



Tai Chi Newsletter

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30th Anniversary Kai Ming Tai Chi day September 2024

The 30th anniversary Kai Ming Tai Chi event was nothing short of a remarkable celebration, filled with joy, unity, and a shared passion for the art of Tai Chi Chuan. As the event marked three decades of dedication and growth, it was a time for both reflection on the past and excitement for the future. The atmosphere was vibrant, yet peaceful, embodying the very essence of Tai Chi Chuan - balance.

The focus of the event was the opportunity to teach Yue Shu Ting's 18 lower hand form, which brought an incredible sense of fulfilment, and is the first time I have ever taught it in the UK. I also taught it in memory of my teacher Lau Kim Hong, who sadly passed the week before the event, as without him I would have never gained access to this rare aspect of the art. The form is taught in Malaysia and was developed by Yue Shu Ting (Ye Xiu Ting), one of Prof. Cheng's senior students.

It was Yue who took the now-famous Huang Sheng Shyan to meet Cheng Man Ching in Taiwan. They had both served as officials in China, before moving to Taiwan, then Malaysia and Singapore respectively. The 18 lower-hand form was added to the end of the 37, by Yue, to practice some additional aspects of the original Yang style.

The form is known for its smooth, flowing movements that focus on precision and subtle power with clear martial applications. Guiding participants through this form, and watching their focus and dedication, was truly invigorating.

The participants varied in skill levels, from beginners to seasoned practitioners, yet the beauty of Tai Chi Chuan is that it unites people regardless of their experience. The 18 lower hand form, with its emphasis on grounded movements and the cultivation of internal strength, was particularly suitable for this diverse group as non had experienced it before.

It offered a challenge for the more experienced while being accessible enough for newer students to grasp the fundamentals. As I demonstrated the form, breaking down the movements and explaining their nuances, there was a palpable sense of engagement from the attendees. Their eagerness to learn and improve was evident in their posture, their breath, and their intent.

One of the most enjoyable aspects of the event was the communal atmosphere. Tai Chi often brings people together, and this gathering was no exception. There was a sense of camaraderie as participants practised together, exchanging tips, offering encouragement, and sharing in the joy of movement.

The rhythmic harmony of the group as they flowed through the form was a beautiful sight to behold. It was a reminder that Tai Chi is not just an individual practice but also a communal one - a shared experience that fosters connection.

Throughout the day, I had the opportunity to interact with many of the attendees, learning about their journeys with Tai Chi. Some spoke of how the practice had helped them find calm amid the stresses of daily life, while others shared stories of how it had improved their physical health and well-being. Listening to these stories was deeply inspiring and underscored the profound impact Tai Chi can have on individuals.

The event wasn't just about practising forms; it was a celebration of the art itself. We watched Professor Cheng Man Ching's Journey to the West film over lunch for example; It was full of clips of Professor Cheng, along with interviews with some of his senior students in the US. Sadly most have now passed so this film still keeps them alive in some way.

As the event drew to a close, there was a shared sense of accomplishment and joy. The anniversary not only commemorated the history of Kai Ming Association for Tai Chi Chuan but also served as a reminder of its continued relevance and vitality. Teaching Yue Shu Ting's 18 lower hand form at such a milestone event was an honour, and the energy of the day left everyone, including me, feeling rejuvenated and inspired.



Thoughts from one participant in his own words. Those who know Larry will recognise his style.

THANK YOU SO MUCH..!

Superb day. let me just deal with my squirming paranoias first – as far as I felt I only blundered out two faux pas – both of which I'm embarrassed of and grateful that you neutralised with a smile...

