

This item was submitted to Loughborough's Institutional Repository (<https://dspace.lboro.ac.uk/>) by the author and is made available under the following Creative Commons Licence conditions.



For the full text of this licence, please go to:  
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.5/>

# Invented Tradition and Translated Practices: The Career of Tai Chi in China and the West

by

(Gehao Zhang)

A Doctoral Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of  
Doctor of Philosophy of Loughborough University

(January 2010)

© by (Gehao Zhang) 2010

# ABSTRACT

This thesis takes the primary contemporary icons of Chinese tradition –the popular practice of Tai Chi- and subjects its career in both China and the West, to a series of critical interrogations focusing on three main moments; the invention and (re)imagination of tradition, the practice's migration from China to the West, and its translation by its English practitioners.

During the Imperial period, when Tai Chi was defined primarily as a martial art, it was the focus of a sustained struggle between its official deployment as part of the military machine and its practice by clandestine societies and insurgent movement. It was simultaneously incorporated into the push to modernization and promoted as a part of an unbroken cultural legacy that defined the uniqueness of Chineseness in various forms during Republican China, Mao's era and Post-Mao era. The thesis also looks at the key figures and the process of institutionalization and indigenisation as the practice generated its own national professional associations and competitions in England since 1940s.

Based on ethnographic research in the Midlands, the thesis explores the contending understandings of Tai Chi among its English practitioners. It explores the ways in which British instructors locate themselves within an 'authentic' tradition by way of a latent lineage system. This allows them to maintain their own personal commitment to Tai Chi as a martial art conflicts while working with the market drive for mass participation based on concepts of relaxation and alternative therapy and medicine.

The ethnographic research also explores the ways that students in Tai Chi classes translate it into an indoors practices with an outdoors imagination, and as a bodily discipline with a spiritual basis, and how they construct their understanding of this spiritual dimension by drawing on polysemic interpretations of oriental conceptions such as Yin, Yang and Qi rather than the standardised references to Taoism in the public representations.

## ***Acknowledgments***

It has been my very good fortune to have had Mr. Graham Murdock as my supervisor. This dissertation has greatly benefited from his assistance, shrewd insights and good judgment. I wish to express my appreciation for his enlighten guidance from my first year in the programme throughout the completion of this dissertation. I am deeply indebted to him for offering me his expertise.

I wish also to extend my gratitude to Professor Zhao Yuezhi, Professor Harriet Evans, Professor Steve Smith and Dr. Katie Hill for their interest in and inspiration of my intellectual pursuit, not only in this dissertation but in other academic adventures as well.

I take pleasure in thanking many of my friends Dr. Zhang Lei, Ms Hou Xiaoyan, Dr. Zheng Jun, Dr. Li Shubo, whose fresh perspectives and encouragement advance the writing of this dissertation. I appreciate the help I received from everyone I meet during my ethnography. They expressed strong interests in my research and trusted me with their stories.

Finally, I convey my love, admiration and appreciation to my family for their unwavering support, unconditional love.

# CONTENTS

<b>SECTION I APPROACH.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION: THE VARIOUS FACES OF TAI CHI.....</b>	<b>8</b>
Tai Chi as a form of martial art .....	9
Tai Chi as a physical discipline linked to concepts of bodily well being, fitness and health .....	10
Tai Chi as a spiritual/religious discipline with complex ties to both Taoism and Confucianism .....	12
Tai Chi as a cultural symbol accepted and promoted by national institutions. ....	12
<b>THESIS STRUCTURE .....</b>	<b>13</b>
Invention.....	13
Migration .....	14
Translation .....	15
<b>ROMANISATION AND TRANSLATION.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>18</b>
Archival Sources .....	19
Ethnography.....	20

**SECTION II ..... 22**

**CHAPTER 1 RE-MAKING TRADITION: INVENTIONS AND TRANSLATIONS... 22**

**Invented Traditions: National and Personal ..... 22**

**Stable Inheritances: Constructing Continuity..... 23**

**Questioning Continuity..... 29**

**Invented Traditions in China ..... 31**

**Invented Traditions in the Martial Arts..... 35**

**The Translation of Tradition ..... 37**

**SECTION II CONTESTED TRADITIONS: THE CAREER OF TAI CHI IN CHINA.. 39**

**CHAPTER 2 THE ART OF WAR: TAI CHI AND THE IMPERIAL IMAGINATION 39**

**The Early Imperial Period..... 39**

**The Broken History of Martial arts ..... 39**

***Wuyi*: The arts of Warfare ..... 40**

**Military Traditions ..... 45**

***Wuju* and *Wuxue*: Official organisation ..... 47**

**Rebels and Militias ..... 48**

***Yangsheng*: Life Cultivation ..... 51**

Philosophical and Religious Influences.....	53
<b>Later Imperial China .....</b>	<b>55</b>
Malfunction of the Imperial Design.....	55
The Introduction of Western Military Drill .....	56
Popular Organisation .....	58
Literati Participation .....	63
<b>CHAPTER 3 MODERNISATION: THE BODY AND THE BODY POLITIC.....</b>	<b>67</b>
In Republican China .....	67
<b>Institutionalisation .....</b>	<b>68</b>
The Establishment of the Education system and the Exclusion of Martial Arts .....	68
The Rise of Tai Chi Organizations.....	70
The Invention of New Forms .....	74
The Growth of Publications on Tai Chi.....	78
<b>Theorizing .....</b>	<b>80</b>
The Construction of Myths.....	81
Competing Ideologies.....	90
<b>The Scientificalisation of National Arts: from Popular to National.....</b>	<b>106</b>
<b>CHAPTER 4 THE REVOLUTION AND REFORM OF TAI CHI .....</b>	<b>113</b>
<b>In the Name of Revolution: Tai Chi in Mao's Era .....</b>	<b>113</b>

From National Arts to Wushu .....	113
<i>Wushu</i> : Battlefield of Two Political Paths? .....	117
<i>Wushu</i> as Competitive Sport .....	119
The Standardisation of Tai Chi .....	120
The Historical Dialectic Narrative of Tai Chi's Invention .....	124
Construction of a Common Theory of Tai Chi.....	127
Long Live Chairman Mao Tai Chi.....	130
<b>'Tai Chi is Good': Tai Chi in the Post-Mao Period.....</b>	<b>133</b>
Toward the Olympics .....	134
Tai Chi as Cultural Symbolism .....	137
The Competition for Authority .....	146
Summing Up: The Politics of Invention and the Mobility of Tradition.....	154
 <b>SECTION III TRANSLATED PRACTICES: TAI CHI IN ENGLAND .....</b>	<b>156</b>
 <b>CHAPTER 5 MIGRATORY PRACTICE.....</b>	<b>156</b>
 <b>The Transnational Journey.....</b>	<b>156</b>
Pytt Geddes: Bringing Tai Chi to the UK.....	157
Zhu Jinxiong (Chu King Hung) and the Family secrets of Martial Arts.....	161
Don Docherty: Bringing Wudang to UK .....	164
The Hong Kong Myth.....	167
American Influence .....	169

<b>National Organizations: Promoters and Rule Makers.....</b>	<b>171</b>
The Tai Chi Union for Great Britain.....	172
Tai Chi Caledonia .....	176
The Tai Chi Open Championship.....	179
Summing Up: Competing Claims, Contested Practices.....	183
 <b>CHAPTER 6 TRANSLATED TEACHINGS: BECOMING A SIFU .....</b>	<b>185</b>
 <b>A Latent Lineage Society .....</b>	<b>185</b>
The Absence of Dan.....	185
The Teacher as Sifu .....	187
Ancestor worship and Oral Tradition .....	188
 <b>Master's matters .....</b>	<b>192</b>
Masters for Martial Arts .....	192
Mass Participation .....	197
 <b>Translating Forms .....</b>	<b>202</b>
Inventing of Forms.....	202
 <b>Translating Theory.....</b>	<b>206</b>
 <b>CHAPTER 7 TRANSLATED EXPERIENCES: BEING A STUDENT .....</b>	<b>211</b>
 <b>Great Expectations: Coming to Tai Chi.....</b>	<b>211</b>
Self-evaluation: Polysemic Interpretation .....	216

Sink the Qi: Translated body experiences.....	219
Push Hands: seesaw battle between the translations.....	223
Struggles between isms.....	227
<b>CHAPTER 8 LIVING IN ENGLAND, IMAGING CHINA.....</b>	<b>230</b>
<b>Collective Preoccupations and Personal Interpretations .....</b>	<b>230</b>
<b>Outdoors Imagination and indoors practice .....</b>	<b>231</b>
<b>Visual Constructions.....</b>	<b>238</b>
<b>Playing with Music: The Audio Construction of Space.....</b>	<b>239</b>
<b>Ritualization.....</b>	<b>241</b>
<b>Clothing .....</b>	<b>242</b>
<b>Inventing Salutes .....</b>	<b>245</b>
<b>Warming up and cooling down .....</b>	<b>251</b>
<b>Qi Gong.....</b>	<b>256</b>
Summing Up .....	258
<b>CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>260</b>
<b>Endless invention, Boundaryless imagination.....</b>	<b>260</b>
<b>Other Sites of Reinvention .....</b>	<b>263</b>

Tai Chi, Reinvention and beyond .....	265
<b>APPENDIX I.....</b>	<b>267</b>
Notes on the Ethnography .....	267
Sampling .....	267
Data Analysis.....	269
List of Informant and respondent.....	270
Tai Chi Tutors interviewed.....	270
Tutors contact via email/phone .....	270
Tai Chi Students interviewed.....	271
<b>APPENDIX II .....</b>	<b>272</b>
Postures and Movements of Yang Style Tai Chi .....	272
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>275</b>

# Section I Approach

## Introduction: The Various Faces of Tai Chi

When westerners set out imagine ‘Traditional’ China, the images evoked will almost inevitably include vistas of Chinese, often elderly, practising Tai Chi together, in parks or other outdoor locations. One of the participants in my ethnographic study of English enthusiasts was first attracted to Tai Chi by exactly this image, in her case, the BBC logo showing a group of skilled practitioners moving gracefully within a landscape of lakes and mountains evoking classical Chinese painting. Similar images also feature prominently in travel brochures and in the literature that the contemporary Chinese government employs to construct the timelessness and distinctiveness of China’s cultural tradition.



Tai Chi Logo on BBC One

At the same time, the meanings attached to Tai Chi are by no means stable or fixed. It has been variously called: Tai Chi, Tai Ji, T'ai Chi, and Tai chi, Tai ji Quan and T'ai Chi Quan. Different ways of romanising the same Chinese characters account for some of these variations but many of

these terms also share something else in common. In the most popular translations the word “Quan (Chuan)”, which occurs in the full Chinese version, has been omitted. “Quan” in Chinese, literally means “Fist”, which clearly points to Tai Chi’s origin as a martial art. Its omission from the English versions suggests that as it has travelled it is no longer considered primarily as a martial art. Indeed, for some people, “Taijiquan had almost completely lost its reputation as a martial art, and today the popular view is that it is a kind of gentle exercise for the elderly and the infirm.”(Sutton 1993: 21) Most researchers however tend to consider contemporary Tai Chi as a set of practices and disciplines that can be approached from three basic directions: as a martial art, as a physical discipline and as a spiritual discipline. Some Chinese historians have argued that these three faces of Tai Chi are not simply a product of its modern formation but are rooted firmly in its historical origins. Gu for example, has argued that from its first emergence Tai Chi combined combat skills popular during late *Ming* dynasty, ancient *Qigong* practice, and the *Yin-Yang* theory of Chinese ancient philosophy. (Gu 1982). Similarly, Kan has claimed that combat, philosophy, and the desire to prolong life run through the entire history of Tai Chi. (Kang 2001)

## **Tai Chi as a form of martial art**

The official and orthodox Chinese encyclopaedia defines Tai Chi as a representative Chinese martial arts style developed during the *Qin* dynasty, during which it came to be called long fist, soft fist. (Yu 1999) Similarly, popular English best-sellers on Tai Chi also present, “Tai chi, or Taijiquan as it is spelt in Romanized Chinese, [as] one of the most wonderful martial arts in the world. ... Some people may be unaware that it is actually a martial art at all, yet it is extremely effective for combat, from the viewpoint of technique as well as force. The amazing thing about Tai Chi is that to defend yourself against almost any form of physical aggression, you need to know only a few fighting patterns.”(Wong, 1996, 2001: 3) And as Yang adds, “Taijiquan was originally created for martial purposes, and every form has its special martial applications.”(Yang, 2003: 1) Since its early public demonstration, there have been debates about the martial arts quality and combat effectiveness of Tai Chi and as late as the 1950s Tai Chi was still included in

the famous stage combat competition in Macao and played a major role in the growing popularity of martial arts novels.

Traditionally, Tai Chi has been classified as an internal martial art, *Xinyi* (also spelt as *Hsing-I*) and *Bagua*, rather than so called external martial art such as *Shaolin*. These kinds of martial arts include the basic techniques of kicking, punching, falling, wresting and locking but also emphasise the practice of *Qi*. Tai Chi systems also includes bare hand solo sequences, weapons sequences (imitating moves with swords, sabres, sticks, and axes ) and push hands (a body contact exercises for two symbolising combat)(Tang and Gu 1964 1996) Tai Chi emphasises defence and uses the centrifugal effect to parry the attacking force (Lu, 1996). There are six major styles: Chen, Yang, Wu (Jianquan), Wu (Yuxiang), Sun, and Zhaobao. Of these, the Yang style is currently the most popular. As we will see, Tai Chi is now increasingly detached from associations with martial arts, though some solo sequences in less popular styles, such as the *Paochui* (Cannon Fist) form in the Chen style still bear clear traces of their martial arts' origins. Most contemporary English instructors however seldom foreground this aspect preferring to emphasise its role as a bodily discipline allied to fitness and health or its links to Eastern philosophies.

## **Tai Chi as a physical discipline linked to concepts of bodily well being, fitness and health**

The physical discipline aspect of Tai Chi is now much more popular than its martial arts dimension .Chinese historians believe that from an early point in its formation, Tai Chi combined martial arts with an ancient life-prolonging exercise called *Daoyin* (a form of rhythmic bodily discipline) and *Tuna* (a kind of breath-controlling exercise) which have now been generalised as *Qigong*. (Gu 1982). Tai Chi has certainly been celebrated for its beneficial effects on bodily health since it first emerged as a popular practice in the 1920s. In 1925, when the first Tai Chi School opened in Shanghai, it made a point of promoting its medical benefits, claiming that Tai Chi is an exercise according to biological and physical principles as well as effective therapy to cure disease.

It was widely believed that Tai Chi can improve the nervous system; heighten sensation; increase the efficiency of the blood vessels, heart and lymph; promote metabolism; and strengthen muscles, bones and joints. (Gu 1982)

Even though these beliefs are based on traditional Chinese medical theory rather than empirical evidence, the view that Tai Chi can be beneficial for health still circulates widely among practitioners and is often emphasised in appeals to possible recruits. A typical advertisement for a Tai Chi class in England emphasises its major function as therapy as follows: “One of the main benefits of Tai Chi is the reduction in blood pressure, But it is also good for breathing, posture, balance, stamina, Weight loss and calming of the mind. Practising daily changes your way of thinking and helps with concentration and creativity. It can also help with anxiety, arthritis and back pain, while also helping people boost their inner energy levels and immune systems. The sequence of gentle, flowing exercise movements incorporated into the art helps Tone the body, strengthen joints and fight diseases.” (Advertisement for AJC Tai Chi in London <http://www.ajc-taichi.co.uk/>)

In support of this popular conception, current research in medical science indicates that Tai Chi is a weight bearing and moderate intensity cardiovascular exercise whose regular practice can improve balance, reduce falls and increase leg strength. It also lowers stress, enhances respiratory functions and promotes emotional well-being (Sandlund and Norlander 2000). Other areas where beneficial effects have been detected include, cardiovascular function, immune response (Blood T-cells), mood states (Self reports), stress hormones (salivary cortisol levels), and arthritis. After examining 27 English languages academic journal articles reporting research studies of Tai Chi's positive impacts, Nigel Mills and Anna Haywood identified six areas: improvements in balance, reductions in blood pressure, oxygen uptake; flexibility and strength; emotional stress and coping with multiple sclerosis. On the basis of their reading of the available evidence they argue that the health improvement benefits claimed for Tai Chi/Chi Gung appear to be supported by a number of well controlled trials. (Mills and Haywood 2001)

## **Tai Chi as a spiritual/religious discipline with complex ties to both Taoism and Confucianism**

According to Yu, Tai Chi has long been considered the most representative embodiment of Chinese thinking and behaviour. For Yu it is “Chinese culture in practice employing movements of the body to express, interpret and promote a cultural spirit: that expresses the ancient Chinese understanding of the life, nature balance and development”. (Yu 1999: 28)

Some Tai Chi masters believe that Tai Chi is rooted in the *Yin-Yang* theory of Chinese ancient philosophy and that the Taoist emphasis on internal cultivation provides the theoretical support for its repertoire of exercises. (Ma 1988) Other commentators argue that “The basic idea of the Great Ultimate (Tai Ji) derived from the pre-Taoist *Book of Changes*, and that the philosophical foundations of Taijiquan are closely linked to Daoism.” (Holcombe 2002: 153) In fact, the word “Tai Chi” only appears in the appendix to the *Book of Changes* rather than the book itself. Moreover, the name, Tai Chi was not introduced to the martial arts until much later, from the 1860s onwards.

The influence of Confucianism on Tai Chi however, can be seen in the ethical conceptions governing its practice: *De* and *Re*. *De* (moral value) is one of most important criteria in Tai Chi training. It is widely believed that it is impossible to achieve the highest level of Tai Chi without high moral standards and that a Tai Chi master without exemplary moral values cannot be seen as a real master within the fraternity of martial artists. *Re* emphasises self-discipline. (Yu 2002)

## **Tai Chi as a cultural symbol accepted and promoted by national institutions.**

The final collapse of the Chinese Empire saw the popular promotion of Martial Arts as national

sports. Among the various contenders Tai Chi easily won the laurels because of its national popularity, its low cost and its assumed links to ancient philosophy and cultural tradition. From the 1930s onwards, with the nation-building impetus of the Nationalist regime, its mass performance became a routine inclusion in sports and cultural events.

As we have already noted however, the various faces of Tai Chi do not carry equally weight with the last hundred years seeing a marked shift from an emphasis on combat, firstly to a stress on sports and competition and then later to a focus on medical benefits. (Tang and Gu 1964, 1996) Comparative research between Chinese and Japanese practitioners has demonstrated that differences in cultural background also influence understandings of Tai Chi. (Lu 1996; Tang and Gu 1964, 1996) In the following chapters, we will explore in more details how the formation of modernity in China has interacted with the modernization of Tai Chi and how conceptions of its nature have shifted in relation to changing political circumstances.

## **Thesis Structure**

The thesis is built around three major organising concepts; invention, migration, and translation.

### **Invention**

The first part of the thesis draws on original Chinese archive sources to reconstruct the development of Tai Chi as a series of invented and (re)imagined traditions. During the Imperial period, when it was defined primarily as a martial art, it was the focus of a sustained struggle between its official deployment as part of the military machine and its practice by clandestine societies and insurgent movements. During the Republican era it was simultaneously incorporated into the push to modernization and promoted as a part of an unbroken cultural legacy that defined the uniqueness of Chineseness. In the process proponents of Confucianism, Taoism and emerging

‘scientific’ and westernised conceptions of national arts struggled for control of its history and meaning. In Communist China, Tai Chi tradition was rewritten again in the service of political orthodoxy while its forms were further modernized in an attempt to create a simple and universal popular disciplinary practice. During the post-Mao period, Tai Chi has been successfully redefined as a major marker of an essentialist Chinese identity and, as noted earlier, images of citizens practising in parks have become ubiquitous in tourist promotional materials.

## **Migration**

The second part of the thesis traces Tai Chi’s migration from China to the West from the 1940s, looking at the key figures in the practice’s transfer to the UK and at the subsequent process of institutionalization and indigenisation as it generated its own national professional associations and competitions.

### **Migration and Diaspora**

The term migration as used here conforms to the normal usage current in studies of human migration and refers to the physical or geographical relocation of Tai Chi from China to the West. In common with human movement across borders the migration of Tai Chi is not merely a matter of geographical relocation from one country to another, from one continent to another; it is also a process of encounter between and across different cultures. This is not a once-and-for-all movement with an identifiable end point. Rather, it is an unfolding process, stretched across time, sometimes even generations. Through the personal efforts of key ‘go-betweens’ coupled with the drive towards institutionalization, Tai Chi has a “legal” resident in its host country and host culture, but as we will see later, far from freezing further development, this formal integration has provided the basis for continual modification.

At first sight the case if Tai Chi fits snugly with recent work on diaspora, a term that has

Firstly, the Chinese diaspora has not been the main agent in introducing and spreading Tai Chi within the UK. Rather, the most concerted efforts at popularization have been made by English Tai Chi enthusiasts with only one or two contributions from Chinese practitioners. Consequently, the popularity of Tai Chi has its own logic and its English manifestation has developed its own tradition.

Secondly, even though Tai Chi practitioners in the UK sometimes emphasize the “Chineseness” of their Tai Chi practices, they generally have few concrete connections to either the Chinese community in Britain or to mainland China. Rather than being rooted in nostalgia for a lost point of origin their relation to China is imagined and reinvented.

English practitioners have not only developed their own forms and styles of Tai Chi, and established their own institutions and organizations of Tai Chi, they have also created a new mythology of origins, which draws on the colonial connection between England and Hong Kong and establishes Hong Kong as the source of an independent authentic tradition, separate from and even superior to the contending Chinese versions.

For both these reasons the concept of diaspora has not displaced migration in this thesis as a framework for understanding and analyzing the spread of Tai Chi to the United Kingdom.

## **Translation**

The final part of thesis, based on ethnographic research in the Midlands, United Kingdom, explores the contending understandings of Tai Chi among its English practitioners, both teachers and students. It explores the ways in which British instructors locate themselves within an 'authentic' tradition by way of a latent lineage system connecting them to Hong Kong masters. This allows them to maintain their own personal commitment to Tai Chi as a martial art while working with the market drive for mass participation based on concepts of relaxation and alternative therapy and medicine.

### Translation and Hybridity

Hybridity, a term that originates in biology, has enjoyed considerable popularity in cultural analysis in recent years, particularly in relation to commentary on cultural globalization.

In an influential formulation, Jan Nederveen Pieterse (2004) presents hybridity as the rhizome of culture arguing that globalization, far from being a process of inexorable homogenising, modernising, and westernizing, is centrally a process of hybridization. Kraidy (2005:148) ,developing this point asserts that hybridity is the 'cultural logic' of globalization and 'entails that traces of other cultures exist in every culture, thus offering foreign media and marketers transcultural wedges for forging affective links between their commodities and local communities'.

In the case of Tai Chi however, the major defining feature of hybridity, the sense of mixture and the equal status of the different cultures involving in the mixture, is absent. In the eyes of its UK practitioners Tai Chi is not a combination or mixture of Chinese and English bodily/spiritual disciplines. On the contrary, they consider their practices to be more authentic and original than their contemporary Chinese counterparts, since they see them as having a direct linkage to Tai Chi's ancient lineage and continuing a tradition which they claim was lost in Communist China. As we will see, in fact, they have added, deleted, adopted and distorted practices derived from their Chinese (or English) masters in a continuous process of translation based on an imagined construction of Chineseness.

## Romanisation and translation

In any work using Chinese sources or referring to Chinese practices there are inevitable technical problems that arise from the different systems for Romanizing words and expressions. The basic choice is between the china-centred *pinyin* system which is promoted officially by the People's Republic of China and the western-centred, Wade-Giles and Yale systems. This choice is not simply technical. It is also political. Generally, I have employed the *pinyin* system because of its increasing popularity as well as its convenience in standardisation. However, I have kept some transliterations for their existing presence in English. The term "Tai Chi" is an example. This compromise can be considered as surrender to the western imagination of China whose exploration forms one the dissertation's central foci. The English term Tai Chi when used within the pinyin system in a Chinese context is spelt Taijiquan and carries two connotations that are missing from the English version. Firstly, "*quan*", which literally translated means "fist", and as we noted earlier, links the practice firmly to its martial arts origins. Secondly, the pronunciation "chuan" makes a different word: "*taiji*" a term widely used in ancient Chinese philosophy.

Another difficulty arises from the fact that there are four possible tones that can be applied to the same word in mandarin Chinese, all of which alter the meaning. The Romanisation process excises these differences. Mostly this is not a major problem but in the case of Tai Chi, there are two Wu styles which in Chinese are designated by different written characters which Romanisation cannot reproduce. In this dissertation, I have used the designations, Wu (Jianquan) style and Wu (Yuxiang) style to distinguish them.

A third problem is presented by the lack of a standard Romanisation system for either Cantonese or Taiwanese names or terms. "Master Chu" for example, appears frequently in English narratives of Tai Chi history in the UK, but is spelt as 'Zhu' in the *pinyin* system.

Other terms present other problems. For instance, the term “*Qi*” occurs frequently in discussions of Tai Chi but there is also a Japanese word “*Ki*” which refers to the same thing and is already widely used in English commentaries on Japanese martial arts. In the present discussion of Tai Chi movements, and in some direct quotations of interviewees, while the phonetic translation is generally used I do also on occasions employ literary translations or Japanese phonetic translations. In these cases, I try to keep the original version as used by the interviewees and list the alternatives, sometimes, with explanations. For example, the Japanese word “*kata*” is used alongside the Chinese phonetic translation “*taolu*” or “*jia*” and is translated as “sequences”, “frames” or “movements” in different contexts.

Hence, while I have endeavoured to make the discussion and analysis presented here as accessible as possible to readers with no knowledge of the original languages, the choice of translation at any particular point is always self-reflexive rather than purely technical..

## **Methodology**

This dissertation employs two main methodologies; archival research and ethnography.

Documentary sources provide the original material for the first part of the work, tracing the development and transformation of Tai Chi within China while the explorations of its migration to England and its meanings for its contemporary English practitioners are based on personal interviews and participant observation.

The aim of the archival research is not to write or rewrite a narrative history of Tai Chi, but rather to examine the shifting relations between Tai Chi and the power centres that have influenced its development and the processes through which it has become embedded in everyday life since the late imperial era. The materials cited in this part include not only formal histories but also oral history, family history, teaching manuals, and unpublished materials.

## Archival Sources

Unlike other topics in Chinese history, where the researcher has abundant sources, the materials relating to martial arts and Tai Chi are relatively scarce and limited.

The Li family manuscript, which was produced around the 1860s, is usually presented as the earliest major historical record of Tai Chi. The original copy was destroyed so that scholars now have to work from copies, and as Shen Sou's research (Shen 1991, Shen 2007) underlines, there are major questions relating to the authenticity of the data it presents and widespread suspicions of forgery and even doubts as to whether the 'original' ever really existed. Since the 1990s other sources claiming to be manuscripts written during the imperial period have emerged but again, most have been either questioned, dismissed as forgeries, or have failed to gain wide acceptance.

Family histories, such as those produced by Chen family responsible for the Chen style of Tai Chi and the Wu family responsible for the Wu (Yuxiang) style, provide some potential information about the historical development of practices. A number of these first appeared in the 1920s and 1930s, and have been published as appendices to teaching manuals down to the present. However, they too have been widely questioned and are generally considered to be semi mythical (Kang 2001). Although a number of the original copies of family histories were destroyed during World War II and in the Cultural Revolution in the 1960s, republished versions are easily accessed but because of the serious questions raised about their reliability, they are used critically here.

Another source is provided by the oral history records preserved in the catalogue known as *Wen Shi Zi Liao* (the history and literature data) edited by different levels of the Local History Office. Those are mainly oral testimonies on different aspects of social life some of which provide useful contextual information about the practice of martial arts and Tai Chi. These are not directly quoted in this dissertation but they have been drawn on in developing my understanding of the social

organisation of martial arts in the imperial era. More directly relevant are the oral histories of martial arts compiled by Chinese historians since the 1980s, represented by Ma Liang's *Fifty Years of Martial Arts and Sports in North China*.

Arguably however, the richest source for discussing the development Tai Chi in Republican China is the published teaching manuals and martial arts magazines. About forty teaching manuals have been preserved some of which were republished as photocopies after the 1980s. Some of these manuals were commercially published in book form; others were informally published and circulated only within martial arts institutions. In researching this dissertation I accumulated the most comprehensive collection of these manuals so far compiled by scholars working in this area. They not only provide details of how Tai Chi was taught and spread, but the prefaces also contain descriptions of the social influence on Tai Chi at that time making them even more valuable. Additionally, during the 1930s, several national and local martial arts magazines and journals were launched. Of these, the *United National Arts Journal* is the most often cited in this dissertation. This was the first national martial arts journal at that time and the main location for initiating academic debates on the origin of Tai Chi.

During the Mao era a number of relevant original sources were destroyed during 1960s but since then there has been a mushrooming effort to republish historical materials, together with the emergence of a number of professional sports research journals. Both these developments have provided resources for the analysis that follows.

## **Ethnography**

The fieldwork drawn on here began in early 2004. I spent almost two years with three instructors and about twenty students in their weekly 2.5 hours sessions in a Tai Chi school called Jade Moon in Loughborough in the English Midlands. In 2005, I also participated regularly in sessions in another school in Leicester city and in two different classes given by the same

instructor in Manchester during the summer. I also participated in the national Tai Chi competition organised by the Tai Chi Union for Great Britain. The choice of different sites began as a snowball strategy, and later evolved into a conscious attempt to compare different types of Tai Chi schools and instructors. As I will discuss in more detail in the ethnographic chapters, this study examines three types of Tai Chi schools: volunteer clubs with amateur instructors, schools convened by either professional or amateur instructors, or sessions in commercial fitness centres. The Loughborough club is a loosely structured association with several amateur instructors and students of different age groups. The Leicester site is a structured school targeted at a certain age group. The Manchester site has a full time instructor and enjoys local council financial support. The Manchester instructor is female while all other instructors are male. The Loughborough site has no direct connections with China, while the other two have close links and even partners in China.

In 2005, I was, by chance, invited to be an instructor in the LA fitness Centre in Loughborough town centre. This offered not merely the chance to change role from exploring participation from the students' perspective to exploring the instructor's perspective but also the chance to reflect more fully on my role as a researcher and on the balance between observation and participation.

Although the sub-cultural community I observed in England was novel to me as a researcher, I came from the (imagined) homeland of Tai Chi. Consequently, while I entered into the group activities of the local Tai Chi communities primarily as an observer I myself also becoming a target of their imagination. When I worked as an instructor, this became more obvious than in other ethnographic sites. While in some ways, my participation as a teacher changed the nature of my interactions with the other participants in the site in which I worked, assuming a different role also provided me with a chance to develop new insights. More generally, my identity as a Chinese researcher and practitioner of Tai Chi operating in the UK gave me a different point of entry and engagement than a British researcher working on the same topic in the same ethnographic sites would have had, and generated experiences and insights that are hopefully distinctive and which add new elements to our understanding of the area.

# Section II

## Chapter 1 Re-Making Tradition: Inventions and Translations

### Invented Traditions: National and Personal

Following the publication of the diverse empirical examples collected together in the landmark collection, *The Invention of Tradition*, edited by Eric J. Hobsbawm and Terence O. Ranger, it is now widely accepted that a number of “Traditions which appear or claim to be old are often quite recent in origin and sometimes invented.” (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983: 1) In Hobsbawm’s view these “inventions” “are usually ways of responding “to novel situations which take the form of reference to old situations, or which establish their own past by quasi-obligatory repetition.”. (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983: 2) often to ideological ends. They consist of sets of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition and claim links with a suitable historic past, creating continuity that it is largely fictitious. (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983)

Hobsbawm classifies invented traditions into “three overlapping types:

- (a) those establishing or symbolizing social cohesion or the membership of groups, real or artificial communities;
- (b) those establishing or legitimizing institutions, status or relations of authority; and
- (c) those whose main purpose [is] socialization, the inculcation of beliefs, value systems and conventions of behaviours” (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983: 9)

All three can operate at both the national and personal level. They can be marked by public rituals or symbols or mobilized for nation building or the construction of the nation-state and, at the same time, can also be integrated into private or personal routines with both levels often overlapping and intertwined. Personal practice re-invigorates the general level through localized

performance, but it may also be closely related to more individualized strategies for meaning making in everyday life. Empirical research has demonstrated the process of invention at work across a wide range of sites in a variety of cultures, from family histories in South Africa (Kaler 2001) to wedding ceremonies in Japan (Shida 1999), and from Tibetan musical instruments (Wu 2005) to Karate and other martial arts systems, instances closely related to the case under investigation in this thesis, (Tan 2004)

## **Stable Inheritances: Constructing Continuity**

While the concept of invented tradition calls attention to the discontinuities of history, Chinese historical scholarship has been at pains to emphasise the unbroken historical continuity of Chinese civilization. This central assertion, and the allied claim that this defining feature separates Chinese civilization from the broken history of Europe., has persisted across diverse historical narratives and schools of historiography, For some scholars, continuity defines Imperial China but ends with the fall of the last emperor, while for others it persist into the Communist era through to the present.

The first position is represented by the cycle of dynasties argument advanced by traditional Chinese scholars, and the by the rather less flattering characterizations of stagnation promoted by Karl Marx's writings on the Asiatic Mode of Production, and Karl Wittfogel's later work on China as a 'hydraulic society' down to Fairbank's Impact-response model and similar Tradition-modernity dichotomies..(Wittfogel 1957, 1962; Marx 1965; Fairbank 1963; 1979)

For these authors, Chinese history from 221 BC to the collapse of the final dynasty, the *Qing*, in 1911, is marked by persistent continuities in both political and social structure and culture. Accounting for this relative stasis and lack of internal change , and explaining the driving forces that eventually propelled the transition to modernity have been major topics in Sinology and China studies and been dubbed, the "China Problem" (Jin and Liu 1995: Li 2000)

Against this, a more recent “China centred approach”, has developed, challenging both the ultra-stability argument and questioning the break between the tradition and modernity. (Cohen 1984)

Historians in Imperial China were charged with keeping records of imperial history. Beginning with the *Shiji* Records written by Sima Qian, the so called father of Chinese historiography, and their continuing endeavours resulted in a collection of *Twenty-Four Histories* covering a period from 3000 BC to the 17th Century. These volumes came to be seen as the primary evidence of historical continuity. As a consequence the traditionalist view came to view Chinese history as a dynastic cycle in which different imperial houses laying claim to the “Mandate of Heaven” rose and fell. This historiography has several variants. For instance, Zhou Yan of the Warring States Period proclaimed that different dynasties represented the values of the five basic elements of the world: Gold, Wood, Water, Fire and Earth. In this schema, the change of the dynasties is propelled by the conflicting principles of these elements: Metal defeats Wood, Wood defeats Earth, Earth defeats Water, Water defeats Fire, Fire defeats Metal. In the Twenty-four Histories, each dynasty claimed that it was able to take the place of the previous dynasty because its represented element triumphed over the previous one. For instance, in the official history of the *Song* dynasty, it claimed that it represents Fire and is therefore able to defeat the previous Five dynasties and Ten State which represent Metal. (Toto 1345, 1985) The following Mongol Yuan dynasty represents Water so was able to defeat the *Song* dynasty (Song 1369, 2005) but was defeated in its turn by the Ming dynasty representing Earth. (Wang 1739, 2007 )

This organised cycle and resulting underlying continuity, which Chinese traditional historians presented as a virtue , became ,in the eyes of critical European observers, synonymous with the ‘problem’ of stasis and resistance to change posed by a seemingly immobile or stagnant society. This argument can trace back to Adam Smith in his master work, *The Wealth of Nations*, first published in 1776, in which he claimed that:

*“China has been long one of the richest, that is one of the most fertile, best cultivated, most industrious, and most populous countries in the world. It seems, however, to have been long stationary. Marco Polo, who visited it more than five hundred years ago, describes its cultivation, industry and populouness, almost in the same terms in which they are described by travellers in the present times. ” (Smith 1776, 1991: 429)*

This basic characterisation was then repeated and developed by a series of influential European scholars and writers producing a veritable chorus singing of China’s essential stagnation. The German philosopher Hegel added his famous or maybe notorious, perception of “Asian ahistorical stagnation” (Hegel 1975). supported by Herder’s later assertion that Oriental culture was stationary in both time and space.(Herder 1995) Karl Marx included China into his model of the Asiatic Mode of Production arguing that its stagnation could only be deconstructed by the impact of western capitalism.(Marx 1965) Building on Marx, Karl August Wittfogel, an early member of the Frankfurt School of critical Marxism, advanced his model of ‘hydraulic societies’ proposing that like Ancient Egypt, but unlike medieval Europe, China’s dependency on large scale irrigation systems required both an extensive bureaucracy and highly centralized government ,both of which impeded innovation and change and consolidated a distinctive form of rule which he dubbed, ‘Oriental Despotism’(Wittfogel 1957; Wittfogel 1962)

Modern Chinese historiography, which developed during the Republican Period of the 1920s and 1930s, though strongly influenced by Marxism, did not accept the Asiatic mode of production argument. Rather, Chinese Marxist historians identified successive phases of Chinese social organization which they characterized as “slave society- feudal society- semi feudal semi-colonial society and socialist society”.(Fan 1943; Mao 1961; Fan 2004) This formula later became the dominant interpretation of history in the People’s Republic of China with the transition between stages being driven by class struggle. The official preference for this framework may also have been due to the influence of Soviet Marxism since Russian historians never adopted the Asiatic

mode of production argument. (Dirlik 1978) Although the Chinese Marxists' view challenged the various models of China's stagnation developed in the West, and insisted on the dynamic nature of imperial China, it still offered an essential linear understanding of the development of Chinese society. Chinese Marxist historiography intersected with Western Marxist historians and non-Marxist or nationalist historians in Taiwan, in developing an Anti-Imperialist narrative of Chinese history which attributed the country's embrace of modernism to its encounter with Western Imperialism. A version of this argument was also developed by western scholars.

Within China studies in the West after World War II, Fairbank's impact-response model proved to be a particularly influential version of this argument. This model followed earlier writers in seeing Imperial China as markedly stable and characterizing development and reforms as matters of adjustment. In the absence of internal dynamics capable of breaking traditional structures from within, Fairbanks argued change could only be produced by the impact of external shocks and elements introduced from outside. For him, and for a number of other writers, the source of the this shock was the encounter with western modernity and imperialism that followed the signing of the unequal treaties after the two Opium Wars in the mid nineteenth century, and the growing western incursion and importation into China, represented in its most concentrated form by the opening of the Treaty Ports to overseas enterprise and foreign settlement. (Fairbank 1963; Reischauer 1979)

In the 1980s however, Chinese historians and scholars returned to the neglected model of the Asiatic Mode of Production and China's stagnation. Shortly after the end of the Cultural Revolution, academic analysts began to characterize the event as a result of oriental cultural despotism and to argue that the Mao era represented the extension of continuity beyond the Imperial age. Li Zhehou, basing his ideas on Jung's notion of the collective unconscious, argued that this continuity was rooted in the psychological sedimentation that had transmitted dispositions and models of behaviour across generations (Li 2003)

Another example of this return to an emphasis on continuity is the “ultra-stability” theory advanced by Jin Guantao and Liu Qinfeng. Using cybernetics and systems theory to analyze Chinese history, they argued that “there was an ultra-stable system that had sustained the longevity of Chinese feudal society and that modern Chinese society still remained in its grip to some extent” (Jin and Liu 1994: 2). However they are careful to point out that: stability does not mean motionlessness” and that “Chinese feudal society was repeatedly shaken by social upheavals; violent and apparently successful rebellions repeatedly made old dynasties collapse and new ones appear” (Bakken 2000: 516). For them, over the whole the period stretching from the original establishment of the Empires of the *Qing* and *Han* until the present, the deep structure of Chinese society never changes but they suggest that rather than seeing imperial period as an unfolding story of dynastic rise and fall it is more useful to focus on the dialectical movement of “deconstruction of unity of tradition- the change of ideology – the establishment of new unity of structure”. (He 1997) This renewed emphasis on the continuities between the imperial and Mao eras also received support from western writers, with the Chinese translation and wide circulation of Alain Peyrefitte’s *L’Empire Immobile* (The Unmoving Empire) in the early 1990’s. (Peyrefitte 1995).

Despite its continuing purchase on academic analysis and common sense understandings of Chinese society, assertions of China’s ‘exceptional’ continuity and stability have been widely questioned on several grounds. The French sinologist Jacques Gernet has raised strong objections to its conflation of very different moments within imperial history.

*“The history of China is like our own unexplored Middle Ages, and the repeated accusations of stagnation, periodical return to a previous condition, and permanence of the same social structures and the same political ideology are so many value judgements on a history that is still unknown.” “the changes that took place in the centralized state from the time of its creation onwards were more important than is generally supposed, for they are masked by the uniformity of the vocabulary...The establishment in the empires of the Yagntze valley between the second and*

*sixth centuries, of an endogamous aristocracy with manors and dependants, which imposed its authority on the central power, is a phenomenon without parallel in any epoch or any other region of China. The political system of the early Sung period (960-1279) with its party struggles in civil service circles and the authoritarian empire created at the end of the fourteenth century by the first Min emperor are world's apart.” (Gernet 1972, 1999:21)*

*“There were also profound differences between one epoch and another ,differences connected with the organization of the state and the social groups who often held the real power (aristocracies, army leaders, highly educated families living on the rent from estates, eunuchs and so on) It is a grave error of method to try to characterized the Chinese imperial system as a whole and throughout its existence, for political systems are living organisms which continually adapt themselves to social and economic changes except for the brief periods when they are in contradiction with them.” (Gernet 1972, 1999:22)*

Pursuing this last point, Philip Kuhn’s research on rebels and local militias has raised serious issues for the “impact-response model” by showing that there were concerted internal challenges to the system well before impact of western modernity. (Kuhn 1970)

Other writers have objected to the Orientalism and Eurocentrism underpinning characterizations of stagnancy. He, for example has argued that the question of “Why is there a continuity of the Feudalism China” also raises the question “Why is there a discontinuity of Feudalism in Europe” but scholars seem less inclined to pursue this.(He 1997) The American historian Paul A Cohen is more direct in his criticism of Eurocentrism pointing out that all three of the most popular models of Chinese early modern history- the impact-response model, the transition from tradition to modernity model and the Imperialism-revolution model identify the key driving force for change as coming from the West. The imperialism-revolution model overtly attributes change to the impact of the west while the other two models covertly assume that responses are a reaction to the impact of external forces. (Cohen 1984) Against this, Cohen argues for a “China centred

approach”. Whereas the Impact-response model and tradition-modern model emphasize the dichotomy between the traditional and the modern, seeing in their terms, the immobility, changelessness, stasis, or stagnancy of imperial China, being broken by the impact of sustained economic and cultural contact with the west, the China-centred approach extends the argument for continuity beyond the collapse of the imperial system. For supporters of this position, the rebellions, reforms and anti-foreign movements considered as connected with western influence by Euro-centrists are continuations of long standing problems to be solved within the country. As Yang has argued, this approach plays well with the political argument that China needs to solve its own problems without relying on the West. (Yang, 2005)

The search for links or bridges between the China’s imperial and ‘modern’ histories has also been taken up by Chinese and scholars. Liu Xiaofeng, for example, has argued that traditional Confucianism had its own revolutionary spirit that provided important resources for the modern revolutionary movement, which was not simply an imitation or adaptation of models first developed in the West. (Liu 2000)

Li Yi in his analysis of Chinese social stratification has insisted that the unbroken emphasis on continuity and unity is rooted in the continuing exercise of rational structured bureaucratic government governed by a worldly and practical ideology. (Li 2005) Other researchers argue more strongly that China is unique among world civilizations and that its historical continuity cannot be explained by western logics. (Gan 2005; Ge 2006)

## **Questioning Continuity**

So far I have simply given a very sparse sketch of some of the main lines of argument active in debates about the relative continuity of Chinese social and cultural organization and how far this is ‘exceptional’. A fuller account of this debate is beyond the scope of the present thesis but a basic

understanding of the positions that have been taken up is necessary because it is directly relevant to my arguments about the invention of tradition since practices of invention, by calling the evidence into question, force us to look again at arguments for continuity. Before moving on to look more closely at the uses of ‘invention’ in China, let us summarise the main problems with the continuity debate.

Firstly, analyses of continuity focus on the persistence of particular forms and practice overtime pay relatively little attention to the problems posed by shifting geographies. Once we take the mobile territorial boundaries of different dynasties into the account, the question of continuity becomes highly problematic. It is difficult discuss the historical continuity between the *Tang* dynasty of the 6th century for example and the much more extensive territory of China produced when the modern boundaries of the state were extended and cemented as a result of the Manchu invasion from the North and subsequent annexations of former independent territories on the peripheries. During the *Tang* period, the Manchu homeland was outside the imperial boundaries, remote and largely uninhabited. Similarly, questions of the continuities between the *Ming* dynasty of the 16th century and China to date are complicated by the fact that present-day Vietnam, Ryukyu, used to be a part of *Ming* Empire.

Secondly, assertions of historical continuity, whether confined to imperial China or extended into the Mao years, necessarily entail the construction of a particular conception of ‘China’. As Hobsbawn has argued in relation to the idea of ‘France’; “Whatever the historic or other continuities embedded in the modern concept of ‘France’ and the ‘the French’ – and which nobody would seek to deny – these very concepts themselves must include a constructed or “invented” component. (Hobsbawn and Ranger 1983: 8)

Further, as Chinese anthropologist Zhang has argued, “arguments for historical continuity are entirely compatible with the ‘invention of tradition’, since the formation of the new tradition which differed from past customs connects history to the present...” (Zhang 2006: 26)

Indeed, some of the basic evidences employed to support claims to historical continuity are actually the products of reinvention. The Chinese written language is a case in point. Modern written Chinese has a clear lineage and route of evolution with the characters being used for thousands of years but an averagely educated contemporary Chinese, may still have difficulties reading the ancient style even though she understand its links to the written language used in daily life. Ancient styles such as *Jiaguwen* or *Zhuanshu* which were codified during the rule of the first Emperor need special expertise to read, while *Lishu*, which was invented in the *Han* dynasty can be read by ordinary people but requires special training to write accurately.

Thirdly, to emphasize only the elements of continuity ignores the gaps and breaks in the historical record produced by two main factors. Firstly, Chinese historians in past eras tended not to keep detailed records of aspects of social life they considered ‘common’ and unworthy of serious attention. Secondly, in most areas of popular practice for much of the imperial period, knowledge was retained and transmitted through the oral tradition and was often not codified in written documents. As we shall see, any attempt to compile a comprehensive history of Tai Chi is subject to both these problems.

In addition, as we shall also see, the history of Tai Chi is subject to the difficulties posed by multiple ‘inventions’ as different groups have sought to present themselves as playing a central role in its development and have manufactured legitimating myths in support of their claims. Far from being a localized case, practices of invention and reinvention have recently emerged as part of a general pattern in Chinese scholarship.

## **Invented Traditions in China**

Since the 1990s, a growing body of empirical evidence has accumulated detailing the ways historical continuity has been constructed, especially during the late *Qing* dynasty--the transitional

era from imperial China to a modern republic. Between December 1996 and August 1997, the *Academia Sinica* in Taiwan held a series of seminars titled *Inventing the Past and Imagining the Future: The Construction of "Nationhood" in Late Qing China, 1895-1912*. These meetings, which presented a series of cases detailing the construction of cultural nationalism in the late imperial period, were the first time that the idea of invented tradition was used to understand Chinese history.

One of the most important studies this discovery of ‘invention’ produced was on the cult of the Yellow Emperor. This was particularly salient since The Yellow Emperor is considered as the primary ancestor of the Chinese people, a symbol that condenses the essence of Chinese identity. However, as the earliest personification of the Yellow Emperor was produced in 356 BC, this claim required the production of a fictive genealogy linking him to the origins of Chinese society. This record of lineage was completed in Shima Qian’s *Shiji* (Book of History) the first official Chinese history book, which appeared in 91 BC in which the Yellow Emperor became the descendent of all the past kings. This construction was then appropriated and consolidated by later emperors from different dynasties who employed a range of practices, from temple building to public sacrifices to anchor their own claims to authority. Some of these rituals and practices were later taken over by both the Communists and the Nationalists in the 1930s as the two sides entered into an increasing bitter contest for power that erupted into Civil War each claiming to represent the ‘true’ spirit of China. This struggle for ‘ownership’ of the symbol of The Yellow Emperor continues to the present as both sides to face each other across the Taiwan Straits with competing claims to Taiwan. (Shen 1997)

The Yellow Emperor has not enjoyed exclusive rights to represent the spirit of China however. Since the 1890s, ethno nationalism has competed with cultural nationalism centred on the cult of Confucius though here again recent scholarship has pointed to a substantial element of invention in the accounts that have passed into both the Western and Chinese mainstreams. Lionel Jensen (1997) for example, has argued that the generally accepted contemporary version of ‘Confucius’ was originally constructed by Jesuit missionaries to China.

Shen's arguments on the invention of the cult of Yellow Emperor have been supported and developed by Sun Longji's research. He details how the construction of a genealogy in the history book, *Shiji*, after 104BC drew on earlier records of the mythical figure of The Yellow Emperor but argues that in the last flourish of Taoism, he was considered more as the patron saint of the world's greatest population rather than the original ancestor and that it was only after 1904, with the rise in anti-Manchu nationalism, that ethnic ancestry was emphasised. This version of the lineage of the Chinese people was formalized in the calendar constructed for the new nation-state which dated the beginning of Chinese history from Yellow Emperor's birth 4000 years ago rather than from the start of the *Ming* dynasty that had ruled before the Manchu invasion from the north established to final dynasty, the *Qing* (Sun 2000)

Shen has also investigated the genealogy of the major Chinese national heroes showing how nineteenth century historians and scholars constructed a pantheon built around figures that had resisted successive invasions or attempts at 'foreign' domination. They included the general who had led the fight against tribal invasions in the Song dynasty, Yue Fei, the anti-Mongol minister, Wen Tianxiang, and the anti-Manchu official, Shi Kefa. A more extreme example is Zhen Chengong whose mother was Japanese but who fought against the Dutch in Taiwan in the late 17 century. Zhen, who was described as a traitor in the history of the Qing dynasty, was recreated as a Chinese national hero drawing on his heroic image in Japanese popular literature. Genghis Khan was excluded from the pantheon by nationalist historians of the early 20th century but was later included when the Republic of China adopted the ideology of the "Five-Nationality Unity for a Republic" after 1911. (Shen 1999) Huan Donglan and Sun Jian's research on the Temple of Yue Fei and the narrative of Yue Fei also supports Shen's research. (Huang 2004; Sun and Huang 2004)

The Great Wall is another instance of a national symbol whose meaning has been struggled over and mythologized. (Waldron 1993) The now popular tourism sites which are presented as the

legacy of the first emperor of 2nd century BC are in fact the products of the re-building undertaken during the Ming dynasty of the 17th century.

Ching May Bo's research on representations of "Cantonese culture" in different historical period offers another example. Local intellectuals have consistently presented Canton as having a distinctive continuous culture with its own language but Ching discovered that the elements included in this definition have varied with shifts in definitions of the national culture, and been struggled over within this geographic area.(Ching 2006; Tang 2007)

Most recent research has paid particular attention to the period of the Late *Qing* dynasty, the moment of the collapse of Imperial system, seeing it high point of, invented traditions, but Li Zhonggong's research on the politics of rituals in the early Republic of China reveals another key period of transformation and invented traditions. One of the most important of these new celebrations was The Premiere Memorial Week instituted to honour the memory Dr Sun Yat-sen, one of the leading figures in the Republican movement and the first premiere. In 1925, the Nationalist government of the Republic of China institutionalized a series of rituals of memorialisation, such as bowing and maintaining a period of silence, and stipulated that they should be observed every Monday morning in governmental and academic institutions. There were also a number of additional national festivals introduced to mark key moments in Sun's life. They included: Presidential Accession Day (May 5th), Premiere's Canton Suffering Day (June 16th), Premiere's London Suffering Day (October 11th), Premier's Birth Day (November 12th), and Premiere's Burial Day (June 12th). Li's recent research has revealed additional inventions around the cult of Sun Yat-sen. (Li 2002; Li 2004; Li 2004; Li 2004)

A more recent instance of invented tradition is provided by Zhang Peiguo's sociological research on the collapse of the People's Commune in the 1980s and local constructions of the meaning of membership of the local community. Inspired by Hobsbawn's conception of invented tradition, he argues that membership of the local village can be understood as a tradition invented

in Mao's era that, despite the material collapse of the communist legacy, continues to be active in the daily network in rural life as a basic ideational system connecting the present and the past.(Zhang 2006; Zhang 2006)

## **Invented Traditions in the Martial Arts**

Turning now to studies of martial arts, which are of direct relevance to the present study of Tai Chi, research using the notion of invented traditions is relatively sparse but it does underline the key point that 'invention' and reinvention involves not only an initial moment of redefinition or reconceptualisation but also a subsequent process of formalization and institutionalization as approved practices are codified and their forms of transmission and performance legitimated. In the case of martial arts this process may involve the issue of codes of approved practice and handbooks, the development of formal teaching and training, the formation of clubs and societies, and the regulation of 'correct' practice.

Inonu Shun's work (1998) explores this process at work in the modern invention, and subsequent reinvention, of Japanese martial arts through an examination of the transformation of jujutsu, a Tokugawa-era martial art, into a national sport (*kokugi*) and body culture, which came to symbolize Japan's modern national identity. In 1882, Kano Jigoro, through his speaking and publishing activities, propagated a new conception of the martial arts employing the word "*Judo*" instead of the traditional name "*Jutsu*" to separate the practices he was advocating from Jujutsu which was strongly associated with the decline of the martial arts at that time and mobilizing the word "do" (way) to signify the underlying principle. At the same time he also promoted the conception of "Budo" (the way of martial arts) as a basis for organizing practice. In the 1930s and 1940s, with the rising tide of nationalism in Japan, Western sports were discouraged and a nationalistic conception of Budo promoted. After Japan's defeat in World War II however, and the change in the political situation, Judo was once again promoted as a sport having been accepted as an Olympic discipline in 1940. It was joined by Shinai Kyogi, a new martial art using bamboo

swords, which was invented as a sports version of kendo.

Lee A. Thompson's research on the development of Sumo illustrates another variant of invention which emphasises institutional dynamics rather than the influence of a single charismatic personality. The contemporary performance of Sumo is organized around two separate but related institutions: the tournament championship and the rank of *yokozuna*. Thompson argues that although it is often said that Japan has preserved or maintained its traditions while undergoing modernization, and the Sumo community is at pains to emphasise its roots in a mythical antiquity, its current organisation is largely a modern invention. The development of the championship system can be explained as part of the modernization of the sport, but the *yokozuna* is popularly perceived as a traditional institution with much longer roots. In fact however, both systems arose together, and, if anything, the traditional *yokozuna* system is in large measure a product of the championship system. The image of the omnipotent *yokozuna* however, is central to the self conception of the projected sport since it represents security and assurance in the face of the indifferent achievement as measured statistically. (Thompson 1998)

Another popular Japanese martial art, Karate, illustrates the way that invented traditions can also be the product of intersections between indigenous practices and elements introduced from outside. As Tan's work has shown, the modern history of Karate is very much tied up with the history of the city of Okinawa. After World War II, Judo and Kendo were banned by the American Occupation Authority since it was felt that they fostered an ideology of militarism whereas Karate was perceived as a form of physical education linked to Chinese boxing. Consequently, the American Occupation Authority played a critical role in promoting Karate and in introducing it to the West. This leads Tan to conclude that the martial tradition of Karate is the outcome of a dynamic interplay between various cultural logics as they constantly encounter and reinterpret each other throughout history. (Tan 2004) On the one side it has been shaped by the shifting relations between China and Japan and the specific local history of Okinawa, and on the other by the impact of Western interests in imagining the Orient. Taken together they have produced a highly politicized and contested construction.

