



SHAOLIN ARTS
SCHOOL OF SELF DEFENSE AND FITNESS®

**T'ai Chi Ch'uan
Student Handbook**

太極拳

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Acknowledgments

I would like to thank all of the people that made this manual possible. To mention everyone that has affected me in the martial arts would create a long list. To mention everyone who has helped in my ability to create this physical manual would be another long list. Thus, I shall just say thank you. You each know who you are. My name is used simply to take the responsibility for future improvements.

About the Author

Si Gung Kerry Gracey loves seeing people succeed in life. He has lots of papers that say he is smart, or at least educated at undergraduate and graduate studies. He also has certificates of rank that suggest high proficiency in martial arts, as well as community awards and trophies, some dusty, some not. Perhaps the truest tests are the students, family and neighbors who have known him for years and still like him. So read the manual, get together, play, have fun, grow, and share.

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*We call **happiness** a certain set of circumstances
that makes joy possible. But we call joy that state of mind
and emotions that needs
nothing to feel happy. – Andre Gide*

Introduction

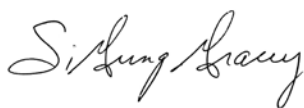
Welcome to T'ai Chi Ch'uan (pronounced 'tie chee chuwan'), a program that has stood the test of time. T'ai Chi Ch'uan, Tai Chi or Taijiquan is one of the most ancient forms of Chinese martial arts, or wushu. Chen style of T'ai Chi is the oldest and, in fact, the original form of T'ai Chi Ch'uan from which all others have developed. It possesses many unique characteristics, such as hardness complementing softness, speed intermixed with controlled movements and particular use of spiral force with silk drawing force providing great therapeutic value. It also employs more movements which are genuinely applicable to self defense than any other form of T'ai Chi.

This manual is your reference guide to review what you learn in the studio. It cannot replace your instructor. Your instructor is a vital key to your success.

Often times students think the more they know the faster they will progress and therefore read ahead. In the arts, knowing a lot of things is not the same as understanding them in depth. It is the creating of useable abilities within each of us that make the difference. Learning each step well will be the quickest method of developing the abilities you want.

The Shaolin Arts are an exciting, successful part of my life. They have much to give.

Congratulations on making a good decision.



Head Master

桂
凱
瑞

Virtue in Power



Keep yourself disciplined in all situations.

Choose the middle path of harmony; never go to extremes.

Be humble; do not show off.

Be loyal to the system and your instructor.

Be honest with yourself and others. Remain courteous.

Persevere and put heart and mind into all you do.

Accept and exhibit responsible behavior, cooperation and
respect.

Avoid fights: do not provoke anger in others or yourself.

By remaining true to the above,
one shows respect for oneself,
for one's instructors,
for the ancestors of the arts,
and for the art.

Studio Etiquette

1. Remove street shoes and bow before entering and leaving the training area of the Studio.

Removing street shoes is an ancient tradition. It is a sign of a visitor's humility to remove their footwear and it preserves the hygiene of the studio. Remember, good health and peak fitness are reasons why people take lessons.

The bow is similar to shaking hands. It is a formal greeting towards someone or something, allowing us time to connect.

2. Always walk quietly to the rear of a class in session. Avoid walking in front of the instructor during a class. Being late for class is rude to the instructor and all the other students. Try to be a few minutes early.
3. Speak quietly, if necessary, when classes are in session.
4. No eating, drinking, smoking or chewing gum in the studio.
5. Control your emotions at all times. The studio is an excellent place to increase your self-control.
6. Refrain from using foul language in or near the studio.
7. Always bow to the instructor at the beginning and end of each class. Likewise, bow to your workout partner when practicing together.

8. Do not disrupt the flow of the class by interrupting the instructor with questions. Your instructor will reserve a proper time in class to answer questions you may have. Too many questions will often disrupt the flow of class and ultimately slow your progress.
9. Possession of drugs or alcohol in the studio is grounds for immediate dismissal.
10. Students should wear the traditional uniform in all classes. This uniform allows you to change hats increasing your ability to learn and therefore increasing your success. Take advantage of this!
11. Refer to your instructor with a title: Laoshi, Mister or Ms. The respect you show towards others is a reflection of the respect you have for yourself and the arts.
12. A dirty wrinkled uniform reflects badly on you as a student. Always wear a clean uniform to class. Your uniform is your responsibility, not your parent's nor your spouse.
13. Students exercise poor judgement, demonstrate a lack of patience, a lack of humility, and show disrespect to the instructor's professional judgement when they ask for more material or rank advancement. When your instructor sees you are ready for more material he or she will be eagerly teach you. We all want to see you honestly progress.

14. Support your studio. Always purchase your equipment from your instructor. We will always strive to get you the best price and quality. By keeping the business in the studio, you help keep your tuition lower.

Most people will do what is right when they understand what is expected and the reasons behind it. If you do have questions or concerns please ask.

We are here to help you succeed.

*Ten thousand rivers flow into the sea;
the sea is never full.*

Uniforms 'Xiao Fu' 校服

The T'ai Chi uniform allows you to "change hats." The proper use of it accelerates the effects of your training. There are many uniforms in the Arts. In T'ai Chi Ch'uan the uniform is the classic center button down type. Silk uniforms in various colors are used for exhibitions, demonstrations, etc. The traditional T'ai Chi uniform is white then black cotton. In the past, peasants wore black because it was easier to maintain and afford, so wearing black became a symbol of humility.

Advanced training, instructor status, and other honors add various patches or color to the basic uniform.

You are responsible for maintaining a clean and neat uniform. The care you extend to your uniform is a reflection of the respect you have towards yourself and the arts.

Rank

White - blue sashes:

Red sash:

Beg. - Intermediate black:

Advanced black (master):

Head Master:

Assistant Instructor:

Chief Instructor:

Uniform

all white

all white or all black

black or white piping.

red piping on any variation.

gold piping on any variation.

blue piping

mixing solid black or white for top or bottom.

The Five Animals / Elements

The Tiger / Fire 虎 火 'Hu' / 'Huo'

Tenacity, power and courage are the attributes of the tiger. Its energy is like an advancing wall washing over everything in its path., like a fire growing and rising.

The Dragon / Earth 龍 地 'Long' / 'Di'

Flexibility with twisting, raising and falling motions are the mythological dragon's methods. It is the thinker. Its energy is carried high, closer to its head and then directed to various parts of its body. Solid like a mountain, everywhere like a sand storm.

The Leopard / Metal 豹 金 Bao' / 'Jin'

Coordinated speed is the leopard. Its energy is like a lightning bolt flashing, or like the metal axe splitting firewood.

The Crane / Wood 鶴 木 'He' / 'Mu'

Balance, gracefulness embody the crane. It represents longevity and teaches us by its calm, quiet nature. Its energy is balanced, reserved, to be used when desired, like a healthy forest.

The Snake / Water 蛇 水 'She' / 'Shui'

Suppleness and rhythmic endurance are the characteristics of the snake. It is known for having strong Chi, or internal strength, able to maintain the ideas of flowing water and solid ice.

Rank

'Deng'

等

Systems of rank has been used in society for varied purposes. The military has its own. Corporations have their own. T'ai Chi has its own. Sashes and belts commonly symbolize skill levels with different shapes and colors representing different levels of achievement. The best rank is one's real skill and respect others have for the individual.

At first there were only white uniforms and sashes, then, through use, the white slowly became darker until it became black, since by tradition one never washed their sash. After even more use, the sash would begin to wear out, fray, and turn white. This was referred to as one returning to their state of innocence. Today we use different colors of sashes representing your progression towards black; black being a recognized high level of proficiency. Each color represents a different rank (level of achievement). After Black Sash there are also different levels of achievement. Some systems use additional colors on the sash to represent these levels, others do not. Some use titles such as, instructor, chief instructor, head instructor or master instructor to indicate knowledge levels. In China, Laoshi is a common title. It means instructor, or more accurately, "one who came before."

The proper attitude to have about rank is not to compare your rank to other students. Rank is meant to show how much you have improved since you started, according to your potential. No two people will ever be exactly the same. Use others to motivate and encourage you, but each sash/rank will be something only you can individually achieve.

Gold Sash:	Beginning	等 開始
Blue Sash:	Intermediate	等 中間
Red Sash:	Advanced	等 高級
Black Sash:	Proficient	等 純熟

The higher the rank one achieves, the more humble that individual should be. In western culture, humility is often viewed as a weakness. In the arts, humility indicates trust in instructors, respect for others and, hopefully, a lack of arrogance.

Remember, as you increase in rank, so do your responsibilities. You have the opportunity to set the right example for all those that follow after you, to help make their path be the most efficient possible.

