’ but I don’t think they’re quite the same thing.

Different weapons develop different skills or areas of Tai Chi Chuan; although our school practices straight sword, broad sword, walking stick, staff, spear and fan, I will focus on the most popular three to give a common ground. These are broad sword, spear and straight sword. These are sometimes referred to as the 100 day, 1000 day and 10,000 day weapons respectively due to their level of complexity to master. I will explore each in turn.



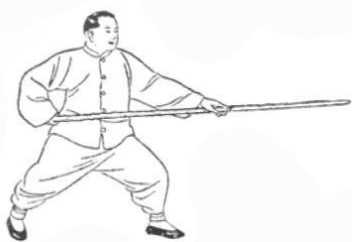
Broad-sword (Dao)

We practice the 32 step Yang style form as described in Weapons of Primordial Pugilism by Dr. Tseng Ju-Pai. The blade is curved and single edge thereby making it a hacking and slashing weapon. There are two types readily available: a light flimsy one used by Wu Shu stylists and a more robust one favoured by Tai Chi Chuan (plus other northern Chinese martial art styles) and made in China by Dragon Well; the blade is usually approx. 28" long. As well as the solo form, individual training exercises are used along with partner work for application practice. This weapon uses coiling and extensively trains the waist as the power is needed to draw the blade through flesh or body (please try not to kill any partners in class). This was ostensibly a battlefield weapon but this does not mean it was designed to be wielded and applied as if you are in an Errol Flynn swash-buckling movie; It is important to use the skill of Tai Chi i.e. sticking, neutralising, redirecting and applying. When blocking a strike this should be done in a sweeping action and with the side of the blade to prevent damage to the cutting edge (the steel wasn’t very good quality) in addition to the use of force against force. The circular force developed by this weapon is excellent for use in fixed step push-hands, grappling or throwing.

In terms of modern application the methodology could be applied to almost anything from the new police batons to an umbrella, walking stick or rolled up newspaper. The techniques can be applied empty hand against empty hand, or empty hand against a weapon to allow resistance training. In addition to this, heavy weapons improve strength and stamina; Yang Cheng Fu is quoted as saying “The heavier the weapons the more energies are gained”. This is

probably the post apt weapon to modern day as it is a close quarters weapons and includes seizing your opponent.

It is extremely useful in developing Peng Jing (ward-off energy), the first and most important underlying energy used in Tai Chi Chuan. It is imperative that awareness of the weapon is developed, as both an extension of the body and improvement of focus. Be aware of the cutting edge as it slices through the air, of the hilt and pommel as striking implements in their own right; hitting with the butt of the weapon (pommel) is a very painful point strike as well as a method of creating space for the blade to cut through. Wrist locks can also be practised with this section of the weapon and applied to everyday items, even a coke bottle (most likely not a 3 litre plastic one). We only have to look at Aikido to witness the effectiveness of weapons awareness applied effectively in empty hand techniques.



Spear (Qiang)

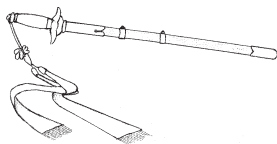
The spear is an excellent strength building weapon and I remember being told stories of practitioners thrusting the tip into heavy sacks and attempting to throw them away to build this power. A tale regarding the spear was told of Yang Ban Hou, Yang Cheng Fu's brother, who it was said, ordered the heads be removed from spears after his daughter was killed during spear play.

The most simple and common introduction to spear training is that purported to have been taught by Yang Cheng Fu and is commonly known as shaking. This involves three or four movements, dependant on how you count: PLEASE SEE PHOTOS' (1) swing the head and tassel of the spear anti-clockwise by turning your waist and wrist and draw a circle. (2) swing the head and tassel of the spear clockwise by turning your waist and wrist and draw a circle. (3) thrust the spear forwards sliding it through your left hand. (4) pull back and press down. The first two movements are blocks and the third a strike. Although simple these movements are fundamental to correct use of the spear.

From here you can build on to two person spear work and form training. I have been taught a form developed by my teacher, Master Tan Ching Ngee of Singapore, which I find quite aerobic. The extended focus and footwork is ideal for developing advancing and entering skills. The use of Ting Jing and Fa Jing are apparent and the feeling of energy extension can be compared to form postures such as double push, single whip or left and right toe kick. Two person practice should have the flavour of push hands not of Friar Tuck and Robin Hood!! Techniques to consider are thrusting, controlled deflection and redirection to enter.

The use of same weapon and mixed weapon training/sparring will develop empty hand skills as well as weapons awareness. The ability to coil through an opponents attack and strike at their 'very heart' is a skill especially developed by the extension quality of the spear.

It is said that the red horse hair is used to distract an attacker or their horse (it probably doesn't have the same effect with a car so don't try). It is also said that the hair is to stop blood dripping down the spear shaft and making the user lose grip; I've never put this to the test as you tend to lose students when you stab them....



Straight-sword (Jian)

'Alive hold the sword, dead hold the sabre'. This Chinese idiom means that the Broad-sword is rigid and inflexible where as the straight sword is lively and flowing. We practice the 54 step form as taught by Professor Cheng Man Ching; this is my teachers favourite weapon. We also practice the 13 sword secrets form, developed by Master Tan, to allow us to focus on the essential methods and hand grips used in proper Jian practice. This has long been considered the gentleman's weapon and it has been said that a scholar has to be well-read, and well-versed in fencing.