Another instance of the ways martial arts may be incorporated into political strategies is provided by Greg Downey's (2002) research on the career of Capoeira in Brazil. Initially, the practice was a punishable offence by the Brazilian government who feared its subversive potential. Following repeated attempts and failures of control however, it was recast in the 1920s as a sport and a mode of callisthenics fostering physical fitness and by the 1960s it was being popularized on a nation-wide basis. Then, in the late 1980s and 1990s, attempts to valorise capoeira's historical and cultural dimensions, in combination with changing understandings of the social role of physical education, led some practitioners to reject reductionist rules for competitive scoring and seek to reward overall proficiency. There were also efforts made to promote capoeira's inclusion at cultural events and folklore performances as an authentic and distinctly Brazilian practice.

## **The Translation of Tradition**

As these instances show, once we examine the process of inventing traditions empirically, we find that original forms are frequently modified and altered as the contexts in which they are practiced change. When the invented tradition travels geographically, the process gets even more complex.

In some circumstance, an invented tradition is not only connected with a timeless past, it is seen as coming from a remote location. Some are transplanted from other countries or other cultures. But they cannot be used in these new contexts in their 'raw' form, particularly when they are linked with particular grounded philosophies and identities. They have to undergo a process of translation. .

The translation of tradition as a particular form of invention or reinvention follows the basic patterns established by the migration of languages. There are additions, deletions, adaptations and the introduction of hybrid or creole elements.

A recent example of these processes in motion is provided by Wu's research on the different applications of the Tibetan chanting bowl and the Chinese bass gong in art and music therapy. (Wu 2005) As he argues, once Western specialists acquired sufficient knowledge of these Eastern traditions, they set about transforming them into systematic theories and practices in the western style, retaining just a hint of the Orient. These translations, in turn, enabled them to be used in new contexts and to find new uses. As he concludes, the Orientals may have invented these traditions, but it takes the Occidentals to appreciate their potential in music therapy. (Wu 2005)

Generalized practices undergo a further translation at the level of personal interpretation and performance as individual practitioners integrate officially sanctioned bodies of knowledge into their own repertoires of understanding and action. As we shall see in the later chapters detailing the ethnographic study, English enthusiasts of Tai Chi interpreted the tradition both variously and selectively. For some it was a martial art, for others a bodily discipline producing physical fitness, for other again, a practice allied to alternative medicine. Further, in their concrete practice they found different ways of relating to their imagination of Tai Chi as an 'oriental' system, through for example the music they played while practicing. In the process, as with the acts of translation at the more general social level there were deletions additions, misconceptions, and novel hybridises.

## **Section II Contested Traditions: The Career of Tai Chi in China**

### **Chapter 2 the Art of War: Tai Chi and the Imperial Imagination**

#### **The Early Imperial Period**

##### **The Broken History of Martial arts**

As we noted in Chapter 1, the historical evidence clearly shows that rather than being ‘authentic’ corporeal expressions of the relations between the body, mind and spirit, as conceived in eastern philosophical systems such as *Zen* or Taoism, many contemporary forms of martial arts are the product of invented traditions, (Shun 1998; Thompson 1998; Tan 2004) developed in response to Eastern confrontations with western modernity and the demands of nation building. As Stephen Chan has argued in relation to Japan, “it must be said that none of the present martial arts forms in today’s Japan, with the possible exception of *Kyudo* (the way of archery) and *Sumo*, took on their present codified forms until the last century, Even *Kendo*, *Judo*, *Aikido*, and, especially, *Karate* have near or actual 20<sup>th</sup>-century origins- although they can, of course, claim ancestors.”(Chan 2000: 96)

The practice of the martial arts has a long history in China with some accounts tracing their origins back to as early as 4000 year ago. However, since most have narratives filled in the gaps left by the archaeological evidence with legends, “ little progress seemed possible in separating

histories from mythologies”(Chan 2000: 96). Holcombe attributes the lack of fuller histories to Confucian scholars’ ignorance of martial arts and their important military role. As he has argued, “The literate Chinese elite tradition took a jaundiced view of physical combat and were inclined to ignore the martial arts”(Holcombe 2002: 153) adding that although “The Chinese elite did not neglect the undeniable strategic importance of the military; it scorned the heroic value of individual physical prowess.”(Holcombe 2002: 153) Chinese historian Ma Mingda’s research on the history of the literature on Chinese martial arts clearly illustrate their broken history. The earliest extant martial arts books date from the *Han* dynasty, but since the *Song* Dynasty, the number of texts steadily decreased. Ma suggests three main reasons for this: first the ban on the private teaching of martial arts, second the fact that military martial arts had its own training system, and there was therefore no need for written records; and third, the fact that the educated had no interest in martial arts while martial arts practitioners had no ability to write. (Ma 2000)

Apart from the fragmentary nature of the historical evidence, the strong tendency to mythologise origins reinforces the discontinuities in historical accounts of the development of Chinese martial arts. Some narratives become tangled up with the history of a particular religion. The history of Tai Chi for example, is enmeshed in the history of Taoism. Some historians have traced its origins back to Lao Zi, a philosopher of 2000 years ago. Others claim that Tai Chi was founded by Zhang Sanfeng, a Taoist monk of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Although these narratives have no evidential basis, they have found their way into history books and been recycled in fictional accounts, time and again, with the result that certain practitioners tend to believe them

### ***Wuyi*: The arts of Warfare**

Most historians tend to see martial arts as stylised practices that relate to warfare but can be distinguished from actual battlefield engagements. Even though Chinese scholars have emphasised the continuity of the martial arts culture in China, they have tended to use different

terms, *Wuyi* (Bugei in Japanese, the art of warfare) and *Wushu*, to distinguish military applications from popular practices. Ma has argued that the early modern *Wushu* martial arts differed from the ancient *Wuyi* but was closely related to it. (Ma 2000) The ancient practice of *Wuyi* was dominated by the deployment of weaponry on the battlefield while the early modern martial arts were dominated by boxing. The distinction between *Wuyi/Wushu* and military/popular martial arts is not hard and fast however since they interact with each other. The general assumption among Chinese scholars is that the martial arts appeared no later than the Warring States Period (475-221 BC). The separation of popular martial arts from military applications began in the *Song* Dynasty and ended with the Mid *Qing* Dynasty in the late 19 century.

Although “Illustration on bronze vessel from as early as 1000 BC, show figures engaging in what apparently are martial exercises.”(Holcombe 2002: 155) most Chinese scholars began their narrative of the martial arts with the Warring States Period. (Ma 2000) which archaeological evidence has revealed as the time when the use of bare hand combat became popular on the battlefield along with swordsmanship. The *Shi Ji* (Book of History) by Shima Qian, one of the earliest written histories, (Sima 91BC, 1982) records professional martial artists working as both teachers and assassins at that time. While the author of the *Hanfeizi*, complained that one professional martial artist, called *Xia*, was in position to manipulate the political system. (Han 140BC, 1997) Some martial artists, especially those with Taoist convictions, believe that the Taoist philosopher Lao Zi of the Warring States Period invented Tai Chi (Du 1933; Zhen and Tan, 1999), however since there is little or no firm evidence for this, most historians either ignore this argument (Gu 1987, Zhang 1994, Gu 1997, Zhao 2000, Zhou 2003, Yu 2006) or consider it as a mythological account with only symbolic value. (Ma 2000; Kang 2001)

The Warring States period ended with the victory of the *Qin* and the unification of China in 221 BC. In order to consolidate its power, the *Qin* dynasty (221-206 BC), the first of the Imperial dynasties, banned the private holdings of weapons, and according the records in the *Shi Ji*, all collected weapons were melted down and converted into bronze statues. The suppression of popular martial arts coupled with the promotion of official military training established a model

policy on the martial arts for the following dynasties. The 15-year harsh rule of the *Qin* Dynasty led to rebellion and civil war. (Gu 1987; Zhang 1994; Gu 1997; Zhao 2000; Zhou 2003; Yu 2006)

The succeeding dynasty, the *Han*, (206BC- 220 AD), became engaged in a long-term war with the northern tribe of the Huns. The increased emphasis on military training that this state of permanent conflict produced inevitably led to an increase in research on ways to improve martial arts techniques and an upsurge of books on the subject. The *Hanshu* (The history of Han), lists six books on *Shoubo* (Bare Hand Fight) and thirty eight on *Jiandao* (arts of the sword, also known as *Kendo* in Japanese) but none of these texts has survived. What is known however is that during the *Han* dynasty the Sabre took place the sword in the military training and that sabre, and sword techniques together with wrestling and *sumo* spread as far as Japan. (Gu 1987; Zhang 1994; Gu 1997; Zhao 2000; Zhou 2003; Yu 2006)

The later *Han* dynasty was fractured by the so-called Yellow Turban rebellion followed by civil war during the Three Kingdoms Period (220-280). This conflict provided the setting for a popular novel *The Legend of Three Kingdoms* published and republished in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries which featured romantic descriptions of martial arts heroes, adding to the mythologies that grew up around martial arts practice.

The following two dynasties, the *Jin* (265-420) and the North-South (386-589) saw the most turbulent period in Chinese history with the Northern tribes occupying inner China. Within 300 years, there were 16 kingdoms in north China while in the south there were six. The constant wars between kingdoms stimulated research on military skills. However, the major advance in martial arts is arguably more a consequence of the introduction of Buddhism into China. The *Shaolin* temple, which was founded in this period, has long been seen as the major source of many martial arts. There is a widespread popular belief that the Indian Buddhist, Bodhidharma (also spelt as Damo), invented *Zen* as well *Shaolin* martial arts, though, the evidence that he actually existed is contested. (Gu 1987; Zhang 1994; Gu 1997; Zhao 2000; Zhou 2003; Yu 2006)

The short lived *Sui* dynasty (581-618) ended the years of separation, and re-established a unified Empire. However, it was itself ended by a great rebellion which has provided another major source of martial arts legends. The following *Tang* dynasty (618-907) was one of the peaks of the imperial system. Imperial institutions were developed and refined and martial arts were formally incorporated into the system with the introduction of a national martial arts examination. Once again however, it is the mythological accounts for that period that has had the most lasting influence on popular understandings of the development of martial arts. One particularly potent story concerned the thirteen *Shaolin* monks who were supposed to have saved the life of the Emperor in the later *Sui* early *Tang* dynasty. Even though this account is based on uncertain and scattered historic clues (Ma 2000), it has been frequently been used as evidence for the flourishing of *Shaolin* martial arts during that time. (Sutton 1993)

There are no accounts of Tai Chi from the *Qin* Dynasty to the *Sui* Dynasty either in official history or in unofficial legends, but there are claims that Taoists of the time, such as Li Daozi, practised Tai Chi. However, these were eventually shown to be based on forgeries in the 1910s. (Xu 1937, 1980, 2006; Tang 1937; Tang and Gu 1964, 1999)

The *Tang* dynasty ended with the Five Dynasty Ten Kingdoms Period (902-979) with constant civil wars between small kingdoms. The *Song* dynasty (960-1127), while successfully reuniting the empire suffered constantly incursions from the northern tribes such as the *Khitans* and later the Mongols. During this period, unified martial arts pedagogies within the military training system were added to the martial arts examination system. Towards the end of this period, popular martial arts organisations reappeared and steadily gained independence from military training. There is evidence suggesting that martial arts performances were popular in marketplaces as a form of entertainment. It is also likely that solo martial arts forms, called *Taozi* (*Taolu* in today's terminology, or *Kata* in Japanese) also appeared. (Gu 1987; Zhang 1994; Gu 1997; Zhao 2000; Zhou 2003; Yu 2006)

The Mongol *Yuan* dynasty (1271-1368) was the first non-*Han* ethnic group empire. The ruler reintroduced the ban on the popular practice of martial arts. As a result, knowledge of some ancient martial arts was lost during this period, while others were re-invented. Chen (1996) for example, claims that martial arts of the stick were re-invented then. The *Yuan* dynasty ended with so-called Red Turban Rebellion led by the secret society of the White Lotus whose descendants became closely related with the subsequent development of the martial arts, even though there is little direct evidence of the role of martial arts in the actual rebellion. There is also a popular belief that Tai Chi was invented by the Taoist, Zhang Sanfeng, around this time, in either the later *Song* early *Yuan* Dynasty or later *Yuan* early *Ming* Dynasty (Xu 1921; Wu 1928, 1936). While this claim has gained considerable currency within popular culture, through martial arts novels and films, most scholars reject it. (Xu 1937, 1980, 2006; Tang 1937; Tang and Gu 1964, 1999)

The *Ming* dynasty (1369-1644) was continually threatened from the North by the Mongol and later the Manchu, and by Japanese pirates along the coast. The consequent need for constant military engagement gave renewed impetus to martial arts training with the result that 70% of the styles practised today originated in the *Ming* dynasty and the following *Qing* dynasty. (Gu 1987, Gu 1997) Accordingly, this period is widely seen as a decisive moment for the development of the martial arts with the emergence of both stylised forms and the renewed uncoupling of popular practice from military training (Gu 1987; Gu 1997). It is also from this period that we can begin to find written documentation.

The earliest extant publication on martial artists is the *Ji Xiao Xin Shu*, written by the famous general, Qi Jiguan (1528-1587) of the *Ming* dynasty, although the version that has survived is the second printed version which dates from 1595. Qi recorded some of the famous martial arts styles of his time and illustrated thirty important martial arts movements.

“There are 32 movements long fist invented by the first emperor of Song Dynasty. There are

Six-step Fist, Monkey Fist, and Hua Fist. The movements have different names but they are generally similar and only slightly different. The most famous martial arts and artist of today are the Seventy-two Movements Fist of the Wen Family, Thirty-six Locks, Twenty-four Qitanma, Eight Dodge and Jump, Twelve Short, Red Eight Punches, Mian Zhang's Close Attach, Shang Dong Province's Li Bantian's kicking, Eagle King's Grab, Qian Diezhang's Throw skills, Zhang Bojing's Punch skills and Bai Zizhang's stick" (Qi 1595, 1996: 450)

Mainstream Chinese scholars claim that Tai Chi was invented at this time by Chen Wangting (Tang 1937; Gu 1982; Gu 1986; Tang and Gu 1964, 1996). Together with the Chen Family's own family History, Qi's article has been used as one of main supports for this argument. Although Tai Chi is not mentioned specifically in the passage just quoted, the first 2 movements of Qi's *Quanjin Thirty-two Shi* (32 movements Boxing) begin with movements named as "grabs the cloth lazily" and "single whip" which are the exactly the same as in Tai Chi. Additionally, Chen Wangting quotes from Qi's work in his own writings (Tang 1937; Gu 1982; Gu 1986; Tang and Gu 1996) Up until the 1980's this argument represented the mainstream consensus on the origins of Tai Chi but in recent years it has again been challenged by the revival of the popular myth of Zhang Sanfeng's invention .

## **Military Traditions**

The development of the military tradition of martial arts is mainly a consequence of the progressive expansion of the empire. The *Han* dynasty won control of middle Asia after a war against the Hun tribes. Under the *Tang* dynasty, the southern border reached as far as the central region of today's Vietnam, and the eastern expanded to the north part of the Korean Peninsula. At its peak, the *Tang* dynasty had a western border that reached Persia, and a northern border that reached Siberia.

The defence against invasion, especially threats from the northern tribes, gave the arts of war an

added urgency. Clashes between the dynasties of inner China and the northern tribes lasted throughout imperial history. In the *Qin* and *Han* dynasty, there were incursions by the Huns, in the *Tang* dynasty, by the Turks, and in the *Song* and *Ming* Dynasties from the Mongol. The military experience gained in the engagements against the northern tribes was soon absorbed into military training; and became an influential component of the martial arts. One frequently mentioned example is the mass use of the sabre instead of the sword. In the early *Han* dynasty, the *Han* Empire suffered an incursion from the northern Huns tribes famous for their cavalry. The main weapon of the armies of the *Han* Empire was a double-edged single and thin sword developed in the wars between infantries on the plain, which was less efficient in battles between cavalries. The single edged curved sabre was developed to meet the needs of combat on horseback. Another example was the use of the *Niajagun* (the archetype of the nunchaku, two cudgels linked with chains). This weapon, adapted from a traditional farming tool, was developed to provide a heavy striking weapon against men on horseback. By the *Ming* dynasty, this weapon was incorporated into popular martial arts practice. (Yang 1980; Wang 1991; Zhong 1999; Ma 2000; Zhou 2006)

The need to maintain internal political control over the empire was a third important source of innovation in the arts of combat. The history of imperial China was marked by hundreds of years of turmoil and chaos caused by wars led by different ruling groups. These wars, together with imperial expansion and the defensive wars against foreigners enlarged the repertoire of military techniques and martial arts. The Two-lanceolated spear for example, was first recorded as the weapon of the famous warlord Gonshun Zhan in the Three Kingdom period. Another record of the same weapon occurs in the description of the war between two generals, Ran Min and Shi Kun, in the North and South Dynasty period. (Ma 2000) It is recorded in the book catalogue of the *Tang* Dynasty, that the Emperor Jianwen of the *Liang* Kingdom of the North and South dynasty wrote a book entitled, *Mashuopu* (Manual for Spear Application on Horseback), indicating that the ruling group were personally involved in developing martial arts. (Ma 2000) According to Ma's research, the use of the steel mace with a spear on the battlefield was developed during the civil war in the *early Tang* Dynasty, and especially associated with General Yuchi Jinde. (Ma 2000) Indirect evidence suggests that the origins of a number of styles of martial arts can be traced back to the

first emperor of the *Song* dynasty, who commanded his troops himself during the civil war. (Ma 2000)

### ***Wuju* and *Wuxue*: Official organisation**

Before guns became widely accepted in the army, systematic training in the martial arts was central to military training.

The historical records show that the *Han* dynasty operated a strict testing system for military officials. According to the *Hanguanjiuyi* (The Old Rituals of *Han* Officials), there was an archery test every eight month in the lunar calendar for all military officials. There was also an autumn test for the garrison soldiers. (Ma 2000) These arrangements were further systematised during the *Song* dynasty with the introduction of standards for military martial arts training in 1078 and the introduction of illustrated teaching manuals the following year. (Ma 2000)

The martial arts were also absorbed into administrative institutions. The imperial examination to select martial arts/military experts, which paralleled the examination system for civilian officials, continued until the final collapse of the imperial system in the early 20th century. (Gu 1987; Gu 1997). In 702, Queen Wu Zhetian established a national examination system for martial arts, *Wuju*. The examination was organized by the *Bingbu* (Ministry of the Military) in the 11th month of the lunar calendar. It included archery, spear applications and other disciplines. The winner would be offered an official position. The system was discontinued under the following emperor but restored in 808. The *Song* dynasty followed the *Tang* system, setting up examinations in 1029, stopping them in 1049 and then reintroducing them again in 1064. The exam was designed to identify talent and merit wherever it might be found and was open to almost all social ranks and classes. It was abolished again during The *Yuan* dynasty and restored again in 1464 during the *Ming* dynasty. From that point on, the exam ran in tandem with the exam for the civic

service. (Gu 1987; Zhang 1994; Gu 1997; Zhao 2000; Zhou 2003; Yu 2006)

Closely related to the exam system, in 1043 the *Song* dynasty set up the *Wuxue*, a national academy for martial arts military training as part of the imperial education system. The system was abolished soon afterwards but restored in 1072. The national *Wuxue* enrolled 100 students training them in both martial arts and military strategies. The *Yuan* dynasty again abolished the system, but under the *Ming* dynasty, it was reintroduced again and extended from the national level to local level. Graduates of the *Wuxue* would be sent to the Ministry of the Military. The *Qing* dynasty followed the *Ming* dynasty's system. (Gu 1987; Zhang 1994; Gu 1997; Zhao 2000; Zhou 2003; Yu 2006)

It is recorded that one of the main claimants to the title of 'inventor' of Tai Chi, Cheng Wangting, participated the pre-exam for the national martial arts exam. (Gu 1982; Gu 1986; Tang and Gu 1996)

## **Rebels and Militias**

Alongside the imperial incorporation of martial arts into the system of administration and rule, clan-based forms of martial arts organisation and practice were also on the rise. As noted earlier, the popular practice of martial arts, together with the holding of weapons, had been officially banned in the *Qin* Dynasty, by the first Emperor. This attempt to maintain an official monopoly over the deployment of force continued in subsequent dynasties.

With its expulsion from mainstream civil society, the popular practice of martial arts migrated to the social underground of rebel groups. Ma's research on the *Podao*, a sword with a long blade and a short hilt wielded with both hands and relatively easy to carry for example, suggests that despite the official ban, it was widely used by rebel groups during the *Song* dynasty. (Ma 2000) There were frequent popular rebellions throughout the imperial period and some dynasties,

including the dynasties themselves: East *Han*, *Tang* and *Ming*, were the direct or indirect products of such movements.

Rebellions were very often connected with secret societies which were often themselves related to religious cults. The martial art of *Qishendao* (Sword of the Seven Sages) for example, was an important feature of ritual performance for Zoroastrianism during the *Song* dynasty. In the *Yuan* dynasty, the dissent group within Zoroastrianism absorbed ideas from the Maitreya providing the basis for the religious group that became known as the White-Lotus. In the 14th century, during the anti-Mongol movement known as the Red Turban rebellion, the white-lotus played a pivotal leadership role. Despite vigorous attempts to suppress it, the white-lotus survived and became involved in numerous rebellions in *Ming* and *Qing* dynasties. Ma's research on the iron spear, mentioned earlier, provides another clue pointing to the connections between martial arts practice, rebellion and the secret society. Ma noticed that there was evidence showing that the first emperor of the *Ming* Dynasty, Zhu Yuanzhang, was an accomplished practitioner of iron spear martial arts when he was involved in the anti-Mongol Red Turban Rebellion.

Within popular culture, Tai Chi is also connected with the Red Turban Rebellion. In Jin Yong's well-read martial arts novel, *Yitianlongji* (Legend of *Yitian* Sword and *Tulong* Sabre), and Jet Li's action film *Tai Chi Master*, the Taoist Zhang Sanfeng, one of the supposed founders of Tai Chi, is depicted against the background of the Red Turban Rebellion. Even though those popular representations are backed by no firm historical evidence, they have given this legendary account of Tai Chi's origins additional currency. In another version of Tai Chi's invention, it is believed that in the early stage of its development Chen Wangting had contact with the famous rebel leader, Li Jiyu. This account was promoted by Communist historians in their efforts to develop a simplified historical dialectic narrative of Tai Chi's history. There is however, no further documentation of the links between Tai Chi and other rebels or secret societies.

Despite the general ban on popular martial arts practice, in some circumstances village militias

were encouraged by the ruling groups. The institutionalised militia system can be traced back to the *Tang* dynasty when the military enrolment system, the so-called *Fubinzhi*, was established. Under this system the army was semi-professional, and during peacetime they worked as peasants although regular training continued. However during times of war they were sent to the battlefield. It is believed that following the introduction of this system, the official organised militia called *Yong* came into being. (Wakeman 1966)

In the middle *Song* dynasty, a new system called *Baojiazhi* was established. Every ten families were organised as a *Bao*, with one of the two males of the family chosen as *Baodin* responsible for organising a village militia called the *Tuanlian*, which received systematic training. According to the *Songshi* (The history of Song), in 1076, there were 71, 820, 28 members of the militia receiving training. Apart from this official organised militia, there were also volunteer militias and historical documents show that in the *Ding* and *Bo* two provinces, there were 588 self-organised militias. (Lin 1987; Lin 1988)

Chinese historian Lin Boyuan has divided the martial arts organisations that developed since the *Song* dynasty (960-1279) into 4 different types: organisation of farmers against foreign invasion; civil organisation against prosecution and exploitation, self-defence organisations led either by religious leaders or local landlords; and *She* or *Pu* organised by the government. (Lin 1987; Lin 1988) Chinese Historian Tan Hua has simplified this list, suggesting as 3 major types:

- (a) Organisations controlled by the local landlords with government support;
- (b) Secret religious organisations outside of government or local landlord control;
- (c) Demonstration and performance organisation of martial arts. (Tan 2003)

In relation to the first grouping, Wakeman argues that as early as the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, the local gentry trained their own non-official militias to compensate for the failures of the official defence system. He points out that the *Yong*, as semi-professional soldiers, were trained for participation in

clashes between regions and lineages. These alternative militias controlled by local gentry became the major force for ensuring local security when a social crisis began. (Wakeman 1966)

Tan's work confirms the local roots and significance of traditional martial arts pointing out that martial arts organisation was also the main youth organisation of the village and that local landlords exercised great influence and control. (Tan 2003)

Alongside Tan's emphasis on the village roots of martial arts groups, the cultural anthropologist, Cheng Dali, has pointed to the important relations between martial arts and lineage societies, arguing that the combat between kinship-based organisations provided the most important basis for martial arts practice. He sees the key role played by ancestor worship in lineage societies as the primary origin of the cult of the master in the martial arts and the exclusiveness of kinship organisations as the main explanation for the reliance on the oral tradition and the restricted circulation of knowledge of martial practices. (Cheng 1995)

There is some evidence to suggest that the emergence of Tai Chi might have also involved the local militia. It is believed that one of its suspected inventors, Cheng Wangting, worked as the leader of a county militia. According to the *Wenxianzhi* (Chronicle of Wen County), he worked for the local defence force against rebel attacks in the 1630s-40s. (Wakeman 1966)

### ***Yangsheng: Life Cultivation***

In addition to the various articulations to the martial arts, innovations in medical theory, particularly the so-called *Yangsheng* (life cultivation), a system of meditation and body practices intended to enhance longevity, constituted a further major influence on the development of Tai Chi. Some researchers even claim that "The graceful slow-motion movement of Tai Chi, illustrates the heritage of Taoism therapeutic exercises embedded in the modern martial arts". (Holcombe 2002: 160)

Brownell defined *Yangsheng* as “a holistic approach that contrasts with the limited focus on an alienated body in Western body” “a Taoist label for physical exercise”. (Brownell 1995: 38) It combines *Tuna*, a breath-controlling practice and *Daoyin*, rhythmic body movements. These ancient life cultivation practices are mentioned in ancient records especially those from within the Taoist tradition and archaeological evidences suggest that they were popular as early as the Warring States Period. The *Xinqiyupeimin* in the Tianjin Museum, a jade with inscriptions found in *Changshai*, Hunan province in 1973, records 44 movements of *Daoyin*. (Brownell 1995)

The Taoist scholar, Wei Boyang, of the East *Han* Dynasty, used the terminology of alchemy as a metaphor to construct the theoretical system of *Qi* practices. Another Taoist classic from the same period, the *Taipingjin* (Peace Sutra), mentions meditation as way of enhancing *Qi*. In the *Jin* Dynasty, in the Taoist Ge Hong’s work, several *Qi* practices are recorded. The Taoist Tao Jinhong invented a *Qi* practice with six words: claiming that by exhaling with six different pronunciations, different organs of the body could be exercised. This 6-word-practice has been applied by later Tai Chi masters. Tao also recorded the so-called *Wuqinxi* (Five-Animal practices), bodily disciplines imitating animal movements. (Gu 1987; Gu 1997)

Buddhist conceptions, such as *Zen*, were also absorbed into the *Qi* practices system. In the *Song* Dynasty, the so-called *Neidan* (internal-alchemy), which imagined the human body as an alchemist’s oven in which special practices of *Qi*, could be forged in the same way as medical pills, flourished. Another bodily discipline called *Baduanjin* was also popular at the same time. In the *Ming* and *Qing* Dynasties, various *Qi* practices were collected systematically and developed by scholars such as Gao Qian. Unlike the martial arts, which were looked down on, the disciplines of *Tuna* and *Daoyin* had long been appreciated by the intellectual and social elite and enjoyed periods of fashion among the upper class. (Gu 1987; Gu 1997)

The *Tuna* and *Daoyin* are said to be a primary formative ingredient in Tai Chi. They not only

provided Tai Chi with the archetype of breath-controlling practices and slow-motion rhythmic movements, but also the conception of *Qi* which is the key element forming the bridge between the martial arts, medical science, and philosophical and religious systems. *Qi*, a fundamental concept in everyday Chinese culture, is most often defined as "air" or "breath", and by extension, "force" or "energy". It is believed that humankind is inseparable from nature, and that *Qi*, as the essential material forming the human body as well as the natural world, connects the person to the external environment. *Qi* flows through the channel in the human body called *Jinluo*. *Tuna* and *Daoyin* are designed to increase the smooth flow of *Qi*. The practice of acupuncture is also based on the theory of stimulating certain point of the *Jinluo* system. For some Chinese historians, the emergence of Tai Chi in the later *Ming* and early *Qing* dynasties was a natural consequence of the development of life cultivation techniques and their convergence with martial arts (Tang and Gu 1996)

### **Philosophical and Religious Influences**

Holcombe has gone so far as to argue that, "In China the martial arts are an aspect of the religion, with all of the attendant mystery and miracles. At the same time, the public face of the martial arts has often been that of the entertainer, and the self-image of the martial artist has been thoroughly imbued with motifs drawn from fiction and the theatre." (Holcombe 2002: 153) "Rather than viewing myths and legends as effluvia from the real martial arts, it is more accurate to see the martial arts as a relatively minor by-product of Buddha-Taoist popular religion and the medieval immortality cult." (Holcombe 2002: 153)

As the hybrid combination of martial arts and life cultivation, Tai Chi was influenced by wider philosophical, spiritual and religious systems and caught up in the tensions and conflicts between them, the concepts of *Yin* and *Yang* offer an instructive example.

The belief that all things possess both a *Yang* (positive) and *Yin* (negative) side is presented in its

most influential form in the *I Ching* (Book of Change). Balancing *Yang* and *Yin* achieves mutual harmony. The term “Tai Chi” appears in the *Xici* (Great Appendix) of the *I Ching*. Although this might have been written later than the main body of the book itself; the appearance of Tai Chi in the *I Ching* has been widely quoted as proof that Tai Chi is a product of Taoist philosophy, despite the fact that the *I Ching* is also considered as one of the classics of Confucianism.

The concept of *Yin/Yang* also appears in other Taoist works. Another frequently quoted source is the philosopher, Lao Zi who lived in the Spring and Autumn Period whose 5000 word treatise, the *Daodejing*, is the classical expression of the so-called *Daojiao* (Religious Taoism) or *Daojiao* (Philosophic Taoism). Even though, he does not mention the words “Tai Chi” expressly his ideas emphasised “stillness”, which later Tai Chi masters adopted as the highest principle of Tai Chi practice. Some masters even argued that Lao Zi was the creator of Tai Chi. (Du 1935; Zhen and Tan 1999) In the philosophic work *Zhuang Zi*, by the author of same name, Tai Chi is understood to be the highest conceivable principle, that from which existence flows which can be understood simply as the co-substantial union of *yin* and *yang*.

Since Tai Chi has been claimed by both Confucianism and Taoism it is not surprising that during the *Song* dynasty, with the newly ascendant system of Neo-Confucianism, which incorporated Buddhism and Taoism conceptions including the *yin/yang* theory, the central symbolic representation of Tai Chi should have assumed particular currency, with the Neo-Confucianist Zhou Dunyi using it to explain neo-Confucianism philosophy. By the *Ming* dynasty Neo-Confucianism had become the accepted state philosophy a position it retained to the end of the last imperial dynasty, the *Qing*.

Wile basing his argument on the textual analysis of some of Tai Chi classics, has claimed that while Neo-Confucianism dominated Tai Chi theory down to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Taoist interpretations gained ground in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Wile 1996)

## Later Imperial China

Susan Brownell, in her research on Chinese sports and physical education, has argued that with respect to techniques of the body, there were two important consequences of China's defeat by the British in the Opium War of 1842: "The emergence of the revivalist movements centered on indigenous methods of hand-to-hand combat and meditation exercises" and "the introduction of Western sports." (Brownell 1995: 38) While this argument identifies important driving forces behind the development of the martial arts in later imperial China, it remains over-reliant on the stimulant-reaction trend in China studies mentioned earlier, which overemphasises western influences and neglects the role of internal forces within Chinese society. These include, the malfunction of the imperial system, changes in military training, the mushrooming spread of secret societies, and the growth of village militia.

### Malfunction of the Imperial Design

The *Qing* dynasty was founded by a semi-nomadic ethnic group, the Manchu, whose military system was rooted in the so-called Banner armies developed by Nurhachi as a way to transcend clan affiliations. The fundamental building block of the banners was the company, reflecting pre-existing lineage or tribal connections in their membership. There were eight banners represented on the battlefield by different coloured flags. The defeated army of the *Ming* dynasty was organised as another military force represented by the colour green and named the Green army. The daily training for both the Banner army and the Green Army was organised around archery and basic martial arts and weapons skills using swords and spears. (Gu 1987; Gu 1997)

According to Chinese historian Mao Huijian, both the Banner Army and the Green Army functioned more like a police force than an army, their main purpose being to maintain local security. The troops were separated into small units of less than 10 persons which made daily training almost impossible. As a consequence, the local militia became more important as a

military force in defence of the empire. (Mao 1995; Mao 1998)

At a general administrative level however, the *Wuju* system of martial arts practice, was not only retained by the *Qing* dynasty but emphasised more than ever. The examination was held every 3 years, and sometimes there was a special additional exam. From the 1000-2000 participants entering each exam, about 100-120 would be chosen. The winners could work for the Ministry of the Military, and even those who had failed could get free travel. (Ma 2000) Since the dynasty had been founded on invasion supported by military force it was not surprising that the emperors placed particular emphasis on the maintenance of the martial arts spirit within their own ethnic group while at the same time banning unauthorized martial arts practices. In 1690, Emperor Kangxi announced that all civilians who had passed the merit system examination system should be proficient at both horse riding and archery. In 1726 the emperor Yongzheng announced a similar order. (Gu 1987; Gu 1997; Gu 1997) In 1843, emperor Daoguang emphasized again that equitation and archery should be the basis of the Manchu spirit. (Shu 1961)

### **The Introduction of Western Military Drill**

China's defeats in the Opium Wars of 1839-1842 are widely thought to mark the starting point of modern Chinese history and the Chinese Empire's drive towards modernization. The establishment of foreign concessions in a number of Chinese cities created a permanent foreign presence on Chinese soil. Western life styles as well as sports and leisure activities were introduced into Chinese society, and rapidly became identified with 'modernity'.

The Opium Wars revealed the ineffectiveness of the Chinese army's reliance on martial arts disciplines faced with modern Western weapons and in an effort to regain a sense of self strength, the imperial leadership embarked on a sustained programme of modernization. The main driving force behind these efforts were those ministers who had experience in foreign affairs, though ironically they were labelled Confucius Reformers by western historians. (Chen 1971: 166) For

them, “strength” did not merely mean military capacity. Consequently, their reforms also included building up mines, and general industry as well as the construction of warships, the development of military-related industries, and the introduction of modern weapons. These interventions are now widely considered as the beginning of the modernization process in China.

The first wave of modernization, starting in the 1860s, also included the modernization of bodily discipline with the introduction of western sports, the retreat from martial arts as the centre of the military training, the adoption of western forms of military drill, and the development of training in the use of new weaponry. In 1861-1862, Russia sent 10,000 guns as well as trainers to the Emperor’s Guards. (Gu 1987; Gu 1997) They were accompanied by British and French trainers. Within half a year, 1200 soldiers had been trained in this way and sent to suppress the Taiping Rebellion. In the later stage of the battle, the rebels, trained in martial arts, confronted an imperial army trained in the new western ways and won. They even defeated a troop organized by American and Britain colonists to support the ruling dynasty. In response, Chinese military trainers were sent to Germany to learn from the acknowledged pioneer of new military techniques. Seven officers were sent to Germany to be trained in drilling in 1876, and in 1885, when the prime minister, Li Hongzhang set up his new military training establishment, the Tianjin Military School he hired a German as principle trainer.(Gu 1987; Gu 1997)

The Chinese army totally abandoned training in Chinese martial arts within three decades and went over entirely to western forms of drill. From the 1880s, drilling was extended from the army to the new military schools that were being established, including in 1881, the North Sea Marine School, in 1886 the Tianjin Military School, Guangdong Army School, and Guangdong Marine School, and in 1887 the Fujian Water Craft School. In the first phase of modernization military leaders drew on models taken from both British and German ways of drilling. But in 1894 the Chinese army suffered a catastrophic defeat by the Japanese army, with the entire new army and navy destroyed. The defeat again profoundly shocked the leaders of the empire and resulted in the British drill system being abandoned, in favour of the Japanese military system. Since the Japanese army employed German techniques the German drilling system finally came to dominate

military training.

Although at that time, there was no official push to introduce western sports into China their popular adoption successfully drove the martial arts out of the imperial system. After only two decades of competition with western sports, martial arts ceased to be important in training the army.

Following the wide acceptance of western weapons and drilling systems in the army, some court leaders realized that the old examination system was also invalid and 1888 saw the very last examination for martial artists. After this, ministers suggested that the examination should be based on tests involving the use of the modern guns instead. In 1901, ten years before the final fall of the empire, the abolition of the examination for martial artists was officially confirmed.

### **Popular Organisation**

We have suggested above that there may have been connections between secret societies, popular martial arts practices, and successive rebellions in early imperial China, although the historical materials that might confirm these links, and illuminate how they operated, are now lost. Emerging archival research however has lent weight to the argument that in later imperial China, and especially in the *Qing* dynasty, secret societies were the main carrier and communication media for popular martial arts practices. (Zhou 1991) For rebel groups, as well as anti-Manchu secret societies such as the White Lotus and the Triads, and later the Boxers, the practice of martial arts was part of their daily routine. This practice operated not only to train members to fight effectively against the official army on the battlefield, but also as a way to cement group affiliations and organization.

The centrality of martial arts to the secret societies has been confirmed by Zhou's research which has discovered that in the so-called *Huidang* societies (of which the Triads are the best

know example), the leader or core figure was a martial artist, and that some societies used the martial arts as the main criteria for election of their leaders. Another distinguishing character of the martial arts practices in these societies was the social construction of a sacred place such as a *Shaolin* temple. The lineage system of the Triad was strongly connected with the legends associated with the South *Shaolin* temple for example. The popular martial arts practices of the *Quanhui* (the boxing society of the north) were also influenced by secret religion observances but these were more closely related to folklore, and the structure of the *Quanhui* was much looser with martial arts practices for the self-defence being emphasised. (Zhou 1991; Zhou 2000; Zhou 2003)

Susan Naquin has suggested other connections between secret religions and martial arts. In her research on the 1813 rebellion of the Eight Trigrams (also translated as Eight Diagrams), she attributes the loose structure of the movement's secret religion to the leaders' profession as a wandering martial artist.(Naquin 1976; Naquin 1981) Similarly, Zhou has traced a relation between the secret religion of the eight Trigrams and the martial arts of *Bagua* (which is also the phonetic translation of the Eight Trigrams).(Zhou 1991) Based on historical records from Shangdong province in the 19th century, Tan has argued that the local organisation of martial arts practice was based on traditional village organisation and that the main demonstration and performance sites were also the main ritual sites for local cults and religions.(Tan 2003)

The most notable example of popular martial arts operating in the context of a secret society is the Boxer rebellion. In contrast to previous movements the boxers deployed martial arts skills not against the emperor, but against "foreign devils". (Gu 1987; Gu 1997; Takacs 2001) They proclaimed that their purpose was killing the foreigners. (Gu 1997: 178).



Boxer Rebels

With the spread of the Christianity in China, clashes with local religions became more commonplace with martial arts groups connected to local cults or religions providing the main organizational and spiritual base for opposition. Foreign incursions into China deepened this conflict. Li Shiyu, Zhou and other Chinese historians have suggested that the so-called Boxer Rebellion led by the *Yihequan* (Society of the Righteous and Harmonious Fists), originated from the secret religion of the white lotus and the specific style of martial arts known as *Meihuaquan* (Plum Boxing) in the 1820s. The leading figure of in the rebellion, Zhao Sanduo, was a famous practitioner of Plum Boxing. The boxers believed that by mastering martial arts they could be invincible against modern weapons.(Li 1979; Feng 1980; Li 1982; Li 1985; Zhou 2000) As an American diplomat noted; “A number of teachers through the country gather together the idle young men at the various villages and organized them into companies and pretend if they will, under their direction, go through certain gymnastic movements and repeat certain incarnations, that they will become impervious to all weapons and nothing can harm them.” (Davis 1981: 27)

Surviving fragments from Chinese records indicate that the boxers collected 25 people as a unit to learn the martial arts and began their practices with a ritual ceremony of bowing. There is however no evidence to show that any Tai Chi masters were involved in the rebellion .Consequently, the subsequent development of Tai Chi was not too affected by the overall decline in popular martial arts practice after the rebellion's failure and suppression.

As in early imperial China, village militia were another important base for popular martial arts practice in the late imperial era. Officially they were to provide an important supplement to the official army. But Wakeman's research on the Opium Wars has shown that they were in fact the major force in the conflict. (Wakeman 1966) This relative strength vis-à-vis the national military has led Philip Khun to argue that local militarization was in fact one of key factors accounting for the collapse of the empire.

Local militia "were formed traditionally among the local inhabitants of a village, or a cluster of villages or town, for common defence against banditry, or for the suppression of rebellion" and their principle " of militia organization seems to have been relatively simple compared to the government forces" (Davis 1971: 27) They were deployed in the campaigns against foreign invaders as well as internal rebellions and since, starting with the Taiping Rebellion, the imperial forces had suffered series of disastrous defeats the reorganized village militia of Hunan province and Anhui province , acting as a hybrid of militia and standard army, became the pivotal force in the imperial military system.

The leading promoter of the martial arts in the early Republican era, Ma Liang, argued in his memoirs that, following the social turmoil of the Taiping rebellion and its aftermath, people began to realize that the martial arts were an important weapon for self-defence and that people cannot be self-reliance without their promotion. What's more the martial arts can build up bodies and maintain the security of the local area. (Ma 1992)

It is difficult to draw a hard and fast distinction between village militia and secret societies since

“By the end of the eighteenth century, at the time of the White Lotus rebellion, the distinction between militia bands and rebel bands was dangerously blurred”. (Davis 1971: 27) Elizabeth Perry’s research on the *Nian* rebellion for example, has shown that the village militia leaders allied themselves with the rebels and that their defence activities changed to plunder. (Perry 1980; Perry 1984)

The village militia were in fact kinship based village martial arts organisations, and as such provided the main channel through which popular martial arts practice spread rather than the secret societies. This kind of kinship system is relatively enclosed and based on a pre-modern agrarian production system. The martial arts serve the defence of the village or kinship clan. The relation between martial arts instructors and their students is also kinship based with teaching and learning only taking place within the family or kinship group. When a student was accepted from ‘outside’ the relation between master and disciple is symbolically that of father-son. This convention of strict master-disciple relationships, which may be inherited from the Confucian tradition of pedagogy, was widely accepted before the 1850s.

One of the accounts of Tai Chi’s origins illustrates this pattern. According to this account, Tai Chi was first taught in the small village of Chen in Henan province in the interior of China, and carried into the ‘outside’ world by Yang Luchan. The dynamics of this narrative are the subject of bitter argument however. (Chen 1934, 1986) One version insists that the original master, Wang Zhongyue first taught Jiang Fa and then Cheng Changxin, the master of Yang Luchan. The alternative version claims that Wang Zhongyue himself learnt from the Chen family. Although these accounts feature the same central figure, Wang Zhongyue, they employ dates that vary by hundreds of years. (Du 1933)

The Chen family history together with local county chronicles however, do provide relatively reliable evidence of the relation between Tai Chi and the village militia recording that several Chen family members served as the leader of the village militia in the clashes against the *Taiping* and *Nian* Rebellions in the 1860s. (Chen 1934, 1986)

Historians have also drawn attention to other relevant changes in popular martial arts practice such as the rise of the new career of bodyguard or commercial guard (Ma 1992; Tan 2003) The bankruptcy of the rural economy brought the rural population into new occupations in the cities, where the village martial arts group functioned as a trade union. (Tan 2003)

### **Literati Participation**

The later 19th century was the key phase in the development of Tai Chi. Firstly, as mentioned earlier, Yang Luchan learnt Tai Chi in Chen village, and then brought this formerly secret martial arts knowledge, firstly to his home town and later to the capital Beijing, laying the initial basis for its national and later, international dissemination.

Secondly, the local elites in Yang's home town, the Wu and Li families, acquired the arts. Their participation had two major impacts. It translated knowledge of Tai Chi and its history from the oral tradition to written texts and led to the production of some of the earliest modern writing on the discipline. (Wu 2001) It also raised Tai Chi's status because of the families' social status as members of the local elite or gentry. The role of the gentry or local elites has been a key site of debate in sinology/China studies. Linked to the imperial system by the civil service examination system they constituted a highly homogeneous cultural group who mediated between the empire and the society, and ensured that local ways of living and thinking were dominated by Confucian values. (Esherick and Rankin 1990)

Accounts of the Wu and Li families' participation given by different Tai Chi masters and researchers vary slightly but all can be traced back to the same source, the original hand-written copy of Li's articles in 1881 which have been preserved as photocopies. According to this document, in the 1850s, after Yang Luchan had learnt Tai Chi in Chen village, his countrymen Wu Heqin (best known as Wu Yuxiang) also studied with the Chen family and went on to teach a number of his male relatives including; his elder brother Wu Chengqin, his younger brother Wu

Ruqin and his nephews Li Jinlun (also named as Li Yishe but wrongly spelt as Li Yiyu by quite a number of researchers) and Li Chenglun (also named as Li Qixuan). The Wu brothers and Li brothers both passed the civil examination.

A key moment in this Chen family narrative recounts how Chengqin found a *Taijiquanpu* (Tai Chi Manual) in salt shop attributed to Wang Zhongyue. This was the first book to use the general philosophic terminology “Tai Chi” to name this style of martial arts. Before that, in both Chen village and Yang/Wu/Li’s home town, it had been named either after the families or was known as *Rouquan* (Soft Fist) or *Shenquan* (Divined Fist). It is possible however that Wang’s book was substantially edited and perhaps even forged by the Wus and Lis to substantiate their claim to have found the earliest written documentation of Tai Chi practices. Certainly, accounts of Wang’s life vary considerably, with key dates being placed as early as the Later *Ming* dynasty and as late as the Mid *Qing* dynasty.

In his socio-historical reading of *Lost T'ai-chi classics from the Later Nineteenth Century*; Wile offers several explanations for the literati’s participation in the martial arts at that time including the renewed the spirit of “self-strengthening” of both the body and the nation, and the adoption of martial arts as a means of reasserting their masculinity. (Wile 1996; Wile 1999) He even proposes that the literati’s participation in Tai Chi can be read as a kind of “political allegory” where the “*nei*” in “*neijian*” is Han Chinese and the “*wai*” in “*waijia*” is Manchu. Since Tai Chi is characterized as an “internal” art, as opposed to such arts as *Shaolin*, characterized (by Tai Chi practitioners) as “external”, then Tai Chi becomes an act of resistance against Manchu domination (Wile 1996). As Frank has noted however, “Much of what Wile conjectures regarding social and historical contexts is highly speculative, and he readily admits a paucity of documentary evidence to support such positions.” (Frank 2003: 284). As mentioned earlier, the self-strengthening movement emphasised the introduction of western military technologies and led to the martial arts losing their role in the military training. In addition, neither the Wu family or the Li family were proud of their achievements in the martial arts. Although their epitaph records every small achievement of their official careers there is little about their glorious contribution to the martial

arts. Wile's simplified dichotomy equating internal/external with Han/Manchu is even more misleading. The *Shaolin* he characterises as external was in fact strongly linked with the anti-Manchu propaganda of secret societies such as the Triad. (Novikov 1972)

Wile is however right to emphasise the importance of the literati's participation in Tai Chi. The consequences were enormous, propelling Tai Chi from being merely a martial art practised by peasants to becoming an elegant art worthy of polite society..

The changes first appeared as the social elite's domestication of fighting arts and their reinvention as a leisure activity. An oral anecdote recounting Yang Luchan's early teaching experiences records that aristocrats were among his early students. Even if those stories are false, their circulation points to the fact that in the imagination of the early Tai Chi masters their version of martial arts was seen as an exercise fit for the elite. As Wu has argued, by countering the associations of Tai Chi with social disruption and clandestine societies, the participation of the gentry and members of the social elite like the Wu/Li families and the other high born disciples of Yang Luchan, opened the door to Tai Chi for the literati. (Wu 2001)

The social elite's participation also leads Tai Chi in new directions, such as health cultivation. In some version of the Salt shop manuscript mentioned earlier there are sentences mentioning the health functions of Tai Chi. Although these passages may have been added later after the original Wu/Li's texts, there is no doubt that the literati's participation did place a strong emphasis on the health cultivation benefits of Tai Chi, as I will show in more detail later.

The Wu/Li texts also began the spiritual and religious reinvention of Tai Chi. Wile argues that the connections between Taoism and Tai Chi were cemented in the Wu/Li and Yang family's forty secret texts in the later nineteenth century. Wile is partly right here. The philosophical, spiritual and religious reinvention did happen at this time, but rather than Taoism it was Neo-Confucianism that provided the core ideas underpinning the Wu/Li texts. As Gu and Wu have shown, although Neo-Confucianism and Taoism shared some basic conceptions, most notably the idea of *Yin/Yang*

as the dominate force. (Tang and Gu 1996; Wu 2001) In the *ShiSanshishuolue* (Brief on Thirteen Postures) by Wu Yuxiang for example, Wu uses the terminology “*Qichenzhuanhe*” which was the requirement for articles in the national civilian exam system.

The main difficulty with Wile’s account is its reliance on secret texts produced within key families. There are two problems. The forty secret chapters in fact included 43 pieces; some of which were Wu/Li’s articles under other names. Further, the Taoist reinterpretation of Tai Chi might be slightly later than Wile’s suspected, for two reasons. Firstly, the Wu/Li families kept their Tai Chi practices with their own families and it was only in the 1920s-30s when Tai Chi manuals began to be widely published that the Wu/Li’s works began to have a wide influence. Secondly, some of the texts are obvious forgeries from the early 20th century. For instance, in one piece the Chinese word *Jiqi* (the translation of machinery) and *Tiyu* (the translation for physical education or sports) appear, but both these words are borrowed from Japanese, something that would not have occurred at the time they were first supposed to have been written.

## **Chapter 3 Modernisation: The Body and the Body Politic**

### **In Republican China**

During the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the martial arts experienced successive waves of decline and revival. At first, they were excluded from the project of nation-building and from the education and sports systems. In response, martial artists set out to reform traditional practices both institutionally and theoretically. A number of martial arts schools were set up, western style pedagogy and teaching were introduced, while the clan-based or village based teaching system declined. Eventually, commercially-based schools came to dominate martial arts teaching. At the same time, the oral tradition of transmitting skills was abandoned and replaced by books on the martial arts, among which those dealing with Tai Chi books were the most numerous.

The re-emphasis on martial arts was also an important strand in the anti-Christian movement that flourished between 1922 and 1926, but following that, they were defined as “the scientificised national sports”(Wu 1928; Zhu 1931; Wu 1933; Wu 1936) and involved in the systematic construction of the new nation state. The phrase “scientificised national sports” carried two paradoxical connotations.

On one hand the emphasis on “science” implied the introduction of modern schools, modern pedagogy, and standardized textbooks into the martial arts in the service of modern biological and psychological theories. As one of the active promoters of this movement, Zhu Minyi, noted: “scientificisation means to make the national sport suited to the principles of mechanics and psychology.” (Zhu 1931: 12) On the other hand, the martial arts were also national so that a whole series of traditions had to be invented to confirm the connections between martial arts and Chinese tradition, and to demonstrate its superiority to its western counterparts. Hence, Tai Chi and other martial arts were simultaneously modernised in the name of “scientificisation”

drawing on western models, and presented as part of a long standing and important indigenous cultural tradition.

## **Institutionalisation**

### **The Establishment of the Education system and the Exclusion of Martial Arts**

“The Boxer Rebellion of 1900 marked (with the possible exception of the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s) the last effort to meet China’s problems through a radical rejection of modern ideas and technology”. (Rozman 1981: 225) After the rebellion’s defeat Chinese society speeded up its modernisation effort, concentrating particularly on institutional modernisation. A series of efforts were made to reconstruct the society and the nation-state. The sports and physical training systems that had been established in China with the introduction of a modern education system were very much part of this effort.

In 1903, the empire announced a new education system, the *Quimou* System based on the Japanese model. However, it lasted for only 8 years, until the fall of the dynasty. The new schools replaced the traditional private schools, the *Sishu*, which only taught the Confucian classics. In contrast, physical education and sports were incorporated into the new system from the outset with primary and secondary schools being required to offer 2-3 hours of callisthenics (physical education) a week. At that time, callisthenics, especially military exercise and drills, was the only form of sport taught and dominated physical education. Indeed, the Chinese translation of callisthenics became the alternative name for sports. The martial arts however, were totally excluded from the new system. After the establishment of the new system the school population grew rapidly. In 1903 the population of primarily school students stood at 22866. By 1909 it had reached 1.4 million. By 1921 the combined primary and secondary school population had reached

80 thousand. (Gu 1987; Gu 1997)

As a consequence, callisthenics began to penetrate into everyday life as the main sports activity. The increasing population of student's required qualified teachers and this led in turn to the founding and development of sports schools. Since the main content of physical education was based on military drilling, army officers were frequently invited into the schools as coaches. Although the education system facilitated the wide spread of sports in the schools, the tediousness of the drilling exercises and the introduction of unqualified military coaches promoted growing opposition to callisthenics among pupils. (Gu 1987; Gu 1997)

The emphasis on military drill can be traced back the self-strength movement of the 1860s. The ideology behind this system was militarism. As established empires that had successfully made the transition to modern, militarized, nation states, German and Japan were held up as examples for China to follow, with the result that a military oriented education system was considered an important force in constructing a modern nation.

After the fall of the *Qing* dynasty in 1911, the new republican government reformed the imperial education system and introduced a new *Renzi Quichou* system. However, they retained the former system's pattern of physical education as well as its guiding principles. Following the defeat of Germany in World War I however, the German educational model was abandoned and in 1922, an American model took its place. Once again however, the martial arts were excluded from the curriculum. (Gu 1987; Gu 1997)

Alongside the state education system however, there was a parallel system of church schools establish mainly by British and American missionaries and by the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA). These operated as an important alternative channel for the introduction of western style sports. The first step was the YMCA and church schools' introduction of ball games into China. Basketball was introduced to in 1896, only 6 years after its invention in United States, followed by baseball, and football around 1900. These innovations helped considerably in

broadening popular understandings of western sports. The YMCA schools also introduced the championship system. Although there were no physical education courses in the church school system, sports competitions were promoted at St John School with the first sport games being held in the 1890s. The competitions and championships between schools in the church system then developed into regional contests and eventually national games. The first national sports games were hosted by the YMCA in Shanghai and the 2<sup>nd</sup> were supported by the YMCA in Beijing. By 1915, when the Far East Sports Games were held in Shanghai, the early efforts by the YMCA had been recognized by the whole society. As Tai has noted, within years, “the YMCA, as a foreign religious group, developed its sports map and dominated the development of sports in the early modern period in China, a country rooted in a traditional, racial and cultural superiority complex. It is a miracle in the Chinese history.”(Tsai 2003: 12)

### The Rise of Tai Chi Organizations

Faced with the flourishing of western sports and the accompanying decline of Chinese martial arts and their continued exclusion from the education system martial arts practitioners began to think about the role of martial arts in the changing society and decided to modernize their own organization and practice. They began by imitating western sports institutions. The first martial arts school, the Jinwu Martial Arts Association, was founded by Huo Yuanjia (1869-1910) who became a legendary figure in the history of martial arts for his duels against Russian and Japanese martial artists. Although stories of these encounters have been told and re-told in fiction and action films, from Bruce Lee to Jackie Chan to Jet Li, few verifiable facts about him or the school remain. In a conscious evocation of western models when it was founded in 1909, it was named a Jinwu Callisthenics Association.