*If happiness is in your destiny,
you need not be in a hurry.*

The Basics 'Xin Nian' 信念

Our Belief System As we develop in our personal lives, we consciously and unconsciously create inner views or mental models of the universe that become part of who we are. This is commonly called our personal belief system. As we move through life this model or belief system is continually challenged, at times falsely and at times correctly. In order to maintain our physical, mental and spiritual health we must successfully adapt to these challenges and assimilate new understanding. In most North American education we are taught the Scientific Method as the process and means to discover truth and thereby have understanding. As we move through life we often experience things that cannot be completely explained by this scientific method, but nonetheless, we still use what degree of knowledge we have on the topic. For example, is light a particle, a wavelength or both? What is electricity? The common answer, for electricity, is electron flow. But the electron flow idea just creates more questions and theories, exponentially. All of which doesn't bother most people as long as the light bulb works when you turn on the switch. As we talk about Chi or energy flows within the body we may be challenging belief systems. But, like the light bulb, if it works, it works! Some cultures are more concerned with why things work, while others are more interested in how things work.

Systems of Energy — Chi 活力

The Western scientific tradition encourages us to objectively analyze data and events external to ourselves; in the Eastern tradition encourages us to subjectively investigate the internal world through contemplation, meditation and body control. The conclusion and constructs from Eastern traditions provide different perspectives from those of the west — or so it may seem at first. Often it's more a difference in methods of description. A key premise in Eastern thinking is the existence of energy as associated with the human body. For thousands of years it has been thought of as a specific force; in China it is referred to as Chi or Qi; in Japan as Ki; in India it is Prana. Use of this energy is commonly reported and witnessed through acupuncture, homeopathy, acupressure, the martial arts and Tai Chi. Some individuals perceive the presence of energy more easily than others, but the ability to perceive it is inherent in everyone. Perception of energy is enhanced by the person's acceptance that it does exist. Expressions like "I'm running out of steam," "I feel high," or "My spirit is low" can all be related to our own experiences with our energy fields. This perception is aided by exercises and techniques designed to stimulate energy flow — namely T'ai Chi.

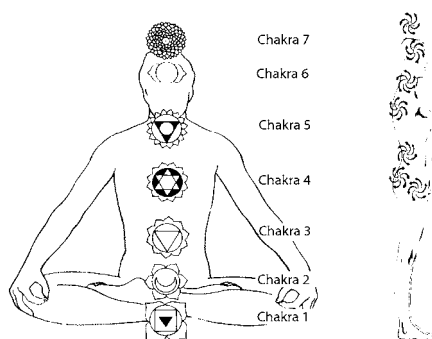
Western scientists, such as Einstein, state everything is made up of energy. The Chinese say, everything is a form of Chi.

There are two main working models of energy / Chi flow in relation to the human body we would like to consider: the East Indian idea of chakras and the Chinese concept of meridians; each with their own set of terms or descriptive language.

First, background energy fields -- all pervasive, diffuse, non-organized vibration -- which permeates the whole body. It responds to those forces surrounding and passing through it, though they have no form of their own. This background energy field is sometimes referred to as the background music of the body. Heat radiating from the body is one example of this background energy. In addition to heat emanations, a number of more subtle vibrations together constitute the aura or auric field. There are people who are sensitive to the vibrations of these auras in that they can either see, feel, and/or hear them in others.

Second, there are vertical energy flows; the body itself acts as a conduit or channel for energy passing through it. The configurations of the body mold the energy into specific forms, most notably the skeletal system with its associated seven major energy centers or chakras; namely the muladhara, svadisthana, manipura, anahata, vishuddha, ajina, and sahasrara. Examples of sources of energy passing through the body would be the sun, moon, and earth. Westerners may think in terms of the gravitational and heat forces, to name two. Each can generate energy patterns and thereby influence the human body.

The Seven Major Chakras



The vortices of chakra energy coincide with the curves of the skull and skeleton.

The first Chakra plays a critical role in grounding our energy.

The second Chakra reflects on the power of sexuality.

The third Chakra is associated with personal power; also called the Dan Tian in China.

The fourth Chakra is connected with the heart.

The fifth Chakra is related to communication and personal creativity.

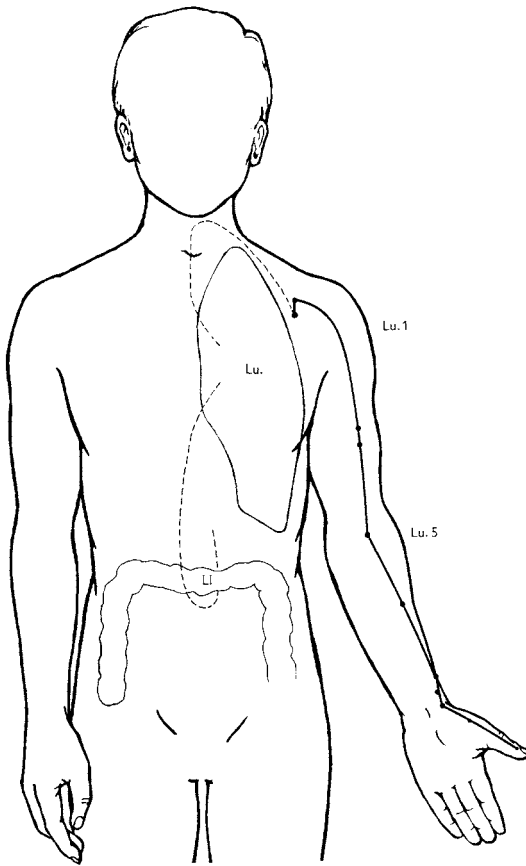
The sixth Chakra is also known as the third eye and relates with intuition.

The seventh Chakra connects you connection to the universe and all things therein.

Third, energy will circulate as currents within the body. The most common method of identifying these currents or pathways is found in acupuncture and traditional Chinese medicine. The pathways are often referred to as meridians. Twelve paired meridians labeled with a yin or yang, and with an associated body organ and / or function. Each meridian is also grouped by the five elements; fire, wood, earth, water and metal. These meridians flow in a creative (Shen) cycle and / or a control (Ko) cycle. Western science associate these energy meridians with blood flow and nerve pathways, but that perspective does not always.

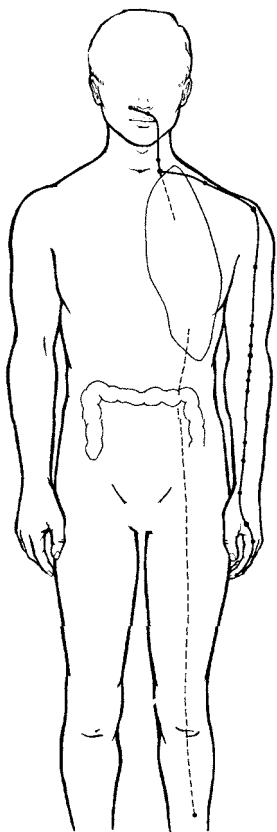
*Why is the sea king of a hundred streams?
Because it lies below them.
Therefore, it is the king of a hundred streams.
Thus, he who leads first must follow behind.*

Lung Meridian, Lu



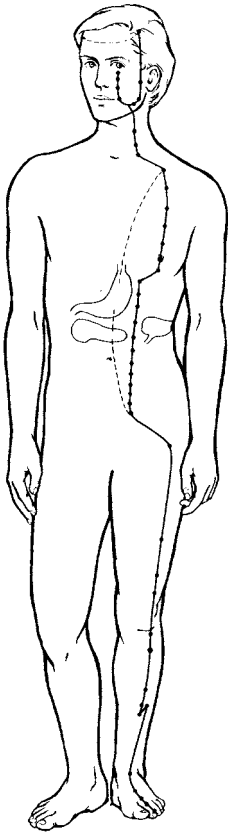
The lung meridian begins at the hollow between the chest and the shoulder, proceeds down the inner aspect of the arm on the thumb side, ending in the tip of the thumb. It is a yin meridian with 11 points. It is a metal element. Also known as Fei Ching.

Large Intestine, Li.



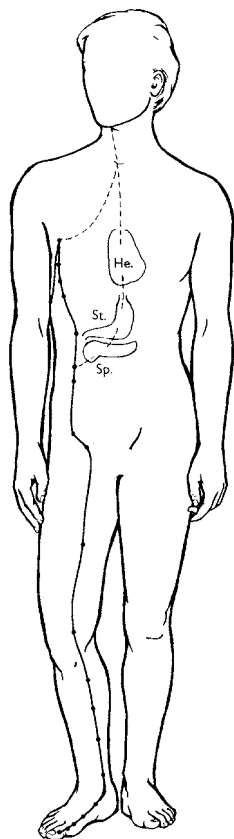
The large intestine meridian starts at the tip of the index finger and moving up the outer arm on the thumb side across the shoulders and the neck to the end of the corner of the nose. There are 20 points. It is a metal element and a yang meridian. Also known as Ch'ang Ching, CC.

Stomach Meridian, St.