I felt a lot more at ease... there's loads obviously Mark – ya see – one thing I see in Paul's teachings that I don't see elsewhere is all this wriggling about – it looks very external but feels very internal – it's torque and tensegrity - body moves arms follow etc – so I always feel like a wriggling idiot in other schools... other stuff too – just my mouth and head :)

I got what I needed Mark... and very deeply... it's a groove that I don't want to lose – the lightness and ease of tai chi – the way it's ok for a group of people to choose to gather and chat about how 'he needs to get a microphone' rather than choose to realise that they need to get close enough to hear you... just the way it felt like a picnic gathering and if folk wanted to group together and chat then that's not gonna interfere with any learning somehow.... Tricked right through in that night I had to see if I'd remembered, then the next day, then later that next day, then this morning heheheh... There's an understanding creeping in of your 'get them hooked and then start teaching' approach... I was practicing without realising because I was idling a curiosity of 'have I remembered' rather than struggling a homework...

So – loads absorbed – and two great one liners nicked :) (I'm gonna make my students a certificate with 'Wasn't as bad as some of the others' printed on it)

Gotta go to work Mark or I'd edit it down again... Thanks for tolerating me with such welcome. So much better meeting up face-to-face than on Zoom, but ya know... That was just so good...

Thank You

Larry Jones – Tai Chi Instructor and functional movement therapist, Lancaster.



Tai Chi pays back in so many ways.

I have for a while suffered from arthritis and rheumatism and unfortunately then had a fall in my kitchen. I broke my elbow and fractured a bone in my vertebrae. This left me with a loss of confidence in walking and balance, so much so that I gave up riding my bike.

Some time later when I had healed, a friend of mine talked me into attending a Tai Chi class she had recently joined. In the class, I paid close attention to the instructor Neil, when he demonstrated and explained one of the basic principles of Tai Chi, that of "weight ratio", i.e. committing your weight to one leg before trying to move the other leg. This sounds so simple but for some reason, we forget or do not do it. After several lessons, I started to get the hang of this and I was amazed how my balance started to improve. This of course then gave me greater confidence so that I am now again enjoying my other hobbies of walking and cycling and therefore enjoying my life again.

I thoroughly recommend Tai Chi to anyone with balance problems, give it a try, and you won't regret it.

Mrs Joan Dugard - Lichfield Methodist class.

Let your imagination lead the way



Time spent doing Qigong or Tai Chi Form is a fantastic way to exercise, it helps with balance and improves various health conditions both physical and mental. But visualisation is also a big part of our Tai Chi experience. It can take us somewhere else, or we can be something else which aids us in our desire to forget our worries for a while and just relax.

I've always had quite a vivid imagination and can picture myself standing on a mountain or rowing a boat quite easily. I do love to share the stories I have found out about some of the exercises from Qigong or postures from the Tai Chi form with my classes.

'**Constant Bear**' is a favourite of mine. A bear is walking through a forest with an owl on his head. The owl is the 'Looking Owl' and it keeps the bear on a straight path and eases his worries. The bear has our world in his paws and is moving it from side to side, from night to day, from Yin to Yang. The bear is looking after our world constantly, keeping us safe.

Then there is the exercise from Fragrant Buddha, '**Chinese Character Eight Drifting Fragrantly**'. Our hands as they float up and down are drawing the number eight. The Chinese believe the number eight to be very lucky. So much so that the Beijing Olympics started on 8th August 2008 at eight minutes and eight seconds past eight.

Another exercise from Fragrant Buddha called '**Rocking Bodhidharma**' has a great story. A Monk of the same name was meditating, but after 7 years of meditation he fell asleep. He was so disappointed in himself that he cut off his own eyelids so he wouldn't fall asleep again. His eyelids as they fell to the ground grew into the first Tea plants; so Tea is an aid to stop you falling asleep! You can purchase a doll called a Daruma which just has blank white circles for eyes. You make a wish and draw in one eye, when your wish comes true you draw on the other eye. On New Years Day you return the doll to the Temple, thank him for his help and then burn him, thus giving him his reward by sending him back to the Heavens.

The story about the posture '**Repulse Monkey**' from the Yang Style 37 Short Form is wonderful! A cheeky Demi God called Monkey steals Peaches from the garden of Xiwangmu, Queen Mother of the West and eats them. The peach contains the gift of immortality so whoever eats it becomes an immortal. Buddha Shakyamuni is very angry with Monkey as immortality is a gift to be earned, not stolen! He is imprisoned under Five Elements Mountain for 500 years as a punishment.