In 1911, the China Martial Arts Association was founded and in 1916, Xu Yusheng founded the Bei Ping Physical School, with instruction in Tai Chi as the centre of the curriculum with famous masters, such as Wu Jianquan, Yang Shaohou, Yang Chengfu, Sun Lutang, being invited to teach

there. (Xu 1927; Wu and Ma 1999) The Zhirou Martial Arts Association was the first Tai Chi organisation in the south of China and helped change the practices geographical spread.

The emergence of martial arts association and clubs marked a significant change heralding the introduction of the school-based, modern and western influenced pedagogy and the displacement of the old the clan-based teaching system.

The Zhirou Martial Arts Association was the most successful Tai Chi organisation at that time. Within several years, the number of enrolled students was in the thousands. The regulations and syllabus offer a good illustration of the attempt to rationalize the organization of Tai Chi at that time:

*“Tai Chi is the basic course of our association. Only those who are willing to register and pay our coaches can teach. This is to show the equality and avoid destroying the foundation of the association.*

*...*

*The students can be divided into 4 types: Type A studies 6 times a week. Type B only studies on Monday, Wednesday, Friday or Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday. Type C studies twice a week. All these 3 types rest on Sunday. Type D studies on Sunday every week.*

*The teaching time is 7am-9am, 4pm-6pm;*

*The tuition fee for the Type A is 10 dollars a month, but 8 dollars per month from the second year, and 6 dollars per month from the third year.*

*The tuition fee for Type B is 6 dollars a month, but 5 dollars per month from the second year, 4 dollars per month from the third year.*

*The tuition fee for Type C is 4 dollars a month, but 3 dollars from the fourth year.*

*...*

*After graduation, the association will test and offer a qualification; the qualified student's name will be advertised in the newspaper.”*

*“The course will be taught yearly, it takes 3 year s to graduate. The course content is as follows:*

*First year: Tai Chi, Fix posture push hand, Tai Chi Sword*

*Second year: Tai Chi long fist, moving push hand*

*Third year: Dalu, Free style combat, sword with company, Tai Chi spear” (Chen 1996: 235)*

The association also had series of regulations for off-campus teaching.

The Wudang Tai Chi Association, founded in 1926, had similar regulations:

*A: Tai Chi fist and sword research class:*

...

*4. System: (The class) divided as fist research group and sword research group. Each group consists of 6 persons. More than 6 persons will be organized as a new group....*

*5. Time: 4:30- 6:00 pm every day. Monday, Wednesday, Friday is for the first research group. Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday is for the sword group..*

*6. Courses: for the first group, the courses begin with basic movements then fix posture push hand then moving push hand, freestyle push hand and Dalu. Forth sword group, the courses begin with the basic single sword, then sword with company then free style sword with company, and freestyle fencing, finally the sword dance.*

*7. Records: Every group elects 2 persons to record all questions about fist and sword. After resolving the question, answers will be recorded and remain as a reference for the future.*

*8. Fee: 40 dollars for one semester one group. 70 dollars for registration for both groups*

*9. Period: 6 month is a semester.*

...

*11. Location: in the premises of the association. The participants may organized a group and choose their own address with the permission of the association. 30 dollars extra fee will be charged.*

*B Tai Chi fist and sword common class*

*2. Tuition fee for the Type A students (studies everyday) is 10 dollars a month, for the type*

*B (studies every other day) it is 6 dollars a month. (Ye 1974, 2004: 11)*

The regulations show that there were also classes for women classes and children. As we can see from these records, the organization and the pedagogy of the new schools was a marked departure from the relatively informal and personalized system prevailing in the 1850s when Yang Luchan learned Tai Chi in Chen village.

In contrast, the leading Tai Chi organizations that emerged in the 1920s, such as the Zhirou, and Wudang, employed a standardised system of instruction , a structured syllabus, fixed locations, different types of classes , and were based on monetary payment for teaching. They were profit-making institutions. Unlike their predecessors, the teachers at these schools were no longer amateur martial artists, peasants, army officials or private instructors, but professional, full time, instructors. We can easily make a list showing that almost all the famous Tai Chi masters from that time onwards, became professional coaches. Chen Fake left Chen village and went to Beijing in 1927. Wu Yuxiang's star student Hao Yueru began to teach in 1910s.(Gu 1986) The rationalization of martial arts organization, then, also brought with it the professionalization of instruction.

Another notable feature of the new system was the relatively high tuition fees charged. The average month wage for manual labourers in 1920 was 7-8 dollars. As the regulations quoted earlier show, tuition fees for the first year of study were set between 6 and 10 dollars a month. These figures suggest that the Tai Chi participants who flocked to the new schools were predominantly drawn from high-income families and educational elites.

The drive towards institutionalisation proceeded unevenly however, and Tai Chi associations and clubs grew up independently. There was no national or regional Tai Chi association, and no attempt to create one. There was no regional or national competition or championship system and no unified system of qualification. There was however attempts to codify the basic forms of Tai

Chi practice.

## The Invention of New Forms

Following the development of schools there were concerted efforts to reform the content of what was taught. A period of invention and adaptation began with modern forms of Tai Chi being developed through four basic processes; variation, combination, simplification, invention.

### **(a) Variation**

The introduction of variations in forms and styles is one of the natural processes in the development of Tai Chi and other martial arts. In the pre-modern era, the forms and styles practised by students of the same master might display slight differences. These variations proliferate as the population of student's increases, and in the 1920s student numbers studying Tai Chi increased rapidly.

After Yang Luchan and his friend Wu Yuxiang learned from the Chen family, they derived their own forms, later known as the Yang style and the Wu (Yuxiang) style. (Hao 1962; Gu 1982; Gu 1986; Gu 1987; Hao and Hao 1992; Wu 1995; Tang and Gu 1996; Gu 1997; Li 1998; Zhao 2000; Wu 2001) Yang Luchan's son Yang Banhou then went on to invent his own form, called Small Frame, and another son, Yang Jianhou, introduced another variation, Medium Frame. Jianhou's son, in turn, introduced a new Large Frame form. According to the Tai Chi historian Wu, Yang Luchan's star student, Zhang Xuezhen, practised another variant, Old Frame, which was introduced into the public domain in the 1930s. Yang Luchan's student Fu Ying and grand student Xiao Gongzhuo practised yet another Inner-palace form while Yang Luchan's son-in-law invented a 56-movement form.(Wu 1995; Wu 2001)

Variations also appeared in other major styles. Wu Yuxiang's student Hao introduced changes to

the original form he had learned which he began to teach from the 1900s onwards. Known at first as the Hao style, it was later renamed after Wu and became widely regarded as the orthodox Wu (Yuxiang) style, (Hao 1962; Gu 1987; Hao and Hao 1992; Wu 1995; Tang and Gu 1996; Gu 1997; Li 1998; Zhao 2000; Wu 2001) though some observers insisted on characterizing it (more accurately) as a branch of the Wu Yuxiang Style. (Li 1998)

### **(b) Combination**

Combination was a second important source of invention. The modernisation process in the countryside coupled with the final overthrow of the last imperial dynasty and the ensuing period of civil war destroyed the stability of agrarian society. Increasing mobility and mass displacement provided possibilities for martial artists from different areas to encounter each other and exchange their knowledge and skills. The result was new combinations of Tai Chi forms. This process can be divided into 3 broad categories: combinations of different Tai Chi forms, the combination between Tai Chi and other indigenous martial arts forms, and the combination between Tai Chi and foreign martial arts. (Frantzis 1998; Wu 2001)

The Wu (Jianquan) form is the best known example of the first type- the combination of Tai Chi forms. Yang Luchan's student, Quan You (1834-1902), learned from Yang Luchan's son Yang Banhou. He taught the forms he had learned from the Yang family to his own son, Wu Jianquan (1870-1942). In 1912, Wu Jianquan was invited to become the coach at the Beijing Sports Research Association to teach Yang Banhou's Small Frame form. He invented his own form during this period and set up his own school in 1933. (Wu 1995; Wu and Ma 1999; Wu 2001) According to Wu Jianquan's daughter, Wu Yinhua, he taught the Slow Frame form in public but practised a Quick frame form within his own family. (Wu and Ma 1999)

Less known instances combined Yang and Wu (Yuxiang) forms. Hao He's student, Wang Qihe (1889-1930), also invented his own version as did another of Hao's students, Liu Donghan. Both were based on combinations of Hao's form and Yang Chengfu's form. (Wu 1995; Wu 2001)

Within the second group, of Tai Chi forms combined with other indigenous martial arts forms, the Sun (Lutang) form is the best known. Sun Lutang (1861-1932) learned Tai Chi from Hao He in 1914. Since Sun was also a famous master in *Bagua* and *Xinyi*, he easily combined both with Tai Chi, to invent his own forms. The result became known as the Sun style. (Gu 1982; Gu 1986; Wu 1995; Tang and Gu 1996; Frantzis 1998; Wu 2001) A less celebrated example is Bagua Tai Chi, which as its name suggests, combined Tai Chi with the martial art disciplines of *Bagua*. This hybrid form was developed by Yang Luchan's son-in-law Xia Guoxun in collaboration with two *Bagua* masters, Chen Tinghua and Liu Dekuan. (Wu 1995; Wu 2001; Zhang 2001) Other combined styles include Chen Panling's invented form of the 1930s, the Fu forms developed by Fu Jien Sung Kuan, and the Ping forms of Guo Lienying. (Frantzis 1998) These forms enjoyed some success in Taiwan and western countries but were, little known by most Chinese martial artists.

Tai Chi masters also exchanged skills and knowledge with external practitioners leading to the incorporation of elements from *Shaolin* and other martial arts. Yang Luchan's grand student Li Ruidong, a famous martial arts master himself, for example, invented the Tai Chi Five Star form (Wu 1995; Wu 2001) Quan You's student, Chang Yuanting, invented his own distinctive form combining Tai Chi with *Shaolin*. (Fan 1994)

Interestingly, almost none of the new variations or combined forms, contained vigorous movements such as jumping and punching with strength (called *Fajin*). Most Tai Chi theorists in mainland China have attributed this deletion of complicated and high-skilled movements as a concession to older and weaker students whose main purpose in practising Tai Chi was to maintain and enhance their general health. Certainly, the health functions of Tai Chi have been emphasized much more since the beginning of the modernization process. (Gu 1986)

### **(c) Simplification**

Unlike the development of variations and new combinations, which occurred unevenly as a result of contacts or the desire of individual emerging practitioners to make a name for them,

simplification was a much more conscious process. The most successful simplification was made by Zhu Minyi, a student of Wu Jianquan who in 1931, combined simplified forms of Tai Chi with movements taken from callisthenics. As he explained in the preface to Wu Tunan's book *Tai Chi Broad Sword*:

*"The equipments I invented for Tai Chi push hand are well accepted by comrades. The year before last year, I returned home from the Europe. The life on the ship was tedious. I practised Tai Chi. I noted that the movements for Tai Chi were repeated and difficult. It was difficult to learn and easy to forget for beginners. Thus, I invented Tai Chi callisthenics. It has the same function as Tai Chi, but the movements are simple. It is easy to learn and difficult to forget."* (Wu 1933: 1)

His manual of Tai Chi callisthenics published in 1931, was praised by Tai Chi theorist Xue Zhiyi for capturing "the essences of Tai Chi" while at the same time, offering a way to effectively "...popularise Tai Chi...The simplest in the world lasted longest." (Zhu 1931: 1) In 1934, this style of Tai Chi was finally incorporated into the physical education course in primary schools.

#### **(d) Extension**

Extension as a process appears to be the opposite of simplification. Here, instead of old forms being deleted or simplified, they are repeated or have new movements added. According to oral accounts of Tai Chi history, there used to be 108 movements for the Tai Chi long fist form, a lucky number in Chinese tradition signifying perfection. In his book written for his students Lin Bingyao, noted that the long form had been called the secret form (in Chinese both words have the same pronunciation) and was kept within the Yang family. (Lin 1992). Even so, a number of efforts were made to re-construct this tradition. The most typical example was devised by Chen Weiming. In his book he explained that he learned a long form from his master Yang Chengfu that conformed to the normal pattern except for several movements. He then added push hand movements to the form, and repeated all the left-handed movements with other right-handed ones. Then the long forms had altogether 108 movements, Chen himself did not consider his efforts as invention: "I dare not to say I have some invention. I just based it on Tai Chi Long Fist taught by

Yang Chengfu and extended it. There are addition rather than deletion to the meaning of Tai Chi; and there are changes but no repetitions.” (Chen 1996: 142) Chen’s extension was not the only example. Another Tai Chi master of the 1930s, Li Jinling, also invented a variation of the long form based on the Yang style. (Wu 1995)

#### **(e) Other Inventions**

In addition, there were numerous other inventions in combat practices at this time. Xu Yushen introduced the single push hand (a push hand form with one arm, which in recent year has been taken for granted as the primary stage of push hand.) in his teaching in the Beiping Sports Research Association. Yang Chengfu developed the *Dalu* push hand (an advanced and sophisticated form), and Wu Yunzhuo invented a 12 movement form of combat. These innovations were all based a strong push towards a scientificised Tai Chi or on efforts to adapt it for more broadly based teaching. (Wu 1995)

Besides the forms mentioned above, “There are a lot of claims around purporting that this or that form of Tai Chi came from a lost ancient or secret lineage. Many of these types of claims for special history are dubious. They are generally advanced under the heading of lost lineages prior to Chen village , (such as from Chang San Feng or Wang Tsung Yueh, of family styles, and of secret styles coming from clandestine studies with the inheritors of regular lineages.” (Frantzis 1998: 304)

### **The Growth of Publications on Tai Chi**

Another important feature of the institutionalisation of Tai Chi was the rapid growth in publications and instruction manuals. These printed forms had three main impacts: they increased the popularity of Tai Chi, they destroyed the former dominance of the oral tradition in teaching, and they helped construct a public image for the practice.

The first published book on Tai Chi was Xu Yushen's (also named Xue Chonghou) *Illustrated Tai Chi Movements* in 1921. This 66 page volume was then re-published in 1926, 1929, 1931, and 1934. It was followed by a number of others codifying different major styles. Sun Fuquan's (also named Sun Lutang) *Studies on Tai Chi* in 1924, is now thought to be the first book on the so-called Sun style. Chen Weiming's *Tai Chi Sword (With Tai Chi Long Fist)* in 1928 was the first publication on Tai Chi weapons. The first publication to codify the so-called Wu (Jianquan) Style, and the first to explain Tai Chi in terms of modern western sciences such as mechanics and physiology was Xu Zhiyi's *Brief Introduction to Tai Chi*. Chen Xin's *Illustrated Tai Chi*, written in 1919 but only published in 1934 (renamed as the *Illustrated Chen Family Tai Chi*) is the first book on the Chen style while Du Yuwang's *Orthodox Tai Chi* in 1935 is generally considered to be the first book on the so-called Zhaobao Style .

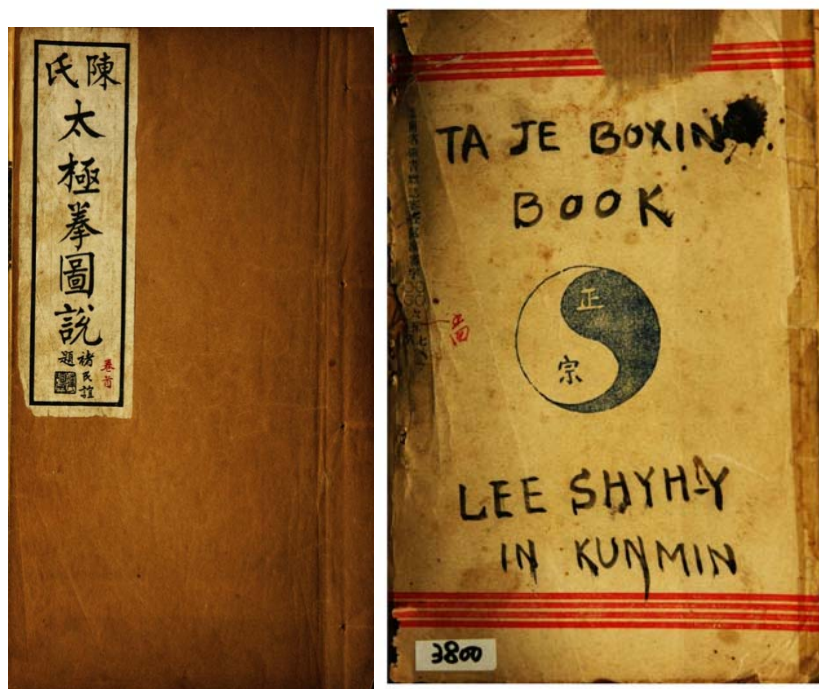
Altogether, between 1921 and 1937 twenty-one books on Tai Chi fist were published. Then, with the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese war, publication ceased, and only resumed again at the end of 1944 , when in the space of five years another 5 new books published. There were also 7 books on the newly invented simplified combination of Tai Chi and callisthenics (later were named National Callisthenics or Revival Callisthenics).

If we look at the total number of publications we find more devoted to Tai Chi than any other form of martial arts. There were for example, only twelve books on *Tantui*, six books on *Xinyi* , and four books on *Bagua*. There were also more than those dealing with western ball games and other sports. Volleyball for example only generated fourteen titles.

With very rare exceptions all the publications on Tai Chi were text books designed as manuals of instruction. Compared with the early manuscripts that had appeared in the period 1860-1880, they contained line illustrations. As a consequence, knowledge of forms that had earlier been secret and restricted became open to everyone, and could be publicly taught and purchased as commodities. The publication of photos of Tai Chi movements which had once been thought of as

secret combined with the establishment of formal organisations for the discipline shook the traditional clan-based pedagogy and comprehensively undermined its role as custodian of correct practice.

Although the institutionalisation of Tai Chi did not transform it into a mass sport marked by systematic organisation and constant competitions, it did succeed in reconstructing its pedagogy and transmission and assimilating it into a westernised conception of modernity



Some of the Earliest Tai Chi Publications

## Theorizing

Moves to institutionalize Tai Chi were accompanied by a concerted effort to rethink its conceptual bases. Previous attempts to theorise practice had been limited in several ways. Firstly, the theoretical writings of famous masters had had only limited circulation usually within a particular kinship network. Secondly, these manuscripts tended to offer only short sketches or notes rather than systematic theoretical discussion. It was only in the early twentieth century, with

the publication of the teaching manuals and textbooks just mentioned, that theoretical research and debate on Tai Chi began to gather momentum.

. The first wave of theorization focused on the origins of Tai Chi and was dominated by attempts to recover and publish classical manuscripts in an effort to construct a narrative of historical continuity and forge a collective identity based on mastery of a set of practices rather than membership of a kinship group. As mentioned earlier however, many of the sources were of dubious provenance and a number were very possibly forgeries or embellishments added at a later date. Consequently, it is more useful to talk about the construction of myths rather than the writing of history.

## **The Construction of Myths**

Up until the 1920s there was no clear account of the origins of Tai Chi. After that point however, this conspicuous gap was filled by a series of stories and anecdotes. These accounts can be classified into two major categories: those relating to the early Taoist masters, and those attributing the invention of Tai Chi to the originating families. The first was promoted in printed form in a book by Xu Yushen in 1921 while the second appeared in the publications by members of the Chen and Yang families.

### **Spiritual Visions**

The key figure in Xu Yushen's book is, the Taoist immortal, Xu Xuanping.

*“Tai Chi taught by Xu Xuanping in the Tang dynasty was called Thirty Seven because it contains 37 movements. ...it also called long fist. The essential theory includes: Eight Characters Song, On The Mind, Application of Entire Body, On 16 Joints, and Application Song. All these taught Song Yuanqiao.”* (Xu 1921: 7)

This source for this account is a manuscript called *The Origin and Development of Branches of Song Family Tai Chi*, held by Song Shuming, the secretary to the President of the China Republic, whom Xu Yushen had got to know in the early 1900s through Song's high skill with Tai Chi push hand movements.

Although Xu Xuanping appears in the official historical records neither these accounts nor the Taoist records mention him knowing any martial arts and there is no other corroborating evidence. The manuscript's veracity is also called into doubt by the plethora of unlikely facts and exaggerated claims. For instance, Xu Xuanping is not only supposed to have had a beard that reached his feet but was also able to run as fast as a horse. (Xu 1921) Contemporary historians have argued convincingly that these descriptions were forged by the holder of the manuscript Song Shuming, pointing out that the language employed diverges sharply from the language current when the accounts were supposed to have been written. (Gu 1982; Tang and Gu 1996) Moreover, Song's only supporting material for Xu as the inventor of Tai Chi are writings attributed to Xu that appear in the manuscript itself, but nowhere else. The only independent record of Xu's life appears in the *Details of the Poems of the Tang Dynasty* by Ji Yougong written in the Song Dynasty which makes no mention of any involvement in martial arts. (Gu 1982; Tang and Gu 1996)

Although Xu Yusheng's claims had been widely questioned by the 1930s, they still found supporters willing to reproduce them. In his book, *The General Introduction to the National Sport*, for example, Wu Tunan listed 42 movements of Xu Xuanping's Tai Chi, but since Xu's Tai Chi was thought to consist of only 37 movements he was obliged to explain that 5 movements had been added. Nor was he alone. Other books that accepted the argument included: Wang Xinwu's *Tai Chi Skill* (1927), Wu Tunan's *Scientificated Tai Chi* (1931), and Li Xiangwu's *Tai Chi* (1935). Xu Yusheng also claimed that other Taoism sages such as Li Daozi, Han Gongyue, and Yin Liheng might also be the inventors of Tai Chi (Xu, 1921). However, these claims never gained popularity

## Zhang Sanfeng

Among the various accounts attributing the invention of Tai Chi to Taoist sages however, the most popular was the story of Zhang Sanfeng. Once again, although Zhang is mentioned in the official historical records, the details of his life remain unclear. Xu Yushen's 1921 book provided two different version of Zhang's story. In one version, Zhang lived in the early *Yuan* dynasty and instructed both Yu Lianzhou and Son Yuanqiao whom we mentioned earlier, while in a second version he lived hundreds of years earlier. Xu even provides a linkage between Zhang and the Chen and Yang families. (Xu 1921)



Portrait of Zhang Sanfeng

Between 1412 and the early 1900s, about 100 historical documents contain mentions of Zhang. In some official accounts, he appears as a famous Taoist, skilled at *Fengshui* and fortune telling. A number of other sources record his mystical experiences. Besides the Song's manuscript, Xu's only other evidence for Zhang's martial arts knowledge comes from Wang Zhennan's (?-1669)

gravestone. In an article on the gravestone, by the famous historian Wang Zhongxi written in 1669, Zhang is mentioned as having lived in the *Song* dynasty and having invented a form of martial arts known as *Neijiaquan* (literally meaning the Internal Fist), which he learned in a dream. Given the scarcity of sources, it is obvious that Xu's narrative of Zhang is problematic. Even so, the story of Zhang's invention of Tai Chi enjoyed considerable popular currency, and in a self fulfilling movement, Xu's book itself became an important reference. Xu admitted his mistake after he met Chen Fake from the Chen family later in the 1920s but the story of Zhang continued to occupy a prominent place in the Tai Chi community's accounts of its origins. (Xu 1937, Tang 1937; Gu 1982; Tang and Gu 1996) In 1931, when Yang Chengfu published *Tai Chi Application*, for example, he added more details about Zhang's formative role, claiming that he invented Tai Chi Chua after observing a fight between a snake and a magpie basing the key movements on the snake's circular motion (Yang 1934) He further argued that Zhang saw a golden light falling on a mountain, and that the light changed into a snake and then into a spear and that behind the spear, there was a cave containing a book on *Tai Chi Spear*. (Yang 1934)

#### Ancestral Claims

The argument that the Chen family's ancestor Chen Bu was the inventor of Tai Chi first appeared in Chen Xin's book. In the preface he claims that, "In the Seventh Year of the Hongwu Emperor's reign, our ancestor (Chen) Bu, in his spare time after reading and farming, taught his offspring the movements of the *Yin* and *Yang*, Openness and Closure, Circulation and Wholeness, to improve their digestion. These movements were theoretically based on Tai Chi philosophy, so it was called Tai Chi"(Chen 1934, 1986: 2)

Since Chen Xin was the 16<sup>th</sup> descendent of Chen Bu, and himself a major theorist in the field, his argument appeared plausible. In 1932 however, Tang Hao visited the Chen village, and made a discovery that cast doubt on the claim. According to Tang, the gravestone of Chen Bu which was built in 1711 by his 10th descendent noted only that he had moved from Hongtong County in the early years of Hongwu Emperor's reign. There was no record of him inventing Tai Chi , which raised the suspicion that Chen Xin had invented the story. (Gu 1982; Tang and Gu 1996)

Chen Xin was not the only person to claim to know the origins of Tai Chi. The family members and students of the Yang family also provided their version of the inventor of Yang Style. In Xu's book, there is a record of how Yang learnt from the Chen Family and brought Tai Chi to Beijing. Chen Weiming's *Tai Chi Shu*, added more details of how Yang learnt Tai Chi secretly. The story was further embellished in 1931 in Yang Chengfu's *Tai Chi Application* which furnished anecdotes of how Yang Luchan had defeated famous martial artists and told the story of how, when Yang Luchan held a bird in his hand, the bird could not fly because of his magical powers acquired after practising Tai Chi. (Yang 1934) By the late 1940s, accounts of Yang Luchan had acquired more mythical elements telling how he once stepped on the snow without making any marks and how, when fishing, he had been attacked by villains and using only his back, without moving his body, had fought them and won. (Chen 1947)

#### Academic Research on the Origins of Tai Chi.

Academic research on the origins of Tai Chi begins in the mid 1930s with the publication of key works by Tang Hao and Xu Zhen.

Tang Hao (1897-1959) is generally considered to be the first genuine martial arts historian. Having himself studied in Japan and learnt several styles of martial arts he turned his attention to Tai Chi and published a series of major works including; *The Origin of Tai Chi*, *Wang Zhongyue's Tai Chi*, *On Wang Zhongyue*, and *Sketches of Xinjianzhai*. He combined field studies with critical textual analysis to interrogate popular accounts of the invention of Tai Chi and came to the conclusion that Tai Chi originated with Chen Wangting of the Chen family.

The materials he mobilised to support his argument included: (1) Chen Haisen's *Chen Family History* which describes Chen Wangting as the "Inventor of the Chen Family Fist, Spear and Sword." (2) Chen Xin's *Chen Family History* which carries a poem authored by Chen Wangting containing the line "Invent the martial arts at leisure" (3) Chen Sen's *Chen Family History*, in which Chen Changxin and Chen Genyun are described as "martial artists" who practised Tai Chi

handed down by their ancestors.. (4) The fact that Chen Village followed the conservative tradition of only practising martial arts learned from their ancestors. (Tang, 1937)

Tang's research was the most thorough and best documented at the time, and in 1949 was officially accepted as a correct account of Tai Chi's origins.

However, his evidence is still far from conclusive since the authors of the family histories he places so much weight on may well have had their own reasons for fabricating claims. Having set out to destroy the mythical legends about the invention of Tai Chi, his own argument arguably, simply substitutes an alternative version of the discipline's invention.



Portrait of Chen Wangting

Alongside Tang's research, Xu Zhen published his research in 1935 and 1937. His argument is altogether more radical and asserts that all claims that Tai Chi originated before the *Ming* dynasty are based either on forged sources or on totally unreliable evidence. Consequently, he dismisses Chen Wangting as the discipline's inventor. However, he had his own blind spots and as a student of the Wu Yuxiang Style overemphasised the role of the Wu Yuxiang family in the development of

### **Manufacturing Myths**

As we mentioned above, Wile and Frank's claim that the development of Tai Chi was linked to Taoism in later 19 century when the literati, led by the Wu/Li families began to participate, was based on forged documentation. (Wile 1996; Wile 1999; Frank 2003) Tai Chi was however reinterpreted along Taoism lines, a little later, in the early 20 century, spurred on by the spread of printed practice manuals and books. The upsurge of discussion on the origins of Tai Chi in the 1920s could be considered as a natural consequence of the literati's growing participation from the later 19 century onwards. As Frank pointed out, "With the important exception of the Chen family itself, all the main Tai Chi lineages claim Zhang Sanfeng, the elusive Taoist as the creator of Tai Chi." (Frank 2003: 272) Indeed, the Chen family remained isolated and relatively unknown as late as 1927, leaving the literati free to develop counter accounts of Tai Chi's lineage. The focus on the Taoist Zhang Sanfeng, which has been dismissed by the Communist historians Tang and Gu as a fraudulent invention, is more plausibly seen as the result of the literati's attempts to appropriate the rural martial arts of Chen village.

It is easy to understand how Tai Chi came to play a central role in the construction of a Chinese identity that laid claim to historical continuity but at the same time regarded itself as thoroughly modern. As Frank has argued in relation to Shanghai, "Tai Chi in the increasingly capitalized Shanghai of the 1920s reflects just such a moment of eruption: emerging class divisions between a wage earning working class and newly elites –a consumption –oriented middle class, and a capitalist, entrepreneurial upper class that is largely displaced in the power structure by foreigners. These relatively new, capital-oriented class divisions nurtured an atmosphere in which martial arts, Tai Chi in particular, could move from the realm of low art to an acceptable form of recreation and ultimately, to a master symbol of Chinese modernity." (Frank 2003: 272) . This nomination of Tai Chi as the master symbol of Chinese modernity is open to challenge however. In fact in the 1910s-20s, promoters of the martial arts including Tai Chi, were strongly criticised by leading figures in the New Culture Movement, such as Lu Xun, as culturally conservative. This movement

which grew out of the demonstration of May 4, 1919, protesting the terms of the settlement following World War I, marked the upsurge of Chinese nationalism, and provoked a re-evaluation of established Chinese cultural institutions and philosophies. .

While Benedict Anderson has denied that there is any clear division between the Eastern and western forms of nationalism, Duara observes that “the dominant historiography of modern China in the West has preferred to see nationalism in China as a purely modern phenomenon” (Duara 1995). Similarly, Mao Haijian has suggested that unlike western nationalism which developed in tandem with the consolidation of the national-state and national culture, the Han Chinese acquired a strong national consciousness quite early. (Mao 1995; Mao 1998) The problem is how the traditional exclusionism evolved into modern nationalism. Anthony D Smith’s concept of “ethno-symbolism” provides a better perspective to understand Tai Chi case. In his analysis ; “For ethno-symbolists, what gives nationalism its power are the myths, memories, traditions, and symbols of ethnic heritages and the ways in which a popular living past had been , and can be , rediscovered and reinterpreted by modern nationalist intelligentsias. It is from these elements of myth, memory, symbol and tradition that modern national identities are reconstituted in each generation, as the nation becomes more inclusive and as its members cope with new challenges. ” (Smith 1999: 9) The creation myths and stories of the early Tai Chi masters resonate strongly with what Montserrat Guibernau and John Hutchinson see as the motifs of by ethno symbolism: “National past, present and future” “the cultural components of ethnics” (Guibernau and Hutchinson 2004: 1) The creation myths of Tai Chi, helped construct historical links between the Republican era and the long span of Chinese history while simultaneously presenting Tai Chi as a scientific national art thereby legitimating the selective deployment of Chinese tradition in the modernisation process.

However, theories of ethno-symbolism fail to explain the lack of explicit appeals to ethnicity in Tai Chi creation myths. There is no emphasis on the uniqueness of the Han Chinese in these narratives and no foregrounding of conflict with the Manchu. On the contrary, the creation myths illustrate how ethnicity could be overcome and become invisible and how, by extension, Chinese

identity is based on shared culture rather than shared ethnicity. This account was supported by two strategies.

First, the lineages are presented as kinship systems. The main creation myths of Tai Chi, especially the Zhang Sanfeng legend, all focus on family like lineages. The printed version of the Zhang Sanfeng legend always began with a family tree in which Zhang Sanfeng sits at the top as the shared ancestor with different generations of masters and disciples listed below. Similarly, different styles of Tai Chi are imagined as different branches of the same basic family tree. Once established these lineages become ritualized through martial arts practices and spread, initially orally then via the publications. The Zhiyou Association mentioned earlier, for example, used the birthday of Zhang Sanfeng as the occasion for a major ceremony and anniversary for the association, designed to confirm the lines of descent from masters to pupils. These links were often more metaphorical than actual. The connections between Zhang Sanfeng and his disciples were fixed, even though there was a gap of hundreds of years. Once accepted, lines of descent rendered ethnicity irrelevant. When Quan You was accepted as the disciple of Yang Luchan for example, he was absorbed into the big family of Tai Chi regardless of his Manchu ethnicity.

Second, the problem of the Taoist Zhang Sanfeng being the carrier of Chineseness and Chinese intellectual tradition was solved by appealing to the symbolic geography of *Wudang* Mountain which is both the sacred mountain of Taoism and the other name for internal martial arts. Most researchers recognise Zhang Sanfeng as the key figure in Tai Chi myths, but most miss the fact that his story is always linked to this specific location. While Wile mistakenly saw the divisions between internal/external martial arts as a metaphor for the Han/Manchu division the internal/external dichotomy is linked to the division between *Wudang* and *Shaolin* martial arts. Although *Shaolin* martial arts were strongly linked with anti-Manchu rebellions their association with the low culture of the rural and urban uneducated poor precluded their mobilisation as officially sanctioned markers of Chineseness since as Joseph Levenson has pointed out, these identified national culture with the culture of the literati. (Levenson 1964) By introducing the symbolic geography of *Wudang* Mountain, the self-contained Tai Chi system could be integrated

into the internal/*Wudang* tradition and separated off from the *Shaolin*/external tradition. The introduction of *Wudang* also linked Tai Chi to Taoism which, with its similarity to Neo-Confucianism, was widely reinterpreted as a China's most pervasive intellectual tradition. This in turn, helped Tai Chi to transcend its regional roots. This move has been so successful that since the 1920s, *Wudang* has become a common prefix to descriptions of Tai Chi as a martial art.

Although originally, the creation myths of Tai Chi drew on a natural conviction of cultural superiority that sought no legitimating or defence outside of the culture itself, as Levenson has suggested, by the later 19th century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century we began to see this culturalism being rapidly displaced by nationalism. And as Duara has noted, the form and content of modern national identity is the product of a trade-off between historical group narratives and the discourse of modern nation-state system. (Duara 1995) It is therefore more useful to understand the creation myths of Tai Chi as a site of struggle between conflicting ideologies. Tai Chi was readily incorporated by modern nationalists into their attempts to construct so-called "national arts", but was, at the same time, subject to interpretive struggles between traditional ideologies and the discourses of modern science.

### **Competing Ideologies**

Anyone with even a little knowledge of ancient Chinese philosophy would immediately link Tai Chi with Taoism since the conception of *Qi*, the idea of the *Yin* and *Yang*, and even the name "Tai Chi" had long been discussed in Taoist philosophy. However, when we look at publications on Tai Chi from the 1920s onwards, we see Taoism competing with both Confucianism and new 'scientific' principles based on western biology, physics and psychology, as ideological frameworks for understanding and promoting Tai Chi. This competition did not however produce mutually exclusive interpretations however. Rather, there was a tendency towards convergence and hybridism. We can suggest three reasons for this.

Firstly, there had been a long tradition in the Chinese philosophy of different ideologies sharing common theoretical resources and borrowing conception from each other. Consequently, Confucianism and the Taoism have mostly co-existed rather than being binary opposites. Indeed, there had been efforts made to converge Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism by philosophers. Thus, it is not easy to distinguish between Confucian and Taoist influences.

Secondly, even though, the ancient philosophy appears to be in opposition to modern science some researchers have employed western science to explain metaphysical conceptions.

Thirdly, the co-existence of the competing ideologies did not mean that they operated at different levels. It would be a mistake to argue that while ancient philosophy worked at the ideological level modern science worked at the practical level. In several publications in the 1920s-30s, the complicated conception of *Yin* and *Yang* had been applied to very practical matters such as explaining the direction of the movements employed in Tai Chi. Conversely, modern science was drawn on to support ancient philosophical ideas.

### **Confucianism**

In the writings of the period Tai Chi was originally strongly linked to Neo-Confucianism with direct quotations from the Neo-Confucianist philosopher Zhou Dunyi. (Gu,1986: Gu 1996) In the first book explicating the Chen Style of Tai Chi, Chen Xin's *Illustrated Chen Family Tai Chi*, which written between 1909-1920 and published in 1934, Chen systematically linked each required movement with a Confucian ethical requirements thereby presenting the recommended bodily practices as a form of moral cultivation. Keeping the body straight, which is a fundamental requirement of Tai Chi, was presented as the embodiment of the Confucian stress on upright moral standards and social behaviour. As Chen noted in his classic article, *On the Body*, "Although the art of the fist is a slight skill, the great doctrine can be seen behind the small skills....The body should be straight, if the body keeps straight, you deal with everything righteously" By introducing a strong link to Confucianism, Chen successfully integrated individual bodily practices with social values. For him, "The Tao of the Heaven and the earth is the *Yin* and *Yang*,

the same as the human body.” (Chen 1934, 1986: 10)

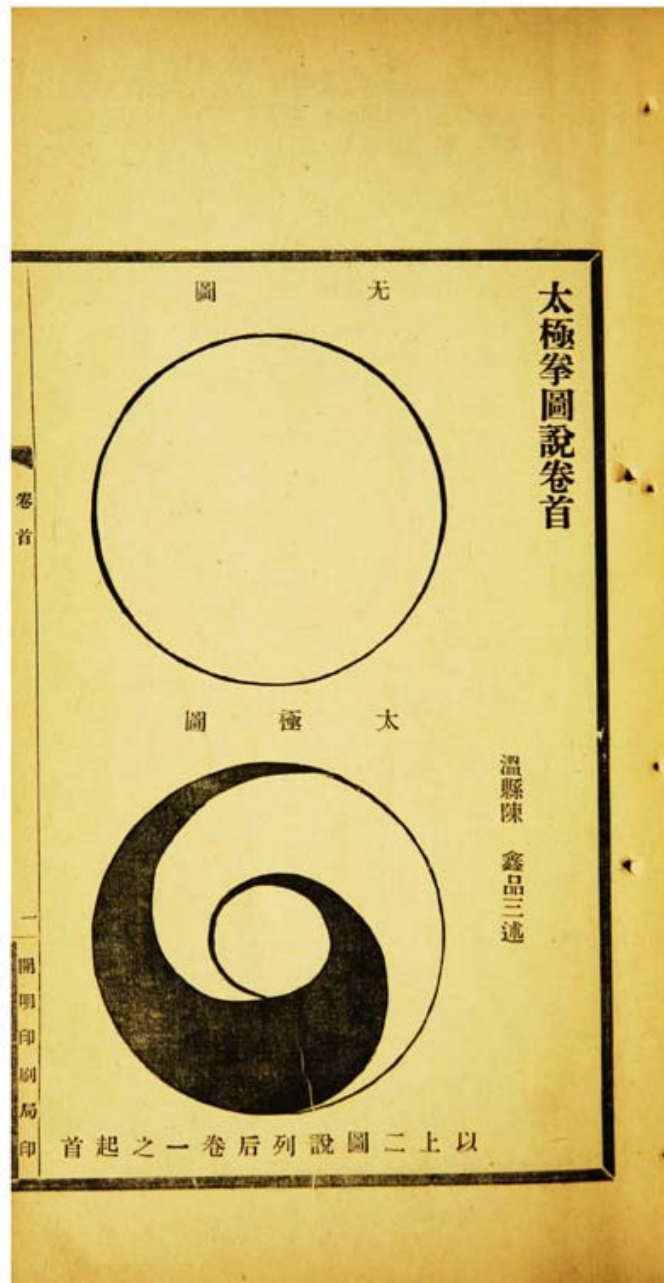
Another, more radical example, of this effort to link Tai Chi to Confucianism came from Xu Yushen (Xu 1921), who replaced the most common symbol of Tai Chi, The Two Fishes, associated with Taoism and representing the relation between *Yin* and *Yang* and the Emptiness/Solidarity of the pushing hand, with an alternative symbol, derived from the work of Zhou Lianxi, one of most famous Neo-Confucian scholars of the *Song* Dynasty. Xu deployed Zhou’s theory to explain that the major principles of Tai Chi are in accord with the ancient Confucian classic *The I-Ching* (a text that also plays an important role in Taoism)



Taoism Two Fishes Tai Chi Symbol



Zhou Lianxi Confucianism Tai Chi Symbol



Tai Chi Symbol Quoted in Chen Xin's Book

He was however swimming against the tide since Confucianism was becoming less and less central to a China in the process of modernisation. Even so, its legacy continued to command attention. Since it had been the dominant ideology of the empire, its influence could be easily found in ancient and early modern Tai Chi theory books. The Confucian influence on Tai Chi theory can be seen in three areas: ethics, aesthetics and practice principles.

Since Confucianism was the dominant ideology in pre-modern Chinese society, Confucian ethics was the major choice for martial artists in developing systems of etiquette –in interpersonal communication and the moral standards that should govern each practitioner’s personal behaviour.

In Xu’s book, he claims that Tai Chi is “based on the Principle of Tai Chi in Confucianism and absorbed the advantages of all other theories”. (Xu 1921: 2) He employs several strategies to promote this argument: linking the history of Tai Chi with Confucianism and famous Confucians; deleting references to Taoism when discussing ideas based on both Taoism and Confucianism; and using Confucianism to explain the core elements of Tai Chi Theory.

As we mentioned above, in his account of Tai Chi’s development, Xu drew heavily on the Song Family history as the basis of his narrative. The Song’s manuscript however displays an obvious pro-Taoism bias. Xu addresses this awkward fact by altering some facts to support his case. For instance, he assigns the Taoist ,Zhang Sanfeng, an import role in the development of Tai Chi, but refuses to consider Zhang as a Taoist arguing that he was in fact a Confucian which is why Tai Chi can be understood as an Internal Martial Arts to distinguish it from external ideologies. (Xu 1921)

Despite these efforts however, the Confucian interpretation of Tai Chi was not popular and never achieved the general currency of Taoist theories. According to the report published in volume 18 of the Shanxi National Arts Quarterly in 1935 for example, when the Tai Chi master Shen Weizhou was interviewed, and used the Golden Mean and other Confucian ideas most to explain Tai Chi, this was considered to be solely his own personal contribution. (Shanxi National Arts Journal, 1935)

### **Taoism**

In contrast, Taoism steadily gained popularity within theories of Tai Chi, not least because it was seen as closely connected to Chinese conceptions of bodily health. In his book, *Tai Chi Shu*, Chen Weiming, emphasises the coincidences between Tai Chi’s required disciplines of “slowness”, “softness” and “quietness” with Lao Zhi’s Taoist philosophy and reinforces this congruence by

editing together quotes from Lao Zhi and Tai Chi classical texts. For instance in his discussion of the relation between straight and bending movements in Tai Chi, he adds that “Lao Zhi said, yield and bend and be straight...hide the straight in the bend, gather and explore” He goes on to use one of Lao Zhi’s most famous quotations; “to treat 'not-exist' as constant is desiring to use it to view its mysteries. To treat 'exists' as constant desires to use it to view its manifestations.” to explain the principle behind the push hand movement , arguing that : “to lock is to view the mysteries, to catch the chance to fight is to view the manifestations.”(Chen 1996: 235)

He deploys another very well known quotation to explain why Tai Chi practitioners defeat their enemies without resorting to brutality:

“Higher worth is like water... In dwelling value the earth. In the heart-mind value depth. In social affairs value ability. In action value timing. In general, simply don't argue. Hence has no indiscretion” (Chen 1996: 235)

Chen’s writings later became one of most important references that later commentators drew on to demonstrate the strong connection between Tai Chi and the Taoism.

Du Yuanhua’s *Orthodox Tai Chi* is another influential example of the way Taoism was mobilized to emphasise Tai Chi’s utility as a bodily discipline that had beneficial effects in maintaining health and prolonging life. Du recounts how his “master told me, this martial art is the art to practice the body and the Qi, the base to live forever. Combat is a side effect.” “This martial art is famous in the world. The martial art is just used to practice the internal state of immortality to let the people know that this art can extend the life span.”(Du 1935: 1)

Du believed strongly that “Lao Zi is the origin of this martial art.”(Du 1935: P1) and endorsed the popular idea that Tai Chi was developed by the Taoist Zhang Sanfeng, but he went further arguing that Lao Zi himself invented Tai Chi. He uses Lao Zi’s term Huang Hu (confused' and 'indistinct) to describe the beginning state of the world as well the beginning state of Tai Chi. In

his conception the organization of the body mirrors the structure of the world. There are three parts to the world: up, middle, down; there are also three parts of the body: head, main body and legs. There are four season, there are four parts of the body: arms, main body, legs and feet. There are six harmonies in the world: up, down, east, west, north, south. There are six harmonies in the body: hands, feet, elbow, knees, thighs, and crotch. Du believed that the animating principle of Tai Chi is Tai Chi, the major principle of the universe, and that the practice of Tai Chi is actually the pursuit of the harmony between the universe and the human body. (Du 1935)

Du's work is an extreme example however. Most Tai Chi practitioners were not pious. They tended to draw on fragments of Taoism, such as *Qi* and *Dantian* rather than subscribing to Taoism in a more systematic way. At the same time, Taoism was mobilised strategically by some instructors to bolster claims that Tai Chi was superior to other martial arts in both theory and in historical lineage. Yang Chengfu's *Tai Chi Application* offers an example of this pragmatic deployment. It begins with the two fishes symbol, which had been so firmly attacked by Xu several years before and there are lots of mythical stories about Taoist inventors scattered throughout the book, but no systematic explication of Taoism. (Yang 1937) Similarly, when writing a preface to a Tai Chi hand book the martial arts activist, Zhang Zhijiang, thought it politic to begin with the sentence: "The origin of Wudang Tai Chi is Taoism"(Cai 1933: 6)

### **The Scientific Principle**

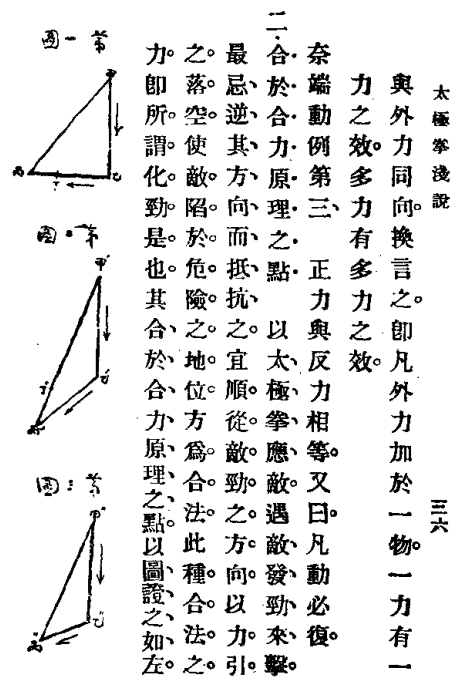
The Republican period saw increasing interest in western science as a vehicle for modernization. Tai Chi was no exception but this 'scientificisation' did not lead to disenchantment for two reasons. Firstly, scientific analysis using insights from physiology and mechanics was never part of the mainstream of research into Tai Chi and analysis of bodily movements was never popularly accepted. Secondly, there was no formal process of rationalisation in the case of Tai Chi as there had been with other martial arts such as Judo. On the contrary, the modern sciences of psychology, physiology and mechanics were employed to support selected pre-existing philosophical conceptions. As Xu Yusheng argued in his Confucian-oriented book, since Tai Chi is grounded in metaphysics, using "geometry and mechanics to explain it" would reduce its moral and spiritual

potency” (Xu 1921: 3)

It was only in 1927 that the first book to use modern science to analyse Tai Chi was published. Written by Xu Zhiyi it is both the first account of the Wu Style and the first to draw on biology, psychology and physics to explain Tai Chi. (Xu 1927)

In the chapter on the relation between Tai Chi and Biology, Xu by-passed the popular view that “raising the top” was a way of gathering the *Qi* and argued instead that it was beneficial for exercising the nerves in the head. Similarly, “lower the chest, raise the back” was presented as a way of exercising the muscles arguing that the reason “why callisthenics and the martial arts can build up bodies, is because they can improve the strength of the muscles” (Xu 1927: 24)

In the section of book dealing with the relation between Tai Chi and mechanics, Xu applies Isaac Newton’s theories to analyse the movements of either Tai Chi solo or the push hand explaining that while normal martial arts may hurt the enemy with their use of force, Tai Chi can knock down the enemy without injury. That is because, according to Newton’s 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Laws of motion, whereas in other martial arts the advancing force meets an equal and opposite resistance in Tai Chi, the force does not stop when it arrives at the enemy’s body. This conception misunderstands and distorts Newton and leads Xu to the absurd conclusion that whereas in normal martial arts, the exercise of force obeys Newton’s Laws, in Tai Chi it doesn’t. In another, more elaborate, effort to use Newton mechanics Xu deploys it to analyse the force and reaction to it employed in the push hand movement. In a series of diagrams, he explains that the basic technique used in Tai Chi is to follow the enemy’s force in order to construct a new resultant force rather than to resist it directly. Xu also used the conception of the centre of gravity to explain the frequently quoted Taoist term in Tai Chi: “gather the *Qi* in *Dantian*”. For Xu, to practice the mysterious *Qi*, is in fact is to lower the centre of gravity of the body.



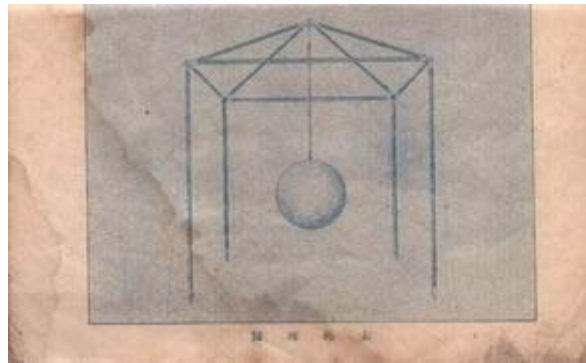
Resultant force diagram of Tai Chi

Although Xu's work attracted considerable praise, his idea of using a scientific approach to study Tai Chi did not exert a strong influence on the grass roots practice of Tai Chi among instructors and students. It did however provide support for the official conception of scientificised National Arts, which could also draw on other contemporary sources

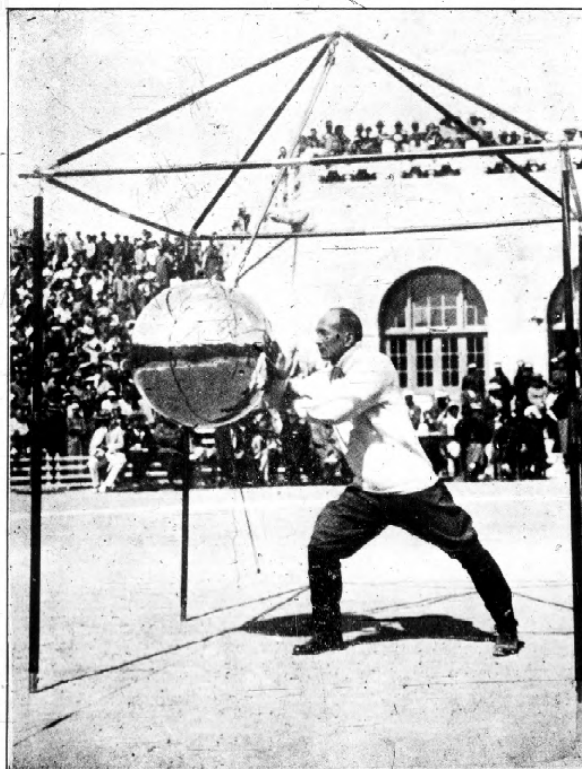
In 1936, Zhang Naiqi had published *The Scientificised Internal Martial Arts* in which he systematically applied scientific approaches to the so-called internal martial arts including Tai Chi. In contrast to Xu who incorporates some Taoist conceptions into his schema, Zhang is adamantly against them, arguing strongly for the scientificisation of the national arts and declaring that "anti-science will die, and should have been dead already." (Zhang 1936: 2)

Zhu Minyi's work and practice illustrates another way of using scientific approaches. As we mentioned earlier, he simplified Tai Chi and produced a new form of Tai Chi callisthenics based on callisthenics rules. He changed the circular movements of Tai Chi into linear and direct callisthenic movements. But his intervention did not stop there. Later, he tried to invent new

equipment and apparatuses for Tai Chi practices. As a well-trained western sports activist, he actively promoted the idea of the “scientificalisation of the martial arts” and was, at the same time, radical opposed to Chinese traditional medicine. In the preface he contributed to Xu Zhiyi’s book he explains that he “invented push hand equipment according to scientific principle based on the research of comrades. I did so based on my strong belief that the inventions in Tai Chi are easy in principle as well as effective in function. They are a good for the popularity of Tai Chi.” (Xu 1932: 13) In 1935, he invented a Tai Chi vehicle made up of brass connecting wheels and gears, which could be moved by using Tai Chi movements. According to a martial arts magazine’s report at the time, the invention was the subject of a documentary film which was to be shown soon. (Shanxi National Arts Journal, 1935) Although Zhu’s invention just used a hanging metal ball or sticks to simulate the push hand movement, the idea of using equipment in martial arts training in the same way as in western sports was revolutionary at the time. By pushing the ball or the sticks, a practitioner could practice the push hand movement by themselves.. As Zhu explained;, “Those equipments can help the practitioners to practice the push hand at home and understand the essence of Tai Chi eventually. No one can deny they are tools for the scientificalisation of Tai Chi.” (Zhu 1931: 12)



Zhu's Tai Chi Ball



全運會開幕時諸民先生表演太極推球之一

Zhu's Tai Chi Ball Present in the National Sports Games



Zhu's Tai Chi Sticks Presented in the National Sports Games

### Constructing the Health Benefits of Tai Chi

A number of scholars believe that since its invention, Tai Chi has been related to both ancient Chinese exercises such as *Daoyin* and *tuna*, and to Chinese Traditional Medicine. (Tang and Gu 1996) However these arguments are based on the analysis on Tai Chi's modern forms. There is simply not enough evidence to establish whether or not Tai Chi was linked to medical knowledge and practice in earlier periods. What is clear however is that as the role of martial arts in the social life declined, Tai Chi as a bodily discipline for sake of health rapidly gained ground.

Mention of the health benefits of Tai Chi appears as early as the discovery of the Salt Shop Manuscript in 1850s. One poem in the manuscript, called the *Thirteen Postures Song* contains the lines; "what is the meaning of (Tai Chi), it is for longevity and as young as the spring". (Tang and

Gu 1964, 1999)

In several version of the Salt Shop Manuscript, there are small characters behind the main ones declaring; “Original Notes: This, the words of Master Zhang Sanfeng of Wudang mountain, (this art), are for the heroes all over the world for longevity, not only for combat skills.” This addition has almost certainly been forged at a later date since the original author is most unlikely to have introduced his attribution with the words; “original notes”. At the same time, the life of the author of the Salt Shop Manuscript, Wang Zhongyue, remains mysterious and the year it was written is still the subject of debate.. Shen Jiazhen and Gu Liuxin argue that the *Thirteen Postures Song* was written by Yang Luchan’s student, Yao Hancheng after the 1850s which would place the idea of Tai Chi as an aid to health as well as a martial art, in second half of the 19th century. (Gu 1986)

Another fact that most researchers mention is that almost all the newly invented forms of Tai Chi deleted the most difficult movements such as jumping.(Wu 2001; Tang and Gu 1996) Today’s popular Yang style for example, invented by Yang Chengfu, contains no jumping movements at all but the form devised by his uncle Wang Jiaoyu’s student, does. Similarly, Wu Jiaquang’s form, a product of the 3rd generation of the Wu Family, which later becomes the standard Wu (Jianquan)’s style also has no jumping movements but they remained in the form devised by his grandfather’s student, Chang Yunjie. The Wu (Yuxiang) style form also has no jumping movements even though the ancient manual on which it is based contains descriptions of them. Chinese historians explain these variations as an adaptation to modern conditions and demands, arguing that “the new forms discard some movements so that, they are fitted to youth as well as to the weak for the purpose of health.” (Tang and Gu 1996: 13) Others however, argue that the difficult moves were discarded for less strategic reasons and that they disappeared because families gradually lost their ancestor’s skill or kept their combat skills secret.