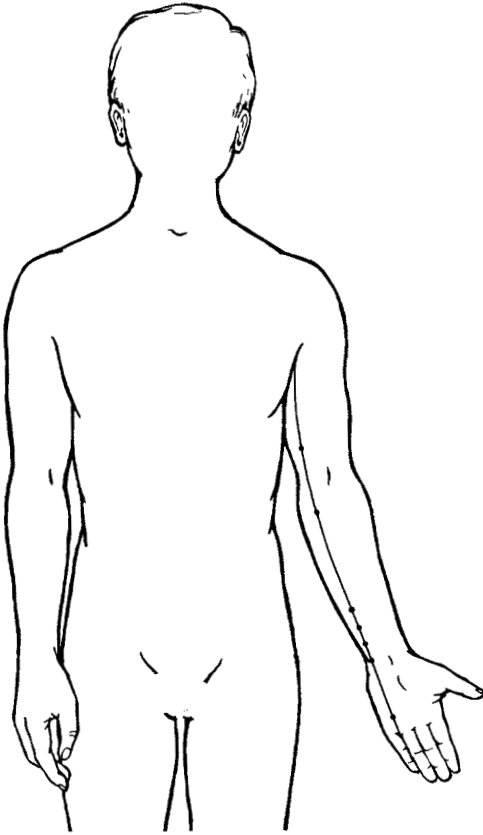
The stomach meridian begins under the eye traveling down the neck proceeds through the leg to end at the tip of the second toe. It has 45 points. It is an earth element and is a yang meridian. Also known as Wei Ching.

Spleen- Pancreas Meridian, Sp, P.



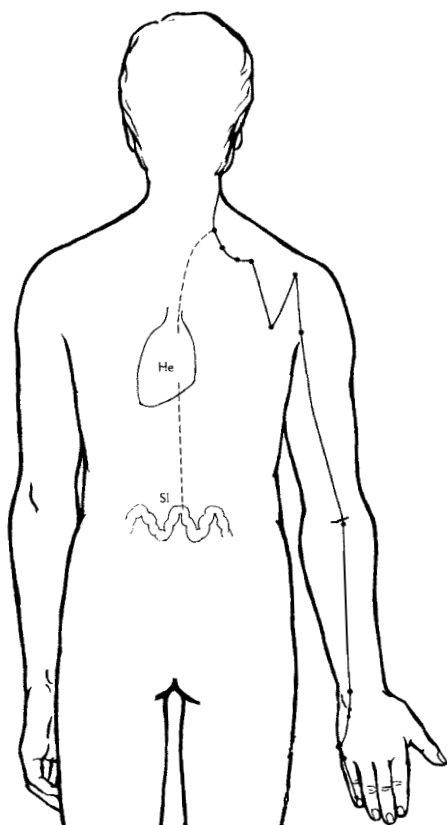
The spleen meridian begins at the tip of the large toe and moves upward along the inside of the leg, continues up to the torso to end at the side of the body with 21 points. It is an earth element and a yin meridian. Also known as P'i Ching.

Heart Meridian, H, or Ht.



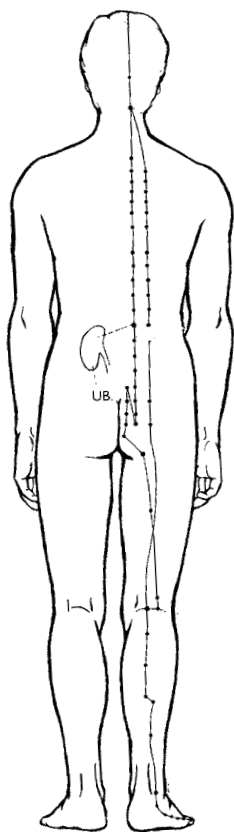
The heart meridian starts in the armpit, travels down the inside of the arm ending at the tip of the little finger with 9 points. It is a yin meridian and its element is fire. Also known as Hsin Ching.

Small Intestine, Si.



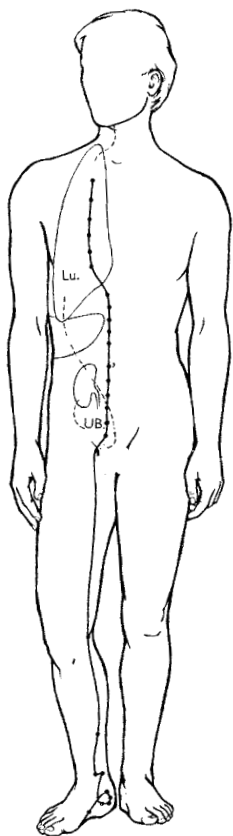
The small intestine meridian starts at the tip of the little finger, runs up the outer arm, across the shoulder and onto the side of the head where it ends at the ear having 19 points. It is a yang meridian and its element is fire. Also known as Hsiao Ch'ang Ching.

Bladder Meridian, Bl.



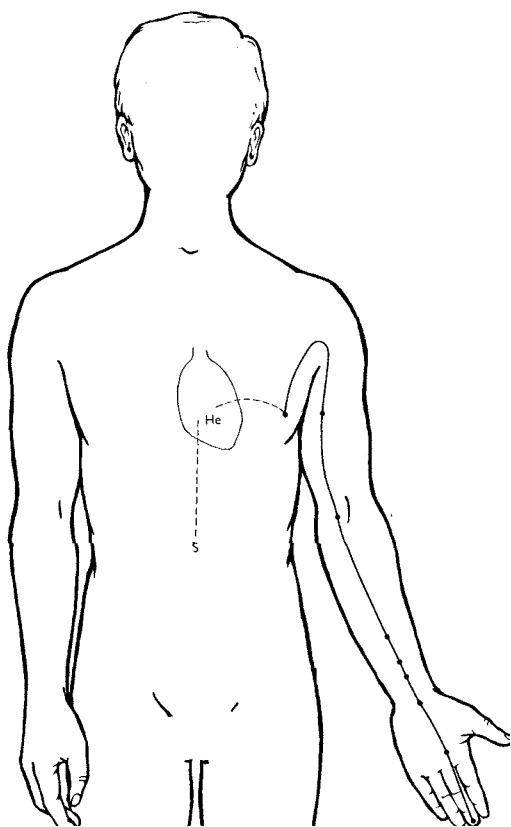
The bladder meridian originates at the inner corner of the eye, moves over the head, down the back in two lines running parallel to the spine. It then follows down the back of the leg and terminates at the little toe for a total of 67 points. Its element is water and is a yang meridian. Also known as P'ang Kuang Ching.

Kidney Meridian, K or Ki.



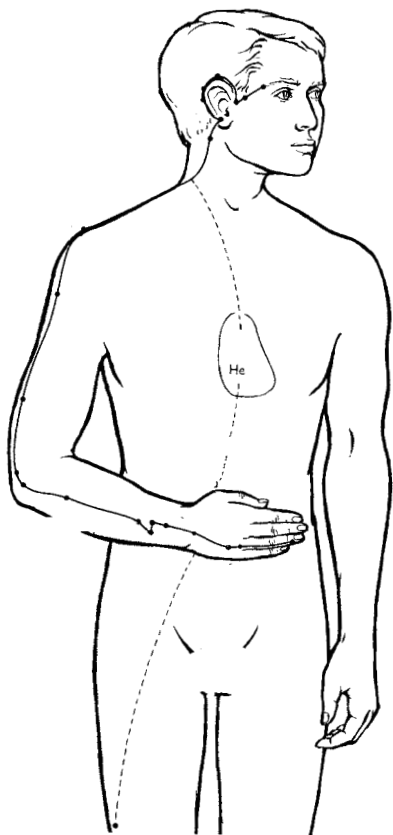
The kidney meridian begins in the bottom of the foot travels up the inside of the leg past the genitals continues up the torso just beside the mid-line to end just below the collar bone with 27 points. It is a yin meridian and its element is water. Also known as Shen Ching.

Pericardium or Heart Constrictor Meridian, P, or HC.



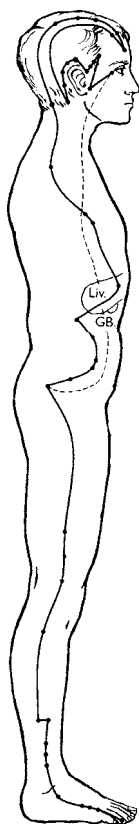
The pericardium meridian begins on the chest near the nipple, flows up to the shoulder then down the middle of the arm, ending at the tip of the middle finger with 9 points. It is a yin meridian and its element is fire. Also known as the Hsin Pao Le Ching.

Triple Warmer or Triple Heater, Tw, Th.