So, by doing the posture we are stopping Monkey from stealing the Peach of Immortality.

'Carry Tiger to Mountain' alludes to a man who was ordered to kill a tiger to impress the emperor. His guilt was such that he promised to return the spirit of the tiger to the mountain every time he practised The Form.

They are just a small selection of wonderful stories that aid visualisation which then helps us to relax when we're doing Qigong or The Form.

Next time you attend a class maybe let your imagination take you on a journey across seas and lakes, up to the top of mountains, dance in rainbows, wave your hands in the clouds, swim with two dragons, gaze at the moon and let your wings take you wherever you want to be.

Lynette Wood – Junior Instructor - Stirchley



A few thoughts on Tai Chi practice as a martial art

By Igor Rakar – Tai Chi teacher, Slovenia

Surely Tai Chi Chuan at the Yang Lu Chan time was practiced as a martial art, but after the suppression of the Boxers Rebellion with the firearms (1900) and mass/public teaching of Tai Chi Chuan (1920) there were more emphasize on Health and less on fighting. After that seems the fighting side of Tai Chi Chuan was declining and today very few people can use Tai Chi Chuan for fighting.

One of the core practices for fighting is strength conditioning. If you train for fighting you can't avoid the core conditioning exercises such running, striking the bag and using weights. Surely the conditioning should be adapted to the Tai Chi practice. We have to have in mind that Tai Chi Chuan is mainly soft/relaxed, and we should avoid the unnecessary tension.

The next practices are the single movements (done as drills) and the solo form practice. Here are also various stretching exercises, standing postures, swings, and coordination movements. These exercises are for developing combat skills such relaxation, balance, structure, and coordination. These skills are the core of using Tai Chi Chuan for fighting.

The next segment of practice are the exercises with the partner. Starting with various two persons drills, continuing with Da Shou (striking in push-hands), Tui Shou (pushing hands), and ending with San Shou (Sparring) practice. This is not the classic

MMA sparring we see today. All the Tai Chi principles must be applied. The use of sensitivity is essential, so in this practice we must always use stick and follow. We should not neglect the practice of fighting on the ground.

As the fighting art we should not neglect the weapons practice. The purpose of traditional Tai Chi weapons today is more to develop skills than use for fighting. Today the practice with the firearms is almost a must. However, it depends of the purpose of the practice. The martial art must prepare for fighting armed and unarmed.

At the end Tai Chi was and should be a martial art. The Tai Chi use is simple, but many today methods make it difficult. So, if the use of Tai Chi for fighting is not simple, that is not the real Tai Chi. Yang Cheng Fu is quoted as saying that not all Tai Chi is the real Tai Chi. What is the real Tai Chi? It can be found in Koh Ah Tee's quotes in the books written by Nigel Sutton.



Tai Chi - Students' Confessions

"View from the back of the class" is a collection of works by instructors and students.

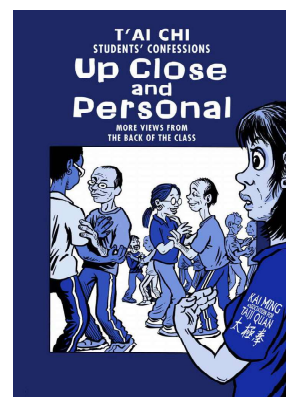
Including are some really funny cartoons of the form too. All Volumes are available in paperback direct from us, and Kindle format on Amazon.

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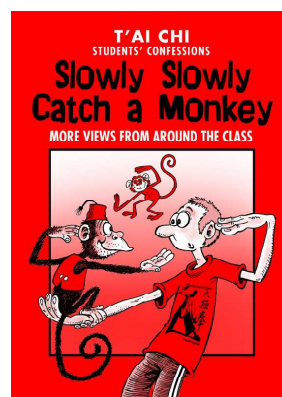
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volume 1



volume 2



volume 3

Dance to the Beat of Tai Chi

Just before Christmas a few years ago I used some tai chi principles in real life for the first time. I'm happy to say it was in the gentlest of ways.