It is assumed that the reputation of Tai Chi as a good means of keeping healthy spread in the major cities,(Gu 1982) but there is no firm empirical evidence to prove it. One of the most frequented quoted supports for this argument is a poem by Yang Chang, written in the 1920s,

which contains the line: “Who knew Tai Chi at first, the cure of Mr Tan (Yankui)’s disease promotes its spread.” (Gu 1982: 17) What is not in doubt however, is that once Tai Chi began to establish schools for training would-be practitioners in the early 20 century, the activity’s health benefits were often referred to in the advertisements written to attract students and in the regulations of the newly launched associations. For instance the regulations of the Zhirou Martial Arts Association explicitly mention that: “It takes 1 year to graduate for the purpose of curing disease and preserving the health. It takes 3 year to graduate for the martial arts applications. ” (Chen 1996: 231) In answering the Frequently Asked Question ‘What is The Effect of Tai Chi ?’ , the Association’s founder, Chen boasts of its curative properties: “I open the association 4 years ago. More than a thousand students attended the classes; they all come because of their weakness or disease. After one year, old disease are cured...pulmonary disease, haemoptysis, tummy bug, bite and sup difficulties, spermatorrhea, hemorrhoids, headache, qualm, anaesthesia, emphysema, flatulency, all kinds of disease, which I cannot figure them out. After Tai Chi lessons, all these are diseases cured. This is the effect that can be seen in our association. ” (Chen 1996: 202)

General publications on Tai Chi also often mentioned its health benefits. In the preface to Xu Zhiyi’s *Brief Introduction to Tai Chi*, Zhou Yichun confirmed these benefits by using the example of his friend: “I have lots of friends who practised this, I saw that all the movements are natural and soft. The mind follows the movements. Those who concentrated and practised for a long time keep their bodily health even though they are weak. No other activity can compare with Tai Chi in strengthening the mind, curing disease and prolonging life.” (Huang in Xu, 1927: 3) In another preface , Huang Zhonghui, stressed that “If the old, the weak, women and the children learn it, they can keep healthy and avoid disease.” (Huang in Xu, 1927: 5)

Tai Chi martial artists and researchers did not provide systematic quantitative and empirical evidence to support their claims, rather, as in the instances just quoted, they relied on resonant anecdotes and on references to medical theories, derived from both traditional Chinese and Western systems.

In the earliest attempt at scientificisation mentioned above, Xu Zhiyi argued that the major advantage of practising of Tai Chi is that it prolongs life and added a preface elaborating on this at the front of the combat section in his book. Xu listed several specific health gains such as: Tai Chi exercises both the body and mind, its movements are slow, and its posture is straight. It develops the body naturally, it can cure the diseases, and it can build up the mind and character. (Xu 1927)

In 1926, when Huang Chujiu published his illustrated book on the Wu style of Tai Chi, he named it *Guides for Health*, arguing that although: “The martial arts is one of the sports where health-preserving is of the essence...Only Tai Chi can really preserve health. The old, the weak, children can all practice it... The movements of Tai Chi are extremely soft. A single movement in it can lead to the movement of the whole body... it fits the biological principles best, develops the different parts of the body equally... it is said it can cure the disease and prolong life, that is true”. (Huang 1926: 5)

A student of Yang Chengfu, Dong Yingjie, promoted Tai Chi as a slimming aid arguing that since fatness is produced by the accumulation of fat in the body and water in the muscles: “to practice Tai Chi three times a day, one can remove the fat and the water with the rheumatism from the body.” (Dong 1980: 45) He went on to celebrate its beneficial effects on a range of other common health concerns: “If one thinks too much one will get high blood pressure and insomnia (Traditional Medicine calls this working too hard) ...blood goes with the mind. To think is to use the brain, thus the blood will remaining the head... to use the relaxed way to practice, gather the *Qi* into *Dantian*, the mind goes downwards., the blood remaining in the head will be spread to the arms and legs... to practice Tai Chi three times a day, insomnia, high blood pressure... will be cured.” (Dong 1980: 45)

By 1934, both in theory and in popular conceptions, the idea of Tai Chi as a bodily discipline for health had become firmly entrenched much to the consternation of those who still wished to present and promote it primarily as a martial art. In an article in the *United National Arts Journal*, titled, *Tai Chi and Military Training*, Tan Mengxian was moved to launch a concerted attack on

the popular stereotype: “The aim of it is to prolong life, build up the mind, even near to the Taoism... It is only fit for the experts and the man of letters.” “From Zhang Sanfeng, among every generation of Tai Chi masters some were famous as heroes, some defended their country with their martial arts...Mr Yang Chengfu, and Mr Wu Jiangquan is all famous for their combat skills. Thus Tai Chi will be of great value in the military.” (Tan 1934: 16) . The stridency of this attack, and its sense of fighting a rearguard action, is testimony to the extent to which Tai Chi’s role as a martial art with a central position in military training had been superseded by an emphasis on bodily cultivation and health.

## **The Scientificalisation of National Arts: from Popular to National**

As early as 1919, in the National Education Association, there were proposals to incorporate martial arts into the school curriculum. Three years later, in 1922, at the first annual conference of China Education Reform Association, Tai Chi martial artist Wu Zhiqin suggested that Chinese martial arts should be introduced as a Chinese form of callisthenics, and made into a required course, supported by new pedagogic books, and spread national wide. (Wu 1922) In 1924, at the third annual conference of the same Association, Shan Xi from the National Normal School proposed that primary schools should add a new national arts course from grade 3. This proposal was endorsed two years later at the 11<sup>th</sup> National Education Association which recommended that “School Education Should Pay Special Attention to National Arts” (Tsai 2003: 10)

Efforts to promote Chinese martial arts on a nationwide basis began in earnest in 1927, after the *Guomingdang* had defeated the warlord’s government and united the country under a single administration. Martial arts were incorporated into the ensuing nation building project at both the administrative and ideological levels. General Zhang Zhijiang, the distinguished martial arts activist and advocate asked the central government to formally define Chinese martial arts as “National Essential Martial Arts”, and briefly as national arts (*Guoshu* in Chinese). “For Zhang, the National Arts was not a single sports category but a whole national sports system with

barehanded and weapon combat competition as its core. From techniques to the management system, from theoretical construction to competitive rules and regulations, ...it ...attempted to represent the Chinese character, [and] was the main form of existence and development of national sport during the Republic of China” (Ma 2000: 383) Brownell has defined this era as “a martial arts revival period” in which the martial arts were again linked to nationalist revival, though in a very different way from the earlier millenarian rebellions. This difference exemplified the unique ways in which body techniques are utilized by a modern state. (Brownell 1995: 53)

In 1927, Zhang proposed the establishment of a national institution for the training and research in the Chinese martial arts: the National Arts Research Bureau. His proposal soon gained support from the leading figures in the *Guomindang* party and government such as Cai Yuanpei, Kong Xiangxi, and Yu Youren, and was officially approved by the Central government on March 15, 1927. The bureau renamed the Central National Arts Institute, was under the direction of the central government and financed by the government along with the Central Library, the Central National Medicine Institute and Central Research Academy. Altogether, its funds amounted to 5000 dollars.

Zhang divided the institute into two sections: *Shaolin* and *Wudang*. The former was to teach then so-called external martial arts such as *Shaolin* while the later focused on the internal martial arts, including Tai Chi. By modelling itself on kinship-based structures the institute directly reproduced traditional forms of training. Zhang’s experiment soon proved to be a disaster however since the sharp division between external and internal forms caused fighting between students belonging to the two sides. Consequently, from 1930 onwards, Zhang had to reorganize the institute as a modern school with a Teaching Section, and a General Section, and common student training classes. Tai Chi was one of the required courses and was taught by distinguished practitioners. Yang Chengfu was invited to teach the Yang style, Gong Rentian was invited to teach the Wu Style, and Cheng Ziming was invited to teach the Chen Style.

The promotion of the national arts was fully in accord with the nationalist ideology of the

*Guomindang* regime and the institute's efforts proved both productive and effective in training, organisation and research. In 1929, 1931 and 1933, it organized regional martial arts competitions in Hangzhou, Shanghai and Hong Kong and in 1929 and 1933 it organized national competitions. After 1933, the institute set up its own training school, the Central National Arts and Sports Teaching Bureau, later renamed the Central National Arts and Sports School. From 1936, the Central National Arts Institute began to promote martial arts overseas. In January 1936 it organized demonstrations in south Asia and Europe, and even participated in the Berlin Olympics giving a demonstration. The Education Ministry also promoted the martial arts with the National Sports Plan of 1932, introducing them into the school curriculum. (Gu 1987, Gu 1997)

Zhang's ambition was to develop a pyramid system national wide. According to his plan, under the leadership of the central national arts institute and local government, provincial institutes, county institutes, district institutes and even village institutes would be established across the country. His scheme met with some success and by 1933, there were 24 provincial institutes, and 300 county ones. These local institutes later became the basis for a network that promoted the martial arts, including Tai Chi. As Brownell has observed, it was largely through the efforts of the Central National Arts institute that "martial arts were categorized, bureaucratized, scheduled into mass displays, and stamped with an official ideology that explicitly linked them with Republican nationalism." (Brownell, 1995: 54)

The conception of scientificised national arts was at the ideological heart of the institute's activities. Consequently, it is not surprising that Tai Chi, especially in its modernised form as a version of callisthenics was so vigorously promoted. Chen even suggested that the national arts institute should establish Tai Chi callisthenics class, and provide free teachers and facilities such as Tai Chi balls and sticks. He recommended that schools should use Tai Chi callisthenics as morning exercises and exercises between classes and libraries should buy books on Tai Chi callisthenics and publish pamphlets. He saw these efforts as the best way to address the poor state of the nation's fitness and health, arguing that: "If the people of the whole nation can understand this Tai Chi callisthenics it could be benefit the national health, and the title of "sick man of the

east Asia” will soon be throw away.”(Chen 1934, 1986: 7) In 1935, the Education Ministry did plan to add Tai Chi callisthenics to primary school courses. As Andrew D Morris has argued, this initiative, which was seen as a way of “nationalizing a middle class, of imbuing it with a national consciousness, in order to define it vis-à-vis the colonial power, fundamentally altered and normalized on elite terms the most powerful forms of popular culture.” (Morris 2004: 225) For Morris, the “the mysticism of Tai Chi was replaced by the simple routine of Tai Chi callisthenics, its conflicting schools by one simple form and founder, its enigmatic terminology by easy-to-follow numbered orders, the tranquil hush of its ancient movements by a jaunty series of calls and counts” (Morris 2004: 227) To demonstrate the superior efficiency and modernity of his Tai Chi callisthenics Zhu employed metaphors of the workings of electric fans, steamboats, and automobiles Even the illustration in his teaching manual, showing a practitioner dressed in a sweater and looks more like a natty golf pro than a conveyor of China’s ancient martial heritage. (Morris 2004)



Westernised dress of Tai Chi \Practitioner in Zhu’s Tai Chi Calisthenics

The records that have survived illustrate how, under the impetus of the National Arts Institute, instruction in Tai Chi rapidly gained ground in the major provinces, often becoming the core of the curriculum, and sometimes the only discipline taught.

In Sichuan, the national arts institute established itself in 1929 with more than 13 branches across the province. It held provincial martial arts competition every year. Tai Chi was one of the major courses. In 1933, Jiangbei County set up its own national art institute, with Tai Chi a main course. The capital of Sichuan province also established its own institute, in 1937, which lasted until 1949, when the *Guomindang* regime ended. Again, Tai Chi was one of the courses. (Yu 1999)

The provincial national arts institute opened a branch in Shandong province, in 1930, under the leadership of a retired deputy president of the Central national arts institute, Li Jing Ling, who promoted Tai Chi very actively, including courses for non members. The institute obtained 5000 dollars in funding from the provincial government every month. Teachers were paid 60 dollars a month while the professional practitioners in the institute could get as much as 25 dollars. Tai Chi was taught by Yu Hua Xin and Li Yu Ling. In 1931, the Shangdong branch edited a Tai Chi textbook based on the Yang style which was soon renamed in popular parlance, the Institute style of Tai Chi. (Yu 1999)

In Henan province, Chen Pan Ling, the founder of Bagua Tai Chi organized the Henan Martial Arts Association in 1927 but after the central national arts institute was established he changed the association's name to the Henan national arts institute. The institute held five 8-month martial arts sessions. Each session had 80 government-funded students and 20 self-funded students. The institute closed during World War II, and re-open in 1946 only to close again in 1947. It supported a Tai Chi Research Association which funded the publication of Chen Panling's *Tai Chi Callisthenics* and the first book on the Chen Style Tai Chi, *Cheng Xin's Illustrated Chen Style Tai Chi*. (Yu 1999)

In Jiangsu province, the Jiangsu national institute invited the founder of the Sun style of Tai Chi, Sun Lu Tang to become the deputy president. The Shanxi national arts institute set up in 1937, invited Tai Chi master Zheng Ruping to teach Tai Chi and establish a Tai Chi Push Hand Research Association. Tai Chi was also the major course at the Hunan national art training institute set up in 1931, renamed the Hunan provincial national arts institute in 1936. In 1934, the newly established Hunan Popular national arts club offered separate classes in Tai Chi to women, children and officials free of charge. The Gansu province national arts institute which set up in 1933 was only taught Tai Chi, holding three classes, each lasting for three months, until the 1940s. A certificate would be awarded after graduation. Tai Chi was also taught at the Zhejiang national arts institute, and the Hankow national arts institute of Hubei province set up in 1927. (Yu 1999)

The Central National Arts Institute's activities ended with the Japanese invasion in 1937 and for the following eight years of war, official promotion of the martial arts almost totally ceased. However, as the front line advanced from its original position in the north of the country a number of Tai Chi masters migrated to the south and south west provinces offering another route through which Tai Chi could be spread nationwide. Some leading figures in Tai Chi/national arts promotion movement however, including Zhu Minyi, the inventor of Tai Chi Callisthenics, collaborated with the Japanese. After the end of World War II, the civil war between *Guomindang* and Communists broke out, further interrupting the systematic teaching of Tai Chi. (Yu 1999)



## **Chapter 4 The Revolution and Reform of Tai Chi**

### **In the Name of Revolution: Tai Chi in Mao's Era**

#### **From National Arts to Wushu**

As early as 1940, nine years before he proclaimed the establishment of a New China, Mao Zedong published his "On New Democracy" in which he stated that the Chinese communist project was "in the cultural sphere, to build a new Chinese national culture", "A national, scientific and mass culture--such is the anti-imperialist and anti-feudal culture of the people, the culture of New Democracy, the new culture of the Chinese nation." Mao explained:

*"A splendid old culture was created during the long period of Chinese feudal society. To study the development of this old culture, to reject its feudal dross and assimilate its democratic essence is a necessary condition for developing our new national culture and increasing our national self-confidence, but we should never swallow anything and everything uncritically. It is imperative to separate the fine old culture of the people which had a more or less democratic and revolutionary character from all the decadence of the old feudal ruling class. China's present new politics and new economy have developed out of her old politics and old economy, and her present new culture, too, has developed out of her old culture; therefore, we must respect our own history and must not lop it off. However, respect for history means giving it its proper place as a science, respecting its dialectical development, and not eulogizing the past at the expense of the present or praising every drop of feudal poison. As far as the masses and the young students are concerned, the essential thing is to guide them to look forward and not backward." (Mao 1961:381 )*

In October 1, 1949, as soon as Mao had proclaimed the official birth of the New China the construction of the new society and the new culture began. The development of sport, including the martial arts, was inevitable placed on the agenda. Within one month of the declaration of the new republic, the state council authorized the establishment of the All China Sports Association and on the 27 October, the Xinhua News Agency carried a report on the preparation meeting for the association: the National Sports of the New Democracy. In a speech, Feng Wenbin the chairman of the Communist Youth League reintroduced the idea of national arts, arguing that: “The national arts, boxing, wrestling, sword, riding, dance, should be promoted. The old and improper should be reformed and critically selected. They should be made scientific, good for health, production and national defence.” Feng’s speech was clearly a “sports version” of Mao’s new democratic culture. Specifically, he defined New Democratic physical culture as national, scientific and mass. (Kolatch 1972)

The reform of “old sports” and the construction of new versions became one of the major tasks for the new leaders of the major sports disciplines, including Tai Chi and the other martial arts. This process of reinvention took place in a political context where The National arts practised during the *Guomindang* regime were labelled as doubly oppressive, being both “Totally Westernised” and “Culturally Reactionary” (Cai 1982) Because of the enduring hatred of the corrupt rule of the *Guomindang* and the massive investment in creating a ‘new’ society, these criticism on the old National Arts gained considerable resonance among promoters of the new culture. As Zhang, one of the major figures in promoting martial arts during the *Guomindang* period noted, this hostility led to a rejection of the gains that had been made:

*The ruling class of past dynasties doubted even feared of the practices of martial art of the mass and the defence and resistance force generated from the martial arts which might threaten their counteractive and bloody rule, thus they despised or insulted the martial arts even oppressed or persecuted the martial arts. All these made valuable cultural heritage lack normal development and caused it to lose its role and effects in national sports. During the counteractive ruling of the*

*Guomindang, I exhausted myself in the promotion of the martial arts but little effort had been made, difficulties had been encountered, sudden attacked had been suffered. All the martial arts promoters showed great anger and hatred toward the Guomindang. (Zhang 1956: 1)*

As in other cultural spheres, the reconstruction of ‘new’ sports required the links between the *Guomindang* regime and historical heritages and traditions to be severed and new continuities between the New republic and Chinese cultural tradition to be established. This was accomplished by renaming the martial arts *Wushu*.

*Wushu*, which literally means the martial arts, was what these disciplines had been called in the 1910s before the consolidation of *Guomindang* rule. (Similarly, National Medicine was renamed Chinese Tradition Medicine and National Music, Chinese Folk Music) . At the same time, a new, more broadly based sense of ‘national’ (uncoupled from the Nationalist regime) was also introduced: “national form sport”. In 1953, the All China National Form Sports Demonstration and Competition, was hold in Tianjin in which martial arts, including Tai Chi, figured prominently. This was the first time the discipline had appeared in public since 1949. Although the organisers were careful to keep any references to national arts out of the competition’s title and rules it is believed that the regulations did in fact retain some elements of the national arts exams of 1928 and 1933 suggesting, as Ma has argued, that the change from the “old” to the “new” society did not break the continuity of national sports. (Ma 2000)

After the national form sport competition, Mao’s ideas on the new democratic culture were confirmed as the guiding line for the development of the national form arts:

*“The national form sport like other heritages of the national culture comes down from long term feudal society. Some part of it had been tainted with feudal colour...all these should be reformed. The denominationalism and the mythical and metaphysical colour of the martial arts circle, which were toxin and dirt, imposed on the unvarnished national form sports by the feudal ruling class...The clean-up of the national form sports is an important task in the reconstruction of*

*the old culture which can be effective with leadership, plan, emphasis and steps...Based on the two principles: "practical" and "visual continuity", the most popular and influential sports should be researched and try to avoid uncritical acceptance or impatience even asperity."*(Yuan 1953: 4)

The idea of *Wushu* was especially emphasised since it was seen to reach out "beyond the limitations of space, facilities, age and gender with simple movements and beautiful images, suited to popularisation among the mass." (Yuan 1953: 4) Some researchers have argued that as a result of this push to locate authentic national practices in periods before the Nationalist government, , some "pre-20<sup>th</sup> century sports activities such as shadow boxing have actually enjoyed a rejuvenation during the past 20 years despite their association with the oppressive society of the past" (Kolatch 1972: 88)

Although both the *Guomindang* and the Communists set out to modernize the martial arts and reconstruct them as national, scientific and popular sports, the new leaders' design for sports was arguably both more "westernised" and more radical. The Central National Arts Institute was never restored. At the administrative level, Chinese *Wushu* were considered as an organic part of sports rather than a self-contained, independent section of physical culture. *Wushu* was constructed as a form of competitive sports along the lines of western models with fixed standards, regulations and professional teams. In 1953, the National Sports Commission selected a group of athletes and organized a martial arts team in the Central Sports College. In 1956, *Wushu* was accepted as a demonstration item at sports events and in November 1956, it was given its own dedicated showcase with the *Wushu* Demonstration Games in Beijing.

As with other forms of cultural expression however, policy on *Wushu* veered between extremes reflecting the state of the ideological and power struggles being waged at the centre of the Communist Party apparatus. The *Wushu* Team was disbanded soon after the Demonstration Games and Zhong Shitong, the Chancellor of the Beijing Sports College, announced publicly, that "*Wushu* is feudal, superficial. It is activity of secret society members and burglars. We don't need

this course, even the ‘tail’ of it.” (Zhang 1957: 7)

This accusation was not entirely without substance. As the annual report of the national sports committee noted in 1955, one of the effects of the promotion of martial arts in the early 1950s had been to help revive secret societies, which many observers saw as a hiding place for counter-revolutionaries and a breeding ground for criminals. To address this threat the committee recommended that “The *Wushu* practice groups in the factories, enterprises and schools should be cleaned up. If there was no such group, there is no need to set up one right now.” “In the rural area, the *Wushu* groups must stop immediately. Their activities could be taken over by the Youth league and local government.” “The martial arts associations in civic society must stop their development. Some of them in the name of *Wushu*, actually teach burglary, robbery, rape, develop secret societies and hide counterrevolutionaries. They should be banned by the government. The criminals should be charged.” (Commission 1955: 3)

### ***Wushu*: Battlefield of Two Political Paths?**

In 1953, the new regime embarked on a programme of “Socialism Reform” In 1956 the Chinese Communist Party established a state-run command economy in agriculture, industry and commerce and tightened its control over all activities within civil society. Under the new system, all sports activities were to be directed by the Sports and Movements Committee of the PRC which had been established in 1954. All sports events were funded by the government and were required to propose a budget in advance. Initially the committee focused on promoting mass participation in sports and improving the national level of basic health, but they later moved to placing more emphasis on competitive sports.

Following the death of Stalin and the Hungarian Rising against Soviet occupation, the Chinese Communist Party launched a concerted campaign “Against Rightists”, Tai Chi and *Wushu* were inevitably caught up in the resulting ideological conflict.

In 1956 Cai Longyun and Wu Gaoming published separate articles in the *New Sports Magazine*. While Cai argued that combat should be an important part of *Wushu*, Wu emphasised its body building functions. The *Sports Articles Collections Magazine* then held a conference on the quality of *Wushu*. Tai Chi master, Wang Xinwu, published an article arguing that “*Wushu* is different from sports” a position that was interpreted as endorsing the *Guomindang*’s parallel systems of National Arts and Sports. His article was considered as an act of political defiance and was criticised for “provoking the contradiction between the *Wushu* circle and sports circle”. (Liu 1957: 11) Since Wang had also complained in his article that “the martial arts are not as emphasised as before” he was accused of denigrating the achievements of the new society. As one of his fiercest critics angrily put it; “actually this is libel that the new society and communist party places less emphasis on the martial arts.” (Chen 1957: 21) concluding that Wang’s view had introduced “a feudal and anti-scientific thought into the martial arts” and adding that “the struggle between it and the new scientific and serve-the-people *Wushu* movement is the struggle of two different paths.” (Chen 1957: 21)

In 1957, the debate over *Wushu* ended with Zhang Feigou’s highly political article “Two Paths of the *Wushu*” in which he argued that:

“There is a debate, in the name of *Wushu*, in which anti-communist, anti-people, and anti-socialism positions conspire. It calls black white, confounds right and wrong, slanders and provokes, and furiously attacks. Those who speak ...in fact have ulterior motives, try to catch fishes in troubled waters, build up their own influence, and fulfil their own ambition, clear the way for the bourgeoisie restoration. In short, they want to rebel. This struggle sees the rightists and others making use of *Wushu* to do evil and provoke. It is acute class struggle.” “We should fight back firmly, break down them totally. Otherwise it will be harmful for the people as well as the *Wushu*.” (Zhang 1957: 17)

As this instance suggests, the debate on the combat and health functions of *Wushu* was widely characterised as a struggle between bourgeois and proletarian conceptions. It suited the

administrative leaders of the sports establishment to promote a reductionist and simplified binary view of the debate since the combat function of martial arts could be plausibly presented as bourgeois and associated with the Nationalist promotion of National Arts, while the body-building and health-maintaining benefits could be seen as serving the proletariat, and based on a newly scientific and revolutionary conception of *Wushu*. This dichotomous presentation had major practical consequences in that it focused attention on the health function of *Wushu* and led to the relative neglect of combat skills. This did not however abolish the competitive aspects of *Wushu*. On the contrary, they thrived as demonstrations of bodily competence and well-being.

### ***Wushu* as Competitive Sport**

In 1957, the National Sports Commission accepted martial arts as competition items in sports games. Later that year, in a competition in Beijing, a marking system was introduced. The same year, courses in martial arts were introduced in university sports departments and one year later, dedicated *Wushu* departments were established in the sports universities in Beijing and Shanghai.

In 1958, the *Wushu* Competition Regulations were authorized and in the first national sports games, martial arts were accepted as both competition and demonstration items. In September 1958, the National *Wushu* Demonstration and Comparison was held. National and local *Wushu* associations were established and in 1961, the new primary school syllabus required that pupils should have 6 hours instruction in martial arts each term, and high school students at least 8 hours. That same year the first national standard *Wushu* textbook for undergraduates was published followed two years later by the first post graduate course in *Wushu* established at the Beijing Sports College. In 1965, in the second national sports games, *Wushu* was included in the list of admissible disciplines finally marking its acceptance as one of the approved competitive sports.

## The Standardisation of Tai Chi

In 1954, the national sports committee convened a gathering of Tai Chi masters to discuss ways of standardising Tai Chi. Under the auspices of the National Wushu Administration, practitioners, led by Li Tianji, devised a new form: the Twenty-four Movements Simplified Tai Chi, based on the popular Yang Style. From the original Thirty-four postures, Twenty were chosen; and from eighty-one movements twenty-four were selected. Difficult and repetitive movements were deleted. It was claimed that the result was much easier to learn and better adapted to mass use. Whereas it took 15-20 minutes to perform the original Yang Style Tai Chi it only took 5-8 minutes to complete the simplified one.



The President of China and No 2 Party Leader Liu Shaoqi Practised Tai Chi

The new simplified version was taken up enthusiastically by high ranking Communist leaders, attracted by its claimed health benefits and the relative ease with which it could be learned. It was even incorporated into the armoury of 'soft power' deployed in diplomacy. In 1957, when Premier Zhou Enlai, and Vice Premier He Long paid a visit to Vietnam, the health benefits of Tai Chi were promoted to the Vietnamese leader Ho Chi Min, and Tai Chi master Gu Liuxin was chosen to teach the simplified version in Vietnam. In 1959, the Japanese Liberal Democrat leader visited China, and Zhou once again took the opportunity to introduce Tai Chi. The prime inventor of the simplified version, Li Tianji, was dispatched to Japan to teach it. Gu was later invited to the home of the leaders of the Central government to offer a class in simplified Tai Chi to the wives of Vice premier He Long, Premier Zhou Enlai and Mao Jiangqin, all of whom were high rank leaders in the government in their own right. At the same time, Tai Chi master Li Jinwu was hired to teach the simplified version in the sanatorium set aside for central government officials. (Zhou 2003)

This official endorsement gave added impetus to the National Sports Committee's efforts to promote the simplified version on a national wide basis. The national committee organised -instruction sessions for instructors in Beijing and after hundreds had been trained, they used the local administrative power to promote Tai Chi locally. Tai Chi master, Li Jinwu, was commissioned to produce a teaching documentary, and brochures and an instructional wall map were published. Free tutorial stations were set up in parks and communities. As a result of these concerted efforts at national promotion, the simplified version "stepped into the daily life of the common people, and in a real sense fulfilled its health function." (Yu 2002: 78) Compared to the Tai Chi Callisthenics invented by Zhu Minyi in the 1930s, the twenty-four movements simplified Tai Chi developed in the Shandong National Arts Institute in the 1940s, together with other simplified forms taught by various masters, was much more successful in gaining wide acceptance. Indeed the process of simplification can be seen as one of key moments in Tai Chi's modernisation. The fact that it was simple to learn and easy to remember helped to ensure that it was widely distributed and taken up. Its popularity helped it survive the dislocations set in motion by the policies of the 'Great Leap Forward' and by the mass famine that followed. The memoirs produced by Tai Chi master Li Deyin (Wang 2003), by Ou Rongju (Peyrefitte 1995; Cheng 2004),

and by the computer scientist Wang Xuan (Li, Sheng et al. 2003) show that during the three years of famine from 1959-1961, the twenty-four movement simplified version of Tai Chi became the main and sometimes the only content of physical education course.



A Chinese family goes through its daily exercises.

### **Tai Chi Practice in China in 1960s**

The success of the twenty-four movement version encouraged further innovations and it was soon followed by a more complicated forty-eight movement form, then an eighty-eight movement form and a thirty-two movement Tai Chi Sword form. The technique standard and regulation on the push hand was also confirmed. In 1958, regulations for the *Wushu* Competition were discussed and Yang Chengfu's form was established as the standard for awarding marks. In 1961, these forms were included in the standard *Wushu* textbook issued to the sports colleges. One year later, all these forms were compiled into an independent book *Tai Chi Movement*. Its publication

indicated that the new reformed standardised Tai Chi forms had been finally confirmed. ( Zhou 2003)

The standardisation of Tai Chi expanded beyond the officially endorsed forms and the years from 1957 onwards saw the publication of a series of book codifying various traditional styles. They included; the *Chen Style Tai Chi* by Shen Jianzhen and Gu Liuxin, the *Yang Style Tai Chi* by Fu Zhongwen, Zhou Yuanlong and Gu Liuxin published in 1963, *Wu Style Tai Chi* by Xu Zhiyi, *Wu Style Tai Chi* by Hao Shuru, Gu Liuxin published in 1961 and the *Sun Style Tai Chi* by Sun Jianyun published in 1957. These remodelled traditional forms came to be known as the five styles and in 1961, the People's Press proposed the publication of a comprehensive book that would contain them all.

In selecting who would write the books presenting the five styles particular emphasis was placed on authors who would “follow the traditional and typical styles, the yang style used the inventor Yang Chengfu's posture as the standard, the Chen style used Chen Fake as the standard, the Wu style used Wu Jianquan as the standard, the Wu style used Hao Shaoru as the standard, the Sun style used Sun Jianyu as the standard.” (Tang and Gu 1964, 1996). Niu Chunming, a famous Tai Chi master of the Yang style and a student of Yang Chengfu provide his own book draft for the edition, but its deviations from Yang Chengfu's postures led to its cancellation. In the end the postures advocated by Yang's nephew, Fu Zhongwen were accepted as the basis for the style. By standardising traditional form and employing the old masters' postures as the standard a bridge was established between present and past, offering an account of historical continuity that by-passed the Nationalist era and enabled the Communist regime to claim that it was representing and advancing the ‘spirit of the people’ and the distinctive essence of Chinese culture.

The fact that these officially endorsed publications employed the term “style” to definite the varieties of Tai Chi for the first time, was also the product of the standardisation and modernisation process. It cancelled out previous descriptors such as “Family” or “Clan” which were considered as feudal hang-overs. Prior to this approaches to different styles had been

characterised by two main tendencies. Firstly, ignorance and antagonism to other styles had enabled practitioners to bolster their claims to be practising the ‘original’ and ‘only true’ form. Secondly, differences in form were defined on the basis of their historical lineages and linkages..In the first major work on Tai Chi in the modern era for example, Xu presents a series of anecdotes about the early Tai Chi masters which are designed both to cement historical continuities and present diversities of form in terms of lineal relations.(Xu 1921) After the publication of the five styles series, codifying the Chen, Yang, Wu (Jianquan), Wu (Yuxiang) and Sun forms, all other variations were no longer considered as independent styles but as branches of the five major forms. The introduction of the concept of “style” rendered the old kinship based differences between Tai Chi forms invalid and constructed a new, more inclusive, continuity between the emerging society and classical tradition.

### **The Historical Dialectic Narrative of Tai Chi’s Invention**

The standardisation of the forms of Tai Chi, both official and traditional, was accompanied by a concerted move towards theoretical reconstruction employing the central Marxist principle of the historical dialectic, with the aim of producing a unified and standard common theory. This effort began by re-reading the existing legends surrounding the inventors of Tai Chi with a view to purging them of their undesirable ideological elements and identifying the essential practices that could be carried forward into the present. The two quotes that follow illustrate the argument:

*“Tai Chi is a great martial art invented and developed in the life practices by our ancestors... because of the historical limitations, there is lots of dross in the theory, we should combine them with our new understanding in our own practices to test them, delete the dross and absorb the essence”*(Shen and Gu 1964: 6)

*“Since the early stage of Tai Chi developed within feudal society, they were inevitable veiled by feudal dirt. In feudal society, those who came from civil society and were welcomed by the masses,*

*were painted in mysterious colours by the intellectuals of the ruling class. With the myth of invention by immortal, Buda, sages, they had been mystified to serve the aim of anaesthetization of the masses and consolidation of their rule.” (Tang and Gu 1964, 1996: 8)*

The first step in this process of re-writing the narrative of Tai Chi's origins was to discredit claims that it was invented by Taoists. Critics took up the argument first advanced by historians in the 1930s and highlighted inconsistencies in periodicity. “There were arguments that Tai Chi was invented in the Later Yuan dynasty Early Ming Dynasty even Tang dynasty. The historical documents show all these accounts are drawing wrong conclusions by false analogy.” (Tang and Gu 1964, 1996: 8). It is a “lie that Tai Chi was invented by Taoist Zhang Sanfeng. After the criticism of Tan Hao, the masses raised their political understanding, and no one felt that it was God's invention.” (Tang and Gu 1964, 1996: 8) Having severed the connection between Tai Chi and “feudal” thinking, represented in its most forceful form by Taoism, however, communist historians needed to construct a version of its invention that emphasised both the historical continuity between the new government and 'authentic' tradition and obeyed the key Marxist tenet that all inventions should contribute to the well-being of the masses, the working people.

Following Tang's earlier research (Tang 1937), Gu confirmed that Chen Wangting of Chen village was the inventor of Tai Chi. But there was a problem. Chen Wangting was a landlord, a member of the ruling class of the time. Honouring him as the inventor of Tai Chi was against orthodox Marxism doctrines. To solve this problem, Gu searched the official history of the *Ming* dynasty and located records indicating that Chen had been a military commander who fought against the Manchu invasion, though as we shall see presently, this revision was not without its problems.

Gu used these new materials in his publications in the 1960s to construct a new image of Chen. His efforts were in vain however when it was pointed out that Chen Wangting was a general designation referring to one born in Chen village not an individual name. Even though critics drew attention to this mistake in the 1960s (Zhao 1964), the respect that Gu enjoyed on account of his

administrative authority and his historical knowledge (Hong 1964) ensured that his version of Chen Wangting's life story was accepted as the official account until the 1980s when he finally had to admit that he was wrong. (Gu, 1982)

To ensure that his account was accepted however, Gu needed not only to purge Chen Wangting of the taint of landlordism, he also needed to demonstrate that his invention originally come from the masses and the working people. In pursuit of this aim, Gu compared the names of Tai Chi movements which he believed had spread directly from Chen Wangting with the earliest remaining documents of the martial arts: Qi Jiguan's *Ji Xiao Xin Shu*. He argued that Chen had been influenced by Qi's book and since Qi was famous for having absorbed the civic martial arts of the time, a bridge between Chen and the working people's practices in martial arts had been built. Gu also paid careful attention to the Chen family's catalogue of their martial arts, which he believed to have originated directly from Chen Wangting in which "*Shaolin*" had been mentioned together with a martial art called "Hongquan" (literally Red Fist or Red Boxing). Gu used this reference to argue that Chen's invention was related to the martial arts practices supported by the *Shaolin* temple in the *Ming* dynasty and was therefore derived from the mass of working people rather than from the ruling class or from Taoism immortals or celestial inspiration. (Tang and Gu 1964, 1996) The appearance of the mysterious Salt Shop Manuscript in which the term Tai Chi was used to refer Tai Chi was also mobilised to bolster the claim that the practice originated with the masses.

Gu concluded that Chen Wangting combined martial arts with *Daoyin* (an ancient form of Callisthenics) and *Tuna* (ancient breath-controlling practices) to produce the spiral movements which accord with theories of Traditional Medicine together with; the push hand; and the "adhere" techniques of using the spear. (Tang and Gu 1964, 1996) He went on to outline Tai Chi's subsequent development showing how the emphasis had passed successively from martial arts to sports games and competition to health and medical benefits. (Tang and Gu 1964, 1996) This account linked the new official forms, such as the twenty-four movements, forty-eight movements and eighty-eight movements, directly to Chen Wangting's original invention and presented the

standardisation carried out by the Communist Sports Committee's as the logical and natural outcome of a long historical process. This simultaneously confirmed the validity and historical continuity of the new government's efforts and ensured that they fitted snugly into the framework provided by Marxist dialectics. When Gu edited the completed book of the five styles of Tai Chi, he ensured that his account went uncontested by deleting Sheng Jiazhen's article arguing that the characters of the Chen Style had been invented by Zhang Sanfeng. Liu Chunming's insistence on Zhang Sanfeng's role as a key originator was also a major reason why his book on the Yang style had been cancelled.

Even though, Gu's work was accorded official status as the 'correct' view of Tai Chi's origins, it was not without its critics. His decision to append a clan linkage chart of the Chen family in his edition of the approved book on the Chen Style led to accusations that his approach lacked class analysis, and unconsciously promoted the Clan system covering class contradictions and violating the principle of dialectics that ought to govern all historical researches in the new society.

In his book *Research on Tai Chi* published in 1964 Gu's narrative of the Chen family history mentions that Chen Wangting was involved in suppressing an uprising of peasants. His account was strongly criticised for its lack of critical analysis of Chen's landlord class stand and his hatred toward the rebelling peasants. His recounting of Chen Zhongsheng's skill with of the spear in combat during the Taiping Rebellion was also roundly criticised. In response to his critics, on 15 December 1964, Gu had to write to the People's Sports Press to confess his political mistakes and admit that his mastery of the case against feudalism was unduly superficial. He also had to promise to engage in self-criticism and undertake to analyse feudal ruling class from a class standpoint in all later editions of his books.

### **Construction of a Common Theory of Tai Chi**

Gu's revised account of the invention of Tai Chi moved some way towards placing the practice

within a Marxist world-view but it was not enough in itself and in 1964 a new theoretical debate gathered momentum.

Since 1958, when Gu was invited to edit the completed book of the five styles he had been struggling to find a unified theory that united them. In 1961, introducing an edition of the completed book he emphasized that he considered correcting errors in accounts of Tai Chi's invention and developing a common theory to be the major principles underpinning the project. (Tang and Gu 1964, 1996) Gu's proposal for a common theory did not cause much disagreement except for his conception of *Qi* and the *Chansijin* (literally translated as silk steeling energy), and referring to the spiral and circular movements in Tai Chi. Although some western researchers have argued that the communists abandoned research on *Qi* (Sutton, 1993), this is an overly reductionist view and ignores the fact that a number of communist scholars, including Gu, believed strongly in the conception of *Qi*.

Gu subscribed to the *Jinluo* theory derived from Chinese traditional medicine and acupuncture which imagined the body as a network of main and subsidiary channels through which *Qi* or vital energy flowed. In 1958, he even conducted some empirical experiments on Tai Chi's effects on the blood and *Qi*. Since the theory of *Jinluo* could be traced back to ancient China, Gu argued that "Even though the historical documents supporting Chen Wangting's invention of Tai Chi did not mention Jinluo, the fact that Tai Chi combined the theory was obvious." and that most of the ancient Tai Chi masters had applied it (Tang and Gu 1964, 1996: 76) He believed that neglecting *Qi* was neglecting the link back to Traditional Medicine theory. To cut off this connection, was to deny Tai Chi's historical continuity.

Gu's view did not go unopposed however. One of his most stringent critics was Xu Zhiyi, famous for his scientific explanation of Tai Chi since 1920s, who considered *Qi* as movements of the nerves, observing "the ancient terms using the heart to refer to the mind, and Qi to refer to the nerves, are not in accord with modern sciences." (Xu 1964: 8) Xu's theory however, was too radically opposed to traditional teaching and to militantly pro modern science so that Gu's

common theory, which included the concept of *Qi* , easily gained the general acceptance.

The acceptance of the idea of *Chansijin* on the other hand, was not as easily accomplished and was the focus of considerable discussion and argument. The debate began with Zhiyi's work on *Chansijin* on June 1<sup>st</sup> 1964. Xu was the author of the first Wu style and had been applying western science to explain Tai Chi since 1927. He believed that *Chansijin* was unique to the Chen Style and that the other simplified styles lacked such movements (Xu, 1964). In response, Luo Jihong published an article on 24<sup>th</sup> July 1964, which, without directly using the term, claimed that *Chansijin* was present in the Yang style, and in the Wu (Jianquan) style and Wu (Yuxiang) styles. He was backed by Zhao Renqing who published a supporting article on 23<sup>th</sup> September and later by Gu who argued that “ *Chansijin* is the scientific principle discovered in sports movements. My understanding is that it extremely advanced, extremely delicate, that it is a unique Chinese way of movement.” When the recognized Tai Chi master, Li Jinwu , intervened in the debate to argue that while Tai Chi did activate *Chansijin* it was missing from the simplified forms, Gu produced a robust reply condemning Li for “overemphasising the inventor of simplified Tai Chi's personal importance, [and ] totally forgetting the party and government's efforts in the promotion of Tai Chi” adding that “Mr. Li states that *Chansijin* is difficult and complicated, this is to scare the weak and the old.” (Tang and Gu 1964, 1996: 7) For Gu, the presence of *Chansijin* was a key feature separating the simplified Tai Chi of the communist party from Tai Chi Callisthenics devised by Zhu Minyi for the *Guomingdang*. “Simplified Tai Chi is different from the past Zhu Minyi's Tai Chi Callisthenics by could exclude *Chansijin*, because it is callisthenics rather than *quan* (Fist, boxing). To put *Chansijin* into Tai Chi Callisthenics or other martial arts could be thought of as putting Mr Zhang's hat on Mr Li's head.” (Tang and Gu 1964, 1996: 8) Gu went on to emphasise the failure of Tai Chi Callisthenics during the *Guomingdang* regime compared with the present popularity of simplified Tai Chi under communist leadership. Although Gu finished his article in 15<sup>th</sup> November 1964, it was not published at the time, for reasons that still remain unclear , and only finally appeared in 1982 in Hong Kong. Even so, Gu's view that *Chansijin* was a common characteristic of all styles of Tai Chi was widely accepted because of his personal influence.

## Long Live Chairman Mao Tai Chi

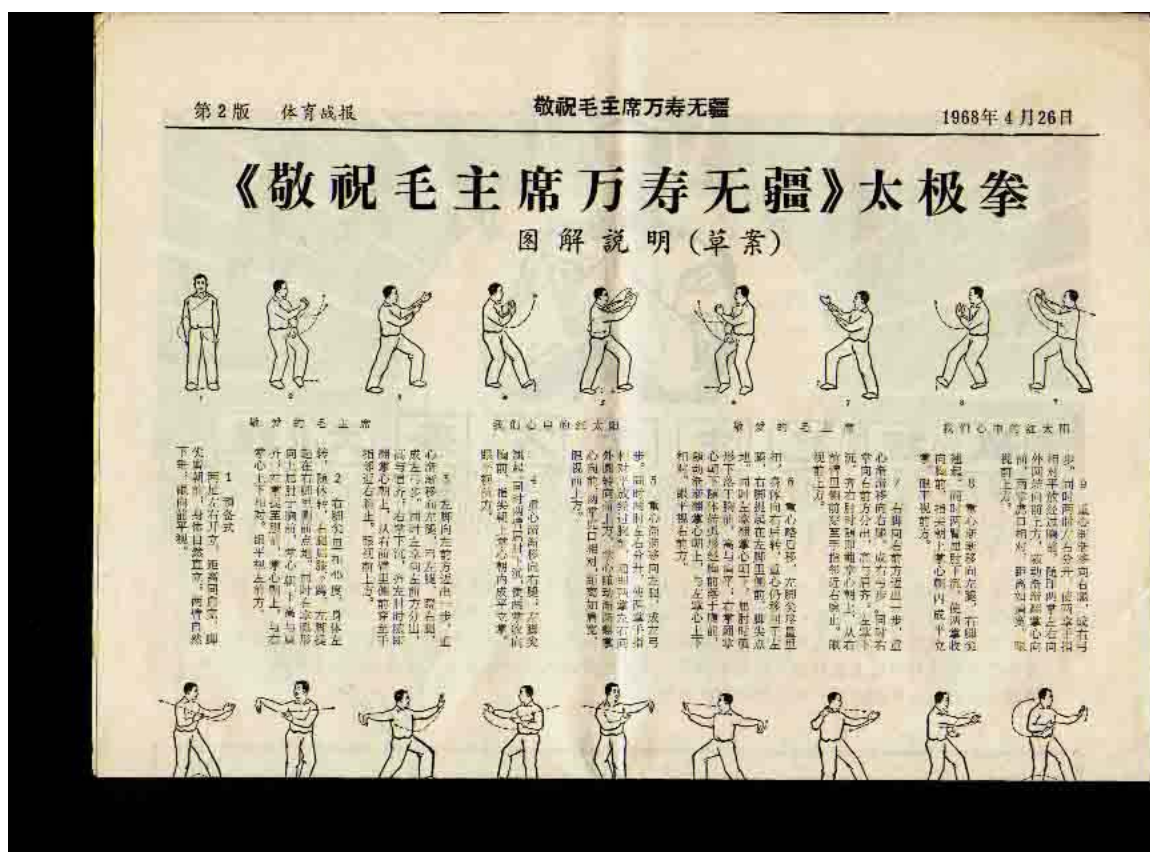
The publication of the five standardised styles of Tai Chi together with the consolidation of a common theory based around Gu's arguments, seemed to mark the completion of Tai Chi's modernisation and adaptation to communist rule. The Great Cultural Revolution that began in 1966 however, totally changed the fate of *Wushu* including Tai Chi.

The Cultural Revolution was a carefully orchestrated upsurge of Chinese students and workers against the bureaucrats of the Chinese Communist Party, launched by Mao Zedong. In today's China, it remembered as ten years of disasters, but in contrast to many other areas of culture that was subjected to radical Red Guards' vandalism Tai Chi suffered but survived.

There are very few records relating to the development of Tai Chi during decade, 1966-1976, but from the materials that do remain we can weave a basic map of events.

From 1966, almost all forms of sports and physical education were replaced by military training or physical labour.. Tai Chi, together with all forms of *Wushu*, were classified as belonging to the Four Olds (Old Customs, Old Cultures, Old Habits, and Old Ideas) and banned. All official practices of *Wushu* stopped. Then, in 1968, it was discovered that one of Mao's quotations mentioned that Tai Chi should be promoted. In response, on the 26<sup>th</sup> April, the Sports Battlefield Report, the alternative Sports News during the Cultural Revolution, published a movement guide entitled *Honour Chairman Mao Long Live Tai Chi*. It reproduced the simplified version, but renamed it as "dear chairman Mao, red sun in our heart". References to Chairman Mao were also integrated into the teaching of instructors wanting to stay on the right side of the authorities. Chen Zhaoxu of the Chen Style for example, had been persecuted because of his landlord background and his experiences in the *Guomingdang* army. He even tried to committed suicide. After he recovered he was encouraged to teach Tai Chi with support from the village. In the name of

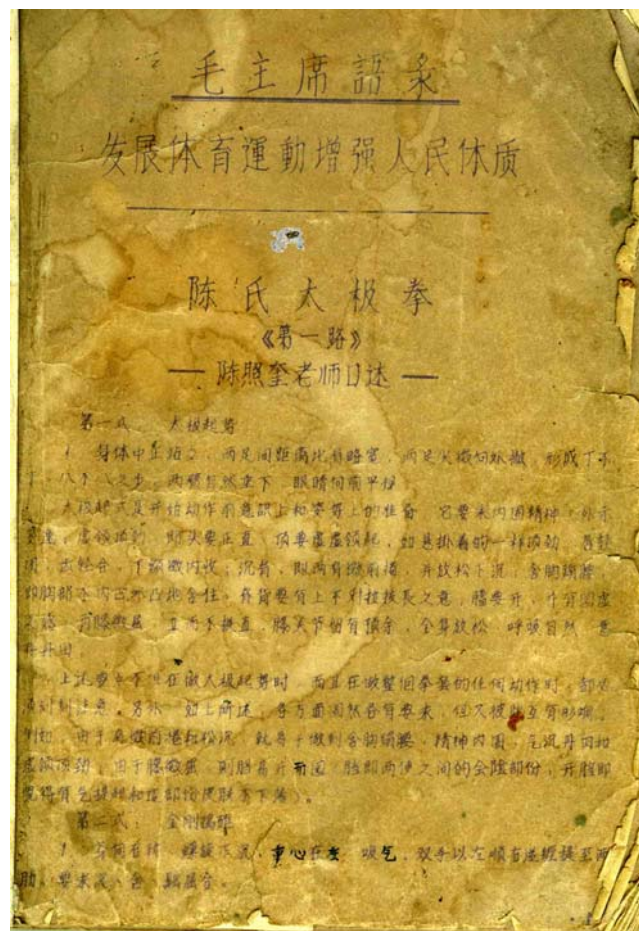
“supporting the red regime” he followed the official Tai Chi promoter and named each movement after a quotation from Mao’s poem.(Chen 1999, Cai 2004)



Long Live Chairman Mao Tai Chi

In 1972, four years before the recognized end of the Cultural Revolution, the general ban on *Wushu* was lifted and work began on rebuilding the infrastructure of support for Tai Chi. The effect was immediate, and was noticed by the distinguished Italian film director, Antonioni, who had come to China that year to make a documentary . He recorded seeing “a kind of physical exercise but also a dance and a ceremony. It disciplines the body and strengthens the spirit. They move very rhythmically, as if following music that no one else can hear.” He assumed that “This tradition is so old that the new leaders are willing to discontinue it as a rudiment of the past as a superstition.”(Antonioni, 1972) , when in fact, as we have seen, they were adapting it to the new

conditions. According to the Beijing chronograph, 3 Tai Chi training centres were rebuilt in 1972, and by 1974 there were 11 with 6000 participants. In 1975, the city sports committee held training sessions for Tai Chi instructors and the national Wushu competition was revived. The following year the third national sports games were held, and included demonstrations of *Wushu* at which 120 athletes performed Tai Chi in mass. (Yu 2002, Zhou 2003)



Chen Zhaokui's Hand-written Tai Chi Manual used in 1960s with Mao's Quotation

Although the public practice of Tai Chi did not recover its full momentum until the early 1970s, it had continued to be practised in private, clandestinely, throughout the Cultural Revolution period. Sun Jianyun of the Sun style for example, offered free Tai Chi sessions at her home (Tong, 2004) Similarly, Chen Zhaokui of the Chen Style offered secret classes in Beijing and in Zhenzhou city (Ma 1996)



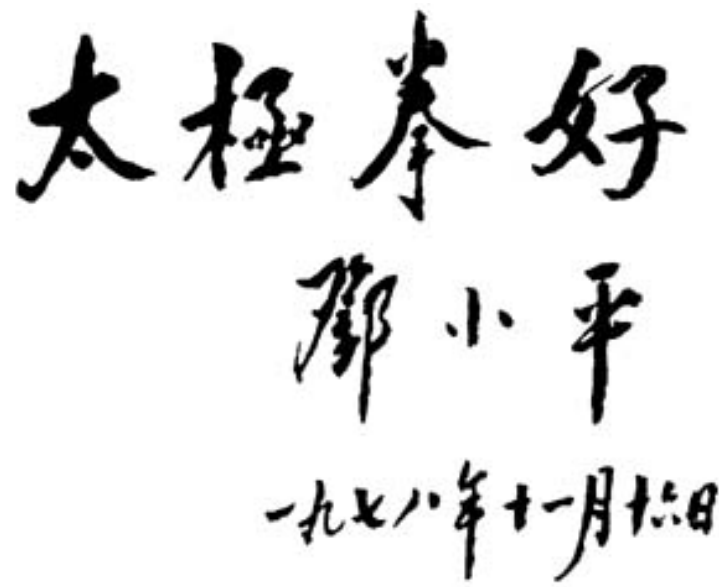
Rural Tai Chi Practitioners in 1970s

### **‘Tai Chi is Good’: Tai Chi in the Post-Mao Period**

On the 16<sup>th</sup> November 1978, Deng Xiaoping, Vice Premier of China at the time, met with a Japanese Congress Delegation led by Matuda Ryuti. One of the visitors, Miura Hideo had mentioned Tai Chi and before they left, Deng presented them with his own calligraphy “Tai Chi is Good” as a gift. Deng gradually consolidated his control over the Communist Party and came to be regarded as the key leader and policy-maker of the Post-Mao period and the principal architect of China’s economic reforms. Consequently, it is not surprising that his personal, and very public, endorsement of Tai Chi has come to be considered as a landmark in the modern history of Tai Chi and *Wushu* by Chinese researchers. (Yu 2002)

Deng set out to develop “socialism with Chinese characteristics” by implementing the Four Modernizations (of agriculture, industry, science and technology , and the military) and creating a “socialist market economy” open to the foreign investment, joint ventures and the privatisation of formerly state-run enterprises. It is still too early to evaluate the long term impact of these

innovations , which are still in process, but the shift from a command economy to a market economy has certainly prompted changes in the organisation of sports. Along with the whole of Chinese society, Tai Chi has faced the challenge of adapting to maketisation and the popularisation of consumer culture.



Deng's Own Calligraphy on Tai Chi

### **Toward the Olympics**

After the end of the Cultural Revolution, the Sport Committee returned to its former policy and Tai Chi and *Wushu* were once again promoted as competitive sports, starting with the modification of the Regulation of *Wushu* in 1979.

The new strategy did however differ in some respects from the original one. The competitive *Wushu* forms invented in the 1950s had been criticised as lacking in combat skills and for being a Chinese version of Callisthenics rather than martial arts. The revised strategy therefore attempted to add combat to the competitive presentation of *Wushu* and from 1979 onwards, the annual national *Wushu* conference included push hands, a two-person practice of Tai Chi. In 1982 combat experts gathered in Beijing to discuss the publication of the Push Hands Regulation and in

November of that year, the first national *Wushu Shanshou* and Push Hands Demonstration was held in Beijing. *Shanshou*, the Chinese version of kick boxing, was considered as the competitive combat form of *Wushu*, while push hands was considered as the competitive combat form of Tai Chi. This decision however has prompted long term debates involving both official sports athletes and martial artists. Critics see it as falling between two stools. On the one hand it is argued, it is not a good example of the modernisation process undergone by the traditional martial arts that have become Olympic sports, such as *Judo* or *Tae-Kwon-Do*. On the other hand, it has not contributed much to developing traditional martial arts as a commercial industry along the lines of the *Karate* or Thai Boxing. The more the national sports committee promoted *Shanshou* as a competitive form of *Wushu*, the further they were considered to be moving away from the martial arts tradition. By the 1990s however, the *Shanshou* had been accepted as a commercial martial art though without much of a connection with the Chinese martial arts tradition. The competitive form of push hands however, never gained popular acceptance. (Zhou 2003)

Tai Chi forms have however been successfully promoted and accepted on the sports field, both within China and worldwide. In September 1984, the National Sports Committee held a national Tai Chi invitation championship. Following its success, in 1986 they confirmed it as the national official sport championship. After 1993, when Beijing made its first bid to host the Olympic games, all non-Olympic sports were discontinued *Wushu*, including Tai Chi was the single exception. In the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> national games *Wushu* was given additional prominence with the award of more medals (Yu 2002) and the Chinese sports authorities expressed an ambition to include it in list of recognised Olympic sports as Chinese culture's unique and distinctive contribution.