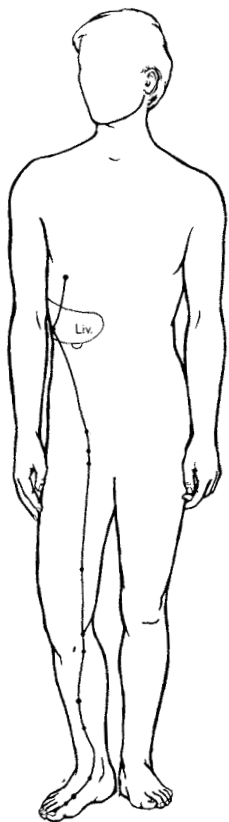
The triple warmer meridian begins at the tip of the ring finger, follows the back of the arm along the mid-line moving up the shoulder, continues across the back surface of the shoulder, onto the head where it flows around the border of the ear to end at the temple with 23 points. It is a yang meridian and its element is fire. Also known as San Chao Ching.

Gall Bladder Meridian, Gb.



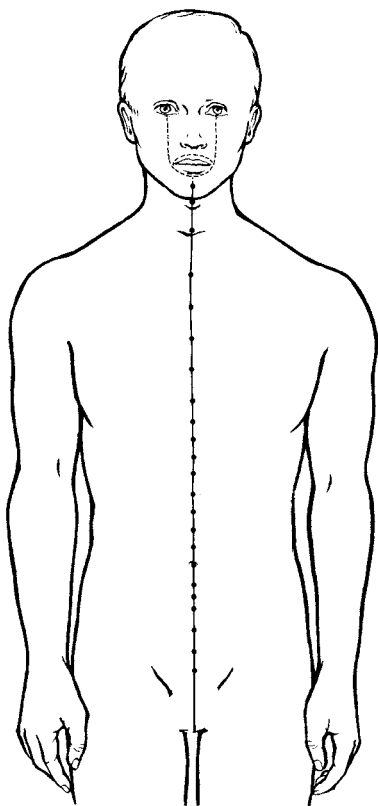
The gall bladder meridian begins at the outer corner of the eye, follows a zig zag route around the ear, returns to the forehead across the top of the head and down the rear side of the neck, travels down the side of the body to end at the tip of the forth toe with 44 points. It is a yang meridian and its element is wood. Also known as Tan Ching.

Liver Meridian, Liv or Lv.



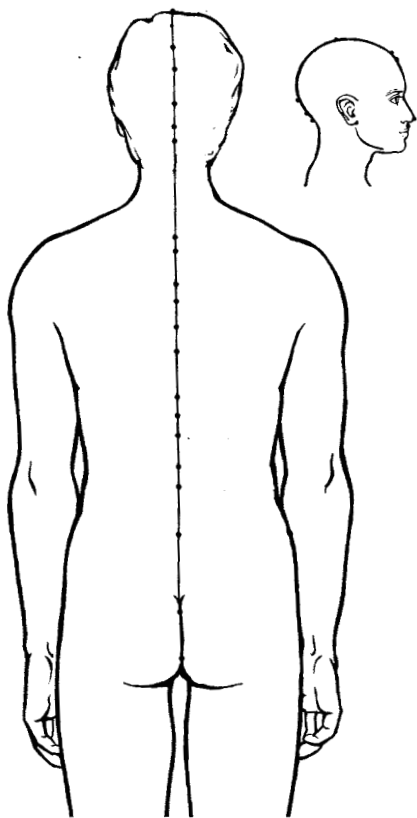
The liver meridian begins at the tip of the large toe moving upward along the inside of the leg and onto the abdomen, ending at the border of the rib cage with 14 points. It is a yin meridian its element is wood. Also known as Kan Ching.

Conception Vessel (minor meridian), Vc.



The conception vessel is not related to any specific organ but is important in the regulation of Chi. It begins in the groin midway between the anus and the scrotum and midway between the anus and the commisura labiorum on women. It travels up the front of the body along the center line, ending just below the lower lip having 24 points. It is the primary source-line of yin energy and all yin-meridians are related to it. Also known as Jen Mei.

Governor Vessel (minor meridian), Vg.



The governor vessel is not related to any specific organ but is important in the regulation of yang Chi. It begins at the tip of the tail bone and travels upward along the spine over the head to end inside the top lip having 28 points. All yang meridians are related to the governor vessel. Also known as Tu Mei.

Yin/Yang



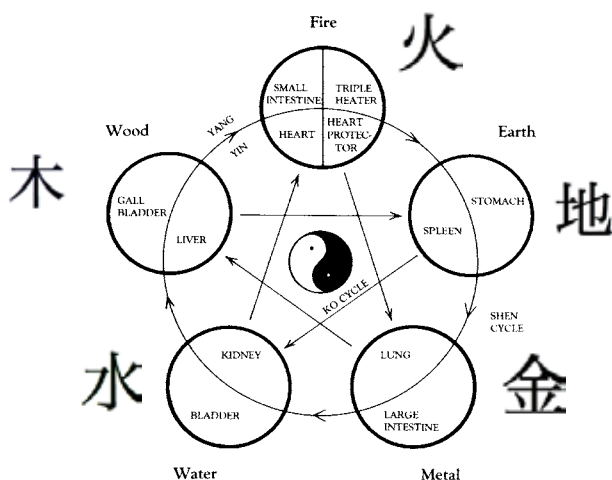
太極圖

Every object or substance is said to possess negative and positive elements within itself, the yin and yang. Yin is dark, female or soft, as compared to yang: light, male or hard.

The yin-yang symbol has no absolute yin or yang. Each is shown containing a portion of the other.

The eight trigrams of the I-Ching or Book of Changes, surround the yin-yang symbol. These eight patterns describe the amount or type of Chi in organs and meridians found in the body. This information in turn is used to treat the body in traditional Chinese medicine.

5 Elements



This diagram indicates the five elements, the twelve main meridian pathways with their yin/yang association, and two major energy cycles: the Shen or creative/generation and the Ko or control/destruction.

The cycle of generation: fire generates earth, earth generates metal, metal obtains water, water produces wood, wood becomes fire.

The cycle of destruction: water puts out fire, fire destroys metal, metal cuts down wood, wood covers earth, earth absorbs water.

Neutral relationships: water does not affect earth, earth does not affect wood, wood does not affect metal, metal does not affect fire, fire does not affect water.

Energy in Human Communication

The vibrations of our energy fields affect our surroundings through the principle of Resonance. We know that if we strike one tuning fork, place it among other tuning forks of the same resonant pitch, those that have not been struck will begin to vibrate. A similar phenomenon occurs if a number of grandfather clocks are placed in the same room, their pendulums, after a period of time, will swing synchronistically. On the human level the menstrual cycles of women living together gradually become aligned.

As people come together, their energy fields engage. There may be an instant sense of “connecting or bonding” as both persons’ inner “tuning forks” resonate at the same pitch. In some cases this happens only after several meetings. Resonance is commonly facilitated through shared experience or physical contact.

As we become more open and resonate with other people’s vibrations, our own clarity and centeredness become increasingly important. If our vibration is disorganized or off center, it is more likely that we will synchronize with another person’s discord. Sometimes we need to put up an “energy buffer” just like a caterpillar constructs a cocoon. We can create a chrysalis of energy by picturing ourselves surrounded by white light, for example. At times stronger buffers are needed. We can envision a massive wall of energy in front of us. Altering our behaviors, becoming

less emotional and empathetic, more detached and intellectual will also shield us.

Some environments, as congested cities, tend to lead people to employ constant energy buffers. This is often unhealthy over an extended period of time. Become aware of your own energy buffers, how to lower them and how to raise them up.

The concept of energy flow as associated with the human body, is a fascinating topic. At times this has been abused by those with a little knowledge and/or a lot of greed. Hollywood has certainly made great profits in their movie industry over these ideas. As Western society continues to meet Eastern, there is truth and growth for both to share. Together, with the best of both worlds, we are all stronger. In T'ai Chi we will often refer to these energy fields. There are many good texts written covering these topics in great detail. We encourage you to research those areas that interest you. A basic book list, at the end of this guide, is provided for your review.

*A ship can find support in water;
water can turn it over.*

History 'Li Shi' 历史

The real origins of T'ai Chi Ch'uan are obscure. The more romantic and mystical accounts date the beginnings of T'ai Chi as far back as the 15th, 12th or even the 8th century, the preferred version attributes it to a famous 15th century Taoist priest, Chang Shanfeng.

An obscure Taoist priest, Chang Sanfeng, is believed to have been the creator of the satisfying exercise system and gentle martial art of T'ai Chi Ch'uan. Ch'uan translates to mean control or fist, therefore T'ai Chi Ch'uan can mean Supreme Ultimate Self Control or supreme ultimate fist or fighting system, depending on your interests and orientation for T'ai Chi Ch'uan. Chang stated, "My own destiny depends upon myself and not upon the heaven." He led a life of active responsibility for his own successes and failures.

T'ai Chi Ch'uan may be considered as the first physical therapy program specifically conceived to promote a sound body for a longer life.

Self defense cannot be considered at this point because Chang stated his determination to find the secrets of immortality. T'ai Chi Ch'uan was not created for the purpose of fighting. It was aimed at preserving and prolonging life...not to imply one could physically live forever, but it was designed to supplement the pursuit of longevity.