I went with my friends to see The Beat – the pop reggae band from the early 1980s (remember Mirror In the Bathroom?), who are still working, and are one of the best dance bands in the world. I designed their logos, record sleeves, and t-shirts, so obviously I have a certain preference... but we were all set for a great night out at Birmingham Town Hall. We got into the venue early and staked out a place we were going to be able to see the band without being right up front, and we chose well, because as the place filled up, our space seemed to be kept open.

The Beat came on, the place erupted, and we were having a great time. Then, a great lummoX of a bloke staggered right in front of us. He was having a good time, but he was drunk and big. I wasn't having his, but I didn't want to push him away and ruin his evening and mine. So, I moved up to him and danced tai chi next to him. And of course, he found himself gently and mysteriously moved aside.

Just as he began to register that something was going on, I changed my balance and was no longer a threat to him, then when he was settled, I changed weight again, a sort of gentle "step up and play guitar" and he moved again... and so it went on, all in time to the bouncing ska/ reggae of The Beat. The guy was gently moved to another part of the floor, without even realizing it.

My friends, standing behind me, watched all this and said it was quite obvious to them what I was doing, and how the guy hadn't stood a chance – hadn't even realized there was a contest going on. Tai Chi principles of Softness proved themselves on that night.

Love and Peace, Bredren!

By Hunt Emerson – student and instructor - Handsworth



Stability

Jason Yeung likens the Tai Chi form sequence of SEPARATE AND KICK WITH HEEL as taking on the look of a circus high wire act!!! Balanced on one leg arms thrust out to the sides for stability he has a good point.

It is one of the most challenging moves you will encounter in the form.

It is just as challenging to the experienced student so beginners should take consolation from this.

Once you are accustomed to this sequence of moves it can be quite enjoyable to practice. Within it is a nice ebb and flow.

When feeling unsure or unfocused, you may start to wobble, become unbalanced, and occasionally calamity! You fall.

We know that the lower one's root, the more stable the posture.

This move however, has three limbs making dramatic outward gestures, so it is logical that when that when coupled with the nervous anticipation that may accompany a difficult move such as this, your stability may be compromised.

So let's split this into several aspects:

PREPARATION: Is your body in proper alignment and stable from the previous move. Are your feet and joints flexible? Is the mind calm? Is the leg low enough to the ground that it does not disturb your balance too greatly.

LIFTING THE LEG: The weight must be settled deep into the root before lifting the empty leg outward. While the arms are used to counter balance the leg movement as it goes up and out. One must remember that moving the whole outward in this way transfers a great percentage of the body weight away from one's centre of gravity.

To this is added the momentum of the rising leg, also going out away from the body. It can be no surprise then that balance is challenged

BRINGING THE LEG IN: You must try and bring the leg in toward your root rather than let it drop back. Though gravity is the primary force at work as the leg comes back, if the focus is on the gravitational pull, it may create a bounce in the body. If however, you keep the focus on the root, the force will be transferred into the ground and you will remain more stable.

COMPLETION/TRANSACTION: If you feel a sense of relief on completion of the move you were probably anxious about it before you even started, aim for this relaxation before you begin the move. This move above all requires strict adherence to the Tai Chi principles. It is a great chance to hone your skills. Whether the leg is being lifted high or you are stepping out comfortably low, the only difference will be the mechanics and, most importantly, the mind-set.



Advanced monthly training sessions.

Sessions are held each month for 3 hours at Weoley Hill Village Hall, Bournville, to enable instructors time for their own training and for more advanced students to gain the time to develop a deeper understanding of the application of tai chi chuan.

Sessions are Sunday's 9.30-12.30 at £30 per person.

Last two Training sessions in 2024

6th October
10th November

Sessions start again February 2025 as we have December and January off.

Grading day is planned for February 2025