The ground for this case had been prepared by developing international competitions as part of the modernising process. On April 22 1984, an International Tai Chi (and Sword) Invitation Championship was held in Wuhan city, attracting 70 Tai Chi experts from 18 countries, including, Japan, Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom. This was also the first international event in Chinese martial arts. (Yu 2002) Its success encouraged the national sports authority to

promote Tai Chi, especially in its official version worldwide.

The Japan *Wushu* Tai Chi Federation was the largest Tai Chi organization outside China and it was therefore with Japan that the push to globalise Tai Chi began. In March 1986, the first Sino-Japanese Tai Chi Exchange Conference was held in Beijing and in 2002 it broadened its scope to become the Sino-Japan-Korea Tai Chi Exchange Conference. (Yu 2002)

Following the efforts of the Chinese Sports Authority *Wushu*, including Tai Chi, was included in the list of formal competitive items at the 11<sup>th</sup> Asian Games, the regional equivalent of the Olympics. (Yu 2002) This was widely considered as a landmark decision in gaining international recognition for Chinese martial arts and a valuable stepping stone on the way to the final goal of getting *Wushu* accepted as an Olympic sport alongside *Judo* and *Tae-Kwon-Do*.

To this end, the National Sports Commission made great efforts to promote *Wushu* in the international competitive sports arena. Since 1991, Tai Chi had been listed as a competition item at the World *Wushu* Championship organized by the World *Wushu* Federation successively in : Beijing (1991), Kuala Lumpur (1992), Baltimore (1995), Rome (1997), Hong Kong (1999), Yerevan (2001) and Hanoi (2005). It was also included in the 12<sup>th</sup> Asian Games in Hiroshima (1998), and the 13<sup>th</sup> Asian Games in Bangkok (2002).

In 1998, the World *Wushu* Federation submitted a formal application to have *Wushu* listed as an Olympic competitive sport. (Yu 2002) After Beijing, at the second attempt, won the bidding to become the Olympic host city, the prospects of success appeared more promising. However, a decision was delayed by a debate that stretched over years and the dream of including *Wushu* in the Olympics, as one of the major symbols of the modernization of Chinese martial arts, remained unresolved. Finally, as a compromise between the Chinese sports authority and the International Olympic committee in 2008, *Wushu* including Tai Chi was accepted as a special form of Olympic sport but its medals was not included in the medal chart.

## Tai Chi as Cultural Symbolism

Compared with Tai Chi's long march towards international recognition as a competitive sport, its dissemination as a pivotal cultural symbol representing "China", has been much more rapid. The development of public collective performance of Tai Chi is an example.

The collective performance of Tai Chi can be traced back to the 1920s when the Zhirou Fist Association mounted a demonstration as part of their anniversary celebrations. Even though, as we noted earlier, later Chinese researchers have been highly critical of Zhu Minyi's Tai Chi callisthenics, demonstrations of these forms at national sports games pioneered the public performance of Tai Chi.

The first modern collective performance is generally thought to have taken place at the National *Wushu* Demonstration in Harbin city in 1976 when 120 athletes from Heilongjiang province demonstrated Tai Chi collectively. However, some Chinese researchers, most notably Yu , argue that the "first collective Tai Chi performance" did not take place until the September 1983, at the 5<sup>th</sup> National Games in Shanghai, when 5000 participants performed Tai Chi in the People's Square. (Yu, 2002) Yu's argument could muster three points in its favour. Firstly, the 1976 demonstration took place during the Cultural Revolution, which later writers came to regard as an unusual, even aberrant period which did not establish firm precedents or models for the future. Secondly, because the performance was undertaken by professional athletes, it did not demonstrate the mass participatory quality of Tai Chi, which later commentators had come to regard as the essence of its collective performance. Thirdly, the Shanghai performance in 1983 was broadcast via television and radio, thereby intensifying and extending its collective reach and making it into a mass mediated event.

The Shanghai performance certainly helped to cement Tai Chi's symbolic value as a signifier of modern China. The fact that it involved 5000 participants, an unprecedented number, demonstrated Tai Chi's popularity. Most of the participants were amateurs, which emphasised its

mass participatory quality. The location of the performance, the People's Square, the central public space in one of the largest and most modern cities in China, demonstrated its contemporariness. The fact that the event was staged as part of the opening ceremony for the National Games, evoked strong connotations of national unity identity, and continuity. Even though the form practised in the performance was the simplified 24 movements version with a history of less than 30 years, the Games were "an occasion for symbolizing the Chinese nation; the ceremonies were a Party-orchestrated representation of the nation to the Chinese people." (Brownell 1995: 132) As Yu argued, the fact that; "in metropolitan Shanghai filled with modern civilization, more than 5000 people practised Tai Chi collectively, it speaks volumes that the ancient sport of Tai Chi is rooted deeply into modern society and closed to the daily life of modern urbanites." (Yu 2002: 415)

Traditionally in Mao's China, the centrepiece of the opening ceremony of the national games consisted of mass callisthenics with political slogans. The introduction of a Tai Chi performance at the first national games after the establishment of Deng's reform policy served two ideological purposes. On the one hand it avoided unhappy memories of the mass callisthenics and parades filled with strident political images and crowds waving Mao's Little Red Book during the Cultural Revolution. At the same time by suturing the slash in history opened up by the Cultural Revolution it reconnected the present to the past by displaying a practice that expressed core qualities of 'Chineseness'. It was the almost perfect alternative to the negative images of Communism evoked by mass sports.

The success of the Shanghai event opened up new perspectives, new approaches, and new modes of Tai Chi performance. Public mass performances became one of most state's most frequently mounted cultural shows and a major symbol not only of China's popular culture but by extension of East Asian culture more generally. In 1988, during the Sino-Japan Tai Chi Exchange Conference, the National Sports Authority organized a mass performance by Tai Chi practitioners from both countries in the Temple of Heaven in Beijing, a site that had previously been used since 1420 for the emperor's ritual sacrifices. Since the Japanese invasion of China during the World

War II, Japan had been a target of Chinese nationalism. The performance in the Temple of Heaven was carefully staged as a diplomatic event, showing ordinary people from two nations with a long history of cultural exchanges marred by recent aggression reconciled through shared mastery of the harmonious bodily movements of Tai Chi in a location associated with prayers for peace.

In September 1990, one year after the Tiananmen Square events of 4<sup>th</sup> June 1989, Beijing hosted the 11<sup>th</sup> Asian Games. It offered the perfect chance for the Chinese government to repair its damaged national image. Again, a mass performance of Tai Chi was chosen as the centrepiece of the opening ceremony, involving 1500 participants from both China and Japan, dressed in white and accompanied by ancient folk music practising the Simplified Twenty-four movements together. The slow-motion movements represented peace, while the united movements of the mass represented the Asian value of collectivism. The performance was broadcast by the national television network, China Central Television, and photos of the performance were issued by the national news agency in an effort to counter the images of armed suppression in Tiananmen Square from the year before that still provided a potent point of reference for international audiences and to replace them with images of harmony

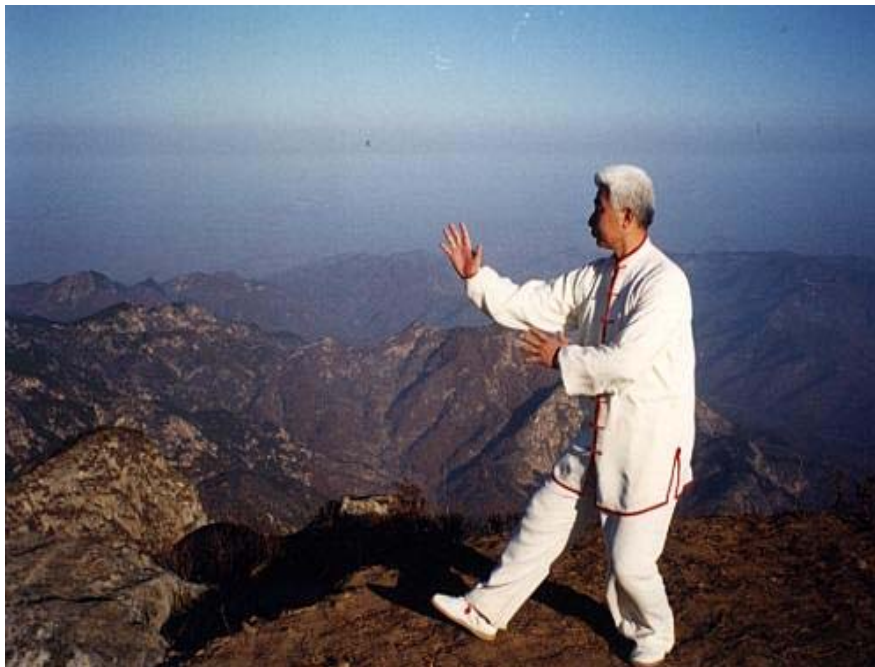
In 1997, when Hong Kong was returned to China, once again this historic event was marked by a mass performance of Tai Chi during the ceremony at the Temple of the Heaven in Beijing, involving 500 participants and broadcast by China Central Television. The return of Hong Kong was considered as ending the 'century of humiliation' imposed by subjection to colonialism. The performance was designed to evoke the new spirit of confidence and pride in Chinese culture and tradition and to, confirm Hong Kong's identity as a part of China.



1998 Mass performance of Tai Chi

Since the 1990s, and the formal acceptance of a market economy by the Chinese Communist Party, consumer culture had expanded dramatically. Mass performances Tai Chi were inevitably caught up in this process of commercialisation and influenced by the popular culture it generated.. Broadcast performances became more and more a hybrid mixture of political, cultural and commercial elements.. On 15<sup>th</sup> October, 1998, the Chinese *Wushu* Association organised the largest ever mass Tai Chi performance in Tiananmen Square to celebrate the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Chinese *Wushu* Association and the 20 year anniversary of the publication of Deng's "Tai Chi Chua is good" calligraphy. Ten thousand Tai Chi participants joined the performance. The location was again highly charged. The Square was the symbolic political centre of the Nation, the main gate into the emperor's forbidden city, "the centre of the world communist movement" during the Mao era, and the principal battlefield in the 1989 struggle for democratisation. The performance was carefully designed to negotiate these contradictory associations and develop positive public relations to support Beijing's bid to host the 2008 Olympic. At the same time it was also marked by commercialisation with a front line of performers that included the Action film stars Wu Jin and Fan Yimin who had just finished the first TV drama series on Tai Chi. Their appearance naturally provided excellent promotion for this production. .

In 2000, China Central Television joined a world-wide network of broadcasters to mark and celebrate the arrival of the new millennium as the dateline travelled across the globe. The Chinese millennium celebration was once again organised around a Tai Chi performance but rather than staging a mass performance, Professor Men Huifeng of the Beijing Sports University was chosen to perform alone on Tai Mountain, close to Confucius's home town and one of the so-called Five Most Famous Mountains in China. The mountain had also been the ceremony site for the ancient emperors to worship heaven. For an international audience the performance conveyed a 'timeless' image of Chinese culture in harmony with nature. For a domestic audience it connected present-day China with a period that was officially designated as hosting the greatest flowering of culture in Chinese history. Ironically, however the form displayed by Professor Men was a totally new one he had invented himself named the East Mountain form after the nickname of the mountain. Again the event was suffused with commercialism with the official celebration of the new millennium providing the ideal platform for Men to promote his new publication explaining his new form.



Prof. Men's Tai Chi in Tai Mont

After the success of the mass performance in Tiananmen Square, all subsequent events aspired to mobilise 10 thousand participants. This even led to efforts to enter the Guinness book of

Records. On 25<sup>th</sup> March 2001, the city of Sanya, which was hosting the World Tai Chi Health Conference, organized by the China Wushu Association, successfully involved ten thousand people in a mass performance and entered the record book. The record did not last long however on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2001, 10,425 people were involved in a performance in Hong Kong establishing a new record. On 28<sup>th</sup> September 2003, another mass performance was held in Beijing, this time on the Great Wall. At a practical level it was a far from ideal location since space was very limited but this deficit was more offset by the symbolic value of staging a mass event on perhaps the best known symbol of the power and integrity of the Chinese nation state. Two months later, Taipei city in Taiwan joined the competition mounting a mass performance of 14,603 people and establishing a new record. On 25 March, Nanjing, the host city for the 10<sup>th</sup> National Game responded with a performance involving over 10 thousand a reclaiming the honours for the mainland.

On 25<sup>th</sup> June 2005, the Beijing Sport Bureau assembled ten thousand participants for a performance on the remaining *Ming* Dynasty section of the Great Wall in an effort to establish mass performance as a “brand” with Beijing characteristics. But just two day later, the National Sports Bureau held another event designed to project a more broadly based image. To establish its official character, it was held at the China Millennium Altar, the building designed for the official ceremony to mark the new millennium. The leading figures of each style were invited to perform to demonstrate Tai Chi’s national character

This did not stop other cities from attempting to polish their images with their own mass performances. On the 19th September 2005, Dalian city joined the competition but civic PR had to work harder than before to make an impact amidst a growing tide of commercialisation. The performance site was surrounded by advertising posters and the event was sponsored by a biological technology enterprise, following the lead established by the earlier Beijing event which had been sponsored by a fashion brand.



Mass Tai Chi Performance in Great Wall



Emblem of Beijing's Biding for Olympics

The emblem of the Beijing's successful bid to host the Olympics was another example of Tai Chi being used as cultural symbolism projecting a positive image of China. In 1993, Beijing's first and unsuccessful bid for the Olympics, had used an emblem based on the profile of the Temple of Heaven, one of city's best known ancient buildings and an obligatory stop on the tourist trail. After the bid's failure, the emblem was roundly criticized as an ugly imitation of the Beijing Tourism Bureau's badge. The lesson was learned and in 1999, the city's bid for the Olympics in 2008 was publicised using an emblem which used the five colour Olympic rings formed into a figure shape that looked like a Tai Chi movement. This association passed immediately into popular currency and the logo was nicknamed; "Tai Chi Man". According to the designer the Tai Chi shape was intended to evoke the ancient traditional sports culture of China while the official statement released by The Beijing Biding Commission confirmed that 'Tai Chi man' also represented cooperation as the basis for world unity.

Interestingly, Tai Chi Man was not on the original short list of possible symbols with the Great Wall, the Temple of the Heaven and even the peony flower making the front running. After it was retrieved from the dust bin however, it immediately won wide acceptance. In the short film compiled as part of the bidding process, Tai Chi once again appeared frequently. In the segment directed by arguably China's most celebrated film maker, Zhang Yimou, the action film star Jacky

Chen was invited to demonstrate Tai Chi although he was not an experienced practitioner and had in fact only learned the movements minutes before shooting began. For the closing ceremony of the Athens Olympic, Zhang was invited to direct a short film in which, Tai Chi was one again emphasized. Then, when he was asked to make a film for Shanghai's bidding for the host of the World Exhibition in 2010, he used Tai Chi once more.



Jacky Chen's Tai Chi Performance



Chinese Premier teaches Japanese Prime Minister Tai Chi

## **The Competition for Authority**

As these instances confirm, by the early years of the twenty first century Tai Chi had become one of the most important and ubiquitous symbols of Chinese culture commanding substantial and widespread support at both the official and popular levels. This new prominence however, invested struggles for authority over the organisation and performance of Tai Chi with added importance.

Before the 1979, under a command economy and with a highly centralized political system, the national authority was the natural arbiter of disputes. The national form, endorsed by the National Sport Commission, was the only allowable interpretation of the way Tai Chi tradition should be adapted to contemporary conditions. After the Cultural Revolution however the authority of the national forms was increasingly challenged. This was partly because official promotion of the national forms had been discontinued for nearly 10 years, and partly because the national form had failed to persuade all practitioners that it encompassed the whole Tai Chi tradition.

Faced with this uncertainty, the National Sports Commission mobilised its administrative power to confirm its claim to be the only valid carrier of tradition. In 1979, the Committee promoted the *Wushu* Dig-out movement. Beginning in 1983 and ending in 1986 and involving 8000 professional and amateur *Wushu* researchers this was the largest ever attempt to survey the state of martial arts' practice. By 1986, 129 styles of *Wushu* had been identified, 6.51 million words of archives had been compiled, and 395 hours of videos featuring over 70s martial artists had been recorded. Despite this huge effort, as the reform process steadily gathered momentum, the National Commission was discontinued; all the materials collected were kept locked up untouched in a storehouse and finally disappeared in the reorganisation of the government structure. (Ma 2000)

In the area of competition, the dominant 24-48-88 forms also faced challenges. Since all these

forms were based on the Yang style, once other styles began to regain popularity , the national form lost its claim to representative status. In September 1984, the National Sport Commission reorganised the national Tai Chi invitation championship, and allowed the Chen, Yang, Sun, Wu ( Jianquan), Wu (Yuxiang) styles. By officially accepting the division between the national form and the traditional forms this catalogue of the seven forms while intended to accommodate diversity in fact displayed a marked lack of confidence in the national form as the prime inheritor of Tai Chi tradition. As a consequence, the national form began to lose stature as the primary carrier of tradition.

In 1988, in an effort to regain its position as the most authoritative interpreter of Tai Chi tradition the National Sports Commission devised an alternative way to solve the problematic relation between the national form and the traditional forms by inventing a series new competitive traditional forms based on each different style rather than the twenty-four, forty-eight, eighty-eight form system which was based only on the Yang style. These new forms could still be presented as the national forms rather than popular traditional forms while as hybrids, they combined the practical advantages of both. However, the Commission continued to face resistance from some quarters with the Wu ( Yuxiang) style not publishing its competitive traditional form until the 1990s.

Although the invention of the new competitive traditional form was intended to resolve the tension between the old national form and traditional forms, it caused new problems. It imposed additional burdens on athletes and made beginners more confused since they had a wider choice of forms. Hence, when *Wushu* was accepted in competition for the 9<sup>th</sup> Asian Games in Beijing, in 1990, the National Commission invented yet another form, consisting of forty-two movements, which amalgamated elements from all the styles in a compressed form. In fact, since this new form was based the popular Yang style with typical movements from other styles, it was subjected to endless criticism from popular martial artists. Added to which , it made the situation even more confused. As a result, neither the simplified forms of the 50s and 70s nor the new competitive traditional form succeeded in shoring up the Commission's claim to be the sole legitimate carrier

of Tai Chi tradition.

These efforts to construct a unified conception of Tai Chi tradition did not proceed in isolation. They were caught up in another major reform of the *Wushu* management system: the introduction of the *Dan* system which installed a ranking system for the first time. Even though some western commentators tend to present ranking systems as one of the major features of martial arts, (Jones, 2002: 1) there are no records of such systems being used in Chinese martial arts. The only similar system in Chinese physical culture was employed in relation to Go. Modern ranking systems appeared first in 1884 in Japan as an invented tradition. (Shun 1998: 163) The Chinese sports authority borrowed freely from the Japanese and Korean models and regarded the *Dan* system as both a “reform” and an “internationalisation”. The Chinese *Wushu Dan* system followed the model established for *Judo* by ranking practitioners by the degree of competence they displayed in mastering the relevant skills required. It designated 9 *dans*, grouped in three classes. divided into sub categories depending on the discipline being practised.; Tai Chi, Long Fist, Southern Fist etc. The various levels of *dan* could only be achieved by demonstrating mastery of the required forms with command of the national forms eventually becoming the only evaluation tool for allocating *Dan* status. However, in contrast to attempts to devise a single unified system that combined forms, the *Dan* system allocated different forms to different levels.

Primary <i>Dan</i>	<i>Dan one</i>	8 movements form
	<i>Dan two</i>	16 movements form
	<i>Dan three</i>	24 movements form
Medium <i>Dan</i>	<i>Dan Four</i>	32 movements form
	<i>Dan Five</i>	Competitive Yang form/ Competitive Sun form
	<i>Dan Six</i>	Competitive Chen form/ Competitive Wu form/ Comprehensive form (42 movements)

This system incorporated the national forms and national competitive traditional forms in a

graduated hierarchy whose design offered an ideal vehicle for advancing the modernisation of Tai Chi since it introduced standardised forms of evaluation that could claim to be based on scientific principles and be expressed in quantitative scores. This was not simply a technical device however, it required another reinvention of the tradition. Firstly, both the traditional and popular martial arts practitioners were offered the opportunity to have their mastery officially confirmed with the award of a *Dan* designation, thereby incorporating them into a single state-sponsored *Wushu* system that could claim to be the sole authoritative arbiter of levels of skill. Secondly, the *Dan* system itself was highly ritualised and added a series of new invented traditions. The winner of each *dan* was offered a badge and a special suit in the typical Mao fashion with the buttons in the shape of the Chinese characters for “martial”. The badges came in 3 designs (Eagle, Tiger and Dragon) and 3 colours (Bronze, Silver and Gold) to identify each level of *Dan*.

Despite these inducements however, the *Dan* system was not a popular success and was widely derided as a test of practitioners’ memory of the forms rather than their martial arts skills. The martial artists resisted because the system was coming from the top-down rather than the bottom-up. Its principles were alien to ‘authentic’ traditions as they imagined them and they felt little or no personal investment. Added to which, this official administrative push was facing an increasing challenge from the incorporation of martial arts into the rapidly expanding commercialised consumer culture.

It was not difficult for popular Tai Chi masters to proclaim their linkage with tradition since, as noted earlier, during the Cultural Revolution the initial ban on the official practice of Tai Chi had forced a return to clan-based teaching and the oral tradition with different styles becoming once again associated with particular families. Consequently, the surnames and birthplaces of masters acted as tangible proofs of their links to tradition. For instance, the most famous masters of the Chen styles were Chen Zhenlei and Chen Xiaowang of the Chen Family, one of family’s sons-in-law and a Chen villager.

Compared with the national forms however, the traditional forms lacked popularity and from

the 1980s onwards, masters of traditional styles developed simplified forms in order to promote them. Chen Xiaowang invented a thirty-eight movement form. Chen Zhenlei invented an eighteen movement form. Feng Zhiqiang of the Chen style invented both a twenty-four movements and thirty-two movements form. Tian Xiuchen of the Chen Style invented a thirty-six movement form. Zhao Youbin of the Yang style invented a thirty-seven movement form. Chui Zhongsan of the Yang style invented a fifty-six movement form. The Wu ( Jianquan's) style, Wu (Yuxiang) style, and Sun style also had their own new simplified forms.

The emergence of the five recognized traditional styles sparked a new wave of invention of new forms, for two main reasons. Firstly, since the late 1990s, the private martial arts school had expanded rapidly and martial arts had once again become a profitable business. Secondly, as the new video CD technology was adopted across China, videos of Tai Chi became one of the most popular cultural products. As consequence of Deng's reform policy and the establishment of a market economy, average incomes had increased rapidly. Rising spending power, coupled with the low price of video CD hardware and software, accelerated take up of the new technology and market dynamics drove a new wave of the invention as different styles, forms and masters competed for popular attention.

Competition *between* styles had long been accompanied by competition *within* styles. The Chen style for example, had been divided into the so-called 'old' and 'new' forms with the: supporters of the Seventy-four movement form of Chen Zhaopi and the Eighty-three movement form of Chen Zhaoxu disputing which was the old form and which was the new one. In the Sun style, Sun Lutang' daughter, Sun Jianyu argued with his granddaughter, Sun Shurong, over whose form was the more authentic. But the more typical arguments were prompted by a newly emerging form proclaiming a secret linkage with ancient tradition.

As the national forms lost their validity as authoritative carriers of Tai Chi tradition and the common theory proposed by Gu was increasingly called into question. a number of popular Tai Chi masters began to return to Taoist accounts. The Zhaobao style is one example.

The Zhaobao style was a series of forms originally practised in Zhaobao village near to the Chen village. It used to be considered as a branch of the Chen Style but since the 1990s, a series of books and videos have proclaimed that far from being a branch of the Chen Style it is in fact an independent style that was invented before the Chen. Since the Zhaobao style emphasised more vertical circles in its movements while the Chen style emphasises drill movements, it was quite plausible to proclaim its independence from the Chen style. But the question of origins presents a problem. In pursuit of evidence to support their claim, Zhaobao masters went back to the materials and archives assembled in the 1920s-1930s, in connection with the debates on Tai Chi's origins discussed earlier, and traced their ancestry back to a Taoist invention.

Since the earliest Taoist invention myths lacked credibility the myth of Zhang Sanfeng was again selected as the basis of the case being advanced. In *Wudang Zhaobao Traditional Three in One Tai Chi* (Liu 1990) Liu Huishi's linked the Zhaobao style to the Taoist Zhang San Fang and *Wudang* mountain where it is believed that Zhang used to live. Other Zhaobao style masters ( Wang and Ya 1991, Liu 1995, 1997, 2004, Zhao 1997, Li 2000, Zhen & Tan 2000 ) also insisted on the linkage establishing a chain of connections: "Zhang Sanfeng – Wang Zhouyue – Xin Xihui – Zhang Chuchen – Chen Jinbai – Zhang Zhongyu – Zhang Yan – Chen Qinpeng", through eight generations stretching over at least 300 years.. The materials they used came from the same source as Du Yuanhua had used in his 1935 publication. In Du's account (1935), the inventor of Tai Chi was Lao Zi, with Zhang Sanfeng playing a key role in transmission and dissemination. Interestingly, Tai Chi master He Youlu who also worked with the Zhaobao style traced its invention back to Chen Qin Pin, and named it the He style after his own ancestors (He 2004). This earned him the rebuke "treat the master, betray the ancestor, surrender to the Chen Style" in the *Wudang* magazine (Zhang 2004) and prompted the first lawsuit involving disputes over the martial arts in Mainland China together with a resurgence of heated the academic debate on the invention of Tai Chi .

Zhaobao masters were not the only group to return to the Taoist immortal Zhang Sanfeng. Zhao

Bin and Lu Diming of the Yang style also questioned Tang's research on Chen Wang Tin arguing that it was based on forged materials and inspired by Tang's long standing antagonism towards the Yang style. (Zhao and Lu 2000). Adherents of another emerging branch of the Yang style, known as the Inner Palace style, which claimed to be derived from one of Yang Luchan's early students in Prince Duan's Place, also believed that their forms were originally invented by Zhang Sanfeng. (Li 2005) There were also publications promoting the orthodox *Wudang* style thought to have originated during Zhang Sanfeng's sojourn in the Taoist stronghold of *Wudang* mountain.(Liu 2001). Even though all these groups argued that they shared the same ancestor their forms were quite different and none were able to muster further first hand proof to support their arguments.

The most radical claim for the origins of a newly emerging form however, was made for *Xunjing*, named after a term in Chinese traditional medicine. The promoter of this style, Li Zhaosheng, also claimed that it had originally been invented by Zhang Sanfeng and bolstered his case by constructing an elaborate line of lineal descent for himself, claiming to be the only descendent of the 13<sup>th</sup> generation of the *Wudang* Taiyi Tisong style, the 26<sup>th</sup> generation of the *Shaolin* Flying Dragon style, the 18<sup>th</sup> generation of the *Wudang* Congenital Tai Chi, the 9<sup>th</sup> generation of the Zhang Sanfeng Dragon Walk and a series of other styles. He argued that each movement was designed according to the principles of traditional medicine and the philosophy of the *I Ching* (*The Book of Changes*). (Li 2001) However, on closer inspection the form he actually taught turned out to be the simplified 24 movements, national form with the single addition of some slight movements of the fingers.

Almost all the newly emerging forms claiming Taoist roots dismissed Tang and Gu's research from the 1930s and 1960s which put the counter case. They accused Gu of using forged evidence, characterised his argument as ultra leftist and ideologically oppressive, and insisted that only acceptance of Zhang Sanfeng's central role in inventing Tai Chi properly acknowledged its deep links to Taoist philosophy (Zhen and Liu 2005) and its unique role as an expression of the national 'essence' (Zhen and Liu, 2005) In 2002 however, the historian Ma Minda published a critique of this position , attacking the key book supporting the case for Zhang Sanfeng's pivotal role as the

originator of Tai Chi ,*Research on Wudang Boxing*. He argued that the book, which had been funded by the National Sports Commission and edited by the Wuhan Sports College, the Wudang Boxing Research Association, and the Yunyang District Sports Commission (Yunyang being where Wudang mountain is located), had plagiarized Wu Tunan's work from the 1930s and hinted that both the Wudang and Zhang Sanfeng forms of Tai Chi could be traced back to the Yang style. (Ma 2002) The book also noted that Zhang was said to have been born in 1247 and to have died in 1464. Far from discouraging devotees however, this long life span was taken as proof of Zhang's unique abilities. The editor of *Wudang* magazine even went so far as to defend himself in court by arguing that the fact that he had lived for 217 years was proof of his superior skills and his profound understanding of Tai Chi and Taoism.

For some observers there was a distinct sense of déjà vu, since in certain respects the 1990s revival of the myth of Zhang's invention of Tai Chi was quite similar to the debates on the invention of Tai Chi in the 1930s. But the context was different. Tang and Gu's case in favour of Chen Wangting's invention, dominated the official narrative and its decline could be attributed to a reaction to the Communist historians' efforts to unify Tai Chi theory by forcing it into the framework of Marxist historical dialectics. For believers in the Taoist roots of Tai Chi this denial of Zhang Sanfeng's role and of *Wudang* mountain as the site of invention was not only reductionist it also cut them off from their imagined narrative of historical continuity. There was no place for *Wudang* Mountain as the symbolic site that connected Chinese martial arts with Chinese Medicine theories and the distinctive Chinese intellectual tradition of Taoism. Consequently, as Marxism lost its privileged place as the only discourse permitted in academic debate, space opened up for other frameworks that spoke to China's sense of its own uniqueness. The repressed, or at least some of them, returned. The debate between the rival claimants to the role of inventor of Tai Chi, between Chen village and *Wudang* Mountain, can also be read as a conflict between official and popular interpretations of the historical narrative and of Chinese cultural identity. But here again, the revivalist movement was not simply an instance of cultural conservatism in the martial arts or of grass-roots rejection of official imposition.. Market dynamics played its role. Supporters of both the Tang and Gu and Taoist versions of tradition accused their opponents of having commercial

reasons for promoting their case, while naturally denying that they themselves were motivated by anything other than the disinterested search for truth.

These suspicions that practitioners were ‘selling out’, centring their re-inventions around elements that had the greatest market potential, were anchored in concrete developments which were mobilising the potent symbolism of Tai Chi in the service of economic development, not only nationally (as in the choice of Olympic logo) but also at provincial level. Since 1992 for example, Henan province has hosted the International Tai Chi Annual Conference under the slogan “the martial arts built the stage, trade performs on the stage”. This enterprise has been supported by millions of RMB *yuan* in investment and generated billions of *yuan* in business contracts successfully signed.

### **Summing Up: The Politics of Invention and the Mobility of Tradition**

As we have seen in this section, throughout its long history, Tai Chi has been repeatedly invented and reinvented. This process has been partly driven by the competition between advocates of contending claimants to the role of originator as they have pressed their cases, and marshalled a variety of evidence, often of dubious provenance, in support. But as we have also seen reinventions have also been inextricably bound up with shifts in political power and the implementation of political projects. Major reinventions have taken place as part of successive general drives to modernise and rationalise Chinese society, starting in the Republican period, continuing under the Antagonists, and then under Mao, and now under impact of the reform process. We have also seen how official versions that have attempted to standardise practice and create a unified theoretic foundation have often been in tension with a variety of popular forms. This diversity of understandings and implementations has in turn, contributed to the polysemic nature of Tai Chi. Although it originated as a martial art, and is still regarded as such by many practitioners, over time it has also come to be understood and promoted for its health benefits and as a way of maintaining physical fitness. As we will see later when we present our ethnographic

study of English practitioners, by allowing adherents to enter through a range of gateways and to integrate it into their lives in a variety of ways this flexibility attracts a wide variety of people of all ages and both genders, enabling it to transcend the restrictive recruitment characteristic of martial arts that have no other articulations. At the same time, as we have also seen, underlying the diversity of interpretations and styles there is a meta-narrative that presents Tai Chi as one of the master symbols of the distinctiveness of Chinese culture and identity, and by extension of 'Oriental' values. In recent years this narrative of Tai Chi as embodying the essence of 'Chineseness', played out in mass public displays and incorporated into the logo for the Beijing Olympics, has been vigorously promoted by the Chinese Government as part of its efforts to project itself as the rightful inheritor of a unique tradition of culture and learning that once dominated the world, and may do so again.

The English practitioners who took part in the field work conducted for this research were certainly influenced by these internationally circulated images of a practice that claimed to link and integrate past and present in a unique way, but their experiences were also crucially mediated by the understandings transmitted by their teachers. As we will see, these had been formed not through direct immersion in Chinese culture but through involvement in a transplanted tradition. The internationalisation of Tai Chi has involved practices and theories travelling through circuits of personal contact and influence and via other centres, particularly Hong Kong. The result has been a process of translation, with all the slippages and additions that moving from one 'text' to another and from one social context to another, this involves. And it is to this process that we now turn.

# Section III Translated Practices: Tai Chi in England

## Chapter 5 Migratory Practice

### The Transnational Journey

As mentioned in previous chapters, Tai Chi spread only gradually on a national basis within China . Originating in Chen village, it was disseminated first locally and then to Hebei province around the 1850s, and from there to the capital, Beijing , in the 1860s. But it was not until the 1920s, that it finally spread to Shanghai and cities and towns in the east and south of China .and not until the 1930s, following the efforts of the Nanjing National Arts Academy, that it became popular on a nationwide basis. In contrast, its international dissemination took place within a much more compressed time scale.

Although some researchers believe that a “soft” Chinese martial art, (“soft” being a standard alternative term for Tai Chi), had been taught in London since 1930.(Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies 1980), there is no firm proof of this .It is more probable that the first English encounter with Tai Chi occurred during World War II, when the Japanese army occupied the north and east of China, and many Tai Chi masters fled to the temporary capital of Chongqin .The main evidence for this is the account given by Zheng Manqin (known as Cheng Man Ching, Cheng Mon Ching, or Cheng Man Ch’ing):.

*“Cheng was invited by the British Counsel General to give a demonstration of his martial art at a reception held in Chungking at the British Embassy. Attending the demonstration was a British military delegation, and two or three of the men accepted invitations to test themselves ...”* (Cheng 1981, 1982: 1)

. At the same time, Tai Chi was also establishing itself in the USA. In 1940, Cai Hepeng (known as Choy Hok Peng or Ts'ai Ho P'eng) opened the American Zhi Rou Association in San Francisco. This was the first Tai Chi centre in North America and possibly the first outside China. A year later, Cai opened the San Feng Association in Los Angeles and in 1943 moved to New York to promote Tai Chi but only accepted Chinese students, announcing that his schools aimed to keep the National Essence, for Chinese only. (Wu 1975)

Tai Chi began to achieve wider dissemination in 1947, when Chen Yanling (also known as Yearning K. Chen) published the first book on the discipline in English, *T'ai-chi ch'èuan, its effects and practical applications* (Chen 1947). Original copies can still be found in the libraries of Oxford University Library and The School of Oriental and African Studies. Until the 1960s, this was the most popular source in English.

### **Pytt Geddes: Bringing Tai Chi to the UK**

In tracing the history of Tai Chi in Great Britain, we need to begin with the work of Pytt Geddes since all the evidence indicates that she was the first European to bring Tai Chi to the United Kingdom.

Gerda Meyer Bruun (always known as "Pytt") was born in Bergen, Norway, on July 17 1917. She had trained as both a psychoanalyst and a dancer, a background that she later described as training her in "using, and observing the use of movement on a number of levels" (Robinson: 2006: 22). She first discovered Tai Chi in 1947 when she went to Shanghai. As she recalled in an interview:

*"I saw an old man every morning going out into the field with his bird cage and then doing his daily practice. Seeing this felt like lightening coming down into my spine. However I had great*

*problems finding a teacher. How Sophia Delza found Master Mah Yueh Liang I don't know. It was after we had left Shanghai that she met and worked with him. We were the only western women who were at all interested in Tai Chi.”(Robinson 2006: 22*

In the mid 1950s she moved to Hong Kong, when she developed a friendship with a Chinese lecturer at the university who was also a Tai Chi practitioner but her request to learn from him was refused because he claimed to lack sufficient experience. The idea of only being taught by someone who had a thorough knowledge had impressed her. Geddes was then introduced to Cai Hopping (Choy Hok Peng) who had been a student of Yang Cheng Fu. Even though Cai had only taught Chinese students when he opened his Tai Chi school in the US, he accepted Geddes after she passed a test to his satisfaction, but insisted that she be taught privately rather than being in a class. She learnt the Long Form of the Yang Style for about two hours a day, every day, for a period of six months.

Geddes described Cai's teaching as “unusual”,

*“There was absolutely no physical contact between us. When he eventually came to correcting me he did it with only one finger, keeping his body very far away from me. I got the feeling that we were sort of measuring each other during this time. I had to unlearn, which was one of the most difficult things for me, all my dance technique. My body had been very well trained in a particular way of moving and I had to re-thing everything. It was like learning to walk again and it took a long, long time to get accustomed to the method of movement. He wanted me to just to copy his movements and I remember him saying, “Look see Missy, look at my foot, and see it.” I was very hard work but when I realised that I had to unlearn my previous patterns of movement I then realised that I just had to let go. This letting go and re-thinking my whole body was the best way for me to learn Tai Chi.” (Robinson 2006: 22)*

A year later, Cai died, but Geddes continued her Tai Chi training with his son Choy Kam Man for a further two and half years. When she returned to England she remembered, “Nobody had the

faintest idea what I was talking about, when I mentioned Tai Chi.” She held demonstrations at all the major acting schools in London including RADA and the Central School of Acting , believing that Tai Chi would be useful for actors and dancers for its delicate movements and body control , but was discouraged by apathy and lack of response to her work. She was unable to convince people that Tai Chi as both a body of knowledge and a system of movement would be of use.

Eventually, she opened her own class .Her first student was Felix Mann, an acupuncturist with comprehensive knowledge of Chinese and Chinese Medicine. The breakthrough to wider recognition came when she was appointed to the teaching staff the School for Contemporary Dance in Euston Road and was able to introduce a compulsory foundation course in Tai Chi:

*“for dancers, which was teaching Tai Chi in such a way that they could use it for themselves as a way of preventing injury. Working with the slow movements and increased awareness gave the dancers an improved sense of their bodies which helped them to prevent injuries.”(Robinson: 2006: 22)*

Her class in London continued for 30 years. Then in 1995, she moved to North East Scotland and continued her Tai Chi class until 2002. She herself continued practising until the last week of her life.



Pytt, the First European Tai Chi Practitioner

Geddes' work established the basic framework for Tai Chi in United Kingdom in at least three ways.

Firstly, since she had not been trained in the martial arts, even the two person practices such as push hand were excluded from her teaching and in her promotional activities the martial arts aspect was downplayed and neglected. In an interview given in her later years, she insisted that

*“Well I don’t have any feelings with Push Hands because, to begin with, I wasn’t really interested in it. When we were in Shanghai I went to endless performances and competitions where I spent hour after hour watching all those experts trying to uproot each other. I found it extremely boring because there was such a strong competitive side to it. I found myself taking a step back from it.”(Robinson 2006: 22)*

As this statement makes clear Her career as a dancer , together perhaps with her gender ,

combined to generate an antipathy to the competitive aspects of Tai Chi brought out by its martial arts components. For her the interest was always in self development.

Secondly, because of her own interests, she focused on the health aspect of Tai Chi considering it as a way of preventing injuries to dancers. Consequently, her dance students practiced Tai Chi as a bodily discipline designed to foster harmony and peace rather than as a combat art. Her first student's identity as an acupuncturist not only increased her own interest in and knowledge of Chinese traditional Medicine, but also influenced her conception of Tai Chi as primarily a bodily discipline.

Thirdly, Geddes's personal interests in Taoism promoted a Taoist interpretation of Tai Chi principles that emphasized its spiritual dimension. Since the early 1960s she had used Tai Chi as a vehicle for her personal practice of Taoism. As she later noted:

*“For me, I was more concerned with a kind of spiritual connection through my Tai Chi, and that's always been my strong point of interest. In my own personal experience this side of Tai Chi has always proved itself.”* (Robinson 2006: 22)

This focus on the spiritual side of Tai Chi and more specifically on Taoism later became a major theme in English language publications as well as providing practitioners with a major motive for getting involved.

### **Zhu Jinxiong (Chu King Hung) and the Family secrets of Martial Arts**

Following Pytt Gedes's pioneering efforts, a number of Tai Chi schools were established. As Japanese martial arts like judo were introduced and became popular in the UK, some Tai Chi classes began appear in Judo Schools such as the Liu Academy of Tai Chi in the Renshuden

Born in China, Chu's family moved to Hong Kong, and as a 12 year old boy he began an apprenticeship with Yang Shouzhong (also know as Yang Shou-chung, Yeung Sau Chung, Yang Zhen-Ming, 1910-1985) which would last for 26 years. He is one Yang's three most recognised students along with Li Xuexu (also known as Ip Tai Tak, Yip Tai Tak) and Zhu Zhenshun (Chu Gin Soon). In the 1970's Chu immigrated to London and set up the International Tai Chi Association (ITCCA). Although Chu's classes were intended to be group lessons, because of an initial lack of students, they tended to be one to one. After spending time on form corrections, the emphasis was on blocking techniques, punching and kicking. By 1976 the student body had grown and a group of the longest serving students gathered at Chu's house twice a week for three hours. This class trained in advanced Forms such as Qigong, Push hand and two men San Shou (free style combating). For five years, up until 1981, these training sessions took place at Chu's house in Wembley. During this period a nucleus of students came together as the most advanced and longest serving ITCCA practitioners and were invited to attend an initiation ceremony and become initiates of Master Chu and the ITCCA in 1979. In 1981 the ITCCA moved to Drummond Street, north of Tottenham Court Road, and went through a growth period with a student body of some 400 students. A number of groups were amalgamated with the advanced class creating a core of dedicated trainees of some thirty students. By this time the ITCCA was enjoying success throughout Europe.

As one of Zhu's student in 1970s-80s remembered:

*All students that trained with Chu in the early days were intrigued by the strength and quality of his "Fajing" and "Peng Jing" ability. In the early mid and late seventies these skills were quite unique in London as were the application of the thirteen kinetic postures/applications. The*

*internal principles of this work were difficult to learn but they are the very core of Yang Style Tai Chi.*(Watson 2002: 2)

Although Chu was not the first Chinese to teach Tai Chi in the UK, he was the first to claim a connection with the Yang family. and the first to introduce the conception of the Family/Style. As a consequence, English practitioners became aware that the various styles of Tai Chi were linked to family lineages. As one of his early student's comments:

*Master Chu's arrival in London had attracted interest from many and varied Martial Arts disciplines and a steady stream of students from a Tai Chi community that was growing in great Britain. Master Chu's connection and lineage with the "Yang Family" was one obvious reason for his popularity.* (Watson: 2004: 2)

After Chu, it became important for Tai Chi teachers to be able to demonstrate either a direct lineage or indirect connection with one of the founding families .

Secondly, Chu emphasized the martial arts aspect of Tai Chi. As one of his student's records:

*In the years 1976-1981 the students in the senior classes were fascinated by the "Yang Style", by "Rooting", developing "Jing", and understanding "Fa-Jing". All of which could be expertly demonstrated by Master Chu. Any student who found himself holding the focus pads to receive Chu's punches and kicks were captured and fascinated by his ability to generate such strength and power. In the ensuing years many famous and respected teachers have visited London with great skills, but few of us will forget our first encounter with "Fa-Jing" a la Master Chu.*(Watson 2004: 2)

However, some of his students later questioned his martial arts skills:

*“all the tricks that were supposed to be a result of some mystical or magical hidden force but*

*in reality were nothing more than deceptive tricks or entertainment.” (Todd 1997: 25)*

Although Chu emphasized the martial arts side of Tai Chi in his teaching he insisted on emphasizing its uniqueness and distinguishing it from other combat skills. As the promotional literature for his classes made clear:

*“The movements can be tested in chi-tests and not in combat application, because although T'ai Chi Ch'uan works extremely well in self defence once it is mastered, its roots lie in inner principles, which Taoist masters used when they created T'ai Chi Ch'uan some 1000 years ago. This is why a T'ai Chi Ch'uan master does not excel primarily in exceptional combat skills, rather in amazing demonstrations of inner energy,” (ITCCA 2001)*

He emphasized what he called "happy Chi". For him practicing Tai Chi prompts a feeling of happiness which invades one's daily life more and more.

Chu left the UK in the early 1990s, but his influence is clear. During my research, I frequently came across his name in both the literature and my interviews with Tai Chi teachers and there is no doubt that the two aspects of Tai Chi: that he particularly emphasized, its martial arts dimension and the importance of family lineage have resonated strongly in Tai Chi community in the UK. However, his construction of Tai Chi did not go unchallenged.

### **Don Docherty: Bringing Wudang to UK**

If Chinese Tai Chi teachers had entirely dominated Tai Chi community in UK, its development would have been no different from its progress in Hong Kong or Taiwan. However, as well as borrowing from China. Tai Chi practitioners in UK jumped over some of the links established by Chinese lineages and developed a tradition of their own. These began with Dan Docherty's efforts.

Born in Glasgow, Scotland, in 1954 he began his martial arts training with Karate and while reading about its historical roots often came across references to Tai Chi. He started to read Tai Chi books, and then had a couple of Tai Chi lessons from a dancer in Glasgow. He graduated with a LLB in 1974 and soon after moved to Hong Kong where he served as an inspector in the Royal Hong Kong Police Force until 1984. Soon after he arrived in Hong Kong in 1975 he started training in Tai Chi under Zheng Tianxiong (known as Cheng Tinhung), the founder of the Hong Kong Tai Chi Association. Within a few years he was elected to represent Hong Kong in the Full-contact Fighting competitions in 1976 and 1980. In 1980 he won the Open Weight Division at the 5th South East Asian Chinese Pugilistic Championships in Malaysia.

In an interview with A. D. Davies in the Martial Arts International Magazine, he claimed that the Chen Style in which he had trained was a martial art related to *Shaolin* boxing rather than a form of Tai Chi:

*basically it's Shaolin Boxing with a bit of Tai Chi thrown in. I've written on this elsewhere. In brief, some members of the Chen Clan of Henan Province wanted to cash in on Tai Chi's popularity so they invented a false genealogy and put forward their mish-mash of Chen Family Pao Chui and Tai Chi as the original Tai Chi. China's leading Tai Chi historian Wu Tu-nan exploded this myth in 'A Research into Tai Chi' (written in Chinese and published in 1986) which describes his visit to the Chen family village in 1917. (Davies 1978: 46)*

He described other styles as having “No internal strength, no evasion, no ability to 'Faat Ging' - strike with focused power. They do not in fact practise Tai Chi; they practise Dou Fu Chuan - Bean curd Boxing. In other words, because they have only Yin and no Yang, their fists are like bean curd; soft and soggy.” (Davies 1978: 46) He was particularly disparaging of Zheng Manqin the legendary practitioner of the Yang Style, especially in United States, claiming that he “did not know internal strength or, if he did he didn't teach it to even his long-term students.”

*Cheng Man-ching is extremely overrated. He firstly became famous because, as a long-term*

*member of the Kuomintang, he was the tutor to Soong Mei-ling, the wife of the then President of Taiwan, Chiang Kai-shek. This naturally was of great advantage in making him famous as a Tai Chi teacher. Looking at his books on Tai Chi, I find them verbose and unimpressive; they don't mention internal strength and I believe he had little if any practical fighting experience.*(Davies 1978: 46)

Most of the evidence Docherty employs would have been familiar to Chinese readers since it draws on the long-running disputes between the Chen and Yang styles from the 1930s and 1960s but it was unfamiliar and shocking to English audiences. Borrowing arguments from both sides he successfully challenged, and for many practitioners, demolished the account propagated by Chu

Docherty however, did not just end the myth of Tai Chi's origins popular in the UK at that time, he established his own version of tradition. Within the lineage system, the version of Tai Chi promoted by Docherty belongs to a branch of the Wu Style. However, he named his style, Wudang Tai Chi, which he claimed “*was given its name by Cheng Tin-hung who never claimed to be teaching a particular style of Tai Chi. Chang San-feng lived on Wudang Mountain and the name Wudang was taken to acknowledge Chang San-feng's status as the founder of Tai Chi.*”(Docherty 1997: 2)

He also used the term “Practical Tai Chi”, “*Practical Tai Chi International is the name under which Dan Docherty has registered the system. The name comes from that given to Cheng Tin-hung's style by Chinese martial arts journalists 'Practical Tai Chi'. The 'International' reflects the fact that it is taught in many countries and to students from many more.*”(Docherty 1997: 2)

Incorporating Wudang into the title of his version of Tai Chi was both strategic and necessary. Having announced the illegitimacy of all other styles, Docherty had no choice but to return to the earliest supposed origins of Tai Chi and link himself to the Taoist, Zhang Sanfeng, widely considered as the founder of the martial arts. Employing the same strategies as martial artists of the later 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, he uses Wudang Mountain as a symbolic geographic

link between his Tai Chi style and a version of Chinese cultural tradition that goes beyond both the national boundary and the psychology of nationalism. Similarly, by using the term “practical”, he stressed his version of martial arts’ superior to other “useless” styles. These innovations broke with the practices of his teacher Zheng Tianxiong and the Hong Kong Tai Chi Association who retained the family lineage tradition, and used the terminology “Chen Style Tai Chi”. Added to which, Docherty’s Wudang style is quite different from the Wudang style popular in the Mainland today which had several variants. Nevertheless, in the British context, his tactic of constructing a symbolic lineage around the myth of Wudang mountain rather than a purely family lineage proved to be rather successful and his unique variant of Wudang Tai Chi has been widely accepted in the UK and Europe.

Dan Docherty however, is not the only person to have developed a self-established tradition and presented himself as the genuine carrier of Tai Chi tradition. Earl Montague is another example. Like Docherty, he became dissatisfied with the inability of the most popular styles of Tai Chi to support full contact combat and returned to a variant of the Yang Style, Yang Luchan, claiming to have learnt the original Yang Luchan style rather than the popular Yang Chengfu style propagated by Yang Luchan’s grandson. However, the fact that he retained the emphasis on family lineage, but promoted an alternative line of descent, prompted extensive criticism from Yang family style practitioners.

### **The Hong Kong Myth**

As the accounts so far presented indicate very clearly, Hong Kong was one of the most important transfer stations in Tai Chi’s transnational journey from China to the UK. As a British colony and major trading port and cosmopolitan centre it was ideally placed to act as the major switching point between China and the UK. Added to which, after 1949, when the Communists closed Mainland China’s to the Western world, Hong Kong, along with Taiwan, were the only remaining centres for Chinese exporters. Pytt Geddes brought her version of Tai Chi from Hong

Kong. Chu brought the Yang Family style and its associated lineage. Don Docherty's Practical emphasis and his version of the Wudang tradition originated there. Not surprisingly, this has led to Hong Kong being seen as the symbolic even mythical Mecca for British Tai Chi practitioners.

This construction has been supported by two discourses both of which overestimate and even mystify the importance of Hong Kong.

The first presents a highly ideological narrative of Tai Chi in which the major modern masters of Tai Chi knowledge and skills are described as having "fled" from Mainland China after the Communist take-over. The same discursive strategy has been used in Taiwan and other off-shore Chinese communities, and in relation to other martial arts and other areas, like Chinese medicine. This has produced a common sense understanding in both Western research and popular works that Chinese martial arts lost its vigour and tradition during under Communist rule because the Communists feared martial arts' rebellious potential but that they blossomed in Hong Kong and Taiwan under the guidance of refugees who had escaped to the other side of the Eastern "iron curtain".

The partiality of these accounts is illustrated by the career of Yang Shouzhong, the son of Yang Chengfu, who is described as having fled to Hong Kong from Communist China, an account that neglects to mention that most of his brothers remained on the Mainland after 1949.

The stereotype proved remarkably resilient however. In the obituary for Pytt Geddes's published on 21 March 2006 in *Daily Telegraph* for example, her lack of success in finding a Tai Chi teacher in Shanghai was attributed to the suspension of training "after the Red Army crossed the Yangtse, took over Shanghai and went on to drive the Nationalists out of China."

In this historic narrative Communist China is presented as having abolished Tai Chi as an everyday practice and attacked its tradition as part of a general assault on China's ancient heritage. Consequently, martial artists who wished to continue to practice their art and celebrate their roots

were forced to flee to Hong Kong and other friendly locations, including Britain and other countries in the western world. As we noted in an earlier chapter, this narrative is based a radically simplified and distorted account of the role that Tai Chi played in Mao's China, and the complex ebb and flow of official disapproval, support and endorsement. However, the myth of a broken Mainland tradition was taken up and nourished by Western Tai Chi communities and operated as a powerful ideological weapon as these communities competed with their Chinese counterparts for the title of true heirs of Tai Chi tradition.. It also operated a potent marketing tool by presenting the brands offered by western teachers as guaranteed to be rooted in the genuine origins of Tai Chi.

This ideological discourse has been supported by an overemphasis on the lineage of the Hong Kong masters who taught western Tai Chi practitioners. Once the continuity of family lineages could be presented as having been severed in Communist China the Hong Kong Tai Chi masters' could be presented as the only or one of the few "recognised" disciples of certain family trees. For instance, Yang Shouzhong has been celebrated not only because he fled from Mainland China, but also because he was the eldest son of Yang Chengfu, even though being the first born confers no particular privilege in the Tai Chi lineage system. Dan Docherty who is considered a heretic in the mainstream Tai Chi community for his negative attitude toward the Yang and Wu families and their masters was full of praise for his own master and grandmasters, especially Qi Minxuan and Zheng Tianxiong, whose residence in Hong Kong, helped reinforce his own version of the Hong Kong myth

### **American Influence**

In tracing the history of Tai Chi in UK, the importance of American influence should not be ignored. As soon as Tai Chi entered popular culture in the US it was re-exported to UK.

There are several reasons for the strong American influences. Firstly, Tai Chi was imported into

United State quite early and spread quite successfully. As we mentioned earlier, Pytt Geddes' master, Cai, opened Tai Chi schools in Los Angeles and San Francisco in 1940s. In 1957, Sophia Delza began to teach in New York City and was, by some accounts, the first Westerner to offer Tai Chi training in North American. In the 1960s, she set-up a Tai Chi association in the United Nations and produced an audio book on Tai Chi, *The Ancient Chinese Health Exercise for Mind and Body*. In 1962, Zheng Manqin began to teach in New York city. As the "recognised" student of the Yang family from Taiwan, his appearance in US, created a Taiwan myth similar to the Hong Kong myth in the UK. By the end of the 1960s Tai Chi was active in forty states and had attracted thousands of participants (Wu 1975) . Its successful development in the US provided a solid base for its re-export to other western countries.

Secondly, of the importation of American Tai Chi materials was aided, and perhaps accelerated, by the general Americanisation of popular culture in Europe. At the same time, the Taiwan myth surrounding Zheng Manqin helped to make Tai Chi in the US appear both authentic and original.

American influence showed itself first in 1965 with the publication of Robert Smith, and Zheng Manqin's English translation of Zhang's Tai Chi manual, which is considered to be the best martial arts manual even today. (Kennedy and Guo 2005) This was followed by a series of other widely circulated publications. They included; Feng, Gia-fu and Jerome Kirk's, *Tai Chi, a way of cantering* and *I Ching. A book of oracle imagery* issued in 1970 in New York and London, and Huang, Al Chung-liang 's *Embrace tiger, return to mountain: the essence of t'ai chi* , Lu, Hui-ching's *T'ai chi ch'uan; a manual of instruction* in 1973, Bruce Tegner's *Kung fu & Tai Chi. Chinese karate and classical exercises* , all published in 1973 in New York. It was not until 1976, that British masters began to publish their own Tai Chi works.