Chang Shanfeng's T'ai Chi creation was described as "Poetry In Motion."

A less romantic, but more reliable account dates the development of T'ai Chi Ch'uan back to Chen Wangting, a 16th century Royal Guard of the Chen village in Wenxian County, Henan Province. After he retired from the army, influenced by Taoism, he led a simple life of farming, and studying and teaching the martial arts.

In the 1670's Chen Wangting developed several T'ai Chi routines, which included the Old Frame Form still practiced today. He was greatly influenced by a famous general of the Imperial army, Qi Jiguang, who wrote an important textbook on military training, *Boxing in 32 Forms*, and was also influenced by other schools of boxing in existence of that time. His goal was to create a system of fitness exercises to maintain health. Chen Wangting assimilated the ancient philosophical techniques of Daoyin and Tuna into his martial art routines. He combined this with the use of clarity of consciousness as developed in the practice of Taoism.

Daoyin is the concentrated exertion of inner force, while Tuna is a set of deep breathing exercises. In more recent times the popular Chi Gung deep breathing exercises developed from these techniques. By combining the martial arts exercises with the practice of Daoyin and Tuna, Tai Chi Chuan became a complete system of exercise. Connecting the practitioner's mental concentration, breathing and actions paved the way for its use in future times as an

ideal form of exercise for all aspects of health care.

T'ai Chi was passed on to and refined by further generations of the Chen family but deliberately kept within the area of Chen's village until the early 19th century when Yang Luchan learned Chen style T'ai Chi while employed in the Chen household. Yang Luchan became a highly skilled and enthusiastic practitioner, developing his own particular simplified style of T'ai Chi, which he taught to a great number of people, including the members of the Imperial Court. The simpler Yang style of T'ai Chi, although lacking the depth of Chen style, was easier to teach and gained popularity.

All the other major schools of T'ai Chi in practice today, including the Sun and Wu schools, originate from Chen's style.

Chen Xin, a member of the 16th generation of the Chen family, wrote and illustrated an immensely detailed book about the Chen school of T'ai Chi that describes the correct postures and movements. It explains the philosophical and medical background to the routines. This was not published until 1932 after Chen Fake, a great grandson of the celebrated Chen Changxing, popularized the Chen style of T'ai Chi.

Chen Fake, the 17th generation of the Chen family, was one of the most highly achieved and possibly the greatest leader of the Chen school of T'ai Chi. There have been many stories told about his amazing prowess in T'ai Chi and also about his near perfect disposition: he was universally well-liked, making no

enemies whatsoever during the 29 years he lived and taught in Beijing up until his death in 1957.

Chen Fake was the youngest child in his family and his father was 60 years old when he was born. His two elder brothers had died in an epidemic. As a result Chen was a very spoiled, lazy, weak child. Even though he knew T'ai Chi would improve his health, he could never be bothered to spend much time practicing. His older cousin, on the other hand, was very highly thought of for his strength and expertise in T'ai Chi. By the time Chen Fake was 14 years old he was the laughing stock of his village. His father was recognized as the leader and most highly skilled practitioner of T'ai Chi in the village so as Chen Fake grew older he began to feel ashamed of himself. He realized he let his father down. He decided to try and catch up to his cousin's level of skill. But no matter how much he improved, his cousin also improved by an equal amount. Fake worried that he would never catch up with him.

Then one day, while they were walking to the fields, his cousin remembered they had left something behind and sent Chen Fake back to fetch it. He told him to "...run back and fetch it. I shall walk slowly so that you can catch up to me." As Chen Fake was running back to catch up with his cousin it suddenly occurred to him that if he practiced harder than his cousin he would eventually catch up with him. From then on he used every available minute of the day to practice, even when other people were resting. He soon improved so much in strength and technique

that he was able to beat his cousin in a duel. His father had been away from home at that time for about 3 years so Chen Fake's spectacular improvement could not have been attributed to any special coaching from him. It resulted of the incredible number of hours he practiced.

He kept up this habit of constant practice throughout his life, even after his abilities had been acknowledged by his students in Beijing when they presented him with a silver shield on which was written "To the Greatest in T'ai Chi." In his teaching he emphasized to his students the need for constant practice, allow Tai Chi to become a way of life.

Another interesting story concerns a wushu contest that the chief of the Beijing Wushu Center, Xu Yusheng, organized. He was a well known wushu [kung fu] expert before he became one of Chen's students, and he asked Chen to judge the contest. Chen refused saying that he was not qualified to judge all forms of wushu since he only knew T'ai Chi, but agreed to act as an adviser. At a discussion on the contest rules, someone proposed that the duels be limited to 15 minutes. To save time, Chen suggested that 3 minutes should be long enough. When questioned further he confessed that he really thought a count of "one, two, three" should be enough. Li Juanhua, who was a former wushu coach and stood 2 meters tall and weighed 100 kilograms, was extremely dubious about this and challenged Chen to defeat him within this time limit. Li made the first move and Chen parried, with one movement lifting Li some 30

centimeters off the ground and dashing him against a wall, at the same time breaking a picture, showering him in plaster dust, yet not injuring him at all.

Chen Fake taught thousands of students during his years in Beijing, many keen to improve their health and even to cure a specific illness.

T'ai Chi Ch'uan in the United States

'Meilijianhezhongguo' 美利坚合众国

Interests in the Chinese Arts increased in direct proportion to America's involvement with China and its people. Western science became more open towards Eastern scientific philosophy after witnessing the success of acupuncture and acupressure techniques. This increased interest in this idea of Chi.

In the fighting dimensions of the Martial Arts, the principles of T'ai Chi have always been taught at higher levels of training.

Over time T'ai Chi Ch'uan skills have been strongly maintained and taught through families systems, or Gar systems. As Asians immigrated, forming the various "China Towns" of North America, their Gar systems came with them. In North America, some residents shunned these new Asian neighbors, most ignored them and a few exhibited interest in understanding their ways and later their Gar T'ai Chi Ch'uan arts. Some Gar systems would use the snake or dragon to explain Chi. Other families liked to use

all five animals, Tiger, Leopard, Snake, Crane and Dragon, to teach the different Chi patterns and uses. Each animal made an excellent contrast and therefore acted as a great learning tool.

Now “Western” students continue to carry on these family traditions. It has proven to be a good way of life.

Today, masters from North and South America travel to the countries of the “East”, to teach and share the Arts once developed there.

The modern history of the Arts is still being written... perhaps one day your name will be remembered when a student reflects, “if I could be like my master...”

*Remembering is for those
who have forgotten.*

T'ai Chi Ch'uan and Health

"disease," dis-ease, the absence of ease.

'An Kang' 安康

Methods of Oriental Treatments for the Body

Acupuncture: The insertion of needles into any of over 700 points in the body in order to stimulate or to sedate the flow of Chi.

Moxibustion: The burning of Herbs over acupuncture points to affect Chi.

Herbs: Herbology teaches that the environment which produces the malady will itself produce the remedy.

Massage: Acupressure in its various forms as done by one person on another and T'ai Chi, which is done by one person on themselves.

Diet: There are many sundry methods of diet. Generally, one must become sensitive to individual needs. The rule of thumb is, the closer you can take something "directly from the earth" the better it is for you. Maintain an educated, common-sense approach covering all four basic food groups. Remember the yin/yang concept of balance in all things.

As a result of his important role in the popularizing of T'ai Chi during the 1930's, Yang Chen Fu is often called the "Father of modern T'ai Chi." In his book, *The Application of Taijiquan*, he mentioned that when he was a young man he decided there was little point in his learning T'ai Chi because it only enabled him to defend himself against a single person. He preferred to learn a technique which would enable him to fight millions at a time, by this means he could help save China from being conquered and divided up by other nations. His uncle explained to him that T'ai Chi was not just a means of self defense. It's primarily purpose aimed to make people healthier and stronger. In order to save a nation, his uncle advised him, one should start by making all the people healthy and strong. Then there could be some hope of saving a country from foreign domination.

Yang Chen Fu took these words to heart and from that time onwards devoted his life to learning and teaching T'ai Chi, and it is largely as a result of his efforts that T'ai Chi has become so widely practiced around the world. T'ai Chi's immense benefits to health that have caused it to become so popular, not its usefulness as a means of self defense.

T'ai Chi stands apart from other martial arts in its use of the sort of techniques which are used to strengthen the internal Chi. It is this combination of exercises used to strengthen the internal Chi together with the simultaneous performance of a series of relaxed, continuously flowing external movements directed by mental concentration which makes T'ai Chi so immensely suitable for healthy exercise.