The flavour of sword application is similar to that used in calligraphy; the smooth flow and sweeps require a skilful and light sensitive grip. It is apparent this weapon requires the highest level of skill and as such is often referred to in Chinese Mythology highlighting its importance in their culture. Nigel Sutton referred to this in his book 'Applied Tai

Chi' where he compares it to the legend of Excalibur. These swords were often called 'Bao Jian' (precious sword). He stated that Professor Cheng is said to have owned such a sword and was able to pierce holes in coins.

Robert Smiths quotes Professor Cheng as saying "Never put more than four ounces on your opponent and never allow them to put more than four ounces on you". This principle is essential for proper Jian use; to sense your opponents intentions and to offer them nothing is the highest skill in Tai Chi Chuan. Cheng, as with my teacher, lit up at thought of sword sparring; this sparring is not swash buckling, it has the flavour of free push hands. The combination of Ting Jing and swift footwork are devastating in action.

The double edge sword is designed to be razor sharp at the tip and be progressively blunter towards the hilt as the blade thickens. This tapered thickness allows for a spring like quality, as with Peng, and reduces the risk of the opponent finding your centre. It is designed to stick and deflect lightly then slash swiftly at vulnerable areas e.g. ankle tendons or thumbs. Sparring brings a new life to the weapon and in turn your empty hand techniques. The most apparent skill developed would be fast effective footwork which is essential for quick and effective combat. Moving from standard push-hands to striking is a natural progression developed by straight sword methodology.

A notable characteristic of the straight sword is the form of the free hand. This is held with the index and middle finger extended and the ring and little fingers bent and held by the thumb. See photo. This is commonly known as 'secret sword hand' and some say is used for striking vital points, in fact one exponent states that it is used to conceal a knife. A more practical interpretation is that it is used to balance the body and focus the chi; the whole body must have Yin and Yang, full and empty, and therefore no life in the other hand would brake the principles of Tai Chi Chuan.

Each weapon develops essential Tai Chi skills and highlights them for correct use in all areas of this wondrous, multi-faceted, art. The many energies including sticking, neutralising, understanding, redirecting and applying, find their place. Search out a teacher that knows and can apply their weapons, not just hang them on a wall.

Join, Jump on and Neutralise

I have coined the phrase, “jumping onto a moving train” to explain an important principle of the internal arts—the correct way to join with incoming energy for neutralizing.

Many hard style martial arts use strength to neutralize or block punches and strikes. Visualize the tight fist, right-angled block of the Karate practitioner. It is designed to break the bone of the incoming striking arm. It may be very effective, but it does not fit the philosophy of the Tai Chi player. We seek to join with, attach to, and understand energy as it enters our space. We seek to be as soft and relaxed as possible under the circumstances. So I coined this phrase, jumping onto a moving train, to explain our desire to softly join with the incoming energy.

If you wanted to jump onto a moving train, you would not just stand in one place and try to jump on it as it passed you by. It is much easier to run alongside the train until you were going about the same speed as the train and then hop onto it.

It is similar neutralizing incoming strikes or pushes. If you try and “jump onto” (neutralize and stick) a partner’s arm when it has gotten quite close to your body, it is difficult because the force has gained momentum and speed.

The ideal is to join with him at the edge of your energy bubble (about a foot and a half from your body) before his strike gains momentum. Your body and intention will be moving in the same direction as his strike so you can join with him smoothly, softly, and without force.

Michael Gilman



One moment of patience may ward off great disaster.

One moment of impatience may ruin a whole life.

Patience is quiet hope and trust that things will turn out right. You wait without complaining. You are tolerant and accepting of difficulties and mistakes.

You picture the end in the beginning and persevere to meet your goals.

Patience is a commitment to the future.

This character contains the ideas for both patience, perseverance and endurance.

This single character can be a bit ambiguous or flexible as it can also mean to endure, to bear, to put up with.



Advanced classes / instructor training

Venue: Weoley Hill Village Hall, Weoley Hill, Bourmville.

Sunday: 9.30-12.30 advanced classes (£30)

Dec. 8th - includes grading

2020 dates

Jan. 12th

Feb. 16th

March 1st

April 19th

May 10th

PLEASE NOTE:

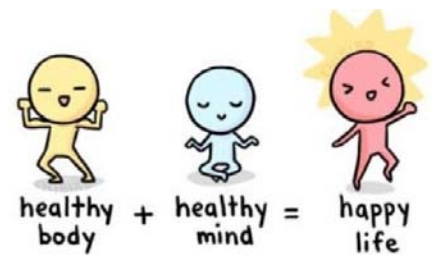
Please send your Newsletter contributions for future issues to markpeters@kaiming.co.uk

A lovely poem from a Cotteridge Park student

What to do when I retire? I couldn't really see,
Maybe “Walking Football” No not with my bad knee!
But then my neighbour Sheila said,
“come and try Tai Chi,
I'm going there on Thursday so come along with me”.

Soon I'm swimming with two dragons and painting rainbows to,
Swinging my arms around wildly and then the white crane flew
I've grasped the sparrows tail, and turned to gaze at the moon,
Now the only problem is the session is over too soon!
The exercise and friendship really make it fun,
and even when it starts raining we can soon bring out the sun

Balance is a mind and body thing



Tension is like knots hidden in our muscles, in our minds, and deep within our hearts.

We practice Tai Chi in order to discover those hidden knots and dissolve them.

- David Chen

All that is gold does not glitter,
Not all those who wander are lost;
The old that is strong does not wither, *(especially if you practice Tai Chi)
Deep roots are not reached by the frost.
J.R.R. Tolkien. 1892-1973 (*added by me, not Tolkien)