One of the major consequences of the early dominance of American publications was to cement the connection between Tai Chi and Taoism .As Dominic La Rochelle has suggested this link has been secured by way of five interpretive strategies employed in Tai Chi publications:

*“(1) the recourse to myths concerning a Taoist origin the taiji quan, (2) Taoist spirituality and philosophy as a theoretical base for the construction of Chinese martial arts systems, (3) Taoism perceived as an argument in a countercultural discourse, (4) the recourse to Western science as a rational explanation of Taoism, and (5) martial arts practice perceived as a psycho physiological practice resulting from Taoism.”(LaRochelle 2005: 10)*

Tai Chi pioneers in United States developed these strategies and set the framework for later publications,

American influence was not confined to handbooks and texts however. The popularity of American Tai Chi books, helped make the United States a major destination for British martial arts enthusiasts, along with Hong Kong and Taiwan. Since Zheng Manqin and his students had been resident in the United States for some time, Zheng’s short form was one of the major exports from the US. Several of Zheng’s students were from the UK and brought the short form back with them when they returned home. Since 1974, the Chinese government has sent several Wushu demonstration teams to US and introduced the Simplified 24 forms there. Again, this style has been imported into the UK by British practitioners who trained in the US. They include one of the leading figures in the British Tai Chi community, Derek, whom I met in Leicester during my research, who had learnt the 24 forms in Boston in the late 1970s.

Although charismatic individuals have played a major role in introducing and publicising Tai Chi in Britain its development also owes much to the activities of the various organisations that have assumed responsibility for promoting it on a nation-wide basis, establishing agreed rules and procedures, and holding competitions at which practitioners from around the country can meet and network.

## **National Organizations: Promoters and Rule Makers**

## The Tai Chi Union for Great Britain



## The Tai Chi Union for Great Britain

### - AUTUMN NEWSLETTER 2005 -

#### TCUGB Judges Workshops

With the strong possibility of internal arts becoming a major recognised sport, as a result of the 2008 Olympics in Beijing it is increasingly important that we at the TCUGB have a good supply of well-trained professional standard judges for all competitions. To this end the TCUGB are staging a number of judges training seminars, beginning 2006.

The Technical Panel of the TCUGB would like to invite all A grade instructors of the TCUGB, who would like to be properly qualified as judges for National and International competitions, to attend a series of seminar/workshops in 2006. There will be six full day events both central and regional, x2 for forms, x2 for weapons and x2 for push hands.

The dates times and location sites will be on our website early in 2006.

Please reply and book up early so that we know we have a full representation at each event.

When we have enough fully qualified instructor judges, then we the TCUGB will invite the Sports Council to several of our competitions to see that we are able to manage Olympic status and be recommended to participate independent of the Wushu Organizations umbrella. As it stands, any Chinese martial art that wishes to be a part of a national squad, must compete under Wushu rules. Basically they are that any style may enter plus that each contestant must demonstrate three moves according to their criteria?

As the largest Tai Chi Organization in the UK we wish to apply to the Sports Council to properly represent traditional Tai Chi Chuan from the UK in the Olympics.

The dates and venues of the workshops will be decided at our next Technical Panel and Executive meeting in Chiswick, London on December the 17th.

Gary Wragg  
Chairman,  
TCUGB

#### TCUGB Members Release Tai Chi Material

A few of our members have been busy working on new material, folk reviews of which will appear in the next TCUGB Magazine. They include:-

#### Tai Chi for Health - Grandmaster Chen Zhenglei & Master Linning Yue ISBN: 1-904719-12-0

A high-quality comprehensive guide to the health aspects of Chen Style Tai Chi Chuan. Full details from [www.taichicentre.com](http://www.taichicentre.com) or telephone: 0161 273 7138.

#### Scholar Boxer Chang Naizhou Theory of Internal Martial Arts and the Evolution of Taijiquan - Marnix Wells North Atlantic Press ISBN: 1556434820

Master Chang, known as the "scholar-boxer," lived and practiced in Henan province, at the center of Chinese culture and martial arts near the Shaolin Temple and legendary Luoyang. His extensive writings reflect many of the ideas, even the phraseology, now familiar from classic Tai Chi Chuan texts. Chinese-language authority Marnix Wells traveled to Chang's village, where the master's family carries on his tradition of Chang boxing. This resulting study of Chang's life and teachings reveals the true origins of today's internal martial arts.

#### The Tai Chi Chuan Classics Les Classiques du Taiji Quan Dan Docherty - Luce Condomine

Probably one of the most important productions ever produced for the serious tai chi practitioner, this CD provides an oral transmission of the Tai Chi Chuan classics which, until now have only been available as, at best, ambiguous or at worst incomprehensible written texts. By hearing the classics orally, whilst performing the form one can get closer to the original intent of these words.

Visit: [www.taichichuan.co.uk](http://www.taichichuan.co.uk) or call Dan docherty on 0208 368 6815.



Ronnie Robinson - Secretary, The Tai Chi Union for Great Britain  
1 Littlemill Drive, Crookston, Glasgow G53 7GF Scotland UK  
Tel: 0141 810 3482 Email: [secretary@taichiunion.com](mailto:secretary@taichiunion.com)

### The Tai Chi Union for Great Britain Newsletter

The Tai Chi Union for Great Britain founded in 1991 defines itself as "an association of practitioners of recognised styles of Tai Chi" and has grown to include a national list of over 400 registered instructors throughout the whole of the British Isles. The business of the Union is carried out by an elected Executive Committee and a Technical Panel who deal with applications, technical enquiries and maintaining and improving standards. The union is non-profit-making and embraces all variants of Tai Chi. As its publicity explains:

"The Tai Chi Union for Great Britain exists to unite Tai Chi practitioners, promote Tai Chi in all its aspects including health, aesthetic meditation and self defence and to improve standards and collate and disseminate information on Tai Chi classes and events in Great Britain and elsewhere."  
([www.taichiunion.com](http://www.taichiunion.com))

This general aim is elaborated on in the Union's constitution which announces its main aims as:

- a. To improve the health and quality of life of members of the community, particularly the old and the sick by advancing Tai Chi as a therapeutic exercise;*
- b. To further the education and training of young persons in Great Britain by providing them with opportunities to study and practice Tai Chi both in Great Britain and elsewhere and in suitable cases also to provide them with financial assistance.*
- c. To promote research and understanding of Chinese religion, ritual and philosophy and their influence in the development of Tai Chi.*

At first sight these aims appear admirably open and inclusive with their stress on serving all ages , from the young to the old. But a closer look reveals a more specific agenda. Firstly, it is noticeable that there is no mention in the text of the martial arts side of Tai Chi .Secondly, the highlighting of 'health and quality of life', 'therapeutic exercise' and 'the sick' suggest a strong bias towards a construction that presents Tai Chi primarily in terms of benefits to health and general well being. Taken together, these emphases and omissions help to reinforce the dominant popular understanding of Tai Chi in Britain. At the same time, they are highly functional from the point of view of recruiting adherents and retaining their interest, since by downplaying its martial arts dimension and talking up its health benefits they maximise its appeal across genders and age groups.

The martial arts dimension is explicitly referred to in the passages in the constitution dealing with the practical steps to be taken in advancing the general aims, under the headings of

promoting 'self defence' and liaising 'with practitioners of other martial arts' , but it they appear as very much secondary.

- a. To unite Tai Chi practitioners in Great Britain in the development of the art of Tai Chi*
- b. to set and improve standards in the teaching and practice of Tai Chi in Great Britain;*
- c. To collate and disseminate information on Tai Chi classes and events publications and videos in Great Britain and elsewhere*
- d. To collate and disseminate information on such other events publications and videos as may be of interest to Tai Chi practitioners in Great Britain;*
- e. To promote Tai Chi in all its aspects including those of health, aesthetic, meditation, ritual, philosophy and self defence*
- f. To liaise with practitioners of Tai Chi and other martial arts world-wide;*
- g. To promote public awareness in Great Britain of the benefits of Tai Chi through the mass media;*
- h. To provide financial assistance for Tai Chi team: representing Great Britain*
- i. To raise money for local charities serving the mentally and physically impaired by organising Tai Chi demonstrations and events.*

If we look at the Union's practical organisation and its conditions of membership for instructors however, we see martial arts assuming a much more central position.

In addition to its promotional activities, the Union also assumes responsibility for setting standards and certificating instructors

There are 3 types of membership in the union: associate membership, instructor membership and the associate instructor membership.

Associate Membership is open to anyone with an interest. Membership currently costs 15 pounds sterling and includes a membership card, 2 copies of Tai Chi magazine, 2 interim newsletters, a TCUGB T-Shirt and discounts for TCUGB organized events. The application form

only asks for basic personal information such as name, address and the T-shirt size.

Instructor membership is open to all practitioners of 'recognisable' styles of Tai Chi resident in Great Britain. It currently costs 30 pounds sterling and includes voting rights, an information and referral service, membership card, T Shirt, 2 copies of Tai Chi magazine including a listing of the instructor's classes, 2 interim newsletters and discounts for TCUGB organised events. There is also the option of having a certificate and/or insurance.

There is a set procedure for applying for instructor membership as well as a referral system. The applicant not only needs to complete all parts of the form but also to provide details of their training history. An applicant's instructor who has previously been accepted by the TCUGB can act as a referee. Applicants unknown to the TCUGB are asked to attend an assessment meeting or present video evidence. Associate Membership is open to overseas Instructors. Its entry requirements are similar to those for Full Instructor Membership.

The issuing of certificates and insurance are the major means of regulating instructors. Since the certificate offers tangible proof of recognition by the Tai Chi community it provides a good marketing tool for instructors while having insurance is compulsory for anyone wanting to offer Tai Chi lessons in some commercial or official institutions. As some instructors admitted to me in interview, obtaining insurance was their main reason for becoming member of the Union

In 2006, the Union announced a new re-assessed grading system for instructors in order to consolidate its role as arbiter of the Tai Chi community. The new system is divided into 4 grades ranked by length of experience:

*Senior Instructors (S)*

*- normally will have at least 20 years experience of practicing Chinese internal arts in depth; they may vote at General Meetings etc., stand for election to the Executive Committee and are in theory Technical Panel Qualified.*

#### *Advanced Instructors (A)*

*- normally will have at least 8-10 years experience of practicing Chinese internal arts in depth, they may vote at General Meetings etc. and stand for election to the Executive Committee.*

#### *Intermediate Instructors (I)*

*- practice Chinese internal arts to an acceptable level; they may vote at General Meetings etc., but not stand for election to the EC.*

#### *Basic Instructors (B)*

*- are continuing their apprenticeship in Chinese internal arts and able to teach at a basic level; they may attend but not vote or stand for election at General Meetings.*

The term “recognizable style” and the new grading system point to several features of the UK Tai Chi community. Firstly, there are some styles popular in the UK which is not recognised within Tai Chi community some of which are the subject of continuing debate. Secondly, there are some unqualified instructors operating , according the union’s standard. Thirdly, the use of the term “internal martial art” in place of Tai Chi, signals the Union’s ambition to expand its coverage to other Chinese martial arts communities . This renewed recognition of Tai Chi as a martial art follows the revival of its martial arts dimension elsewhere, most notably in the annual Open Championship, discussed below.

### **Tai Chi Caledonia**

Tai Chi Caledonia is one of most important annual events for the Tai Chi community in the UK. It was founded by Bob Lowey and Ronnie Robinson who have both spent many years actively participating in major internal arts gatherings in the UK and Europe. In 1995 the first Tai Chi Caledonia was held in an army camp in the Scottish Highlands at Aviator. Despite the barracks

accommodation over 40 participants from the UK and Europe gathered in mid May that year. Since its third camp, it has moved to the campus of Stirling University and since 1997 has been held for one week in June. . Tai Chi Caledonia is not the only such gathering. A number of similar workshops or camps are listed on the Tai Chi Union's website organised by its members or local branches. Indeed, they have become one of the most common forms of social gathering for the Tai Chi community. The Caledonian however remains the largest.

As its title "Caledonia", the ancient name for Scotland , suggests, it was originally a regional Tai Chi event but the organisers ambitiously expanded it to a national or international event. This shift in self definition is signalled in the changes to the posters in different years. In the early years such as 1996 and 1997, it is defined as "a week of Tai Chi, arts and entertainment in the Scottish Highlands" then "a week of Tai Chi and internal arts in a Scottish Castle", the ambiguous "Tai Chi, arts and entertainment" having been replaced by the more explicit "Tai Chi and internal arts". Later, iconic words like "Highland" and "Scottish Castle" were changed to "central of Scotland" or "heart of Scotland" to minimized the specificity of place. There were changes to in the imagery. After 2003 the old background designs showing the flag of Scotland were abandoned. The layout also showed "Tai Chi" gradually taking precedence over "Caledonia" In the posters for 1996 and 1997, the words "Tai Chi Caledonia" used the same font in the same size., By 2000, the word "Tai Chi " appeared slightly larger than the word "Caledonia", while by 2003, and it was almost double the size.

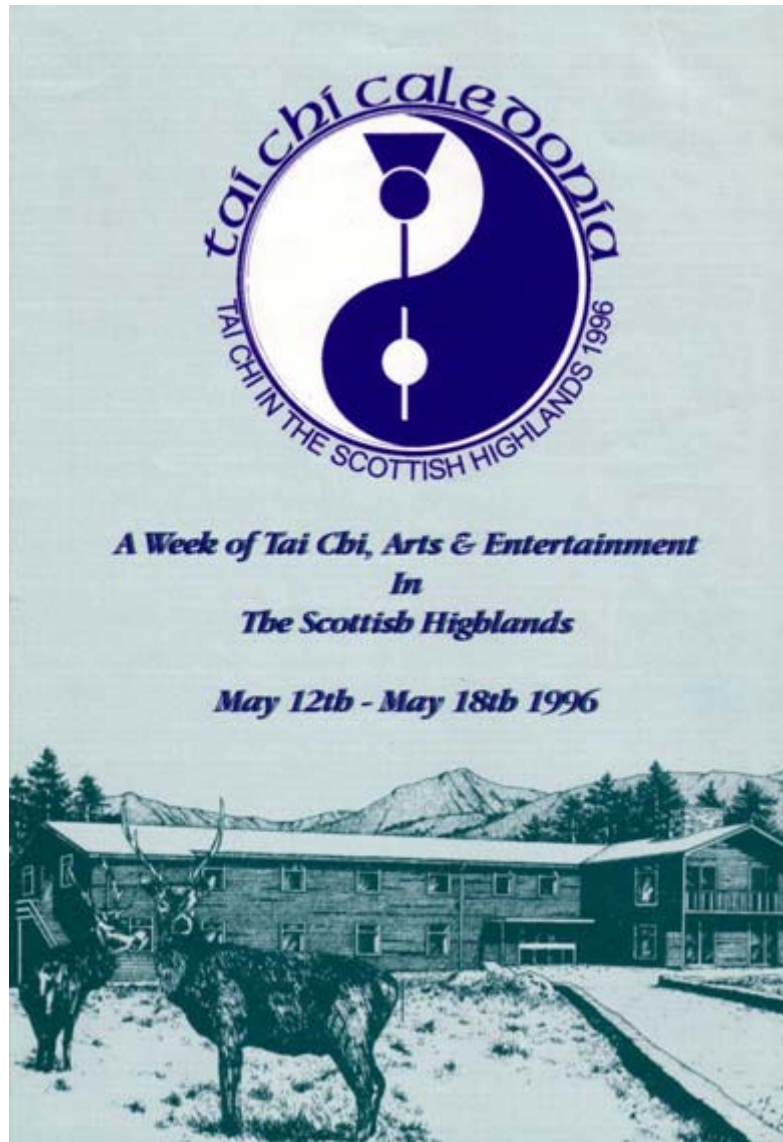
The emphasis on the "national" and "international" character of the camp could also be seen in other aspects.

Firstly, the instructors came from various countries in Europe. Besides leading figures in the British Tai Chi community such as Dan Docherty who introduced the conception of "Wudang" to UK as mentioned earlier, and the general secretary of Tai Chi Union, Ronnie Robinson, the instructors have included the French sports doctor Dr Luce Condaminei, the Italian Tai Chi instructor Franco Mescola, and the German instructor Nils Klug. In 2004 there are also instructors

from China including Wang Haijun, a direct descendent of the Chen style family lineage .The following year , Faye Li Yip, daughter of Professor Li Deyin, one of Tai Chi standard makers in China, also participated.

Secondly, unlike the workshops organised by particular schools, Tai Chi Caledonia has displayed a strong tolerance towards different styles, lineages and traditions .At the 2006 camp for instance, in addition to sessions in the Yang, Sun styles and Wudang styles popular in the UK, there sessions in other martial arts such as Bagua and non martial arts session such as “cultivating the golden elixir within”, “8 brocade”, and “yin/yang and five elements”.

Since 2000 Tai Chi Caledonia has also merged with other events. In 2002 it was combined with the annual assembly of Tai Chi Union and since 2006, training sessions for the instructors and judges have been added.



Tai Chi Caledonia Poster

## **The Tai Chi Open Championship**

### **(a) Organizational Event, Personal Efforts**

The Tai Chi Open Championship is one of the major events in the British Tai Chi community and believed to be the oldest Tai Chi tournament in Europe. Originally held in London, it later moved to Oxford. It began as a competition for Tai Chi practitioners only, but for the last twelve years

other Chinese martial arts have been added.

The advertisement for the championship announces that it is jointly organised by the two major British organisations in Tai Chi and martial arts: the Tai Chi Union of Great Britain and the British Council for Chinese Martial Arts. However, as the main organiser claimed in interview, the practical details are very much his responsibility and the result of his personal efforts, with the two organisations (both of which he belongs to) lending their name and support. As with all such claims, this needs to be taken with a sizeable pinch of salt. On the other hand his central role has allowed him to pursue some of his own particular interests within the general framework established by the Union's principles and definition. This is particularly evident in the strong emphasis placed on combat forms of competition.

In common with the Union's role as both promoter and arbiter of Tai Chi community, the championship lays particular stress on the standardization of Tai Chi, but unlike some of its publications it also places a strong emphasis on the martial arts dimension.

#### **(b) Enacting Standardisation**

In its advertising the championship stresses that it is open to all styles and forms, but this immediately creates serious problems at a practical level in deciding how best to judge and compare performances employing different forms. Faced with almost the same situation as his Chinese counterparts judging Wushu competitions, the championship organiser adopted their solution and attempted to standardise the competition by treating it as performing arts.

This rationalisation process employed two basic strategies. The first was to group competitors according to the discipline they were demonstrating and their age, gender and years of practice. Hence competition was divided into various broad categories, Tai Chi, internal martial arts (referring to Chinese martial arts such as *Bagua* and *Xinyi*), and external martial arts (all other styles), into various forms, fixed stepped push hand, moving push hand and a Chinese full contact, and into junior, veteran, beginner, intermediate and open divisions. The second strategy

involved evaluating participants' performances according to a standard judging system. For instance, the evaluation of the hand form is based on schema awarding marks for 10 points

- 1. Correct posture*
- 2. Correct stance*
- 3. Distinguishing Yin & Yang*
- 4. Intent & focus*
- 5. Coordination*
- 6. Smooth transition from one technique to another*
- 7. Balanced turning & stepping*
- 8. Relaxation & softness*
- 9. Aesthetic appearance*
- 10. Martial spirit*

Each of the three judges can deduct 5 points from a competitor's total in respect of each instance of performing cartwheels, splits or somersaults. They can also disqualify competitors who perform an inappropriate form and deduct points in accordance with the degree to which a form contains inappropriate movements. Points will also be lost for stopping or hesitating

Since the competition time is also strictly limited 5 points can be deducted for each completed 10 second period by which the competitor's form exceeds the time allowed. This will normally be 4 minutes, but for the 42 step hand form the time limit will be no less than 5 and no more than 6 minutes and points will be deducted on the same basis as before in respect of which the form takes more than 6 or less than 5 minutes to complete.

### **(c) Tai Chi as a competitive fighting**

Unlike the popular public image of Tai Chi, the championship is highly competitive and martial arts oriented.

It consists of three main sections: the forms competition based on performance and the judge's marking, the push hand competition based on restricted body contact fighting, and full contact fighting. Competitive fighting occupies the majority of the time and space. The more detailed agenda subdivides the push hand section into fixed step and moving variants which taken together account for almost the whole day of competition. The full contact fight competition is placed at the end of the day with the intention of providing a dramatic climax to the Championship

stall	Push hand	Male form
		Female form
	Push hand	External Marital Arts

In terms of the arrangement of space, the competition fields are divided into 5 parts: On one side are the push hand and the other side are the male and female Tai Chi form competitions, and the external martial arts form competition. Although, the push hand competition is much less brutal than boxing, wrestling or Tae Kwon Do, it is still a body contact fight competition. The extended space allocated to it confirms its privileged position within the Championship.

In this respect, the British Tai Chi competitors differ from their Chinese counterparts, since in the Chinese Wushu Games, Asian Games or other International Wushu Games ,push hand is not an independent category of competition.

The response from the participants also consolidates the martial arts side of the championship. The comments on past championship posted on the website are all about how exciting the fight scenes were. This emphasis on defeating opponents is a major motivation for taking part. As a tutor from a Bournemouth Tai Chi school recounted in interview, his ambition in entering the push hand competition was to win fame for himself and his school.



Athletes and Judges in National Tai Chi Championship

### **Summing Up: Competing Claims, Contested Practices**

Looking back over the development of Tai Chi in Britain, two points stand out.

Firstly, the different routes by which Tai Chi arrived in Britain and the different attempts to standardise and organise its performance have generated continuing tensions between its promotion as a bodily discipline delivering health benefits, its spiritual dimensions, and its continuing practice as a martial art.

Secondly, the adopted emphasis on lineage, constructed on the basis of who English practitioners had been taught by, has played a central role in establishing the credentials of Tai Chi teachers, and has again been in tension with the attempt to create more standardised credentials.

As we will see in the next section, which analyses the data collected through close observation of Tai Chi venues in the Midlands, these tensions play themselves out in a variety of ways in the imagination and practices of both teachers and their pupils. Added to which we also see English practitioners struggling to construct their own understanding of Tai Chi as a distinctly Chinese, and by extension, Oriental, practice and to domesticate it so that it fits the situations, social and psychological, in which they find themselves.

## **Chapter 6 Translated Teachings: Becoming a Sifu**

### **A Latent Lineage Society**

As we have noted several times already, the Chinese martial arts community is rooted in a strong sense of family and kinship. The students studying under the same teacher tend to consider themselves to be siblings and to think of the teacher as a “father”. Anthropological (Freedman 1958, 1970) and historical (Own by 1996)) researches on Chinese secret societies and martial arts groups have placed particular emphasis on these ‘fictive’ kinship networks, and the way they form “aggregated lineages” (Takacs 2001; Takacs 2003). These martial arts lineage are actual functioning lineages but rather than being born into them, members are inducted through initiation rites.

When we turn to the Tai Chi community in the United Kingdom however, the situation becomes more complicated. Since Tai Chi is not considered as a pure martial art, the Tai Chi community does not operate as a simple lineage system. That is not to say that there is no lineage society system operating within Tai Chi groups but based on my own observation in different Tai Chi school and clubs, it is a latent rather than direct. What make the lineage system latent are two major characteristics. Firstly, it is not always active. It functions sometimes and in some other circumstance but not in all. Secondly, its activation depends on the context. When the martial arts side of Tai Chi is emphasised, it is much more likely to be activated. Self designations with strong patrilineal connotations ,such as sifu , are popular among martial arts practitioners of Tai Chi while among the fitness seekers they have little or no purchase.

### **The Absence of Dan**

The continuing vitality of the latent lineage system within the Tai Chi community can be

attributed in large part to the absence of a recognised and universal ranking system. Judo, Karate and Tae-Kwon-Do, all operate strict ranking systems. *“In some cases ranking is based entirely on seniority, and in others, on blatant fighting prowess. Rank is denoted by colour belts or ceremonial outfits, badges, or special insignia.”*(David E Jones,) In Tae-Kwon-Do, the colour of the belt has a specific meaning related to experiences and skills. For example, the yellow belt representing the soil signifies the foundational stage. The green belt representing grass indicates the progress stage. The highest rank, the black belt, conveys mastery of skill even in a dark environment. In the Tae-Kwon-Do system, the 1-3<sup>rd</sup> Dan grades are entitled to become assistant instructors, 4-6 can call themselves instructor, 7-8 can claim to be masters and the 9, the highest are considered Grand Masters.. Behind the traditional hierarchical surface of the rank system, there is a philosophy based on rationality and modernity at work. The acquisition of the symbolic belt and the related social rank in martial artist’s circles is based on a rational and consistent system for judging martial arts skills or experiences. Promotion within the rank system is either by mastery of certain disciplines of increasing difficulty or the accumulation of training time or the winning of records in the competition. The rank system therefore operates as a kind of martial arts bureaucracy.

We can suggest three main reasons why the Tai Chi community abandoned the Dan system and accepted a latent lineage society system instead

. First, unlike popular Japanese martial arts like Judo, Karate, Tae-Kwon-Do, the ranking system has never established itself as a “tradition” in Chinese martial arts. First used in *Judo* in 1884 the Chinese martial arts authority introduced it as a “foreign advanced administrative experience” and tried to promote it in the late 1990s but without much success. Added to which, in the United Kingdom, neither the official British Council for Chinese martial arts nor its popular counterpart, the Tai Chi Union of Great Britain, has any systematic evaluation system.

Secondly, Tai Chi is not considered solely as a martial art, but as a combination of martial arts, and bodily and spiritual disciplines, and is more frequently imagined in relation to these latter

dimensions. Since the *Dan* system only has a strong presence within martial arts its acceptance by the Tai Chi community might limit recruitment rather than provide benefits.

Third, the *dan* system as we mentioned earlier, is a bureaucratic system. Because of its relatively long standing within Karate or Tae-Kwon-Do, practitioners of these disciplines can imagine it as an ancient tradition. But within Chinese martial arts and Tai Chi, it is appears as a relatively recent innovation imported from overseas. Consequently, the Tai Chi community has opted to retain the lineage society system which can be constructed and imagined as more ancient, original, and Chinese.

### **The Teacher as Sifu**

To fully understand a Tai Chi group, it essential to understand the role and status of the instructor .There are several designations for a Tai Chi instructor. The general descriptions, instructor or teacher, are used quite often in Tai Chi school advertisements and during practice sessions instructors and teachers will usually be addressed by their first name. But there is another term, the Cantonese term for a master: Sifu. This is most commonly used in martial arts schools, although the official Latinisation for the word is “*Shifu*”. However, the term ‘master’ is often used as an alternative because of the difficulty English speakers have with Chinese pronunciation.

It may seem to the outsider that the specific choice of title for the instructor is flexible and even random. In fact, the process by which people come to be entitled to call them sifu/master offers us a key with which to unlock the latent lineage society system that underpins the power structure of Tai Chi community. Both linguistically and in practice, the claim to the title of sifu/master helps to reproduce a lineage society that supports the imagination of Chineseness operating within Tai Chi communities. Literarily speaking, the word Sifu is a combination of two characters: *Si* which means “teacher” and *Fu* which means “father”. The relation between the sifu and their students as an imagined father-son relation is therefore embedded in the title. This masculine bias is further

underscored by the fact that a sifu can only be a “teaching father” not a “mother.”

There are no agreed rules for the use of the title Sifu/master in Tai Chi schools though it is much more likely to be employed in the schools or clubs where the martial arts side of Tai Chi is emphasised. Where it is not, the titles Sifu/master are seldom used. In all Tai Chi schools and clubs, “sifu/master” is used naturally to refer to ancient masters or ancestors but during my observations in Tai Chi schools and in interviews with instructors, no one used the word Sifu or master as a description of himself/herself. However, when Derek, a male Tai Chi master in Leicester, mentioned his own instructor he persistently referred to him as “sifu”, while Sue, a female master in Manchester, insisted on referring to “Master Liu Yong, Grandmaster Chen Zhenlei”. This pattern was repeated by Derek’s own students who frequently added the title Sifu to his name when referring to him.

The three titles “sifu-master-instructor” indicate different degrees of respect. The Chinese title “Sifu” is seen as much more honourable than its translated version “master”, while “master” in turn, carries more weight than “instructor”.

### **Ancestor worship and Oral Tradition**

Ancestor worship is one of the major characteristics of a lineage society. However, within the Tai Chi community I observed it remains latent. This may be because the Tai Chi community is not a standard lineage society based on blood relationships, and Tai Chi practices only account for a small part of the community members’ activities.

The most obvious expression of ancestor worship is the emphasis placed on the inventor myth. Unlike their Chinese counterparts who continue to debate the invention of Tai Chi, English practitioners are much more likely to accept the Taoist sage, Zhang Sanfeng, as the originator of Tai Chi. The Wudang Tai Chi I referred earlier, named after the sacred residence of the Taoist immortals, is a good example. . Sifu/masters subscribing to the Chen style are however an

exception, since they believe that the ancestor of the Chen family was the ‘true’ inventor of Tai Chi. Sue, a sifu/master of the Chen style Tai Chi once told me as a joke that she used to meet a master who taught the simplified twenty-four movements form, who insisted that it had a history of thousands of years and could be traced back the Taoist sage Zhang Sanfeng, when in fact everybody knew that it was only invented in 1950s.

At the Jade Moon School in Loughborough, when students come for the first time, they will be given some printed material about the school and the form of Tai Chi they will learn. The Chinese character of the Taoist sage Zhang Sanfeng’s name as well as a portrait of Yang Luchan, the founder of the Yang style are printed in the middle of the paper, even though there was nobody in the school who could recognize either the Chinese character or the portrait when I asked them.

The ancestor worship practiced in Tai Chi schools I studied however, more frequently took the form of mystifying the master and grand master of the instructors rather than rites concerning remote ancestors from ancient time. Sue once described that when her master Liu Yong played Tai Chi, the glass in the building trembled as he stepped on the floor. Derek liked to tell the story of how his eighty-year-old master easily defeated him in push hand.

Another feature promoting ancestor worship is the confirmation of the lineage. Almost all Tai Chi schools and their sifu/masters had their own lineage diagrams. For instance, Derek is proclaimed as a 5<sup>th</sup> generation adherent under Master Ou Rongju in the publicity materials for his school. The lineage is seen to run from Yang Luchan to Yang Banhou to Yang Shouzhong to Ou Rongju. Ironically, according to some Chinese publications, Mr Ou was just one of the students of Yang Shouzhong in his large class in Guangzhou not a so-called “closing door” disciple who has privileged access.. Sue recorded her lineage as Chen Zhenlei—Liu Yong, who can claim direct lineage to the Chen family and Chen style Tai Chi.

Stephan of the Jade Moon School traced back his lineage to Master Chu , who we mentioned earlier, in a direct line from the Yang family, even though he never met Master Chu and cannot be

sure whether this master Chu is the same one he read about in Earl Montague's book.

Within the lineage system, the conception of a "closing door disciple" (literally translated from the Chinese) plays a central role. It refers to a student within one sifu/master's instruction who has been specifically chosen or singled out to be separated from the common students in the open class and given instruction behind "closed doors", hinting at the passage of secret skills. Only someone who is recognized as a closing door disciple can be formally listed on the public recognized lineage chart. Even though, during my ethnography, I had no opportunity to witness a "closing door" ritual it is widely believed that it consists of a banquet and the ceremony of the master drinking tea offered by the disciple. In fact, some "closing door" disciples I met gained their title simply by being confirmed by their sifu/master without a formal ritual. It is entirely possible that the banquet and tea-drinking ceremony is imagined, based on the rituals shown in martial arts films.

Besides ancestor worship, another significant feature of the lineage society operating within Tai Chi community is the use of the oral tradition. Although there are numerous Tai Chi publications in English, most schools and clubs prefer to communicate vital knowledge orally. Neither Derek nor Sue used any written materials. Her explanation for this was that there were no good publications in English

As she explained:

*We don't have any study material. Because we have no books in English on Chen style, it is very very hard to get books in English. Last, about six months ago, Chen Zhenglei's book has finally been translated into English and became available in the west. So we do have A book on Lao Jia, Lao Jia Yi Lu. It got sword form. It has Chen Zhenlei on the front cover. So that's the only textbook we have in English. That's the only one we had. For all this time, erh, English-speaking student have had nothing written that they could read and study. It is very easy you Chinese pick up a book and read the theory and understand the principles of Chan Si Jin, anything in the book just*

*read it. We are sort of just following blindly without any written material or whatever. So it's quite difficult for westerners because there is nothing to translate. (Sue, female, 40s)*

She believes video productions showing Tai Chi shares the same problem and that the best are only in Chinese.

*“Yes, we have Cheng Zhen Lei's videos, DVDs on all aspects of Chen forms, so we can, we can use that, but again they are all in Chinese. Easy for you to watch and understand, if you speak Chinese, but he is talking, he is very, very good, because he is very, very clear in his movements. And you can usually follow and understand his video without reading too much spoken word,... but you can't learn from the video without having some language to assist ...”(Sue, female, 40s)*

Sue's explanation is not convincing since even after the English publication of Chen Zhenglei's book the class still relied on the oral tradition. Other styles like the Yang style have books translated into and written in English, so the reliance on oral transmission cannot be attributed to the lack of suitable “textbooks”.

In the Jade Moon School, Stephan will give new comers a copy of the names of the movements.

*“We have the first page which has the first section, just broken down to sequences it doesn't say put left hand here, put right hand there. We just give them the sequences. It is more like a memo which movement comes next, rather than explains the individual movement. We will explain during the practice, like grasp the bird's tail, roll back. The movements are just written down”(Stephan, male, 40s)*

Since in his class the complete form is divided in 3 sections, there is no more textual information for the students who learn section one. Stephan remembers this material as having been passed from his own master about ten years ago, and he insisted that he didn't change it;

*“I got these two sheets ... And I went on through it. There are slight mistakes... Like at this point your foot hand is put forward. I thought hang on, now my left foot is forward. Those are mistakes in the typing. So I retype it, corrected it as I thought it should be. We haven’t changed the materials we first got and this is in Yang Zhenduo’s book. It’s still basically the same. I think one thing we do more than I saw when I looked Yang Zhenduo’s materials even his DVD. I would like to ask these questions. Why? And I think it’s probably that he teaches at a very basic level. You don’t see any Yin and Yang in his hand. He does it like this, very robotic and basic. Why is that, it’s just because his instruction is for beginners. And he deliberately let the martial blowing movements out, so the people can get the concept. Maybe he teaches that later, I don’t know.”*  
(Stephan, male, 40s)

The main advantage of reliance on the oral tradition for the sifu is that it confirmed his or her authority. Since neither publications or video material are allowed in the classroom the sifu/master’s instruction and personal demonstrations of bodily correction is the only available source of knowledge. In the hours of repetition of the bodily movements, the sifu/master is considered as the only model. At the same time, since the sifu/master’s own knowledge has been acquired from a previous oral source the continuing reliance on oral transmission contributes to confirming their position in the lineage of the family tree. That’s why Stephan insists that his own modification of the movements is at the minim level. He is claiming to have inherited and to be passing on, an unbroken tradition of practice.

## **Master’s matters**

### **Masters for Martial Arts**

As we have emphasised a number of times, there are different faces of Tai Chi. For the Sifu/master this may present problems since their personal understanding of Tai Chi as a martial art is often in tension with the imagination of Tai Chi as a spiritual or health discipline held by

their students and emphasised in popular imagery.

In the internal journal of the Great Britain Tai Chi Union, there is a special column for interviews between the editor and the sifu/masters entitled 'meet the instructors'. The attitude toward the martial arts is one of the major concerns expressed.

During my ethnography, I encountered instructors who proclaimed that their primary interest in Tai Chi was as a martial art. Some emphasised the martial aspects alongside other dimensions, others went further and denied the popular "soft" image of Tai Chi altogether:

*"Most people don't get that far in Tai Chi practice since all they see and what is publicly taught is 'soft' and flowing which is one part and NOT the whole thing. Tai Chi is a martial art and can be taught as a martial art. That is how I teach it. The reason why people do not practice Tai Chi as a martial art is because there are very few teachers that can teach it as a martial art. That is only one reason; another reason is the students have not proven they are worthy as loyal students to be taught the applications. Tai Chi has lost a lot of its substance because the martial arts aspect has been left out and forgotten. Therefore, Tai Chi as a complete art is no longer being taught as a complete art. "* (Mike, male, 30s)

Some instructors object to the separation between the martial and spiritual sides of Tai Chi arguing that the martial aspect is not only essential to a full understanding of Tai Chi but is fundamental:

*To gain a proper understanding of the true realisation of the concepts of the art it is essential to practise the martial aspect. It is essential to understand the applications and how they can work in real situations. The Form is a sequence of martial arts applications performed in a very specific way to develop very specific skills that are the basis for the usage of Tai Chi martial system. To perform the Form properly knowledge of the applications is essential because this will give the proper focus and meaning to the postures. The Tui Shou (Pushing hands) exercises are the bridge*

*between the Form and the San Shou (Self Defence), so I teach these from the first lesson. (Carl Burgess, male, 40s)*

*Tai Chi is a martial art, so there is no separable martial aspect. If you're not practising it as a martial art, you're not practising Tai Chi. (Joanna, female, 30s)*

*It must not be forgotten that Tai Chi is a Martial Art and although it is practiced in many classes for its moving meditation which is of great benefit to the practitioner, the fullness of this wonderful art cannot be achieved without the understanding of the martial applications. (Stephan, male, 40s)*

*"Tai Chi" is the name of the philosophy of the interaction between Yin and Yang. "Tai Chi" (Tai Chi) is the name of the exercise system that we practise. "Chuan" means fist, and so implies that this is a Martial Art...Many people in the West practise Tai Chi just for its therapeutic side. However Tai Chi can also be used as a very powerful Martial Art. It "reverses the joints and separates the bones from the muscles," meaning that it favours locking the joints (chin na) of your opponent with dislocation being the intention. As a martial art it has very few kicks and punches. (Sue, female, 40s)*

*Tai Chi is a traditional Chinese Martial Art and can be classified as Kung Fu or Wushu. There are many theories on its development and stories abound of Taoist priests and ancient sages who have been attributed with the creation of Chinese Shadow Boxing. Martial Arts scholars in mainland China have determined that the originator was Chen Wangting of Wen County, Henan province in the middle of the 17th century at the end of the Ming Dynasty. (Derek, male, 50s)*

The Sifu/masters' passion for martial arts was not expressed only verbally. It was translated into their practice and in Tai Chi classes I observed, it was not difficult to see the martial applications, especially when there were lots of young students or students with an interest in martial arts. At the Jade Moon school for example, since Tai Chi class is a mixture of old and young sometime the

sifu/masters will divided the students into different groups according to their interests and experiences. In some of the groups the martial application is not only explained and demonstrated but also practised with body contacts. The photo below shows one of the Jade Moon master's Peter explained some locking and unlocking techniques.

However, not all the students are interested in martial arts. In this case, the sifu/masters will practise the martial arts applications or two person forms with martial meaning before or after the classes. The photo below shows the Jade Moon master Stephan playing a two person form with obvious martial meaning with his students before the class. During the summer time, Stephan and Peter developed a new session for martial applications confined to some advanced students.

The instructor's martial arts passion was often traceable to their own training. Derek had been trained and taught Mantis and Wing Chun. Stephan and Peter had experiences in Karate and Judo.

This diversity of experience is one explanation for their interest in other martial arts whether they are Chinese, Japanese or Korean. For some the decision to focus on Tai Chi was a consequence of their journey through the martial arts and a result of "root-seeking" as someone describes it. For others was the result of a chance encounter with Tai Chi or the influence of particular teachers. Stephan for example, began with Karate, but found that there was something missing between the Karate movements and its theory. He believes that Tai Chi fills this gap.

Carl had been practicing Tai Chi for nearly 20 years when I contacted him, but before that he had seven years of experiences in other martial arts. He started learning martial arts in 1978 with the Shaolin Kung Fu Association where he was introduced to full contact fighting. He then learnt Thai boxing techniques before moving onto Wing Chun and Monkey Boxing in the early 80's. He began training in Tai Chi in 1986. It was natural for him to begin his narrative of his personal Tai Chi history with the Action Films of the martial arts star, Bruce Lee.

*My interest was stimulated by Bruce Lee back in the early 70s. In my early days I learned*

*everything I could and met many interesting people who knew many interesting arts. A friend told me about Tai Chi but knowing that my interest was primarily martial warned me not to learn from anybody who did not teach the art primarily as a martial art. What piqued my interest was the mention of the Nei Kung training, something that I had not come across in all the other arts I had practised. Another friend told me that Dan Docherty, a South East Asian Martial Arts Champion, was teaching Tai Chi in Covent Garden and the rest is history. (Carl Burgess, male, 40s)*

Joanna Zoyra admitted that her choice of Tai Chi was the result of a combination of her research on the martial arts and her spiritual beliefs:

*I was looking for a good fighting style and my research drew me towards Baguazhang, Xingyiquan and Tai Chi. I also studied some Eskrima, Silat, and a little Seven Star Praying Mantis, but for me the Taoist styles were the most suitable because I am a Taoist. These arts make sense to me philosophically, intellectually and spiritually. I resisted studying Tai Chi until I encountered the work of people like Dan Docherty, Nigel Sutton and Feng Zhiqqiang. They convinced me that Taiji could actually be practised as a martial art. Although I mostly teach the Zheng Manqin style, aesthetically I've only ever really liked the Chen style because it is powerful as well as graceful (Joanna, female, 30s)*

Not all sifu/masters are oriented to martial arts however and my own research suggests that for most their involvement in Tai Chi is often based on personal reasons.

Some of them began Tai Chi because of injury or sickness:

*I was looking for a rehabilitee exercise after a back injury in a horse riding accident a few years previous. I had thought about taking up Yoga but a friend recommended Tai Chi to me and I set about finding a class. I saw Tai Chi being practiced in a TV program and thought it was Japanese! But I liked the idea that it was practised slowly and the groups practising were always so synchronised. When I got to a class I thought it looked so graceful and beautiful and easy, that soon changed when I found out how poorly balanced and coordinated I was. (Mandeigh male, 40s)*

*Others are fascinated with the elegance of Tai Chi movements:*

*I saw a friend of mine playing the form and I was struck dumb by its beauty, grace and 'other worldliness'. I was very unhappy at the time and knew that I needed help of some sort. So when I asked him what he was doing and learnt that it was Tai Chi, I thought I would give it a go. I quickly realized that if I didn't give it 100% how would I know if it would help me? So I decided to give Tai Chi 100% for 10 weeks and if it did not help me, I would stop and seek something else. Well as you can see I am still exploring and it is still helping (Richard, male, 40s)*

Other instructors choose Tai Chi because of their philosophical beliefs . One respondent recounted how she was attracted by the imagined link between the practice's assumed Taoist origins and their own pacifist ideals:

*I am not interested in the competitive side of the Martial Art Form. It maybe that I was born in 1945, the year of Peace, and I was brought up as a pacifist following my parents experience of war. I find the movements bring a peace and calm to the mind, suppleness to the body and a feeling of general well-being. Having been in competitive sports as a teenager, (swimming and tennis) I faced winning and losing frequently. It took away the enjoyment of the activity and so, just as I was reaching my peak, I quit. Some people need the self-discipline and skills required to take part in a competitive hierarchical system. The Way of the Warrior. For others it is the "feel-good-factor". The two approaches are one, from the same origins, just different interpretations. ( Libi, female, 50s)*

## **Mass Participation**

Despite some of the instructors' commitment to the martial arts aspects of Tai Chi, the publicity and publications issued by Tai Chi Schools and classes tend to emphasise its value as a bodily discipline for fitness and health or a spiritual discipline to release stress, knowing that these aspects are what most students are attracted to.

A typical advertisement for a Tai Chi class emphasises its major function as therapy as follows:

*“One of the main benefits of Tai Chi is the reduction in blood pressure, But it is also good for breathing, posture, balance, stamina, Weight loss and calming of the mind. Practising daily changes your way of thinking and helps with concentration and creativity. It can also help with anxiety, arthritis and back pain, While also helping people boost their inner energy levels and immune systems. The sequence of gentle, flowing exercise movements incorporated into the art helps Tone the body, strengthen joints and fight diseases.”* (Advertisement for AJC Tai Chi in London <http://www.ajc-Tai Chi.co.uk/>)

In the classes of the instructors oriented to martial arts however, Tai Chi’s martial arts origins may be mentioned alongside its general benefits .

*Yang Family Tai Chi is a meditative martial art where participants learn sequences of poses that focus the body and mind. All abilities are welcome as the style can be adapted to suit your own pace. (Jade Moon Tai Chi School)*

On the website of his school, Derek published an article on Tai Chi theory, which proclaimed that:

*Although Tai Chi is a traditional Chinese Martial Art, most people today choose to practice it for its health promoting benefits. Sifu Derek's Tai Chi Master loves to introduce one of his students, who he indicates had very bad mental and physical problems, now in her eighties saying my older Tai Chi sister is as lively as a cricket.*

The website of Sue’s British Chen Style Tai Chi College, emphasises that:

*Many people regard Tai Chi as slow relaxed movement for health and wellbeing, but it is a*

*combination of: Martial Art Movement Chinese Culture Jingluo System Meditation.*

However, it goes on the foreground Tai Chi's potential as a universal bodily discipline:

*Because the movements are performed in a slow relaxed manner, they are suitable for everyone. Although Tai Chi originated in China, it is now an International Sport, practised all over the World.*

*Tai Chi uses relaxation and softness to develop power. Before Tai Chi all Martial Arts relied on strength and the strongest person winning. Tai Chi has endured because it has the additional benefit of maintaining the health. When the body is relaxed the Jingluo (meridians) can open to allow the Qi to flow. From Qi flowing smoothly you can develop fast movements - from fast movements comes Gong Fu!*

The publications and advertisements I encountered explain the therapeutic function of Tai Chi by emphasising its slow movements or tracing it back to the complicated terminologies used in Chinese Traditional Medicine. But there is at least one thing they all have in common. The instructors confirm that Tai Chi is good for ANYONE. Despite of their own martial arts passion expressed in private conversations, they publicly advertise Tai Chi's all-round health functions and its suitability for everybody. This promotion of universality is obviously driven by the market impetus to ensure mass participation in their classes. Even if profit is not always the primary goal of their Tai Chi classes, mass participation contributes to their reputation as a successful sifu/master and generates significant cultural capital. Indeed, an instructor's ability to attract mass participation is another important factor in confirming their status as a successful Sifu, along with their lineage.

Most sifu/masters prefer to combine mass participation with their personal martial arts passion, but they are not always able to do so. In fact, a number of the Sifu/masters are frustrated by their students

*Tai Chi for health is very popular, Tai Chi as a martial art is far less so. The problem for me is that most people come to my classes looking for a soft gentle relaxing exercise and are surprised to find that within the softness there is hardness, within the gentle there is the tough, and the relaxation is a special form called Song, which is difficult to attain.( Carl, male, 30s)*

*I would like a better recognition of Tai Chi as a legitimate martial art. For this to happen there needs to be greater awareness amongst the general public and practitioners alike of the nature of the art. This will of course only happen when there are a sufficient number of Tai Chi practitioners competing in full contact and other fight format competitions. Tai Chi is seen mainly as a soft exercise suitable for the old and infirm hence does not attract many people who would like to participate in these kinds of activity. (Carl, male, 30s)*

Sue also talked about her desire to teach the martial arts application being limited by the requirements from students.

*I'd like to teach more application and martial arts, but there are not always the students in looking to Tai Chi ,this is the problem in the west people just think Tai Chi sort of slow, relax, gentle, exercises, they don't understand it is a particular martial arts. So when you put a post that Tai Chi classes, it is gonna to be for the old people not younger people. There is VERY few younger people come to Tai Chi class so it is difficult to get the idea through that it is something that can be regard as martial arts. People who wanna doing martial arts, they go to Karate, Aikido, Karate is very popular, kick-boxing is very popular. Those are the thing is popular. We don't always, people don't think, oh martial arts, Tai Chi. You know, and it is part a problem from China. Because in China, they always show OLD people dong Tai Chi, you must sure old people doing it. You see, the parks in Beijing for the ELDERLY people doing SLOW and relax movements and give a notion that Tai Chi is for elderly people. So young people in the west think that's all right for my grandmother to do, but not for me. I am looking for something more vigour, some hard training that will be fun. I just think it too easily. Not as easily as it looks, right? (Sue, female,*

30s)

It is however difficult for sifu/masters to suppress their interest in martial arts entirely in the classroom. Consequently, they try to find ways of introducing elements while not alienating their students..

Stephan is happy to teach the application of each movement and explain them to his students, and he believes this attracts students.

*I think it is good to explain, even to some people who don't want to learn; it helps them to understand Tai Chi better. Because they understand what their arms are doing rather than putting their hands up. You know, you can in the eyes there are more than interests. They are doing something with their hands rather than you know just putting up their hands and don't know why. That helps. Then, that's as far as we go, isn't? You will find after few months, students will start to ask, they are practicing in different way. You know they are more interest in learning martial arts side. But, you could never know, you could put people off. Especially you could get the Old ladies coming to the class, you saw talking about breaking arms. Hitting somebody in the across the row. It can put them off. I didn't put Wendy and Sue off. They are quite intrigued. That movements they have been doing it so long, that's it was. I didn't know that. It is more completed if you tell them the meaning of the movements. You know, they feel that they get the whole picture rather than part of it. (Stephan, male, 40s)*

In Derek's class, the martial arts application is seldom mentioned.

*"I mean I think to say Ok, this is to lift or to break a grab. It is one thing but that don't naturally produce people who can utilize Tai Chi self-defence.*

*That is whole different focus, whole different method of training. Because, like anyone if you want the reasonable fighter OK. We are always talking about self-defence not fighting. You know,*

*you know and social people. But it is fight. Somebody attacking, you fight it. So if you want to be a good fighter, the only way you can do is to fight a lot, there is no other way. I don't know other way. Heheheheh. And you know most people don't want to do that , even now, in my age, I don't want to do that. I used to enjoy fighting. In class and outside again I am sociable. That is why I know this way.” (Derek, male, 50s)*

Form these accounts it is evident that Tai Chi classes often tread a precarious line, with instructors struggling to balance students demands against their personal preferences and finding ways to reconcile their martial arts passion with the need for mass participation.



Peter in Jade Moon School Demonstrates Combating Applications

## **Translating Forms**

### **Inventing of Forms**

Moving between the different Tai Chi schools included in this study, it is not surprising that the forms they employed varied considerably.. This is an inevitable process , given that over Tai Chi's

decade's long history in the UK, Tai Chi Sifu/masters have come from different backgrounds with different purposes, and have based their practice on different interpretations and reinventions.

As in the history of Tai Chi's development within China, detailed earlier, sifu/masters have introduced their own modifications and reinventions. If we compare their invention of forms with the invention of the 1920s-30s in China we find there are similarities as well as differences. The similarities lay in the practices of invention such as, simplification, derivation, combination and extension, all of which remain active today. The differences are attributable to the different motives that inform these inventions. The Chinese masters of the 1930s saw themselves as reformers of the old martial arts, pursuing the modernisation of their ancient skills in the interests of bolstering the national spirit. Their British counterparts do not share this project.

#### **(a) Derivation**

As we saw in earlier chapters, derivation was one of the most popular modes of invention in China in the 1920s-30s and the main reason for the emergence of new forms and styles of Tai Chi. It is not so popular in British Tai Chi schools and clubs although there are some examples such as Dan Docherty's Wu Tang Tai Chi (also spelt as Wudang Tai Chi). According to its publicised lineage, Dan Docherty was taught the Wu style by master Zheng Tianxiong. What he called the Wu Tang style therefore clearly derives from the Wu style. But the British Wudang style is far more popular in Great Britain and other European countries than the Wu style itself. There are also several *Wudang* styles popular in China in recent years which are all quite different from Dan Docherty's, but they are totally unknown to the western world.

Neither Docherty nor his followers are willing to admit that their *Wudang* style is an invention or derivation from another style. They would rather believe that it is the original style invented on Wudang Mountain by the Taoist sage Zhang Sanfeng. For them, the lineage from Zheng Tianxiong to Dan Docherty is proof of the connection between Dan Docherty and the Taoist Immortal but not of the derivation from the Wu style. (Cheng and Docherty 1983)

## **(b) Simplification**

Simplification is the main and most popular form of invention. It has generated numerous books with titles like; *Tai Chi in Five Minutes*.. However, these radical short-cuts are not popular in Tai Chi schools or clubs. Their main audiences are those who do not regularly attend classes. At the same time, instructors will introduce their own forms of simplification. There are several obvious reasons for this. First, simplification increases the efficiency of teaching and learning. Second, it makes it possible for the old and weak to participate in Tai Chi with ease. Third, it makes Tai Chi more user-friendly for beginners and helps to retain interest, and commitment. As the advertisement for Derek's Tai Chi school puts it, the simplified form is:

*“Designed for the beginner,... selecting the major movements combined into 24 forms. It's basic and easy to grasp.”*

As we noted in earlier chapters, there are several simplified forms produced by either the Chinese national authority in Sports or by famous masters such as Zhen Manqing. These were not popular in the schools I studied. Instead, instructors would simplify the original forms in other ways for their own purposes. In the Jade Moon Tai Chi School for example, the masters divide the long form they teach into three sections. The students learnt each section separately. Only advanced students play the whole sequences of 3 sections. In the British Chen Style Tai Chi College in Manchester, in the class for the elderly, the master will only teach the first fifteen movements out the total of 74 movements.

Another form of simplification is to concentrate on simplifying a single movement to reduce its difficulty by for example, changing a circular movement to a linear one. In the Jade Moon Tai Chi School, the master simplified the Turn Body with Lotus Kick into a 180 degree rotation on the toe. Since this movement is so close to a ballet rotation, some students questioned its authenticity. After analysing the published manuals and videos of famous masters, the master in Jade Moon, decided to change it back to its “original” version. However, after only a few sessions, the simplified version fought back since the students found it much easier than the “original”

version, and the complicated “original” version was soon abandoned by both the master and the students spontaneously and without further discussion.

### **(c) Combination**

Combination is another frequent form of invention.. Since most of the sifu/masters I encountered had some martial arts experiences and, as we saw earlier a number had a strong commitment to Tai Chi as a martial art, it is easy to understand why they wished to introduce forms and movements from other martial arts styles into their Tai Chi teaching. In the Jade Moon Tai Chi School for example, a Phoenix style is taught which is similar to some forms coming from *Bagua*. The most popular combination however, is with the forms from so call internal styles of martial arts such as *Xinyi*, because they share a common theoretical root, even though their movements are incompatible. Peter of the Jade Moon School used to teach a short sequence which he learnt from Erle Montaigue’s class and inserted into the turning movements he taught. The short sequence consists of straight movements such as punch, turning and punch. It looks like a distorted form of *XinYi*.

### **(d) Extension**

As we noted earlier, the extension of the forms was popular in the 1930s in China as a way to claim that a particular version of a certain style was “original” or recovered from lost ancient forms. The same process has occurred in the western world. One of the most debated instances is Erle Montaigue’s Old Yang Style. He called this form the Yang Luchan form to hint that the first generation of the Yang style masters invented it. However, it is widely questioned why this blue eyed westerner was perhaps one of the only person in modern history to have received such information and widely believed that Erle invented the form himself. looking at this Old Yang Style form or Yang Luchan form it is easy to see that it simply extends the existing popular form. In the popular form for example, the first several movements are “Preparation Position, Commencement of Tai Chi, Grasp the bird’s tail, and Single Whip”. In the old Yang style form, extra movements like “double spear hands, fish in eight” have simply been inserted in between

these.