The accumulation of thousands of years of knowledge and technique refined to create T'ai Chi into a complete system of exercise for good health. The physical benefits mask one of the most effective forms of martial art ever devised. T'ai Chi's origin as a martial art doesn't invalidate it as a means of attaining good health. Remember, of all population bases, the soldier needs for strength from maintaining good health in poor living conditions quickly resulted in either his life or death. Even in its original form, the main emphasis in its practice was to create a stronger, and thus a healthier body both internally and externally. For example, the external movement known as the "single whip" is designed to help the lungs while "brush knee" helps the lower digestive tract and stomach.

T'ai Chi is a complete exercise in many senses of the word. First, it utilizes mental concentration and clarity of mind, thereby training the central nervous system and promoting mental relaxation. Second, it either directly or indirectly exercises and benefits all the body's internal organs. Third, it exercises all the muscles, joints and ligaments of the body.

Scientific research supports the view that regular practice of T'ai Chi is beneficial to the health of both body and mind. Specifically, regular practice will improve mental health, mental relaxation and the ability to concentrate. It will also affect physical health, by improving many bodily systems such as the cardiovascular, respiratory and digestive systems. T'ai Chi has also been shown to improve

immunity, coordination, body awareness and the skeletomuscular system, and is successfully used for its curative effect on many diseases. It has been used by doctors all over the world to treat different psychosomatic diseases, mental stress, heart disease, hypertension, diabetes, arthritis, etc.

Sundry amounts of research have been undertaken, and many papers published in authoritative journals, concerning the medical benefits of T'ai Chi. Much of this has been carried out in China, the original home of T'ai Chi, but increasingly more countries of the world have added to this research as Tai Chi's popularity grows.

We will summarize these health benefits. First, from the viewpoint of modern scientific knowledge of human physiology and of modern medicine, and second from the viewpoint of the classical T'ai Chi texts and of traditional Chinese medicine.

All forms of T'ai Chi share many basic principles and therefore have many similar benefits to health. Chen style's complete forms results in more complete benefits.

The Modern Viewpoint

Mental Health

In our busy modern world we travel very much in the fast lane maintaining lifestyles that are often extremely hectic, and resulting in poor eating habits, minimal exercise and a excessive mental stress. Some medical professional believe more than 50% of illnesses treated by modern doctors can be attributed to psychosomatic disorders or, directly or indirectly, to mental stress.

This stress can cause physical illnesses such as cardiovascular problems and high blood pressure. Stress has been proven to cause increased blood cholesterol levels and even some forms of cancer. Thus mental stress has a very clear and direct relationship to total body health, causing not only mental but also physical illness.

In practicing T'ai Chi, the principle requirement is for the mind to be completely cleared of extraneous thoughts so that it can concentrate completely on the execution of the required movements. When performing T'ai Chi the mind must be in a relaxed yet clear and alert state so that it can be used to direct and coordinate the movement of all parts of the body. This exercises the central nervous system and improves mental relaxation.

Relaxing the body relieves and relaxes of the mind. Likewise, a tense mind tightens and restricts the body.

There is a direct physiological connection. Consider a time when you finished a significant mental exercise, did you notice a big sigh, stretch, or sense of physical relief at its completion? When practicing T'ai Chi properly, the muscles are gently stretched out until they are fully relaxed. Such actions are impossible with a tense mind. Thus, in order to practice T'ai Chi properly, one is almost compelled to relax mentally.

Traditional form practice of T'ai Chi aids relaxation and focus by using a sequential series of movements, called 'forms', each designed to expand, relax, focus creating an awareness.

In order to fulfill all these requirements, one must train one's mind. It is possible through this training to reach a mental state similar to that of meditation, which is why T'ai Chi is often called 'meditation in motion.'

Practicing T'ai Chi is a pleasurable experience, giving the practitioner a feeling of comfort and improving their mood. This idea was verified through the recording of electrical brain waves (EEG) of two groups of people. One group consisted of regular practitioners of T'ai Chi while the other group, a control group, were not T'ai Chi practitioners. In the experiment the T'ai Chi group recorded a larger number of alpha waves than the control group. The production of alpha waves, the study reported, signifies a state of "mental clarity and concentration," and subjects were said to be "highly calm and alert" and to have "improved or restored memory." All

these findings are consistent with mental relaxation.

The Cardio-Vascular System

Another part of the body that has greatly benefited from regular practice of T'ai Chi is the cardiovascular system. Various studies have shown that regular practice of T'ai Chi improves heart function by exercising the heart in a gentle, gradual, controlled manner similar to swimming. Exercise of the cardio-vascular system in T'ai Chi can be tailored to suit different levels of health. So T'ai Chi can be said to be suitable for everybody, and as a form of sustained exercise of the cardio-vascular system, T'ai Chi is now recommended by many physicians to their patients with heart problems.

Another means in which the heart benefits from the practice of T'ai Chi is through the abdominal breathing. This causes alternate increases and decreases of pressure inside the abdominal cavity which cause alternate increases and decreases of pressure inside the thoracic cavity. This in effect gives the heart a gentle massage, like a good massage given to tired muscles.

Changes of pressure inside the thoracic cavity also improve the ability of the heart and lungs to contract and expand, thus ensuring better blood circulation, and improved air exchange within the lungs.

Another factor that can lead to improved functioning of the cardio-vascular system occurs when the entire body's muscles are stretched out, especially when

executing spiral movements. Like twisting a sponge, this efficiently empties the blood and lymphatic fluid from all parts of the body including the extremities. The subsequent returning movement effectively untwist the sponge so the body is able to 'suck in' a greater amount of blood and nutrients than normal improving the circulation of blood through the body and allowing oxygen and nutrients to reach all parts of the body more efficiently.

There are other factors that can affect the heart in a less direct way, such as elevation of cholesterol and triglyceride levels, which can cause atherosclerosis (damage to the blood vessels and the heart). Multiple studies conclude T'ai Chi can decrease the level of cholesterol and triglycerides in the blood.

Force is followed by a loss of strength.

This is not the way of nature.

*That which goes against nature comes to an early
end.*

The Respiratory System

The abdominal breathing required in T'ai Chi is performed in coordination with body movements. It is deep, slow, rhythmic in nature. This type of deep breathing utilizes the abdominal and diaphragmatic muscles and provides beneficial exercise for the lungs. Many physiotherapists teach their preoperative patients deep diaphragmatic breathing as an aid to recovery, since it opens up the full space of the lungs and promotes better oxygenation of the body tissues.

Correct coordination of body movement with breathing is very important. When performing a movement of opening up of the body, such as when both of the upper limbs stretch out, one should inhale. The movement involved in opening up stretches out the muscles of the chest wall, which controls inspiration, as well as lowering the diaphragmatic muscles. The combination of all these movements of the muscles fully extends the respiratory capacity. When performing a closing up movement, the reverse is also true, with all the air being fully exhaled from the lungs.

A study quoted from Traditional Chinese Fitness Exercises by China Sports Magazine and New World Press showed that T'ai Chi practitioners enjoyed greater vital lung capacity, greater lung tissue elasticity and a lower rate of calcification of the rib cartilage, as well as easier breathing patterns after completion of a respiratory function test, and a quicker recovery time.

The Digestive System

T'ai Chi improves the digestive system in various ways. First, when practicing T'ai Chi, the relaxation of muscles and decrease in mental stress enhances the functioning of the parasympathetic nervous system which aids in better digestion along with the general repair and maintenance of the body.

Secondly, practicing T'ai Chi simulates the flow of blood to the intestines and stomach. T'ai Chi alternately increases and decreases pressure inside the abdomen resulting from abdominal breathing. With improved blood circulation, the function of the digestive system naturally also improves. The change of pressure caused by diaphragmatic breathing also gives the abdominal organs a gentle massage.

Third, though not fully understood, studies show the level of blood cholesterol and other blood fats in the body can be significantly lowered by practicing T'ai Chi for as little as six months. Somehow the breakdown of unhealthy fatty substances is encouraged through the practice of T'ai Chi.

Fourth, as with all other forms of exercise, T'ai Chi aids the digestion of food and enables the body to utilize a greater proportion of its calorific content. Thus T'ai Chi is particularly suitable for people with poorly functioning digestive systems or who are overweight.

The Skeletomuscular System

The lack of physical exercise leads to a thinning and weakening of the bones (osteoporosis) and causes susceptibility to fractures. Individuals with a deficiency of calcium, and those whose body cannot utilize the calcium in it, such as menopausal women, are also affected in this way. Lack of exercise is known to be a common cause of these problems. Those who fail to exercise regularly become extremely prone to muscular and ligament injuries.

Research established regular exercise increases the density of the bones, making them stronger and less likely to fracture. T'ai Chi effectiveness results from gradual exercises in muscle workload, without stress, gradually increasing the strength of the bones.

When practicing T'ai Chi, correctly, upright posture is essential. Good posture decreases the stress on the joints and the bones allowing them to work more efficiently and consequently to last longer. Poor posture not only affects the internal organs, since there is less space for them (for example, people with hunch-backs have a smaller lung capacity), but also causes more stress on the joints and the bones.

The gentle stretching exercises practiced in T'ai Chi will strengthen the muscles and the bones, making the muscles more supple and stronger. This rhythmic stretching out and relaxing of the muscles squeezes the muscles dry and then relaxing, lets the blood flow back in. Blood becomes diffused into the muscles and the joints, bringing nutrients and oxygen that will

improve the health of the tissues, muscles, and bones. Tense muscle whether due to physical or mental stress for extensive periods are more susceptible to damage. The gentle stretching which occurs when practicing T'ai Chi will prevent such injury or repair it.

Almost all T'ai Chi movements hinge from the waist and involve a great deal of movement of the region around the lumbar vertebrae. T'ai Chi, therefore, greatly benefits the lumbar spine and the muscles around it. The Traditional Chinese Fitness Exercises indicated that only 25.8 % of a group of elderly T'ai Chi practitioners studied suffered from spinal column deformities compared with 47.2 % of a control group chosen to represent the normal population and of the same age. X-ray examination of their spines also showed senile osteoporosis (thinning of the bones) in only 36.6% of the T'ai Chi group as compared to 63.8 % of the control group.

Other Systems

T'ai Chi benefits all systems of the body, such as the immune system, which helps the body to fight invading disease and cleans up abnormal cells, a precursors of cancer. In 1989 in Dallas, Texas, a research team undertook one of the world's largest ever studies on exercise and health. The findings showed that moderate exercise, such as obtained from walking or swimming improved many aspects of health, including the immunological system. T'ai Chi must, therefore, be considered to be an entirely suitable form of exercise for achieving improved immunological activity.

All other systems of the body are geared to working more harmoniously and effectively with regular exercise. When the major systems, such as the cardiovascular and respiratory systems, function properly, the repair and maintenance of other systems improves. So we can safely assume that practicing T'ai Chi will improve metabolism and also the regenerative capacity of the body.

The benefit obtained by one system will enhance the benefits obtained by another. For instance, if we compare the benefit obtained to mental relaxation by practicing T'ai Chi for one hour compared to that obtained from lying down and relaxing mentally, the former is considerably more effective. Simply because relaxation of the muscles enhances mental relaxation, the abdominal breathing and the mental concentration required to perform the movements correctly. In fact, T'ai Chi is so well designed that one benefit will always amplify another. To give another example, mental relaxation improves muscular relaxation, muscular relaxation improves abdominal breathing and better posture, which in turn will further improve mental relaxation. It is like a ripple effect, with the benefits compounding on each other to improve overall health of the body.

In summary, T'ai Chi's gentle movements exercise the entire physiological system of the human body with all the resulting benefits of improved health associated with longevity and quality of life. It combines physical exercise and mental exercise with added advantage of a gentle and relaxing program that reduces the chance of injury.

The Traditional Viewpoint

In ancient times, Chinese culture and traditional medicine were considerably more sophisticated than those practice in many other parts of the world. Many of the theories and practices in use in China two to three thousand years ago align with modern medical practices. For instance, in the Han Dynasty (25-220 AD) the renowned doctor Hua Tuo wrote, "The human body requires constant exercise," and also that "regular exercise aids digestion, stimulates circulation and helps the body to resist diseases." This is almost the same advice any modern doctor would give. It is hard to believe that it was written nearly 2,000 years ago!

Many of the points discussed under the previous section are also entirely consistent with traditional Chinese medicine and do not need to be repeated here. Instead, discussion will mainly be centered on those traditional ideas not yet embraced by modern science.

T'ai Chi incorporates the ancient philosophical techniques of Daoyin and Tuna. Daoyin is the concentrated exertion of inner force, while Tuna is a set of deep breathing exercises. Daoyin is the Jingluo theory of the flow of internal energy throughout the body, which forms the basis of all traditional Chinese medicine. The term meridian, which is used in western texts on acupuncture, is the equivalent of Jingluo. Chi flows from the Dan Tian along meridians to all parts of the body.

Chi or Qi is a concept firmly embedded in Chinese culture and traditional medicine. Chi is defined as a form of life energy that circulates throughout the body in all living things. It originates as a combination of air from the lungs, the essence from the kidneys and the essence from food and drink via the digestive system.

Chi not only maintains life and health, it governs almost all activity in the body including the following:

- It activates the life force, the growth, metabolism, regeneration and repair of the body.
- It has a warming effect, regulating body temperature and keeping the organs in an active capacity.
- It guards against invasion of the body by disease.
- It enhances and regulates the circulation of blood, body fluids, saliva etc., throughout the body and is, therefore, responsible for the transportation of nutrients and oxygen to the whole body.
- It restores and maintains the level of blood and body fluids circulating in the body.

Chi is stored in the Dan Tian and circulates around, to and through all parts of the body.

In summary, Chi is of vital importance to the health of the entire body. A person with strong Chi is both healthier and stronger than a person with weak Chi, and any disturbance of the flow of Chi, or weakening of Chi, will result in illness.

Chi is not a tangible substance, and its existence cannot (as yet) be detected by modern scientific methods. Circumstantial evidence is, however, plentiful. Most T'ai Chi practitioners will testify that they can feel the Chi flowing through their body and will, to varying degrees, be able to direct this flow.

Traditional medicine bases much of its theory on Chi. It is an essential part of all traditional Chinese medicine, including acupuncture which is now very well known and accepted throughout the world.

Acupuncture is based largely on a belief in the curative effects of correcting the flow of Chi. Acupuncture therapies are used to regulate and improve the flow of Chi precisely in the same way and for the same reasons, that practitioners of Tai Chi, through practice, aim to improve the flow and strength of their Chi, giving lasting therapeutic benefits to the whole body.

T'ai Chi was created with the basic intention of strengthening internal Chi. It can be achieved by following the basic principles of T'ai Chi, that is, by allowing Chi to sink to the Dan Tian, keeping the body erect, keeping the head straight, and relaxing and sinking the shoulders and elbow joints. The flowing movements of T'ai Chi are an excellent means of facilitating the improved cultivation and flow of Chi.

With a stronger Chi, and with the ability to direct it at will, the practitioner can concentrate Chi at one point of his or her body when attacked, making this point stronger and less susceptible to injury.

When the internal force is delivered during an attack, the power released is great, as demonstrated by the famous masters of T'ai Chi.

Control of Chi can be used to great benefit in improving health. Not only does a stronger and well flowing Chi allow the body to function better, but it has been used to cure illnesses in a particular part of the body.

For many years, T'ai Chi has been recommended by traditional Chinese doctors as a form of therapy, and nowadays there are special T'ai Chi units attached to many of the hospitals in China which teach patients how to use T'ai Chi to improve their health.

A recent study in Beijing has shown that practitioners of Chen style T'ai Chi have faster reflexes than practitioners of other styles. The fast and hard movements are particularly beneficial to those individuals with need for more rapid expenditure of energy, or for those who need a more expressive emotional outlet.

The movements in Chen style T'ai Chi also contain a more clear and direct application for self-defense than any other form of T'ai Chi. This is an added bonus to the practitioner since understanding the application of a movement to self-defense helps the practitioner to better understand each movement and how to direct the flow of internal force within it. It forms a sound foundation for training for self defense purposes and is entirely suitable as a compliment to other martial art disciplines.

Chen style T'ai Chi involves more hand and finger movements and more stretching of the body joints than other styles, which benefits those individuals requiring comprehensive exercise.

Chen style is more vigorous, usually requiring a lower stance, and includes fast movements and force delivering movements, such as the punch in Cover With Hand and Punch With Fist. These require a greater exertion of strength. Yet the movements can all be performed with differing degrees of exertion; certain modifications and the adoption of a higher stance will make the form much less vigorous. Chen style T'ai Chi is suitable for most people. For younger people who wish to attain a high level of physical fitness faster, or for fitter people who wish to extend themselves further, Chen style has much to offer.

The Three Stages of Learning T'ai Chi

'Bu'



Every individual is different, and progresses at different rates through different areas or dimensions of T'ai Chi Ch'uan. Here are three general stages of training that, when followed, allow individuals to progress most efficiently. The technical characteristics listed are summarized and are best understood by gaining experience with a qualified instructor.

During the development of T'ai Chi Ch'uan, masters of this art wrote a series of treatises collectively titled the T'ai Chi Classics. They are written by Chan San Feng during the 13th Century, Wang Chung-Yueh during the 18th century, Wu Yu-Seong and Lee I-yu during the 19th century. These Classics contain the essential principles of T'ai Chi Ch'uan. They teach both the mental and the physical aspects of the art. It is not our intention to reproduce the entire Classic here but rather a synopsis of the principles.

First Stage

Here the student first learns individual positions and movements. Their aim is to understand and practice all hand, body, foot, leg and eye movements and positions so that they can reach a stage where they can perform each movement correctly and accurately with correct posture using the least amount of muscle tension as possible.