In the Jade Moon School, even though the sifu/masters insisted that they hadn't changed the materials they first received and that they followed Yang Zhenduo's book, they had in fact extended the forms, again by inserting extra movements such as "shoulder strike" and "fish in eight". This kind of extension is not for the purpose of securing a better transition between movements but to better represent the flow of *Qi*. Stephan of Jade Moon explained how he devised his extension after watching a DVD of Yang Chengfu, from the fourth generation of the Yang family, and a direct descendant of the lineage line, and noticed that it only offered the very basic movements. He wanted to go further with his students.

Simplification, derivation, extension and combination are all based on already existing forms. But there are also instances of origination in the UK context. The Lee style is a typical example. This was quite popular in England in the 1970s mainly due to the efforts of Chee Soo, a successful martial arts author. The form consisted of several postures imitating animals, such as the tiger posture and the dragon posture. Since its movements have very few similarities with all other styles, its authenticity has been doubted even since. In different versions of Chee Soo's book, the form claims a lineage stretching back to Ho-Hsieh Lee who lived 1,000 BC or to Li Yishe of Yongnian County in the 1860s; even though its movements have nothing in common with the latter and only share the same surname Lee/Li. This form became less popular when more mainstream Tai Chi forms emerged in the UK.

British sifu/masters tend to avoid the word invention with very few exceptions. When simplifications are introduced they believe they help to preserve the essence. If extensions are introduced they tend to consider them as rediscoveries and reassertions of historical origins.

## **Translating Theory**

Again, like their Chinese predecessors in 1930s China, the inventions of UK instructors,

inventions are not confined to modifying of practices they also extend to theory.

The most popular theoretic inventions in Tai Chi cluster around three major conceptions: Qi, Yin, and Yang.

All three of these conceptions have a long history of discussion in Chinese philosophy but even though there are many publications devoted to them there is no widely accepted or authoritative theoretical framework. This absence opens up a space in which instructors can develop their own translations of the theory.

In recent publications on Tai Chi in English, whether or not they are translated from the Chinese, a substantial amount of space has been devoted to the idea of a measurable external *Qi*. Some of the ancient masters quoted have promoted the mythical conception of *Qi* and some, like Chu (Zhu Jinxiong or Chu King) have gone further. His conception of happy Chi, as its name suggests, personalises the abstract conception of *Qi* and re-presents it as a state of individual emotional well-being.

During my observation in Tai Chi school, I encountered some instances of this kind of mystical conception but more frequently, instructors like Peter and Stephan had developed an altogether more pragmatic and realistic attitude toward *Qi*, *Yin* and *Yang*.

*I don't think Qi is some way of life coming to your hand or anything like that. Qi is what happens when everything flows correctly. The mind is focus. You the Song the Qi when you Song. And everything is stable. And you got pure thoughts in the movement like a tennis player when he hit the ball, just right. You know he feels it's good, because the timing has been perfect. You can say his Qi flow his whole body and go over to the ball. If he has a bad balance of Qi, he doesn't hit the ball correctly. I think it's the same way, the same applying in Tai Chi movements or you know doing in the martial arts application. You have the timing right you feel the other person's energy. Then your Qi can radiate the desired effect. I don't think it's you know Qi can only be a living*

object

*It's very much a state of mind. Even if you do the right technique, if your state of mind isn't correct, then the Qi won't feel like it flows. And you are in a good state and do the techniques correct, all these come together, I personally I can say I feel my Qi is right. But I don't think anything mysterious. (Stephan, male, 40s)*

Stephan also questioned the popular idea of tingling fingers as a representation of Qi flow.

*It's my personal opinion. The reason you feel the tingling is because of many thing. You are in a state of relaxation, you sink your mind or, some calls it Qi. You are moving at a stage so you are exercising the body. Therefore the circulation is good. Because of the blood flow and everything Then you get tingling . It's difficult, but because of the mind, you can call it Qi. You can do the same form next week. All the movements are the same. You're thinking about when to go home and watch the football. And your mind isn't there. Maybe your hands don't tingle then. It doesn't feel the same. Only when your mind and body comes together, the same time when you just feels right, and I think those points I can feel the Qi. (Stephan, male, 40s)*

Since students have invested their money and time in being taught particular techniques, instructors tend to express their theoretical ideas through their practice rather than through explicit talks or lectures.

In the Jade Moon for example, the practices of Qi are incorporated into two sections: the warming-up at the beginning and the so called Qigong practices at the end. During the warming-up exercises, the participants are required to massage their own kidney. The male participants are required to use the left hand to massage clockwise, while the female are asked to use their right hand to massage counter-clockwise. The explanation for this distinction is that according to the Yin and Yang philosophy underpinning Tai Chi, the female is catalogued as the Yin, left, and the male as the Yang, right. To reinforce this conception, when the participants

commence their movements, the instructor asks all the females to begin from their left-hand side while all the male participants are asked to begin with their right-hand side. There is no Tai Chi book that mentions the differences in either direction or gender. However, in this reconstructed practice the gendered meaning of the bodily disciplines has been emphasised and inserted into a wider schema taken from “eastern” philosophic tradition. .

Another example is the so-called *Qigong* practice in the same training hall. After the training session, the participants are required to do some standing exercises combined with meditation and breath control. This is called *Zhanzhuang* in Chinese but has been renamed here as *Qigong*, a much more general word for a whole catalogue of breath control techniques. One of the basic postures in Tai Chi is standing with both hands rising like holding a ball. In the Jade Moon, this posture had been develop into a variant with the hands rising up and then falling down interrupted as representing the two states of Taoism: Heaven and the People .Here again, a selective borrowing from eastern philosophy serves the imagined body-mind nexus by inventing body postures with meanings designed to produce spiritual relaxation.



Qigong Practise in Jade Moon School

In Derek’s class, the instructor clearly stated his doubts about the basic conception of *Qi*

*This is a whole world of Qi. What is Qi, many people will say different things. I mean, my teacher who is 68.(interrupted 10 seconds) always talk about the Qi. Qi this, Qi that. When you ask special training. Oh no, just practice your Tai Chi form. Oh yeh, you know everything has its yin and yang and open and close. You know, one, two, all the actions do Yin and Yang, but you don't actually, in my feeling, you don't actually need to understand that to play Tai Chi. You maybe disagree, but I don't think you need to understand. What is yin, what is yin action, what is yang action. You are doing the form correctly, you will do this anyway. You know, you are living in yin and yang...I mean, physically, when you play Tai Chi, your, your, you are physically doing yin and yang theory.*

*If Qi exist, and it is, it is natural thing because we all have it .and a good child had play Tai Chi and this young man doesn't but his Qi is perfectly strong and perfectly good. So it is different. as I try to say it is a natural state I don't regard it something mystical. I believe it is a natural state. Yes it can be developed. I also saw some danger in some Qigong style people force the Qi or force the feeling, inside the body. and once in China Qigong was banned for this. Many people came out with very strange ideas and breathing and. Stuff of flying and lot of very weird things so very very careful. So my feeling it to keep it natural. Quite simple Very wise.*

*all trains Qigong. If I down to the park playing Tai Chi in the morning. He is down in the park doing some sort of Mantis in the morning, and these practice Win Chun in the morning. So because Qigong is breathe control with mind control naturally (Derek, male, 50s)*

Here, Derek even uses the word *Qi* as the equivalent of Health. In his class “*Qigong*” is still taught, but it is used as a warming-up exercise in relation to Mantis Fist, another Chinese martial arts. As this instance again makes clear, instructors from different backgrounds introduce a variety of other elements into their Tai Chi classes.

## Chapter 7 Translated Experiences: Being a student

### Great Expectations: Coming to Tai Chi

In his research, Chinese sports scholar Nu compared the different motivations of Tai Chi practitioners in China and Japan. In China, almost 1/3 of practitioners considered themselves to be unhealthy and used Tai Chi as an alternative therapy, while in Japan, 65.8% saw themselves as healthy and practiced Tai Chi as a discipline for fitness. The situation in England is different from either of these. (Nu 1998)

During my research in Tai Chi classes, my interviews with participants revealed that most students had a certain preoccupation with Tai Chi before they came to practice it systematically. Some had searched for a long time for a 'proper' Tai Chi class.

A fifty-six year old lady had spent years teaching herself before she found a Tai Chi class:

*It's one of those things that I have been meaning to do for a long time. I talked to myself, I would like to do Tai Chi, it's something about it appears to me, the speed of it, the whole philosophy. I thought about for about two or three year, I didn't decide to find a Tai Chi class. I can't find a Tai Chi class, I bought the book, It had no tape with it, and I have to look at how the feet going. Somehow, when you stand and thinking it doesn't look right. It says that's south, it suppose to start from South. South is the right place to start. Every direction you choose is start from South, everything else is north, west and east. It makes me wrong way around. I am reading this book, and I am thinking no I need to watch somebody to do it. Somebody to say to me that am right you need that arm goes that way. And I just decide if one day stop reading about it and joining a class. (Windy, female, 56)*

Another young practitioner describes Tai Chi as “*Something we always wanted to do, but never found time or never found somewhere to do it. And I am annoyed.*” (Perry, male, 22)

Before he joined a Tai Chi class, he also had the experience of self-teaching

*I left my Karate because the differences between me and my teacher. We have been looking around since then. To find some not so distant place to go. We started here in December. Teach ourselves. Tai Chi you see on the TV, people tell you the makeup of it. It is sort of you can see it but how to do they should no. I want to know how to do it properly. When the ad is on the board, Oh, Quick, to the reception. That's something, I always want to do but there is no opportunity. (Perry, male, 22)*

There were some exceptions, students who knew nothing about Tai Chi before but had been attracted or intrigued by popular images they had seen:

*No, I never do Tai Chi before; the only thing I have seen is the advertisement on television, the BBC advertisement. I didn't know that's Tai Chi, and I came here and I talked to some body here, they said that's Tai Chi. I thought that's just some movements, some elegant, you know, dance movement or something looks good in the clothing and they put like that is because maybe the scene goes with the advertisement. (Sue, female, 50s)*

Even though most students tended to know something about Tai Chi before taking classes, like the blind sages in the famous fable about the elephant, they were likely to have only a partial understanding having touched only the tail or the ear of the whole animal. It is therefore not surprising that different students imagined Tai Chi variously as a sports, a martial art, a bodily discipline for fitness, or a spiritual discipline for mental calmness.

In the class I conducted in a fitness club, one of my students who had experience in yoga clearly stated:

*“I do yoga, Tai Chi, you know, sort of ballet type thing, almost, more elegant. I think I just said it is being in the space around you everybody.” (Helen, female, 40s)*

Another student saw Tai Chi as one element in a variety of practices they were engaged in, some very different, some similar:

*I used to do fencing, European style sword work. I practice quite a few sports. Something I do closest to Tai Chi is I do stuff spinning, performance work. That’s the closest style which the way of moving is similar to Tai Chi. (Andy, male, 18)*

Another student didn’t know much about Tai Chi before he began taking classes but was a long time sports practitioner. Even though he had gained his initial impression from a local newspaper, he had his own conception of Tai Chi as a discipline of “flexibility”

*I do a lot sports anyway already. I read stuff and the newspaper basically and generally thing about Tai Chi. So I had a vague idea. I like to do it. The yang style teacher, he had an advertisement in the local paper. I have seen it for few times then I have a goal. I follow the advertisement in the paper. So I knew Tai Chi initially in the newspaper.*

*From what I saw from the paper for me it’s good for flexibility. I have done a lot of sports. Gym muscle building and I thought that’s a little bit rigid, I am getting older. I am more rigid and get it tested in the exercises. So it sounds Tai Chi. I thought, it would be good for flexibility. Without not knowing what it really was. But it’s the idea it is the using turning and flexibility rather than strength. That’s my initial impression. I followed up with it because the impression is really, that side is good. It is lot of turning and flexibility. And the exercises I didn’t realize it the concentration and you know the patience and doing this slowly and building up from that exercise and flexibility and the patience and concentration that’s extra which I never thought about, which I like. That’s why I kept doing. (Wile, male, 40s)*

Other young practitioners thought of Tai Chi primarily as a martial art, since in common with a number of instructors they had started training in some other martial art, such as Karate or Wing-Chun, and later shifted to Tai Chi.

*Martial Arts I have been interested since I was little. Bruce Lee is my always and forever. It's kind of childhood dream. It is something I always want to do but never have the confidence to do. Because you are always with other people, they will mess it up. People gonna laugh. (Arnold, male, 20s)*

However, when asking about their motives for taking up Tai Chi, the most frequent answer students gave was "for relaxation". This was particularly the case with older participants.

A fifty-year old practitioner who has been practised for nearly 5years told me directly:

*I came to Tai Chi classes for relaxation and hopefully to make me feel better. (Windy, female, 50s)*

A recent-retired new student also confessed

*I feel so depressed last year. I try to find some ways to solve it. It says exercises work and drugs work as well. Hahahaha. So I choose Tai Chi. (John, male, 50s)*

Another student considered Tai Chi as an alternative of drugs

*I have been working in a very stressful job. So I decide to do two things after my retirement: fishing and Tai Chi. (Bill, male, 60s)*

The word "relaxation" is not unfamiliar in Tai Chi manuals and theoretical discussion. Indeed, it

is one of the most frequently repeated requirements for the practice. What is interesting is that here “relaxation” is presented as a means towards developing a better movement quality not an end in itself.

The influence of popular mass media images emerged from my interviews as a major influence on the ways participants imagined Tai Chi. Those who practiced it as a martial art, see it as essentially the same discipline as they had seen in action films:

*I don't know what attracted me. Basically, it's something I always want to do. Seeing all these programmes on TV. Wow, that's brilliant. You should do that. The films when they do all these stuffs. I saw the Hero recently. That's beautiful, I love it. (Perry, male, 20s)*

In contrast, those looking for relaxation had been attracted by images they had seen in travel programs about China:

*Quite long time ago, just from things like travel programmes, people in China, when you see like quite old people doing Tai Chi in the park. (John, male, 50s)*

*Just travel programme, when people on the TV, they are showing stereotypical image of China. When you get China or Hong Kong or Singapore, they show people in the park doing Tai Chi and tend to be slightly old people. (Andrew, male, 30s )*

After practicing for a while, some students may spend money on books and videos .Their choices again, tended to reinforce the ways they already imagined Tai Chi

*I have tons of books people saying about different styles of Tai Chi, Kongfu, Bagua, (Andy, male, 18)*

*We confessed we watched every video we can find, and every book we can find. I have got eight*

*or nine. I have got Tai Chi journey, An Introduction to Tai Chi, Soft Martial Arts. (Windy, female, 56)*

*I have got an English police who went to China, I cannot remember the name, He writes a book about martial arts, it is interesting, fascinating. We have 20-30 books. (Sue, female, 50s)*

*I have got two. They are actually in German. Years ago, I saw on television at night. It's a German guy doing Tai Chi. We have been doing it for years then. The video is all in German, you don't need to hear, you can watch it. They are absolutely fabulous. Another Australian one, the healing one. Tai Chi for healing. (Perry, male, 22 )*

### **Self-evaluation: Polysemic Interpretation**

Despite these differences in student's motivations for taking up Tai Chi and the ways they imagined it, they shared a common conception of it being a discipline that fostered "relaxation". Their understandings of "relaxation" however, by no means uniform.

*Relax, a generally relax. Not sleepy, cause there is a concentration. You always thinking of the new moves, so you concentrating what you are doing in a relax manner. So afterwards it's quiet relax and alight. You just concentrate a bit, so generally enjoyable sensation, basically when I finish it. (Sue, female, 50s)*

*Because it relax me. I do lots of running, The joints will tense up. Tai Chi movement relax them a bit, make me loose. (Wile, male, 40s)*

One student who practiced several different styles of Tai Chi in different class believed that different styles brought him different feelings.

*I found Yang style, a bigger style, a more open style , maybe more stretching. Chen style, I found it better for the joints on the twisting point of view. If anything basically different is the Yang style is more stretching the muscles possible, and Chen is good for the joints. I used my joints more in Chen style, more stretching and open in Yang style. And of cause the breathing exercises, I used them a lot, because that's good for running. The more breathing you can do, the easiest you can run, the fastest you can run. (Andrew, male, 22)*

Some students tended to exaggerate the effect of Tai Chi on their bodies claiming that everything is helped by Tai Chi.

*Even to small points like driving. I drive in a more relax. It makes you like that. You approach anything in life, problems. Definitely.*

A seventy year old student even told me that the fact that she had fallen down the stairs the other day without injuring herself was a directly result of the greater flexibility in her joints that she felt Tai Chi had given her.

Other students describe relaxation as primarily a mental rather than a bodily state. They describe a state of “taking off”

*Tai Chi is a funny thing isn't it. It takes from your mind. (Rao, female, 40s)*

*Fitness and to relax the mind really. Mind is such a thing that it always worries; it's very difficult to get rid of it. (Sue, female, 50s)*

A seventy-year old student believed that her sleep was much better because of the “taking off” state.

*Very, very relaxing actually, extremely relaxing. I find it extremely relaxing. After my Tai Chi*

*session, I sleep better. That's the first reason I come to it. Normally, I had a problem sleeping. I feel after my Tai Chi practice, I sleep a lot better. Maybe another reason in Tai Chi must be the relaxed way of exercises. Maybe it's concentrating on it. It takes your mind off things. (Jessica, female, 70s)*

Some students describe the feeling as a restless, energetic state.

*It is beneficial. We feel relaxed, we better after doing it, mentally, physically and spiritually all together. We hope to do it for a long time.*

*I think it good for you mentally. You can look a situation different. The way you did before, we are much better than we used to be. We can calm down which is nice.*

*Cantered and peaceful, It's that lovely sort of sensation. Physical sensation, I find. If you've gone through the form, I really feel it's done well, there is a mental calmness. Very calm. There is also physical sort of relaxation, it really does centre energy. That whole feeling of. It's not latitude, not tiredness. It's peacefulness, I think that's why it makes it so adaptive in a way. There is a lovely sensation, you doing it flowing out and flowing out, At the end of it, that feeling have flowed and turned just give you lovely, peaceful sensation. I feel very serene, very calm. It lowers my blood pressure, probably. It's that kind of calm, but it's a mental calm as well as a physical calm. (Aisani, female, 50s)*

In context, some of the martial arts enthusiasts claimed that they didn't feel a sense of relaxation:

*Sometimes depending on the class if I am doing well lots of Tai Chi stuff I usually feel energised (Jack, male, 20s)*

*It depends. Sometimes it is quite tired. My legs feel quite tired. I find it feels quite relaxed. Quite*

*relaxing. I don't know, it depends. I love to say, I think it depends on what kind of day. In quite a social day, I found it quite relaxing, But in a quite tiring day, it can wear me up as well. (Andy, male, 18)*

### **Sink the Qi: Translated body experiences**

Dykhuisen in his comparative research on Aikido practice in Japan and United States, used *Ki* (the Japanese word for *Qi*) as the key conception. He found that in Japanese and American *dojos*, different conception of *Ki* were circulated. While the Japanese version is gentle, the American one is much more forceful. (Dykhuisen 2000)

In Tai Chi theory, as we discussed earlier, in the 1920s different ideologies competed to provide explanations of *Qi*. English students' understandings of *Qi* are translations from these initiatives.

The most distinctive feature is the separation of the conception of *Qi* from breathing. As we discussed earlier, *Qigong* is used as a warming up or "cooling down" exercise in Tai Chi classrooms. Most of the students see the breathing practice and the *Qigong* as different things. In contrast, in Chinese popular culture, especially in relation to martial arts and traditional medicine, inhaling air is one of the main sources of *Qi* with the air imagined as flowing through networks across the body. English students however, would rather consider *Qi* as flowing energy rather than air.

*Breathing is very important. I used to have singing lessons. A good sound is produced through breathing. Good voice projection comes from good breathing. It seems to me, if you exercise, breathing is part of it. It's certain seems to me that Tai Chi, the whole idea is when your movement goes out, the breathing goes out, when you come back in, the breathing comes in. Put these two together, but there is something I think it is quite hard to do. I meant I am not very good at it yet. Because it might tends to be arms going out, arms going in, how you breathing... It is the last*

*thing you master down the line. You master the physical movements and then you start to refine it. And among the refinements, you must do breathing. I am sure the better your breathing would be, the powerful the actual feeling would be, because it would support the movement. I find it hardest and last down the line. When I put my arm, I cannot remember should I breathe in or out. (Martyn, male, 40s)*

Some students are interested in the techniques of breath control but not in the theory that underpins them.

*Just a little discipline to control them, to control the action of it, especially with the first motion, when you hold your hands up, I have done it with much body strength. I found after a while, I guess my hand get. It's quite good but I didn't tend to do much of this outside of class. I am more interesting the actual movements of Tai Chi. I just enjoy the discipline of the movements. I don't really know much of the spiritual side of it. (Aisani, female, 50s)*

*I like the breathing exercise, it helps you internal motion, if you like. Again before the exercise, I did the breathing exercises, using the external exercises to help your internal organs. That was something extra I found. So I enjoy that as well because I like expand the lungs as much as possible basically to use in the running which I do more sports, you know I go on some race, so obviously it can flexible your muscles, breathing expand your lungs as much as possible. So I enjoy that and found that useful. (Sue, female, 50s)*

*On an intellectual level, to a certain amount, just some curiosity of know about things. I am quite curious about things. Just actually practice that sort of stuff, not huge amount. I don't know much of them at all. I just know some of the terms. I just heard the words. So I don't know huge amount of them. To me it is internal sensation. A plain movement of your whole body, and get the feeling. And when you are doing correctly, you will have a good feeling about it. To me, it is internal feeling. (John, male, 50s)*

Another tendency is to mix up everything and consider the unfamiliar oriental conceptions of *Qi*, *Yin* and *Yang* all together. When I taught a Tai Chi class at LA fitness, a student worried about her tingling fingers. Another student explained it as a sign that *Qi* was flowing freely. This student announced excitedly that now she had got the feeling of *Qi*, the next aim it was to find *Yang*.

Some students who were familiar with western medical science began to re-imagine their body after practising Tai Chi. A nurse who had practiced Tai Chi for just one or two years told me that when she practice the *Qigong*, she could feel a sense of burring and imagined the store place for *Qi* being situated under the belly.

Another student claimed to have a sensation of coldness:

*Sometime when we stand like this. We fell cold. Like the Fridge, As if somebody opens the fridge door, we feel the cold come out. (Jessica, female, 70s)*

Another student believed that *Qi* is something that has been lost in the Western world, and that practicing Tai Chi brought her back into contact with it:

*The idea things have balance, things have yin and yang and Qi. There is a flow in your body. I think modern day people get sick in their bodies and they are not very good at interpreting how their bodies feel and how their bodies work. In a sense I think lots of people autonomous much more aware of it. but the modern life stops you being really aware and of your body, how it feels and it works. It seems when you do Tai Chi, it get you back to that really be connecting to your body, how your body feels, what your body is doing. Idea of Qi and that all sort of flow the energy is a lovely sensation. It fix with whole thing. When you do it right, you will feel it. I don't know whether I am right. When I do it, every now and again I get that wonderful sensation and flowing out and flowing back. That is the whole concept Qi. Being in centred in your dantian, being cantered and feeling it and I think it is something we lost it and do need to put it back again.*

*They are opposite not simple like white and dark. There is a light, there is a dark, there is a heat, there is cold, happiness and sadness I can think one with the other. That's sort of balance. If you can manage to balance one set of feeling with another set of feelings. You will have an emotional well being. So for me it is about nature versas. It's not about good and evil, and that sort of sense, it is about thing like light, dark , cold and warm and about happiness and sadness about rough and smooth. It's about the opposite of the world. If you look around, they are everywhere. And it fit Tai Chi, it's that whole idea of if you go, you must come back again, you can't go out and out and out for ever, you have to come back. When you come back, you gather the power. And the power goes out there, you come back again. You move the weight from one side to another, and if you want add power to it, shifting the weight from one side to another. If that, so you keep the balance. If keep in the middle, you can see the two fit together. So pushing out, must be come in again, you can just push, push and push but come back to the point where start to go. So I think it fit it beautifully. Sensational Qi and flow and how you get that flow and how you feel that flow is about how the world balanced. It is quite shrewd philosophy. It's very peaceful philosophy, it's very serene philosophy. (Helen, female, 40s)*

Some students when they practice Tai Chi for years, even develop an explanation for the proper and improper use of Qi.

*But the other class we had. It's that one in Bestol. The one there we don't really understand what he is doing. When we went there once or twice, I went home with a headache. A very bad headache It 's because of all these Qi had no way to go and it blocked in the head. We used to cool it down afterwards. Even we do Qiqong, we don't like to finish it high one. I like to finish it up with low one. Otherwise I will have a headache because the Qi stays high. (Windy, female, 50s)*

For them, Qi is a visible force:

*When we used to go the first chap, we used to get it through the feet. Through this part of the foot. We used to pass the "Ball" to the foot and ground. We used to breathe in and type it down*

*through the fingers. We could feel that. You know the Shaolin monk's show, it is fantastic. When we saw them, we saw them in Nottingham. We were spellbound like children. You can see the chap on the side. He talked about the martial arts. We were on the front. Everybody on the front can really feel they are Qi in up. We all felt that. We went to the see the Leicester show, they've already done their done their tour. They were literary ware out. They are tired, nothing came out. They went through emotionally but there is no that feeling. (Windy, female, 50s)*

### **Push Hands: seesaw battle between the translations**

In Ang Lee's film *Push Hand*, he uses this two-person practice form as the metaphor for the seesaw battle between Eastern and Western lifestyles and worldviews. In the English Tai Chi classroom, the push hand becomes the battlefield for different translations of Tai Chi itself.

As we noted earlier, even though there are some martial arts enthusiasts in Tai Chi classrooms, most of Tai Chi students are looking for bodily relaxation and spirituality..

*I didn't realize that Tai Chi was a martial art; it is very much based on martial arts. I had a vague realization of it. When you see the slow movements, I don't realize actually they are application for the martial arts. That's what I have a lot of interests in doing it. So the thing is useful for me as an expansion of my knowledge if you like. It is interesting to find that slow movements put the respective why they are good for health because they come from the martial arts background. But I didn't realize that in the beginning. I learnt the another way around, realizing the slow movements are martial arts and that makes it more interesting, more knowledgeable for me. I am interesting in how it makes your body work. (Helen, female, 40s)*

*I like when the teacher explains where the movements come from, I found it is a little bit easier to remember. Exactly where to go from there, because, you can picture you can have exactly what they try to accomplish. So you can figure out exactly the ways suppose to move. So I do like*

*finding out that sort of things (Bill, male, 60s)*

The push hand is a two-person movement. Compared with the slow movements that generally characterizes Tai Chi, the sense of martial arts is much obvious in this practice. Some of the students totally ignore its origins as a preparation for combat, a form of shadow boxing, and simply consider it as an extra exercise.

*It seems very simple, but needs more tact to do it properly. I just do it as another technique, again just as proper concentration. If it is a change exercise, just add a bit to show there is more than one way to learn how to twist and use the information, Tai Chi information. I used it just as an extra exercise. (Wile, male, 40s)*

Some student explained that they dislike the push hand exercises since they detracted from the feeling of bodily well being that Tai Chi brings them. Added to which, they don't understand the forms

*Sometime we hated push hands for years. Actually we do enjoy it sometime. After we done all of that., we don't enjoy it. We never grasp it properly. We don't understand. :We don't feel we gain anything from it. except once you come to help us and tell us to make the arm to make circles. We got better. That's gone now, we are back to not understand now. (Windy, female, 56)*

*Is there any point of it? I know there is, but we don't know what the point is. We don't know understand it. We don't feel like the way we do all these exercises. When we do part one, two, three, we really feel good, aching not just tickling but aching. And we start to do the push hand that took away the good feeling. So we stop doing it. (Sue, female, 50s)*

When they do the push hands exercise, instead of making circling movements with their hands that perform it as a rhythmic calisthenics. They even murmur "one, two, three, and four" as they do the movements.



Old Ladies in Jade Moon Practise Push Hands

The photo was taken when these two elderly ladies began to learn the push hand. They did sincerely as an imitation of combat.



Push Hand Becomes Gossip Time

After several weeks however, they successfully translated it into a calisthenics and an occasion to gossip.

Some students had no interest in martial arts at all. They see Tai Chi as a non-violent practice

*I haven't done any martial art bit. Maybe, it is female thing or not. I thought it tend to see very much as exercises and mental calmness and that sort of things. I mean I knew the fact there is a martial art aspect of it. I suppose which makes you aware you are at school, team teach train, you have particular training in strength, and you can see a lot of those movements. You push out and wait, I didn't take it as a martial art., but as a sort of Peaceful, balance, mobility, all these sort of elements. It would take much to turn into a fight form. I am a little bit old for a fight form. (Aisani, female, 50s)*

*It really bothers me to add the martial art. I do like that love sensation. It's I suppose that lovely*

*sensation, balance, in and out, keep your body still in the middle, and then rotating around and moving around. That lovely sensation. (Jessica, female, 70s)*

## **Struggles between isms**

Whereas, students in most classes can bracket off Tai Chi's martial arts aspects, since as we noted earlier these are not generally emphasised, it is much more difficult for students attracted to Tai Chi as a spiritual discipline rooted in Taoism to reconcile this with their own religious beliefs.

English students applied three major strategies to manage the encounter between their own religion beliefs and Tai Chi's underlying philosophy: Conversion, Affiliation and Comparison.

### **(a) Conversion**

There are some examples of famous Tai Chi sifu/masters converting to Taoism. The first person to bring Tai Chi from China to England, Pytt Geddes is a typical example. Her autobiography *Looking for the Golden Needle* (Geddes 1991) takes its title from the Taoist metaphor of the golden needle. However, I found almost no example of conversion to Taoism during my research. Interestingly however, there were several instances of conversion to Buddhism. A young student who had been learning Tai Chi since he was 18 for example, converted to Buddhism after practising Tai Chi for more than three years. At first sight this seems distinctly odd since Buddhism has exerted very little influence on the development of Tai Chi and its core theoretical tenets have little in common with Buddhist beliefs. There is however a more pragmatic explanation. Firstly, material on Buddhism is much more readily available to English readers than writings on Taoism. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, Buddhism is a closer fit with prevailing Western stereotypes of the 'essence' of 'Eastern' religion.

### **(b) Affiliation**

In contrast, Tai Chi students who believed in Hinduism, most of whom came from South Asian backgrounds, managed Tai Chi's assumed Taoist origins by emplacing the strong affiliations with their own religious system. Even though they may not know much about Taoism, they saw the two as sharing a common Asian ancestry. A student of Indian origin, in the class I taught at LA fitness told me that she saw similarities between Tai Chi , and Hinduism, though as she confessed, she discovered these by accident rather than through any systematic study.

*The only knowledge I have is the Buddhism. You know we learnt at school. That's all, not Taoism. I don't anything about Taoism, that's something relating Japanese, that's Japanese religion isn't it? (Aisani, female, 50s)*

*I came across Yin and Yang when I was reading about Feng Shui. I found about that when I want somebody to rearrange the furniture in my house. "Feng Shui" my house, I thought I read about it first. That's when I heard about Yin and Yang. We have something similar in our religion. (Aisani, female, 50s)*

This sense of communality gave a number of Asian students a sense of superiority over their white, Western, counterparts.

### **(c) Comparison**

While Asian practitioners experienced a sense of affiliation because of their symbolic geographic closeness to China, the Christian students had to find ways of negotiating the differences between Tai Chi principles and their own beliefs

Some saw no difficulty in accomplishing this. One Catholic student for example believed that Tai Chi supported his religious life by offering a bridge between the spiritual world he thought of as being inside him already and his body.

*I am a Catholic. I have been practicing my religion which is usual for lots of English people don't, but I do. So I obviously have a spiritual side which is running partly along with my physical interests in sports and interests. What Tai Chi I found is quite interesting to do is tied together and it links up a little bit from the religion and spiritual side. I used my Catholic faith and my physical sports side, the link between them I find is good. And Tai Chi makes that little bridge. From the sport and external side, Tai Chi going to the spiritual side of internal body and the concentration which is helping your brain, your mind, that links up and complete spiritual side to me. When I speak the term spirit I am thinking of religious spirit which is completely outside of the body. So again there is a use of thing I didn't realize as I started. That makes a link between the two. So I am interesting the spiritual side when I started Tai Chi rather than before. That's why I kept going because I can the link between your body, your mind, your spirit and then the external spiritual world. It gives us a whole life style. So it's like a little link to hold your life together with the different parts without think about them all the time and continuously. When you do practice, you do different things, you can instead of doing them separately each one, but bring them together, when you are doing one, you can think another if you like. (John, male, 50s)*

However, another student, also an active Christian, experienced more difficulty and managed the potential conflict with his own beliefs by taking no interest in the philosophy underlying Tai Chi and treating it simply as a bodily discipline:

*Not huge amount of interests of it, to be honest, partially because I am active Christian. I go to church. That explains my life comes from. It depends how far it goes to the spiritual side of Tai Chi, I mean if I want to grasp that, I may find it bit more conflict but concentrating just on the physical movements. It doesn't seem to be problem. Just depends on your way of focus. (Andrew, male, 30s)*

## Chapter 8 Living in England, Imaging China

### Collective Preoccupations and Personal Interpretations

Donohue has argued that there is a warrior dream among American students of Japanese martial arts. Tai Chi presents a more complex case because as we have seen, in addition to being a martial art, it has also been promoted as a bodily discipline and spiritual discipline. Consequently different students may construct variable understandings based on their particular personal formation and interests (Donohue 1994)

In his ethnography of practitioners of the Japanese martial art, Aikido, Kohn has argued that it provides both a pretext for the expression of group identity and an arena for self-discovery and personal interpretation (Kohn 2003). This combination is also operative for students of Tai Chi. As we noted earlier, mass participation in Tai Chi in China did not occur until the 1930s, and the first recorded mass performance of Tai Chi was not until 1934 in the National Games. Even so the imagination of Tai Chi as both an outdoors practice and a group performance has become firmly fixed in the minds of English practitioners. However, not all my respondents welcomed this collective aspect of Tai Chi.

Some enjoyed group practice:

*I prefer to play in the group. You see, you are learning from each other. Tai Chi, it takes my mind off things. (Aisani, female, 50s)*

But, others preferred a balance between group and personal practice.

*I like to follow up myself. Learning with the group, seeing what everyone is doing and get all the mistakes sorted out. And if I can remember the lesson, I prefer to practice by myself. In lessons,*

*doing one thing, get it right. And I like to practice by myself to train connect up two separate movements. So I do like to practice by myself and learn in the group. (Sue, female, 50s)*

Another student explained why they enjoyed personal practice, emphasising its role as an arena for developing a personal style

*I quite like to do things in the group; I really enjoy doing it in the group. But it is quite nice to just go through the bit I can't do and the bit I like doing and I need to practice on my own. Because I think, you have to develop your own taste, your own speed which you want to do it. Sometimes when you do in a group, that's not your particular speed, and you know your breathing, so sometimes it's quite nice to do it on your own. Develop the form on your own speed, sometimes it's quite nice to go with a group of people with their speed. I don't mind, I like both. (Windy, female, 56)*

The acceptance of group performance alongside the preference for private practice points to the role of polysemic interpretations of Tai Chi in the collective imagination of English practitioners

## **Outdoors Imagination and indoors practice**

In Tamara Kohn's anthropological study of Aikido she argues that "people cannot casually insert a martial art or any other in body discipline' into a 'foreign other' space' within an 'English', 'French' or any other core identity, in the way that they might place an 'Oriental carpet' on the floor next to an 'Oriental carpet' on the floor next to their old English sofa in their Victorian terraced house." (Kohn 2001) In the case of Tai Chi however, English practitioners have successfully solved the problem operating within a "foreign other space" by translating the traditional conventions of location into a form that fits their situation. This solution centres on the paradoxical formation of "indoors practices with outdoors imagination", which employs visual and audio devices to relocate their indoors practice to an imagined "Chinese" space. Thus the practice itself becomes not only a bodily and spiritual consumption of a foreign bodily/spiritual

discipline but also a way of inhabiting another space, an escape from the tedious everyday life cycle and a taste of the exotic.

The perception of Tai Chi in China as primarily an outdoors practice is also held by some researchers. Some Chinese sports science researchers, basing their conclusions on qualitative research in different Chinese cities, argue that the main spaces for Tai Chi practice are parks, public squares, and green spaces (Li 2000; Tian 2002; Chen and Yan 2003). The American anthropologist Adam Dean Frank has also recorded his experiences of observing the practice of Tai Chi in two parks in Shanghai. (Frank 2003). Comparative research shows that while 78.1% of Chinese practitioners practice their Tai Chi outdoors and 44.5% in the park, 65.5% of Japanese adherents practice in a stadium or gym and 23.3% at home. The research also shows that males prefer outdoors practice more than female in both countries, and that there is a higher proportion of indoors practitioners among those with less than 5-years of experience. (Nu 1998)

The available research then confirms the dominance of outdoors Tai Chi practice in China. Frank's research does however mention some "secret spaces" and private practice. These locations too are written into the tradition with one of the most popular Tai Chi works produced in 1920s, by the famous master Yang Chengfu, mentioning that "gardens and halls with ventilation and sunshine are preferred, [and that] places with direct strong wind should be avoided." (Yang 1927)

Some researchers attribute the current imbalance between outdoors and indoors practice, and particularly the choice of parks as favoured locations, to cultural habit arguing that Chinese people prefer to practice under the shade of trees or in green spaces. (Nu 1998). Cultural habits however do not arrive from nowhere and in this case it is tempting to suggest a link to the strong emphasis on maintaining the "harmony between the natural universe and human beings" in traditional Chinese philosophy. This conception has penetrated into both Chinese medicine and life cultivation exercises as a result of generations of reinvention in their theorizations, with the result that outdoor practices are widely seen as a convenient way to gain external Qi. Some Chinese sports science researchers even advise "foreign" practitioners to practice outdoors as an "effective way of practice." (Nu 1998)

But, there is another more important material reason for this bias towards the outdoors which is mentioned but not emphasised by Chinese researchers (Nu 1998) and that is the lack of public indoors spaces in China. Because of its huge population, there is an extreme shortage of public sports stadiums and sports facilities. There are also relatively few community centres and public halls because of the underdevelopment of social services. As a result, in many places practicing outdoors is a necessity born of the lack of viable alternatives rather than a genuine choice.

However, when Tai Chi was introduced to the UK, these material constraints were never mentioned and the idea that Tai Chi was essentially an outdoors practices became absolute and were constructed as a central element defining the tradition of Tai Chi in China. However, while most English practitioners kept the outdoors imagination of Tai Chi they insisted on indoors practices for themselves. They accepted that outdoors practice is central to Tai Chi's essential 'Chineseness', but argued that it is only possible to operate in this way within China. Consequently, they prefer indoors practice for practical reasons but retain an imaginary link to Chinese tradition by evoking the outdoors indoors.. This division in turn, is one element in a set of binary oppositions which define Tai Chi practice spaces.

China	England
Outdoors	Indoors
Traditional	Invented
Other	Ours
Frequent	Occasional

In my interviews among Tai Chi practitioners, this binary way of thinking appears repeatedly. Most insisted that they prefer to practice indoors, but some of were happy to play Tai Chi outdoors with certain conditions.

*“You can of cause play in the park, but for us, hahaha. If you play Tai Chi in the park, no one*

*will stare at you strangely because you are Chinese. ”(Wile, male, 40s)*

*“Once I played Tai Chi in my own garden just for several minutes. I noticed that my neighbour who is working in his garden looked at me. Finally, I went back to my living room. ”(Kate,female, 30s)*

*“I do play Tai Chi at home, but only in the room, between sofas with the television on, unlike you Chinese, in the park.”(Sue, female, 50s)*

*“In the summer, we used to do it in the garden. We do it in the garden which is nice, without audience but birds, husband in the garage with windows closed.” (Windy, female, 56)*

*On Tuesday, when we do a little bit because I have got a whole hour something for myself. I just do it in the living room. Move all the furniture away. (Perry, male, 22)*

*I practice at school, if I get tense and stressed. I disappear and go into my room and closed the door. And just stand, five minutes to go through the form and just calm down. (Aisani, female, 50s)*

*In the summer, I do it lots of, lots of times; my neighbours will wonder what strange thing this woman is doing on the patio. Going through the form three times while this is sunny, shining. When it is winter time, I tend to do it indoors. (Jack, male, 30s)*

*Just in the morning, in the summer, I will do it outside, that is sort of early morning, when I first get up in the summer, and I tend to go out. It need space, the long the form, the more difficult to do. I just do Tiger Goes to Mountain, or Grasp Birds’ Tail, I do it indoors. But in the summer; I will go out to do the whole form. (Andy, male, 18)*

The emphasis on outdoors practice as a defining feature of Tai Chi in China has been actively promoted since the early 1990s by the Tai Chi Union of Great Britain through their annual “Tai

Chi in the Park” event On the last weekend in June, members of the Union have the duty to play Tai Chi on open green land or in a park in order to reproduce the images familiar from Chinese tourist post cards. “just as it is traditionally done in China”. However, since this is only once a year, and is carefully orchestrated it in fact reinforces the binary division between outdoor/indoor, Chinese/English conceptions of practicing Tai Chi.

Apart from those special days and the particular conditions mentioned earlier , the preference among English practitioners was very much for staying indoors and during my observation at different sites, I witnessed several occasions when Tai Chi participants actively insisted on indoor practice.

In the first week after Easter in 2004, when one of the Tai Chi classes had their routine session on a Wednesday evening, both instructors and the students arrived to find all the rooms in the Hall were locked since the warden was still away on his Easter holiday. The instructors suggested to the students that they either to practice on the grassland just outside of the hall or on the stairs, and in the corridors and foyer. Almost all the students voted for the latter. For a whole night, even though outside it was quite bright and not so chilly, students preferred to practice in far from ideal conditions indoors. Most of the students could not see the instructor’s demonstrations of moves since he was on another floor, and they could not complete their own movements otherwise they ran the risk of falling down the stairs.



Limited Space of a Manchester Tai Chi Class

The photo above was taken in a Tai Chi session at Sue's Chen Style Tai Chi College in Manchester. Even though there is grassland nearby, the students still prefer to practice in the only place then can rent: the foyer of a Chinese real estate company. The students of this class are all Chinese immigrants, but they believe "it is better to play indoors to avoid embarrassment." The result of working in such a restricted space is that every time they finish one movement they find themselves against the wall and have to step back to make more room.



Outdoors Class in Jade Moon School

The photo above shows the temporary outdoors class that Stephan tried to organize to give extra free Tai Chi lessons on Sunday afternoons in the park. It attracted only one or two participants compared with the twenty in the weekly night class and Stephan had to cancel it after just two weeks. The photo above shows Stephan and the only participant of his outdoors Tai Chi class during summer.

The English preference for practicing indoors however has also begun to return to China as an innovation. Sue's class in Manchester had a close relation with her Chinese master who decided to borrow her "advanced western management experiences in promoting Tai Chi":

*Our teacher in China opened a club last year. The teacher's Manlian Julebu. That's quite a new idea in China, not just practice in the park. (show the picture) This is the club room. So the students now had their own classroom in Lianyungang where he started. Master Liu Yonfg. They can now pay to train private lessons. All these courses going on, they had full time teachers there*

*all day, and they run classes and courses. That's a new way to promote Tai Chi really in that area.*  
*Before all classes are in the parks .*

## **Visual Constructions**

Since most Tai Chi classes practice in rented spaces, it is not easy for the instructors and practitioners to reconstruct a visual environment filled with Chineseness. Some classes , like some of Derek's sessions, choose Chinese community centres as their sites of practice, where the lanterns, Chinese calligraphy, and photos of Chinese scenes helped students to imagine being in a Chinese space. However, most classes are not so lucky In fact, most of Derek's sessions were located in a YMCA centre. Sometimes, sessions are located in a space with some Chinese ingredients. One of Sue's sessions for example, took place in the foyer of a Chinese company. Unfortunately, though crowding students into a limited space diluted the limited Chinese elements. Peter and Steve's sessions were located in a local Bangladeshi community centre. Since the local communities are mostly Asian, the hall itself contains Asian elements. The doors within the halls are all in the shape of mosques. At the far end of hall, on the wall, there are several old pictures of the local buildings as a typical narrative of local history. On the right side, behind the practitioners, there are maps of the British Isles as well as Bangladesh. One of the students in Jade Moon School, Jessica always complained that the dirty curtains always diverted her attention when she practiced. She would like to pay to get rid of the curtains, and put up more Chinese decorations.

Some instructors would try to introduce Chinese decorations to help students to reconstruct an imagined Chinese space. At the entrance of the hall, during the session, a stand with the Tai Chi symbol was erected to divide the English real life world from the "Chinese" Tai Chi space.

Another device the instructors employed was to put some mats on the floors to make the hall looks more like a training hall. Stephan and Peter spent several weeks measuring the length and width of the hall and then went out and bought mats. They convinced the warden that they could store the mats in the cupboard of the hall. When they had sessions they put mats on half the hall,

and after the session finished they put them away. Unfortunately, these efforts only lasted for several weeks and failed because of the warden's change of mind but they were informed by Stephan and Peter's belief that putting down mats would transform the community centre into a 'Chinese' training hall. They asked the students to take off their shoes and practice on the mat, as they believed that in China, the training mat is the major element for a typical martial arts training hall and that taking off shoes is the basic manner and custom in a training hall. Both of the instructors claimed that these assumptions were common sense among martial artists. Peter even argued that barefoot practice is superior since it makes it much easier to absorb the essence of nature, the external *Qi*, from the ground. In fact there is no tradition of using mats and barefoot training in China. These elements are seen as typically Japanese by Chinese practitioners but have been widely disseminated through action films featuring Judo and Karate.

## **Playing with Music: The Audio Construction of Space**

While most Tai Chi schools have great difficulty in constructing a space of Tai Chi with Chinese elements, a number use audio clues as an alternative. A number of Tai Chi practitioners I met during my research showed strong interests in using of music during practice, and the commonest criteria for selecting what to play was its Chineseness.

*We used to do it with music. We just used literally Tai Chi type music. We did five years ago. Four or five cassettes, winter fire water, there is a Chinese one as well. Someone got it from London, I still got it. It is a lovely, flowing music. (Sue, female, 40s)*

In China today it is also quite common for Tai Chi practitioners in the park to play music but this is relatively new innovation made possible by the rapid spread of easy to carry tape cassette recorders and CD players and the low cost of tapes and discs. When Tai Chi was originally practiced as a martial art, there was no need for music and when it was practiced in villages in China in 1920s, there was no possibility to access it. However, now the use of the music is considered as an inseparable part of the tradition of Tai Chi. The major reason for using music

outdoors is to mark out a space together with other morning exercise practitioners. The choice of the music is very free .Even though there are countless Tai Chi music products on sale in Chinese bookshops; the most commonly used music is Beijing Opera. This is easy to understand since most participants are elderly and Beijing Opera is one of the major hobbies for the old. Another frequently used source is Chinese folk music even though the examples used were not designed to accompany Tai Chi practice.

English Tai Chi communities have developed their own way of using music , translating this particular tradition by adding their own characteristics. On the bookshelves labelled Tai Chi music in the bookshops frequented by the Tai Chi community, the most popular tracks are those composed by western New Age musicians but with assumed ‘Chinese characteristics’. One Tai Chi practitioner I met nominated Oliver Shanti’s *Tai Chi* as his favourite which was somewhat ironic since this track is familiar to Chinese listeners as the theme music for a popular 1990s Taiwan erotic TV drama.



Shanti's Tai Chi Music CD Album Cover

Since not all English Tai Chi schools have access to channels through which they can obtain “original” Tai Chi music from China they tend to use the music which the instructors think fits best. In the Jade Moon club, this is typically new age music. They have changed the music several times. The most recent accompaniment to exercises I observed was the theme music from the Tom Cruise film, *The Last Samurai*. Here, a Hollywood product offering a romanticised view of the decline of one major martial arts tradition is combined with a reconstructed and adapted version of

another ancient oriental bodily discipline, in order to “re-create the atmosphere” for the consumption of both the bodily discipline itself and the bodily selves discovered through the discipline.

I myself also had the experience of using music. When I was invited to teach Tai Chi in LA fitness in Loughborough, I was asked to prepare some music for my session. One of the reasons I was given for this was that it helped to separate my class off from other users, although I noticed that the training room was soundproofed and divided from other spaces with transparent glass. At a practical level there was no need to divide the space with sound at all. Its function was solely to evoke the appropriate atmosphere.

## **Ritualization**

The visual or audio construction of space is not however in itself a sufficient guarantee that participant’s will be successfully integrated into it. It is quite possible that a participant in a Tai Chi class steps into a “Tai Chi Space” with his/her mind still at home or at work. To counter this and facilitate full integration, teachers and students in the Tai Chi classes I observed had reinvented a series of ritualised forms of membership and incorporation.

They marked both a movement from one kind of space to another , from the mundane ‘English’ locations of everyday routine to an exotic “Oriental” space, and a movement between lifestyles , even cultural identities.

Anthropological studies of Japanese martial arts practice in the United States have found that it is quite common for Karate classes to ritually bow to a sword: “If the *shinzen* is hanging when students enter, they bow to it upon entering. At the formal start of class, students line up in rank order, with sensei in front. A bowing ritual commences, first to the *shinzen*, then to sensei, then to the sword.”(Klens-Bigman 2002: 3) “all of these rituals and practices exist to remove students from their everyday lives...”(Klens-Bigman 2002: 3) “These activities are carried out to relax the

participants by separating them from everyday cares and help them concentrate on the lessons at hand Opening rituals also underscore the identity of participants as members of a distinct group”(Donohue 1994: 4)

However, as noted above, there is no equivalent in Tai Chi to the hierarchy characteristic of Japanese martial arts systems. Consequently, there is no likelihood of seeing rows of Tai Chi of students bowing to a sword. Added to which there are major practical constraints arising from the lack of a permanent training space. In a rented training hall, it is almost impossible for the teacher or the students to hang a sword or a portrait of an ancestor before each session. Consequently, rituals of separation and reincorporation have to assume other forms.

## **Clothing**

Dedicated Chinese style clothing is the one of the most popular forms of ritualization in most English Tai Chi schools.

The requirements for Tai Chi clothing presented in the major Chinese sources from the 1920s and 1930s are conveniently vague and variable, and marked by the drive for modernisation. Hence, while in the earliest published Tai Chi work in the 1920s, it is recommended that “it is better to wear loose Chinese style clothes or short clothes with cloth shoes with wide openings” (Yang 1937: 10) in Chu Minyi’s *Tai Chi Calisthenics* from 1933, as we noted earlier,”the sweater and plus-four-clad martial arts instructor guiding readers through the routine looks more like a natty golf pro than a conveyor of China’s ancient martial heritage”. (Morris 2004)

In many English Tai Chi classes however, the choice of clothing has become one of the most important elements and changing clothes before sessions one of the most important rituals. Two kinds of clothes have been labelled as suitable clothing for Tai Chi classes: Tai Chi T shirts and Tai Chi suits neither of which is normal dress for Tai Chi class participant. The T shirt displays the united identity of the group while the suit divides the group off from society at large. To take off their daily clothing and change into the “Tai Chi” suit or T Shirt therefore assumes the status of a

symbolic ritual marking the transition between two different life styles and identities.



Tai Chi T Shirt

The Tai Chi T shirt is a T shirt without a collar as shown in the picture. Normally the clothing is printed with the name or logo of the school. This kind of clothing is quite popular in the formal Tai Chi schools because of its low cost. Having all class participants wear the same clothing with the same logo is also a good way to display and confirm a group identity. This clothing has almost no symbolic connection with either Tai Chi or martial arts in the Chinese context. It was a popular way of dressing during the summer and nicknamed as the “Oldie Suit”, but it became dramatically popular in the mid-1980s in China often with ironic quotations printed on the front. Its adoption by English Tai Chi schools is therefore a classic act of translation



Tai Chi Suit

Tai Chi suit, (shown as above) another popular style of clothing in Tai Chi schools, displays rather more “Chineseness”. It is generally a lightweight polyester cotton or silk garment with frog bottoms and trousers with an elasticised waist and ankles to make practicing forms easier. Since it is much more expensive than the T shirt it is less popular. But in another sense, possessing a Tai Chi suit acts as a signal of devotion to a Tai Chi career. Only those advanced in their studies or long-term participants are likely to purchase one. In those classes in which a uniform is not required, the Tai Chi suit becomes an object of conspicuous consumption and a marker of the different ranks between students. Within the latent lineage society system in the Sifu/master’s mind, students with suits who are generally the advanced, are more readily considered as core member of the classes and member of the lineage society.

In some schools, the practices surrounding clothing are more marked. For instance, in Stephan’s class, only the Sifu/master Stephan, Peter and Stephan’s girlfriend who are in charge of the finances of the Tai Chi school may change in the training hall. All other students must change in

their cars or at home or in the toilets. Only the Sifu/master, who constructs the “Tai Chi” spaces, can use that space as a changing room. This claim to priority confirms the latent lineage society system in which the sifu/master is superior to the students, and students are expected to display their respect and deference.

## **Inventing Salutes**

As mentioned above, in Japanese dojos, bowing is used as the main element in ritualization. In Tai Chi schools, this role is performed by a salute. There is no standard form. Different schools, may have different salutes but most assume forms not regularly used in everyday life in English society. The salutes themselves are thought to be authentically Chinese. In fact, they have not been practiced in exactly the same way in China either in ancient or contemporary times. . Consequently, the various forms employed in the UK display the different degree of “translation” from tradition. Some are more westernized, while others are more “original.”

### **(a) Clapping**

In Sue’s class in Bury, “clapping” is used as the major salute at both the beginning and end of the class, but especially the latter. Sue, the Sifu/master, waves her hands over her head and claps once. The students then follow her. Sue’s movement is learnt from her master in China. She believes it is the standard Chinese salute in Tai Chi training classes. However, there are neither written records of this salute nor is it popularly practiced in daily life.

The only place where “clapping” is regularly practiced in China is in the Physical Education courses in primary or secondary schools. The teacher there sometimes claps their hands to announce the end of the lesson. Even though, the origin of this “clapping” is not clear, it is certain that it is not one of the ancient or “traditional” Chinese salutes in daily life or in martial arts. It is quite possible that it comes from some movement introduced as part of calisthenics since the government promoted calisthenics in primary and secondary school ends with clapping the hands over the head and jumping. As we noted in our historical account, calisthenics was one the first

Western sports to be introduced to China in the later 19 century, raising the possibility that “clapping”, a practice originally imported from West to China has been re-exported to Tai Chi community in England and retranslated into a distinctively Chinese salute.

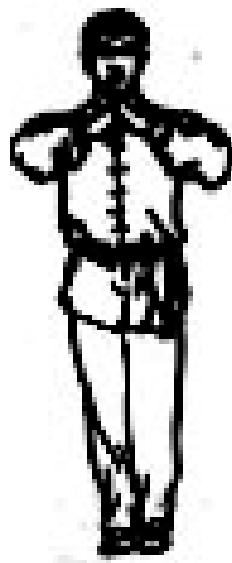
The sifu/master is not the only translator of this salute. When the students clap their hands, they develop their own variants. Quite a number clap their hands just in front of their chest rather than over their heads. Since clapping is not a recognised movement in Tai Chi, the sifu/master won't regulate the students strictly. The interesting thing is that clapping in front of the chest is close to the Japanese salute employed in their religious rites, a movement similar to Buddhist's putting their palms together to pray. Since most students, unlike their sifu/master, have never been to China or been trained by Chinese masters, they more easily assume the clapping in front of the chest they have seen in Japanese films is also naturally “Chinese”. The students' alteration of the “clapping” salute appeared so natural and unconscious, that during my researches when I asked the students in Sue's class the reason why they did it neither the sifu/master nor the students had realize before that their clapping positions were different.

It is interesting to compare this student originated innovation with the behaviour of participants in another of Sue's classes in Manchester city centre, which is made up entirely of elderly Chinese. Here the students clap their hands over their head exactly as the sifu/master does without addition, deletion or alteration. We can suggest three reasons for this. Firstly, the Chinese students greater familiarity with, and acceptance of, the lineage system primes them to regard all the master's movements as the authentic, and unalterable, transmission of authoritative tradition. Secondly, unlike their English counterparts they are less likely to collapse an understanding of ‘Chineseness’ into a more generalised conception of ‘Oriental’ practices. Thirdly, the English students' greater investment in Tai Chi as an arena of self expression predisposes them to improvise and personalise practices.

#### **(b) Holding hands**

In Stephan's class, holding hands is practiced as the major salute at the beginning and the end of

the session. It is an even more typical “translation” than clapping.



Standard Holding Hands Posture Printed in the National Wushu Regulations



Traditional Chinese Holding Hands



Holding Hands in Jade Moon

The photo above is taken from the Chinese national Wushu Competition Rules. The Rules require the contestants to salute by “holding hands”. This salute is based on the Shaolin style of holding-hands (the Four Fingers Salute being the most popular) and regulated, unified and invested with new meaning. The salute requires participants to stand still in a referred position, the four fingers of the left hand are held open with the thumb bent; the right hand is held as a fist. The Left palm covers the right fist in front of the chest at chest height 20-30cm from the chest.

Holding the hand as a salute has been used in China since the early Imperial Period. The photos above shows different variants .Over time however it has been repeatedly reinvented and invested with new requirements and significance. In the later Imperial and early Republican Period, the martial arts “four finger palm and fist ” hold hands signified an Anti-Manchu stance in line with the dominant anti-Manchu nationalist ideology at that time. The palm and fist were interpreted as the Moon and Sun. In the Chinese language, the characters for Moon and Sun together form a new character which was the name of the previous Han Chinese dynasty.

As Anti-Manchu nationalism faded, the meaning of the salute changed as well. The four strict fingers signified martial artists from the four seas (the four seas in the Chinese language signifying everywhere), while the bent thumb indicated modesty. The right fist means making friends with martial arts. The circle with the arms indicates the union of the all martial artists.

In the new Wushu Rules and Regulations, the official interpretation is that the four fingers of the left palm signify the competences of “virtue, wise, physical and beauty”, the bent thumb means lack of arrogance. The right fist evokes the spirit of martial arts. Holding of the palm and the fist together indicates the regulation and moderation of the martial arts.

In contemporary China however, this salute is not popular and is dogged by disputes over interpretation. Some observers believe that women should use the left fist and right palm to distinguish themselves from men while other believe that it is rude to use the left fist and right palm. There are also commentators arguing for the employment of the left fist and right palm at funerals or for non martial artists leaving the left palm and right fist for the exclusive use of martial artists. There are also martial arts researchers working on the Confucian influences on Holding Hands. (Tang 2004)

In some religious contexts, the salute has acquired even more interpretations. Among Taoists, holding hands signified the promotion of virtue and dispersal of evil with the left hand symbolising virtue and the right, evil. There is also special variant among Taoists which involves putting the left thumb into the right part of the hand between the thumb and the index finger and the right thumb underneath, allowing both hands to take on the shape of Tai Chi diagram.

In Stephan’s class the form of the holding hand is used as a salute but there are no complex requirements governing the position of the palm, fist and fingers. The sifu/master puts his hands near his stomach, some students follow him while other put their hands in front of their chests to show their respect. The major addition to the salute is the introduction of bowing. Both the

sifu/master and the student bows when he/she is doing the holding hand but whereas the sifu/master just slightly bends his body the students try to bend much lower to show their respect.

Stephan learnt this salute from his master. Like his claimed Tai Chi lineage, it is difficult to trace back to its origin, but Stephan believes it derives from a famous “Master Chu”. The students however are happy to use this incontrovertibly “Chinese” way of saluting as the beginning and the ending of the session. It is not known who added the bowing to the holding hand salute in this class. But one thing is certain; this version of salute is a typical instance of the translation of tradition through addition. What is interesting is the bowing. While both the sifu/master and the students believe it is traditional Chinese etiquette, it is only become popular in China after the collapse of the Imperial dynasty. It was borrowed from Japan as a modern “westernized” salute to take the place of bending the knee.

### **(c) Buddhist Salute: Anjali**

The Buddhist Salute, Anjali, which places one or both palms straight up in front of the chest, is quite commonly used as a salute in Tai Chi classrooms. The sifu/master and the student put their hands together as palms and bow to each other. Even though students tend to believe that there is connection between this salute and Tai Chi, no secure link has been established. As we noted earlier, although Tai Chi was the site of competing ideologies in 1910-20s, it was much less influenced by Buddhism compared with the other major religions in China. The Buddhist salute is not popular in China or even across the rest of East Asia. It is only popular in Buddhist countries such as Thailand which have no connection with Tai Chi.

The only connection between the Buddhist salute and Tai Chi is through the Shaolin monks. The salute features in films and martial arts demonstrations by Shaolin monks primarily because of their religious beliefs rather than their identity as martial artists. However, since they have become a major Chinese martial arts stereotype their religious daily salute has been adopted by martial artists including some Tai Chi practitioners.

Some experienced practitioners have developed their own accounts. One young practitioner I interviewed complained that lots of English people do not really understand the salute, Putting two palms together is a sign of respect but placing just one palm in front of the chest is disrespectful since it signified adopting a fighting position, following the practice of the Shaolin monks who held a weapon in the other hand. This young man had practiced Tai Chi and other Chinese martial arts for years and worked as a sales assistant in martial arts equipments shop in London and was more knowledgeable than the average practitioner. He drew on this knowledge and his imagination to translate the Anjali salute in his own way.

## **Warming up and cooling down**

There were other elements of ritualization in Tai Chi classes I observed that carried less of a symbolic charge than the special clothing and the salutes but were no less important The warming up exercises at the beginning of the class are one typical example. Unlike the changing of clothing or saluting which is accomplished in seconds, warming up could last several minutes or even one third of the whole training time in some cases.

There are of course physical and practical reasons for the warming-up. It is needed in order to stretch the bodies before spending the next hour in rigorous bodily discipline. Especially in the winter, warming up exercises are essential in order to reduce injures. But warming up is not just a series of physical movements, it is a ritual marking the transitional between daily life and the bodily even spiritually disciplines involved in Tai Chi. It offers practitioners an opportunity to bridge the physical and psychological gap between the dull routine of daily life and the bodily imagination of Chineseness embodied in Tai Chi movements. In most Tai Chi classes, warming up involves not only exercising muscles which are seldom used but also movements which never occur spontaneously in everyday life .It is designed to remind practitioners that they in the process of moving to another space. What's more these movements are spiritually even philosophically meaningful.

Different movements are used in different classes depending on the background of the sifu/masters. In some cases, the students join in the process. Because of their age and health condition, the sifu/master might negotiate with students in arranging the warming up, deleting some difficult movements, or cutting the times. In these situations sifu/master and students cooperate together to translate the tradition of warming up.

In Sue's class, the warming up exercises is called *Chansijin* (silk reeling strength). As we noted earlier, in the 1950-60s, *Chansijin* was one of the most disputed topics of debate in Tai Chi circles when Communist theorists tried to use it to unify Tai Chi theory. Although the conception was first published in the 1930s in Chen Xin's book on Chen style Tai Chi, the "*Chansijin* routines" was first published in early the 1980s in Chen Xiaowang's book.

The *Chansijin* basic routine starts with a single arm movement in a clockwise, oblique circle with the right arm. Next set, the clockwise, oblique circle is then reversed and a circle is drawn anti-clockwise. Then, progress to the left arm. The clockwise and counter clockwise movements are practiced with the left arm this time round. From the single arm practice, the routine goes into alternating, double arm movements, the right arm and left arm rotate in opposing directions. From alternating motions, the routine slides into moving both arms together in the same direction clockwise. Thereafter, both arms are moved in anti-clockwise rotations. Moving on, the next set requires both arms to draw oblique circles in front of the body. The movement should start with the palms beginning from the centre of the body and rotating the arms outwards in a circle away from the centre of the body, and the following set vice versa. The next stage of practice requires one to shift the legs in the basic Chen style forwards at a 45-degree angle, starting with the right foot first. When finished drawing circles in both directions, one may shift the left foot forwards, at a 45-degree angle for the next set, repeating in both directions again. The last stage of the basic routine requires shifting up to a standing position, with left foot planted firmly on the ground, and the right foot lightly placed at a 45-degree angle away from the left. The arms should be moved in a vertical, circular motion, likewise, in both directions.

In Chinese Tai Chi theories the role of *Chansijin* is firstly to train students in *dantian*-generated

movements (It is believed that by practising Chansijin, the *dantian*, a point about 1 inch below the bellybutton, can gather the *Qi*) and secondly to allow students to practice them in coordination with the whole body's movement. This form of practice promotes blood flow and exercise for the joints. This basic routine is the foundation for building many of the more complicated silk-reeling movements. The end goal in practicing this routine is to achieve a state where students are able to reach a level where their "bodies can listen to their minds." In time, a dedicated student could gradually generate *Chansijin* from the *dantian* and coordinate this force with the entire body. In China, *Chansijin* practice is a combination of basic movements, and used as either introductory training or an extra exercises to develop certain parts of the body.

However the version of Chansijin translated into a warming up routine in Sue's class, is simpler and similar to the original movement in Tai Chi forms. What's more, other simpler movement such as turning the neck, shoulder and waist are added but also defined as Chansijin. The result is a set of warming up exercises that consist of simply turning, twisting and drawing circles with different part of body with additions.

In the Jade Moon School, the warming up exercise is even more original. They used a series of 12 stretching movements derived from different sources.

Some of them are general stretching movements used in sports and physical education, such as bending the body and touching the ground with the finger tips with the legs kept straight. Some imitate certain military positions. Some come from martial arts training movements while others derive from Chinese ancient health cultivation practices. But they all share at least one common characteristic, they are not movements regularly encountered in modern daily life. This makes them an effective vehicle of ritualization.

The movement of this photo shows a Shaolin monk's martial arts movement, Yin Jin Jing , which is mystified in Chinese martial arts novels and films as a scared book of martial arts essences.



Warming-up in Jade Moon



## A Posture in *Shaolin* Manual



Warming-up in Jade Moon

The movement, which consists of standing on one leg with the other leg turning circles is similar to a movement incorporated into Tai Chi callisthenics popular in the 1930s. There are also movement simulating archery or riding a horse derived from ancient military activities which are far away from the participants' daily lives but close to their imagination of the ancient East.

The invention of warming-up traditions for Tai Chi practice is not always just a matter of combining different movements from different sources however. Sometimes, it also involves a theorizing process. After the last movement of the warming-up exercises for example, the participants are required to massage their kidney. The male participants are required to use the left hand to massage clockwise, while the female are required to use their right hand and to move counter-clockwise. The explanation given for this variation is that according to the *Yin* and *Yang* philosophy underpinning Tai Chi, the female is classified as the *Yin*, left, and the male as the *Yang*,

right. To reinforce this conception, when the participants commence their movements, the instructor asks all the females to begin from their left-hand side while all the male participants are asked to begin with their right-hand side. There is no Tai Chi book that mentions these differences in either direction or gender. However, in this reconstructed practice the gender meaning of the bodily disciplines has been emphasised and inserted into a wider schema taken from “eastern” philosophic tradition.

## Qi Gong

In some Tai Chi classes, there are also a set of practices devoted to ‘cooling down’, ritualized physical movements to calm the body and facilitate a spiritual transit from the world of Tai Chi back to normal and daily life. This exercise, which takes the form of breath-controlling movements or meditation, is called as *Qigong*.

In fact, the name *Qigong* is itself a typical example of the translation/reinvention of tradition. *Qigong* literally means the practice of *Qi*, meaning energy cultivation. In the Chinese language, *Qigong* is an aspect of Chinese medicine involving the coordination of different breathing patterns with various physical postures and motions of the body. *Qigong* is mostly taught for health maintenance purposes. The word *Qigong* is a general and collective word for a series of different practices. In the English Tai Chi class however, *Qigong* involved several standing posture with certain breath controlling requirements. This has a special term in Chinese martial arts, *Zhangzhuang*, literally meaning “stand like a stake”. *Zhangzhuang* however is a highly martial arts oriented terminology so it is not surprising that it is abandoned in favour of *Qigong* which carries the much more popular connotations of Tai Chi’s links with health and philosophy

One of the basic postures recorded in Tai Chi manuals is standing with both hands rising like holding a ball. In the Jade Moon School, this posture had been developed into a new variant with the hands rising up and then falling down interpreted as representing the states of Taoism: the Heaven and the People. Here again, a selective borrowing from eastern philosophy serves the

imagined body-mind nexus by inventing body postures with meanings designed to produce spiritual relaxation.



Qigong in Jade Moon



Qigong in Jade Moon

## Summing Up

In this section of the thesis, based on three years of ethnographic observation at several different

sites, I have offered a thick description of the “translation” of Tai Chi practices in the English Midlands among both the instructors and the student. As we have seen, in most Tai Chi classes, instructors lay claim to and enact their authority through a latent lineage system society which links them to particular ‘masters’ within asserted lines of descent that are delineated and reaffirmed primarily through the oral tradition. At the same time, we have also seen that both instructors and students translate Tai Chi into various versions , introducing particular rituals and forms, and adapting spaces of performance, in ways informed by their own their personal understanding and imagination of the practice. The result is an array of practices that mediate between the shared sense of Tai Chi as an expression of the essence of “Chineseness” (and sometimes , by extension, of the ‘Orient’ and the East more generally) and the specific biographies of individual practitioners and the particular interests and stakes that underpin their involvement.

## Conclusion

### Endless invention, Boundaryless imagination

Given the argument of this thesis, that Tai Chi has become one of the central signifiers of the continuity and uniqueness of Chinese culture, it was no surprise to find that the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympic Games featured a mass display by Tai Chi practitioners. Nor, given my central argument that Tai Chi has been a continual site of contest and reinvention, was it a surprise that this performance was immediately denounced as inauthentic by a number of Chinese cultural critics. While most broadcasters repeated the organisers' official characterisation of this performance as a representation of the ancient Chinese philosophical principle of the "harmony between the heaven and the human", in an interview with the German international television channel, *Deutsche Welle*, the cultural analyst Zhu Dake dismissed it as stew of various martial arts styles that did not properly represent the Chinese spirit. Zhu is partly right. As the organizers admitted later, the form of the performance had been specially designed solely for the ceremony. However, Zhu is mistaken in seeing this instance of reinvention as atypical and exceptional, a result of the present Chinese political leadership's attempts to adapt ancient Chinese cultural forms for contemporary purposes. As I have argued in this thesis, the form created for the Olympics was simply the latest instance in a long chain of inventions and reinventions.

As we noted in previous sections, although the evidence that has survived from the Imperial Period is fragmentary and often of dubious provenance, it is sufficient to confirm that the forms, applications, and functions of Tai Chi were sites of contest almost from its first emergence. For the periods after the fall of the imperial system however, the evidence is much more substantial and points to a continual process of inventing and reinventing as part of successive general drives to modernise and rationalise Chinese society, starting in the Republican period, continuing under the Antagonists, and then under Mao, and now under the impact of the market reform

With the collapse of the empire, Tai Chi lost its former rationale as a martial art and killing skill at the level of both official military training and popular practice. At the same time, the participation of the literati and local gentry introduced a new emphasis on grounding practice in philosophical schemas. During the Republican period the competition between the ideologies of Confucianism, Taoism and modern science, together with disputes over Tai Chi's origins, fuelled an almost continual process of reinvention of both forms and rationales. These efforts were driven in turn, by two major forces: the drive to 'modernise' Tai Chi by applying western scientific principles, and efforts to reposition it in relation to a revised understanding of traditional culture. These two forces negotiated with each other to produce a dominant ideology of "scientific national arts" within which reinvented versions of Tai Chi were deployed in the grand project of nation-building. In Mao's China, while Tai Chi added the elements of modern competitive sports, its rationale was recast within the revolutionary discourse of "historical dialectics". After the Mao era, the efforts to develop Tai Chi as a competition sport in the Olympic Games accelerated its function as a vehicle of national symbolism that became firmly established within the western imagination.

The dynamic of invention and reinvention has not come to a halt. On the contrary, it is still unfolding. Interesting, just as I was completing this present research there was news of a new invention that interrupted my efforts to "end" the study. In late 2005, a Chinese scholar discovered a family history of a Li family in Henan province which mentioned Chen Wangting, a figure, who as we have seen, is widely considered to be the inventor of Tai Chi in the official narrative as well as among practitioners of the Chen style.

Mindful of the popularity of accounts that nominate the Taoist sage Zhang Sanfeng as the original inventor of Tai Chi, the local historian together with Chen style practitioners has endeavoured to link this new finding with another Taoist sage, Li Daozi, who predates Zhang and can therefore be presented as having a more direct link to the ancient Taoist philosopher Laozi. This revisionist history has reanimated the quarrel over the discipline's origins which we have encountered time and again in the development of Tai Chi. This latest claim led the national sports

committee to issue an official document confirming Chen as the ‘true’ inventor, a move designed to maintain the official narrative by investing it with administrative force. Despite this official attempt to call a halt to the process of reinvention and promote their version of the practices’ origin as the only acceptable account, a new wave of invention of the origin of Tai Chi is still going on. (Wang and Li 2005; Chen 2006; Chen 2006; Chen 2007; Long 2008)

This diversity of understandings and subsequent implementations has in turn, contributed to the polysemic nature of Tai Chi. Although it originated as a martial art, and is still regarded as such by many practitioners, over time it has also come to be understood and promoted for its health benefits and as a way of maintaining physical fitness. As we have seen in the ethnographic study of English practitioners, by allowing adherents to enter through a range of gateways and to integrate it into their lives in a variety of ways this flexibility attracts a wide variety of people of all ages and both genders, enabling Tai Chi to transcend the restrictive recruitment characteristic of martial arts that have no other articulations.

As we have also seen, once introduced into England in the early 1940s, Tai Chi in the UK has developed its own tradition, reinvented its own forms and style and linked them with imagined Chinese origins which are some way removed from the official Chinese narratives. My ethnographic observation has confirmed that the substantial and well organized British Tai Chi community has relatively weak practical and organisational links to China but a strong imagination of Chineseness. The individuals I observed translated Tai Chi into their own frameworks of interpretation. Consequently, not only is the invention of Tai Chi endless, its interpretation and imagination is boundaryless.

In the ethnographic sections, we examined some of the specific innovations introduced by English practitioners. As an observer who grew up in China, and a practitioner who trained there, I was continually struck by the novel and creative ways that the participants I observed developed their own interpretations. Often the space left by their lack of concrete knowledge of Chinese practices and traditions was filled with elements that they were familiar with and which they took

to be characteristically 'oriental'. In this way Tai Chi was made familiar while at the same time preserving its sense of the exotic. In other cases, it may be more thoroughly domesticated. According to a news report in *The Times* on 14th April 2008, Robert Taverner, who runs an organic farm in Essex, performs Tai Chi to his cows in an effort to increase their milk production. The Federation of Organic Milk Groups has even invited Tai Chi instructors to work with farmers and in yet another instance of reinvention and adaptation, has promoted newly invented movements which are invested with agricultural titles such as "Up with the lark" and "Arms like tractor wheels".

## **Other Sites of Reinvention**

Tai Chi is not the only site of invented tradition. It is also common in other areas of martial arts. *Xinyi* is notable example. Thought to have originated in the *Shaolin* temple but practiced in both the Muslim community in China and among the Han Chinese it has generated versions grounded in the Zen Buddhist philosophy of the Shaolin temple, a Taoist version, and Muslim version in which the movements are connected with Islamic rituals and quotations from the Koran. (Smith 2003) *Shaolin* which is often used as a generic name for Chinese martial arts offers another example of reinvention. Historical research has shown that while popular historical narratives of so called Southern style of Shaolin connect it with the early history of the Triad and other secret societies, it was in fact forged by the anti-Manchu nationalist in early 20 century. (Qing 2000)

The invention of tradition is also evident as a process in other areas in which "Chineseness" is emphasized. Chinese traditional medicine for example, which shares some philosophical roots with Tai Chi, is also considered as a symbol and demonstration of China's cultural uniqueness, and has been mobilised by successive political forces in many of the same ways. During the Republican period, like Tai Chi, it was caught up in the drive to modernize, with academic circles struggling to find way to adapt it and fending off pressure for its eradication. In Mao's China it was promoted and interpreted as revolutionary and the medicine of the workers, peasants and soldiers in opposition to the western medicine of the bourgeoisie. More recently, debates about

whether it is a pseudo-science have continued, alongside renewed calls for a ban (Leung 1958; Leung and Xue 2005)

Another example is Feng Shui which has gained great popularity in the western world alongside Tai Chi. As a practice it originated from the tactics employed for tomb choosing and was banned officially in China in 1949 where it was widely considered as superstition. However after its wide acceptance in the Western world and its newly forged connection with the idea of environment protection, it has been re-imported into China and discussed in university classrooms as well in popular cultural forms, such as paper-back novels. (Bramble 2003; Stolze 2000)

If we compare the cases of Tai Chi, Chinese traditional medicine and Feng Shui, we see that although they have been treated differently in different times and locations they have all undergone a process of reinvention which shares certain basic characteristics. Firstly, they have all been the site of competition between advocates of competing claimants to the role of originator, each of which has marshalled a variety of evidence, often of dubious provenance. Secondly, inventions and reinventions have been inextricably bound up with shifts in political power and the implementation of political projects. Thirdly, as they have migrated to the west, they have all come to represent an imagined, essential, Chineseness while at the same time being interpreted and employed in a variety of novel ways.

Much of the writing generated by Edward Said's path breaking study of 'Orientalism' (Said 1978), which examined the West's love-hate relation with the East, has operated either at the level of abstract conceptualisation or has taken areas that fit the traditional restricted definition of culture, such as literature and art, as sites for concrete investigation. Some writers have focused on forms of popular representation, such as film (see e.g. Bernstein and Studklar 1997) but the work presented here suggests that there is much to be learned about the everyday dynamics of 'Orientalism' by taking areas of practice that are integrated more thoroughly into everyday life, particularly those that their users imagine have direct impacts on their health, fitness, and general well being. However, in exploring western attitudes to the Orient we also need to take on board,

Colin Campbell's argument, developed in his book, *The Easternization of the West* (2008) that in many ways since the 1960s, with the rise of ecological concerns, eastern philosophies has displaced western thought systems at the centre of the western world views. As we have seen from the ethnographic work presented here, Tai Chi was linked to a diffuse 'new age' sensibility among some practitioners. A comparative study of the adaptations and amalgamations at work across a range of 'eastern' practices would be an illuminating next step.

This present research has also raised the question of Tai Chi's relation to other cognate practices. Some of the participants also practiced yoga. Others were interested in other martial arts. How these different practices are integrated with each other in personal life projects and senses of the self offers another fertile area for investigation.

## **Tai Chi, Reinvention and beyond**

This thesis has focussed specifically on the processes through which Tai Chi has been invented and reinvented, both with China, and as it has travelled to the West, taking the imagination and practices of contemporary English practitioners as a case study. However, this by no means exhausts the possible areas of study.

As one of most popular bodily/spiritual disciplines, Tai Chi offers a rich site for further sociological and anthropological studies of changing orientations to belief and religion on the one hand and health and the body on the other. These two foci in turn, open up new possibilities for exploring questions of personal and social identity. Similarly, although we touched here on Tai Chi itself as a popular cultural phenomenon, and briefly mentioned the role of martial arts novels and films' in influencing the imagination of Tai Chi, the role of popular representations merits sustained attention.

In developing this line of inquiry, and building on the accounts of grounded practice provided by the ethnographic work presented here, future work will need to focus more centrally on the

relation between Tai Chi and the cross cutting social divisions of class, ethnicity, age , and particularly, gender. As a martial art, Tai Chi was originally restricted to males but there is evidence in the historical section of this thesis that in the Republican era, the application of Yi/Yan theory promoted female participation. In the section on migration and translation we saw how Tai Chi was promoted in England by very different advocates, including a female dance teacher and a male martial arts practitioner. There was some evidence from the ethnographic study that this division has persisted, with male practitioners being more likely to be attracted to the martial arts aspects of Tai Chi and female enthusiasts more likely to be attracted its articulations to bodily and spiritual well being. A much larger scale study than was possible here is needed to explore these articulations in detail.

As we have argued, Tai Chi, which at first sight seems so ‘timeless’ and so much an expression of the ‘essence’ of Chinese culture, is in fact continuously mutable and mobile, its present forms the outcomes of a continuous process of reinvention and translation .Given this endless process of invention and the boundaryless space of imagination it generates for its non Chinese practitioners, this present study can only ever be a beginning. But in opening up an area of research that has been underrepresented in Western scholarship, and by rereading the available Chinese sources and scholarship, I hope I have at provoked questions that other people will want to pursue.

# Appendix I

## Notes on the Ethnography

### Sampling

I began my selection of ethnographic sites by attempting to compile a comprehensive list of Tai Chi school and clubs in the UK using the search engine [taichifinder.com](http://taichifinder.com).

Examining the information provided for the various entries allowed me to classify them according to the three fold typology described and analysed in the introductory section of the thesis. The intention was to include an example of each type in the study.



I began with the Jade Moon in Loughborough making initial contact with the instructor of the club via telephone presenting myself as a Chinese Tai Chi fan and offering to exchange knowledge. Accidentally, the first visit was made on a night when it was snowing heavily when only one student, Andy had come. He later became my main informant there.

Following this initial contact I went to the club once a week for the following three years. I also participated the members socialising after class.

I kept a research diary for every visit together with observation notes. All these materials were inputted into the Nvivo qualitative analysis programme for further analysis.

In addition to written records of my observations, I made tape recordings of a cross section of class sessions. These were also inputted into Nvivo and provided valuable first-hand empirical data for the analysis of the class's structure, and its procedures and rituals, presented in the latter chapters of the thesis.

Other materials, including the advertisement of the club, the teaching materials, and photos taken in the classroom were also imported into Nvivo for further analysis.

Alongside my observational work conducted in-depth interviews with all the twenty or so long-term students in the club and its instructors. Most of these interviews were conducted in the training room.

The club's instructor Stephen, became my major informant on the experiences of instructors/masters.

Another important informant was Martyn, who seldom participated in the Jade Moon's sessions but was a graduate student at Leicester University.

Through Martyn, I gained access to a more professionally run and organised Tai Chi school. Since the master of this school was also the main organiser of the national Tai Chi organisation, this contact also opened the way for an institutional analysis of Tai Chi organisations in the UK.

Through my contact with the general secretary of Great Britain Union of Tai Chi, I came to participate in the annual Tai Chi competition held in Oxford.

I established contact with the third ethnographic site in the study which was located in Manchester, through the connections that I had personally established within the Tai Chi circle. This site differed from the other two in three important respects.

Firstly, it taught a different style of Tai Chi . Secondly, the instructor was female. Thirdly, it had strong connections with China which the two other sites lacked.. In this case I employed focus groups with participants rather than in-depth interviews alongside my participant observation. After two years of conducting ethnography, by chance I was invited to teach Tai Chi in the local LA Fitness club in Loughborough on a weekly basis. This provided me with a fourth ethnographic site , though because I was the instructor I was more fully a participant as well as an observer. The sessions lasted for half a year, from the week after the Easter holiday until Christmas.. The students in the class were all members of the Fitness club. At the maxim there are twenty students for each session, all of them beginners. As I explained in the introduction to this thesis my participation raised issues of how far what I observed was a product of my persona (as a Chinese practitioner) and my instructional style.. On the other hand this experience generated research material which may not have emerged in the “standard” British Tai Chi School led by an English teacher. In addition, the student body was much more ethnically diverse (mainly from the Indian community) than the other ethnographic sites.

In addition to my work in the four selected Tai Chi schools and clubs, I also participated the annual national completion championship held in Oxford each year and in other events held by the Great Britain Tai Chi Union. These offered a valuable source of contextual information on the general organisation of the UK Tai Chi community

### **Data Analysis**

As mentioned earlier, during the data collection period, I used Nvivo (version 7) to store, classify and manage the various kinds of data I collected. These included ethnographic notes, teaching manuals, advertisements of the school, photos taken in the session and even the full timetable of the LA Fitness centre. After each in-depth-interview, the recording was immediately

transcribed and added to the database. All the interviewees were tagged by age, gender, occupation, religious affiliation and location in order to facilitate comparisons and provide a basis for classifications.

During the initial stages of the data input process, I used the word frequency query function of the software to find the words used most often by the interviewees. This provided a guide to the Tai Chi masters' and students' main concerns which was then employed to amplify and develop the questions used in later interviews.

Once all the data had been inputted, key words and quotations (especially those did not appear in the word frequency query) were coded as nodes. These nodes were then catalogued based on their themes and used to develop the organisational framework for the discussion of key topics developed in the body of the thesis.

## **List of Informant and respondent**

### **Tai Chi Tutors interviewed**

Don, Male, 50s, London, Professional Tai Ch instructor

Derek, Male, 50s, Leicester, Professional Tai Ch instructor

Peter, Male, 50s, Leicester, Hospital Warden

Mike, Male, 30s, Loughborough, Labourer

Sue Female 40s, Manchester, Professional Tai Ch instructor

Stephan, Male, 40s, Loughborough, Administrative

Williams, Male, 60s, London, Professional Tai Ch instructor

### **Tutors contact via email/phone**

Carls, Male, 40s

Joanna, Female, 30s

Mandeigh, Male, 40s

Richard, Male, 40s

Libi, Female, 50s

Robin, 50s

### **Tai Chi Students interviewed**

Aisani, Female, 50s, Loughborough, Teacher (Indian British)

Arnold, Male, 20s, Leicester, Labourer

Andrew, Male, 30s, Leicester, Sales

Andy, Male, 18, Loughborough, Student

Amanda, Female, 30s, Manchester, Sales

Bill, Male, 60s, Loughborough, Retired

Emma, Female, 30s, London, Housewife (Polish)

Euphie, Female, 30s, Manchester, Housewife

Helen, Female, 40s, Loughborough, Housewife

Jack, Male, 20s, Leicester, Student

Jessica, Female, 70s, Loughborough, Retired

John, Male, 50s, Loughborough, Administrative

Kate, Female, 30s, Leicester, Nurse

Louise, Female, 40s, Manchester, Clerk

Martyn, Male, 40s, Loughborough, Researcher

Nakiro, Female, 20s, Loughborough, Student (Japanese)

Perry, Male, 20s, Loughborough, Accountant

Rao, Female, 40s, Loughborough, Teacher (Indian British)

Sue, Female, 50s, Loughborough, Retired

Wile, Male, 40s, Leicester, Technician

Windy, Female, 50s, Loughborough, Retired

Woody, Male, 20s, Southampton, Student

Yasar, Male, 20s, Manchester, Student (Algerian French)

## Appendix II

### Postures and Movements of Yang Style Tai Chi



Beginning

Grasp Sparrows Tail

Single Whip

Play Guitar

White Crane Spreads Wings

Brush Knee and Twist Step

Play Guitar

Forward and Punch with Fist

Apparent Closure and Push

Hit Tiger

Fist Under Elbow

Slant Flying

Needle at Sea Bottom

Fan Through the Back

Hit the Tiger

Wave Hands Like Clouds

Hit High Horse

Split Legs

Cross Legs

Step and Punch

Split the Legs

Hit the Tiger

Strike Opponent's Ears with Both Fists

Parting Wild Horses Mane

Fair Lady Works at Shuttles

Lower Position

Golden Cock Stands On One Leg

Snake Creeps Down

Side Kick

Step and Punch

Step Forward to Seven Stars

Step Back to Ride Tiger

Turn Body and Sweep Lotus With Leg

Bend Bow and Shoot Tiger

Cross Hands

Conclusion

## Bibliography

- Anderson, B R. O'G. (1991). Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism London, Verso
- Bernstein, M.H and Studlar, G (Eds) (1997) Vision of the East: Orientalism in Film. London. I.B.Tauris
- Bramble C (2003) Architect's Guide to Feng Shui, Exploding the Myth,. Oxford, Architectural Press
- Brownell, S. (1995). Training the Body for China, Sports in the Moral Order of the People's Republic. Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press.
- Cai, S. (1982). Promote the People's Sports Forward (把我国人民体育事业继续推向前进). Collection of Sports Achieves (体育运动文件汇编), Beijing People Sports Press.
- Cai, Y. (1933). Tai Chi Chuan with Illustrated Explanation (太极拳图解), Shanghai, Wu Chengji Publishing House
- Campbell, C (2008) The Easternization of the West: A Thematic Account of Change in the Modern Era. London. Paradigm
- Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, U. o. B. (1980). Fad and Fashion, The Sports Council and Social Science Research Council.
- Chan, S. (2000). The Construction and Export of Culture as Artefact: The Case of Japanese Martial Arts Body & Society 6: 69.
- Chen, J. (1957). Against Wang Xinwu's Strange Views. Sports Series (体育文丛) 8, Beijing
- Chen, W. (1996). Cheng Wei Ming Completed Collection (陈微明太极拳遗作汇编). Beijing, People Sports Press
- Chen, X. (1934, 1986). Illustrated Chen Family Tai Chi (陈式太极图说), Shanghai, Shanghai Bookshop.
- Chen, X. (1986). Illustrated Chen Family Tai Chi (陈式太极图说), Shanghai Bookshop.
- Chen, Y. (1947). T'ai-chi chuan, its effects and practical applications. Los Angeles, Martial Arts Supplies Distributor.
- Chen Yan, W. J. (2003). "The Result Analysis of Researching Casual Physical Training Current Situation for the Middle-aged and Old People in Shenyang." Journal of Shenyang Institute of Physical Education 1: 94. Shenyang

- Cheng, D. (1995). Chinese Martial Arts: History and Culture (中国武术: 历史与文化), Chengdu, Sichuan University Press.
- Cheng, M. (1981). T'ai chi chuan : a simplified method of calisthenics for health and self defence. Richmond, Ca, North Atlantic Books.
- Cheng, M. C. (1982). Master Chang's thirteen chapters on T'ai Chi Ch'uan. Brooklyn, Sweet Chi Press.
- Cheng, T. H. and D. J. Docherty (1983). Wutang : Tai Chi Chuan. Hong Kong, D.J. Docherty.
- Cheng, Z. (2004). Ou Rongju, the Hero of Jinwuhuei has not seen the Doctor for 50 years because of Taichi (精武会功臣区荣钜 50 年不找医生 靠太极健身). Information Times. Guangzhou
- Ching, M. B. (2006). Local Culture and National Identity: The Formation of Cantonese Culture in Late Qing Dynasty, Hong Kong, Sanlian Bookshop.
- Cohen, P. A. (1984). Discovering History in China, American Historical Writing on the Recent Chinese Past, Columbia University Press.
- Commission, N. S. (1955). Annual Report. N. S. Commission. Beijing
- Davies, A. D. "Dan Docherty: Tai Chi Gladiator." Fighting Arts International **46**.
- Davis, F.-L. (1971). Primitive revolutionaries of China: A Study of secret Societies in the Late Nineteenth Century. London and Henley, Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Davis, J., Ed. (1981). Boxer Uprising. American Diplomatic and Public Papers: The united States and China, Series III-The Sino-Japanese War to the Russo-Japanese War, 1853-1905, Wilmington.
- Dirlik, A. (1978). Revolution and History: Origins of Marxist Historiography in China, 1919-1937. California, University of California Press.
- Docherty, D (1997) Tai Chi, The Completed Tai Chi Chuan, Crownood Press
- Dong, Y. (1980). Tai Chi Chuan: An Explanation (太极拳释义), Shanghai, Shanghai Bookshop.
- Donohue, J. (1994). Warrior Dreams: The Martial Arts and the American Imagination. Westport, Bergin & Garvey.
- Du, Y. (1935). Orthodox Tai Chi. Kaifeng, Kuishengde Publiser
- Duara, P. (1995). Rescuing History from the Nation. Questioning Narratives of Modern China. Chicago, London, University of Chicago Press.
- Dykhuisen, C. j. (2000). Training in culture: The Case of Aikido Education and meaning-making outcomes in Japan and the United States. International Journal of Intercultural Relations **24**: 741.

- Esherick, J. and M. B. Rankin (1990). Chinese local elites and patterns of dominance. Berkeley, University of California Press.
- Fairbank, D. (1963). China's Response to the West: A Documentary Survey, 1839-1923, Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Fairbank, Reischauer (1979, 1989). China: Tradition and Transformation, North Sydney, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt
- Fan, G. (1994). Chang Style Tai Chi Quan. Shanghai, Shanghai Education Press.
- Fan, W (1943) Brief Introduction to Chinese History, Yanan, New China Bookshop,
- Fan, W (2004) Chinese General History, Beijing, People's Press
- Feng, S. . (1980). Questions on the Origin of the Boxer Rebellion (义和团源流质疑) Social Science Journal **4**.
- Frank, A. D. (2003). Taijiquan and the Search for the Little Old Chinese Man: Ritualizing Race Through Martial Arts, The University of Texas at Austin. **Doctor of Philosophy**.
- Frantzis, B. K. (1998). The power of internal martial arts : combat secrets of ba gua, tai chi, & hsing-i. Berkeley, Calif., North Atlantic
- Freedman, M. (1958, 1970). Lineage Organization in South-eastern China London School of Economics Monographs on Social Anthropology **No. 18**.
- Gan, Y. (2005). Explain China in Western Logics. 21 Century Economic Reports.
- Ge, Z. (2006). Thoughts History Relates to Everybody. South Weekly.
- Geddes, G. (1991). Looking for the golden needle : an allegorical journey. Plymouth, MannaMedia.
- Gernet, L. A History of Chinese Civilization, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Gu, L. (1982). Tai Chi Quan Shu (太极拳术), Shanghai, Shanghai Education Press.
- Gu, L. (1986). Cannon Fist (炮捶). Hong Kong, Hai Feng Press.
- Gu, S. (1987). Chinese Sports History: Modern Period, Beijing, People Sports Press.
- Gu, S. (1997). Ancient Chinese Sports History (中国古代体育史), Beijing Sports and Physical Education University Press.
- Gu, S. (1997). Chinese Sports History, Beijing Sports and Physical Education University Press.
- Guibernau, M. and J. Hutchinson (2004). History and National Destiny: Ethnosymbolism and its Critics, Blackwell.

- Han, F. (140BC, 1997). Hanfeizi. Beijing, Zhonghuashuju.
- Hao, S. . (1962). Wu Style Tai Chi Quan (武式太极拳), Beijing, People Sports Press.
- Hao, S. . and Hao (1992). Wu Style Tai Chi Quan, Beijing, People Sports Press.
- He, H. (1997). The Change of a Problem: on the long continuity of Chinese feudal society Academic Thoughts Review 学术思想评论 2.
- Hegel, G. W. F. (1975). Lectures on the Philosophy of World History, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Herder, J. G. (1995). China. German Thinkers on China(德国思想家论中国). A. 夏. Hsia. Nanjing, Jiansu People's Press: 81.
- Hobsbawn, R., Ed. (1992). The Invention of Tradition Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Holcombe, C. (2002). Theatre of Combat: A Critical Look at the Chinese Martial Arts. Combat, Ritual, Performance. D. Jones, E, Praeger.
- Hong, J. . (1964). On the Silk Reel of Tai Chi,unpublished
- Huang, C. (1926). Tai Chi Quan Illustration(Also named as Guides for Health) (太极拳图 (康健指南)).
- Huang, D. (2004). Temple of Yue Fei: Create the Field of Public Memory (岳飞庙:创造公共记忆的场). New Social History: Event, Memory, Narrative (新社会史) . J. Sun, Zhejiang People's Press.
- ITCCA "Old Yang Style Tai Chi Ch'uan."
- Jin, G. a. L., Qinfeng (1994). Changes in Opening: On the Ultra stability of Chinese Society Again. Hong Kong, Hong Kong Chinese University Press.
- Kaler, A. (2001). Many Divorces and Many Spinsters: Marriage as an Invented Tradition in Southern Malawi, 1946-1999. Journal of Family History 26(4): 529.
- Kraidy, M.( 2005), Hybridity: or the cultural logic of globalization Philadelphia, Temple
- Nederveen P, J(2004), Globalization and Culture: global mélange , Oxford, Rowman & Littlefield.
- Kang, G. (2001). The Development of Tai Chi (全面梳理太极拳发展脉络). China Wushu 3. : 5
- Kennedy, B. K. and E. Guo (2005). Chinese Martial Arts Training Manuals, A Historical Survey. Berkeley, California, North Atlantic Books.
- Klens-Bigman, D., Ed. (2002). Toward a Theory of Martial Arts as Performance Art. Combat, Ritual and Performance, Praeger.

- Kohn, T. (2001). Don't Talk - Blend": Ideas About Body and Communication in Aikido Practice. Anthropology of Indirect Communication. J. Hendry and B. Watson. London, Routledge: 164.
- Kohn, T. (2003). The Aikido Body: Expressions of Group Identities and Self-discovery in Martial Arts Training. Sport, Dance and Embodied Identities. N. D. a. E. P. Archetti. Oxford, Berg Press.
- Kolatch, J. (1972). Sports Politics and Ideology in China. Jonathan David Publishers
- Kuhn, P. (1970). Rebellion and Its Enemies in Late Imperial China, Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- LaRochelle, D. (2005). Reception Theory, Daoism and Martial Arts in the West. An interpretative Model in Cultural and Religious Transfers Studies. Daoism Studies Consultation: « Daoism Studies: Problems and Prospects », 2005 American Academy of Religion Annual Meetings, Philadelphia.
- Levenson, J. R. (1964). Confucian China and Its Modern Fate, University of California Press.
- Leung B (1958) Traditional Chinese medicine : The Human Dimension James H. Davidson, eContent Management Pty Ltd (QLD)
- Leung P and Xue C (2005) Chinese Medicine : Modern Practice, World Scientific Publishing Company
- Li, C. (2000). Analyse on the Martial Arts Practitioner in Tianhe Sports Centre Guanzhou City. Sichuan Sports Science **89**(1).
- Li, G. (2002). Politics of Funeral and the Reconstruction of the Republic of China. Depart of History, Nanjing University. **PhD**.
- Li, G. (2004). Premier Memorial Week and Political Culture of Republic of China. Twenty First Centaury (86).
- Li, H. (1998). Wu Style Tai Chi Quan with Illustrations, Theories and Secret Manuals (武式太极拳图解 太极论 诀), Beijing Sports University Press.
- Li, K. (2000). The Establishment of the Han Empire and the Group of Lui Bang: Studies on the Military Meritocracy. Beijing, Sanlian Bookshop.
- Li, S. (1979). The Origin of the Boxer Rebellion (义和团源流试探) History Education **2**.
- Li, S. . (1982). On Some Problems in the Research on the Boxer Rebellion (对义和拳研究中几个问题的探讨). Studies and Thinking (学习与思考) **6**.
- Li, S. . (1985). "Answers to the Origin of the Boxer Rebellion (义和团源流答问)." Historical Studies Journal **2**.

- Li, Y. (2005). The Structure and Evolution of Chinese Social Stratification, University Press of America.
- Li, Z. (2003). Chinese Ancient Thought History (中国古代思想史论). Tianjin, Tianjin Social Science Academy Press.
- Li, Z. (2004). The Cult of Sun Yet-sun and the Political Culture of the Republic of China Twenty First Century 12.
- Li, Z. (2004). Open Memorial: the Expression and Practice of the Zhongsanling. Nanjing University Journal 3.
- Li, Z. J., X. Z. Sheng, et al. (2003). Survey and Analysis on the Elder's Practices of Taijiquan in Communities in Shanghai (上海市社区中老年人习练太极拳现状调查与分析). Journal of Shanghai Physical Education Institute 27(5).
- Lin, B. (1992). Details on the Yang Style Tai Chi Quan Forms (杨式太极拳架详解), Beijing, People Sports Press.
- Lin, B. . (1987). Chinese Sports History: Ancient Period, Beijing, People Sports Press.
- Lin, B. . (1988). China Sports History (中国体育史), Sports and Physical Education College Press.
- Liu, X. (2000). On the Origin of the Confucian Revolutionary Spirit儒家革命精神源流考, Shanghai, Shanghai Sannian Bookshop.
- Liu, Y. . (1957). My Views on Wang Xinwu's Views on the Development of Wushu (对于王新午“开展武术运动”的一些意见)的意见 Sports Series (体育文丛) 7.
- Ma, L. . (1992). Fifty Years of Martial Arts and Sports in North China (中华北方武术体育五十余年纪略). Selection of Chinese Early Modern Sports Achieves (中国近代体育文选), People Sports Press.
- Ma, M. (2000). Sketches on the Swords (说剑丛稿), Laozhou, Lanzhou University Press.
- Mao, H. . (1995). The Collapse of the Divine Dynasty: Re-study on the Opium War (天朝的崩溃:鸦片战争再研究), Sanlian Bookshop.
- Mao, H. . (1998). The Measurement of the Early Modern: the Diplomacy and Military of Two Opium Wars (近代的尺度:两次鸦片战争的外交与军事). Sanlian Bookshop.
- Mao, Z. (1961). Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung. Beijing, Foreign Languages Press.
- Marx, K. (1965). Pre-capitalist Economic formations. E. Hobsbawn. New York, International Publishers.

- Morris, A. D. (2004). Marrow of the Nation, a History of Sport and Physical Culture in Republican China. London, University of California Press.
- Naquin, S. (1976). Millenarian Rebellion in China: The Eight Trigrams Uprising of 1813 New Haven and London, Yale University Press.
- Naquin, S. (1981). Shantung Rebellion : The Wang Lun Uprising of 1774. New Haven, Yale University Press
- Novikov, B. (1972). The Anti-Manchu Propaganda of the Triads, in Jean Chesneaux ed. Popular Movements and Secret Societies in China, 1840-1950, Palo Alto Stanford University Press.
- Nu, S. (1998). "Social Survey and Analyse on the Basic Features of Chinese and Japanese Taijiquan Practitioners." Sports Science **18**(5).
- Ownby, D. (1996). Brotherhoods and Secret Societies in Early and Mid-Qing China: the Formation of a Tradition. Palo Alto, Stanford, Stanford University Press.
- Perry, E., J (1980). Rebels and Revolutionaries in North China, 1845-1945, Palo Alto, Stanford University Press.
- Perry, E., J (1984). Chinese Perspectives on the Nien Rebellion. New York, Armonk.
- Peyrefitte, A. (1995). L'Empire Immobile ou Le Choc De Mondes. Beijing, Sanlian Bookshop.
- Qi, J. (1595, 1996). Jixiaoxinshu. Beijing, China Bookshop
- Qin, B (2000) The True History of Hongmen, Fuzhou, Fujian People's Press
- Robinson, R. Gerda Geddes - Tai Chi Pioneer. Tai Chi Chan & Internal Arts **no 16**.2006
- Robinson, R Gerda Geddes- Tai Chi Pioneer Tai Chi Chuan no 22, 2006
- Rozman, G, Ed. (1981). The Modernisation of China. New York, The Free Press.
- Said, E (1978) Orientalism : Western Concepts of the Orient. New York. Pantheon Books
- Sheffer, G (2006 ) Diaspora Politics: At Home Abroad, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press
- Shen, J. and L. Gu (1964). Chen Style Taijiquan, Beijing, People Sports Press.
- Shen, S. (1997). The Cult of Yellow Emperor and the Construction of Nation-State in Later Qing Dynasty. Invention of Past, Imagination of Future: the Construction of Nation-State in Later Qing Dynasty 1895-1912, Taipei.
- Shen, S. (1999). Genealogy of National Heroes and the National-State Imagination in Later Qing

- 
- Shida, K. (1999). "The Shintoist Wedding Ceremony in Japan." Media, Culture and Society **21**(2): 195.
- Shu, X. . (1961). Chinese Early Modern Education History Materials Collection, People Education Press.
- Shun, I. (1998). The Invention of the Martial Arts: Kano Jigoro and Lodokan Judo. Mirror of Modernity: Invented Traditions of Modern Japan. S. Vlastos, University of California Press: 163.
- Sima, Q. (91BC, 1982)). Shiji. Beijing, China Bookshop
- Smith, A. (1776, 1991). The Wealth of Nations, London, Random.
- Smith, A., D (1999). Myths and Memories of the Nation, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Smith, R (2003) Hsing-I: Chinese Mind-Body Boxing, Berkeley, North Atlantic Books
- Song, L (1369, 2005) Yuan History, Beijing, China Bookshop
- Stolze, G (2000) Seal of the Wheel, St. Paul, Atlas Games,
- Sun, J. and D. Huang (2004). Narrative of Yue Fei, Public Memory and Nationhood Identity (岳飞叙述、公共记忆与国族记忆). Twenty First Century **86**.
- Sun, L. (2000). Nationalism of Qing Dynasty and the Cult of Yellow Emperor History Research **3**.
- Sutton, N. (1993). Gongfu, Guoshu and Wushu Journal of Asian Martial Arts **vol 2** (No3).
- Takacs, J. L. (2001). All Heroes Think Alike: Kinship and Ritual in Baguazhang. University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.
- Takacs, J. L. (2003). A Case of Contagious Legitimacy: Kinship, Ritual and Manipulation in Chinese Martial Arts Society Modern Asian Studies **37**(4): 885.
- Tan, H. (2003). "Change of the Society in Modern China and the Progress of Wushu (近代中国社会的变革与武术进步)." Journal of Southwest Normal University(1).
- Tan, K. S. Y. (2004). Constructing a Martial Tradition: Rethinking a Popular History of Karate-Dou. Journal of Sports and Social Issues **28**(2): 169.
- Tan, M. . (1934). "Tai Chi Chuan and Military Training." United National Arts(4,5).
- Tang, H. and L. Gu (1996). Researches on Tai Chi (太极拳研究), Beijing, People's Sports Press.
- Tang, S. a. W., Liming (2004). "The Philosophy Source of the Martial Arts "Holding Hands" Salute." Jounal of Shandong Education Institute **19**(3): 121.
- Tang, X. (2007). The Construction of Cantonese Culture. Twenty First Century **10**.

- Thompson, L. A. (1998). The Invention of the Yokozuna and the Championship System. Or, Futahaguro's Revenge. Mirror of Modernity: Invented Traditions of Modern Japan. S. Vlastos, University of California Press.
- Todd, T. "The Erle Montaigne Story." New Zealand Martial Arts Magazine.
- Toto, (1345, 1985))Song History, Beijing, China Bookshop
- Tsai, J.-j. (2003). The Effect of the Anti-Christian Movement in China (1922-1927) to YMCA's Physical Education Activities (非基督教運動 (1922-1927) 對基督教青年體育事業發展之影響) Journal of National Taipei Teachers College **16**(2).
- Wakeman, F. . (1966). Strangers at the Gate: Social Disorder in South China, 1839-1861. Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press.
- Waldron, A., Ed. (1993). Representing China : The Great Wall and Cultural Nationalism in the Twentieth Century. Harumi Befu.
- Wang, G (1739,2007 ) Ming History, Beijing, China Bookshop
- Wang, T. (2003). Deyin Taichi. China Wushu. **3**.
- Wang, Z. . (1991). Chinese Fire Weapon History (中国火器史), Beijing, Military Science Press (军事科学出版社).
- Wile, D. (1996). Lost t'ai-chi classics from the late Ch'ing dynasty. Albany, State University of New York Press.
- Wile, D. (1999). T'ai-chi's ancestors : the making of an internal martial art. New York, Sweet Chi ; Enfield : Airlift
- Wittfogel, K., A (1957). Oriental Despotism: A Comparative Study of Total Power. New Haven, Yale University.
- Wittfogel, K., A (1962). The Marxist View of China. China Quarterly **11,12**: 1.
- Wu, N. (1928). Tai Chi : Scientificalized National Sports (科学化的国术太极拳). Shanghai, Commercial Press.
- Wu, R.s. (2005). A Tradition Invented? Or A Tradition Employed?—On the Application of the Tibetan Chanting Bowl and the Chinese Bass Gong in Western Music Therapy. 2005 Asia-Pacific Art Forum Taipei.
- Wu, T. (1933). Tai Chi Sabre. Shanghai, Commercial Press.

- Wu, T. (1936). General Introduction to National Sports. Shanghai, Commercial Press.
- Wu, W.-c. (1975). Selection of Historical Literatures and Illustrations of Physical Activities in Chinese Culture.
- Wu, W. (1995). On Styles of Tai Chi. Spirit of the Martial Arts. 5.
- Wu, W. (2001). Wu Style Tai Chi Complete Book, Beijing, Beijing Sports University Press.
- Wu, Y. and Y. Ma (1999). Orthodox Wu Style Tai Chi Quan (正宗吴式太极拳). Beijing, Beijing Sports University Press.
- Xu, Y. (1921, 1980). Illustrated Tai Chi (太极拳势图解). Shanghai, Shanghai Bookshop
- Xu, Z. 徐. (1927). On Tai Chi Chuan (太极拳浅说), Wenhua Publication Company (文华图书印刷公司) .
- Xu, Z. 徐. (1964). On the Questions about Silk Strength (略谈太极拳的缠丝劲问题). Sports News.
- Yang, C. (1934). The Complete Book of Tai Chi Quan Forms and Application (太极体用全书). China Bookshop.
- Yang, C. (1937). Tai Chi Application. Shanghai, Commercial Press.
- Yang, H. (1980). On Chinese Ancient Weapon (中国古兵器论丛), Beijing, Antique Bookshop.
- Yu, G. (1999). Essential Tai Chi Chuan Dictionary, Beijing, People Sports Press.
- Yu, G., Ed. (2002). Interviews with Tai Chi Masters. Beijing, People Sports Press.
- Yuan, Y. (1953). On National Form Sports (重视民族形式体育). New China Agency.
- Zhang, F. (1957). Two Lines in the Battlefield of Wushu (武术工作中的两条路线) Sports Series (体育文丛) 9.
- Zhang, F.. (2001). Bagua Tai Chi Chuan (八卦太极拳). Beijing, People Sports Press.
- Zhang, N.. (1936). Scientific Internal Martial Arts (科学的内功拳). Shanghai, Shanghai, Life Bookshop.
- Zhang, P. (2006). Between the Public Property and Private Property: the Membership and Institutional Logic at the Moment of Dissemble of People's Commune. Sociology Research 5.
- Zhang, P. (2006). The Membership and Practice Logic in the Real Estate Conflicition in Rural Area Society 26.
- Zhang, W.. (1957). Wushu is the Historical Heritage, it Should be Inherited and Developed. People's

Daily.

Zhang, Z. (1956). Speech on the National Sports(关于国术的发言). 2nd Full Meeting of the Second National Political Consultant Conference (全国政协第二届全国委员会第二次会议), Beijing.

Zhao, G. (2000). Chinese Martial Arts History (中国武术史话), Shijiazhuang, Hubei People Press.

Zhao, R. (1964). The Differences between Silk Strength and Chousi Strength. Sports Newspaper.

Zhong, S. (1999). The History and Legend of the Ancient Weapon (中国古兵器的历史与传说), Beijing, Chinese Liberation Army Press.

Zhou, W. (1991). The Martial Arts in the Secret Society in Qing Dynasty (清代秘密结社武术活动试探). Chengdu Sports Institute Journal **2**.

Zhou, W. (2000). The Academic Importance and Value of Boxer Rebellion in the Mariel Arts History in Qing Dynasty (义和团运动研究对清代武术史研究的学术意义和价值). 100 Years of Boxer Rebellion

Zhou, W. (2003). Chinese Martial Arts History (中国武术史), Beijing, Higher Education Press.

Zhou, W. (2006). Chinese Weapon History, Hundred Flower Arts and Literature Press.

Zhu, M. (1931). Tai Chi Calisthenics 太极操. Shanghai Ddong Bookshop.