Posture: Head is held upright as though a string has been attached to the top of it from the ceiling above, chin is slightly tucked in and neck relaxed. The chest is slightly drawn in with the back straight. The shoulders are relaxed and the buttocks slightly pulled in.

Stability: Correct stance together with correct foot movement creates the basics for stability and support of the body. As you practice correct technique, strength and flexibility will increase for each stance.

Waist: The waist is the key to all movement of the upper body and the lower limbs. It controls changes in body movement, regulates the distribution of weight between the lower limbs and channels the internal force and strength to all parts of the body. As the classic T'ai Chi Ch'uan text states: "The nine major joints of the body are: palm, wrist, elbow, shoulder, neck, back, waist, knee and ankle — all are interconnected by the internal force, Chi, which flows to and from each part of the body as directed by the waist."

Gentleness: In the beginning, one should try to do movements slowly, at a gentle even pace, to be certain of performing each movement with accuracy. A slower speed will allow for improved positions and avoid harsh, tense or unnatural movements.

Breathing: Abdominal breathing, long, deep, even and slow, not forced, is used in T'ai Chi Ch'uan. Generally, breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth. When the practitioner becomes more proficient, they must learn to coordinate breathing and movements. The general rule is when storing energy, closing up, moving upwards, or bending inward one should breath in. When delivering energy, opening out, moving downward, or stretching out one should breath out. However the method of breathing is not absolute. The most important thing to remember is not to force breathing. If you are unsure get feedback from your instructor.

Rooting and Sinking: This is done in progressive stages: first lowering the center of chi down from the chest, then dropping it to the waist, next to the legs, and finally down to the soles of the feet.

Just as a tall building has an unseen foundation which gives support, for the student of T'ai Chi, stability and security consist in being rooted in the trust of the complete system.

Concentration and Meditation

We should realize that not everyone sitting cross-legged on the floor claiming to meditate is actually meditating. Meditating is a very specific and exact discipline. There is the famous story of the Zen master observing someone sitting cross-legged on the floor. He walked over to him, picked up a stone and started to rub it furiously. Finally the person looked up and inquired about his action. The master answered that he was making a mirror. The person protested that it was impossible to create a mirror by rubbing a stone. The master agreed and added that it was also impossible to achieve enlightenment by merely sitting cross-legged.

It is common in teaching meditation to use a mantra. A mantra is a sound that has no meaning to the user. It is used to help clear the mind of all thoughts. A study by Boston University showed that using the repetition of any sound, even the words “apple pie” greatly aided individuals to clear and relax their mind.

*The greatest virtue is to follow nature.
To see the simplicity.
To realize one's true nature.
To cast off selfishness.
And temper desire.*

Second Stage

In the second stage, one loses awareness of oneself and becomes the T'ai Chi form.

Once the basic characteristics of each movement have been learned it is necessary to start combining all movements into one whole continuous, flowing, coordinated form.

The body must move as one complete unit, keeping the center fixed on the Dan Tien. All movements must extend from that point.

Particular attention needs to be paid to the following points:

Continuity: The whole form is done beginning to end in one flowing sequence, with no obvious breaks between the movements. Even with the slow and fast, the hard and soft, there can appear to be a slight stop in energy, there is in fact no real stop at all internally until the form is done.

Coordination: All parts of the body are coordinated at all times. As one part of the body moves the rest of the body moves in harmony, coordination and balance.

Spiral/circular: Movements are spiral or circular in nature and should be made smoothly and in a continuous manner. The form must flow continuously without pause. It is likened to pulling silk from a cocoon; if the continuity is interrupted or if there is any slack or jerk, the silk will break. Movements commence internally and then are translated into

external movements incorporating the whole body. When changes of direction are called for, they are not necessarily made in the form of a simple curve but are given more liveliness and smoothness by a brief preliminary movement in the opposite direction. The transition from one movement to the next should never be noticeable, there should never be a break between them. Circular movements harmonize the flow of Chi, whereas straight line responses tend to stifle or break the stream of Chi.

Balanced: All movement should be circular, well balanced, harmonious and very flexible. In the classical text it is written, "If the real intention of the movement is to move upwards then one should first move downward slightly. If the real intention is to move left then one should precede this movement with a slight move to the right first. It should be understood that when there is a forward pushing force there is always a backward balancing force as well, and when stretching out in one direction there is also a stretching out in the other direction. When moving in curves and circles there is still an element of straightness." (This is like the concept of where there is Yin there is always Yang, and in Yang there is always Yin).

The body should never be double weighted, that is, "dead weight" on each leg, as one's balance can be upset very easily.

It has been suggested that neither the excesses of asceticism nor the laxness of self-indulgence would be conducive to spiritual growth. Rather, take the middle

path. We must find a norm of living which is within our capabilities and then the norm must slowly be extended and deepened to the more perfect manner of living. A balance of both yin and yang, lowness and evenness develop patience and forbearance.

Coordination and Centering

One must also coordinate one's life in the manner befitting a seeker of truth. Correct thinking, correct speech and action must be incorporated into daily life. One must think in a truthful manner.

Hard/Soft: Hardness and softness should always complement one another, with a clear and definite change of rhythm from one to the other. Each change within a movement should express a clear and definite rhythm with a clear contrast between the hard and the soft, the fast and the slow, the storing and the delivering of energy. Storing energy is like drawing a bow, while delivering the energy is like shooting the arrow.

Force: Some movements require the deliverance of force, such as stored energy being delivered in a punching movement. Here, there should be no obvious halt after the punch; instead, the force of the recoil should be used to transfer smoothly and softly into the next movement. In this method it can be seen how soft and hard, the fast and the slow complement each other, at the same time fully expressing the characteristic of continuing rhythmic energy in motion.

Intrinsic meaning: Movements should show substance; that is the body should show a reserve of strong moving, inner force that is not fully extended but could be extended, and is not fully exerted but could be exerted. Each movement is precisely performed and each has a genuine purpose. All movements of the hands, eyes, legs, body, and feet are part of a well coordinated whole involving changes and turns, and all contain an intrinsic meaning associated with their use. Applications for each movement will greatly increase interest and skill levels. Over time many applications for each movement will be developed. Everyone need not have the same application for the same movement. What is important is for the individual to have a precise purpose for each movement. The understanding of internal force (Chi) and an intrinsic meaning of the movements should be developed in order to gain greater self awareness of how T'ai Chi can be used to improve mental, physical, and spiritual health. With practice, feedback, and instruction your skills will thereby grow. Each form has unique characteristics, rhythms, moods and feelings, which the practitioner should be discovering and rediscovering as they develop with the form.

Emptiness and fullness: Distinguish between yin and yang; the left leg is yang when the weight is concentrated there, and the right leg is yin, etc.

This principle applies emotionally and psychologically as well.

Breathing and Chi: Chi means breath-energy or life-energy. Deep abdominal breathing, releasing only a portion of it and pressing the rest of this Chi down again into the Dan Tien. When using the stomach, this is referred to as "Before the Gate of Heaven Breathing."

You must begin to identify more and more with your breath. Once the breath enters the nostrils it actually becomes a part of yourself. You can live without your limbs but you cannot live without your breath. Breath is also a symbol of something that is more subtle than the gross physical body. It symbolizes the Spirit which is in and around you.

Relaxation: The confidence of trust comes only through experience.

Reading a book on nutrition will not relieve one's hunger. Merely reading about T'ai Chi principles will not bestow the experience.

Relaxation in its highest sense means faith or trust. The greater our faith, the greater our tranquillity of mind. Practice T'ai Chi and gain the experience.

When these teachings are interpreted in a spiritual context, emptiness means humility. Humility is the process of seeing oneself in correct perspective to the rest of creation. With such a perspective, one will feel neither proud nor arrogant; nor will he have an unrealistic sense of self-importance. Humility is called 'selflessness' in the East.

When the T'ai Chi practitioner attains emptiness,

energy can freely flow. When we cling tenaciously to our position, or to our concepts of ourselves, we cannot make room for our own growth. It is our ego which prevents us from wanting to lose. Whether this loss is in a push hands match or the loss of position or prestige, it nevertheless can become our own egotistical stumbling block.

A new student approached their Master one day and asked, "How long must I study to become the best practitioner in the land?"

"Ten years, at least," the Master answered.

"Ten years is a long time," said the student. "What if I studied twice as hard as anyone else?"

"Twenty years," replied the Master.

"What if I practice night and day, with my heart and soul?"

"Thirty years," was the Master's reply.

"How can that be? Each time I say I will work harder, you tell me that it will take longer. Why?" the student asked.

"The answer is clear. When one eye is fixed upon your destination, there is only one eye left with which to find the way."

Relax and enjoy your journey. There are many things to discover along the way!

Third Stage

Fullness is confidence in the higher spiritual self, and in one's aptitude for nobility, goodness and truth.

Here you regain consciousness of yourself concentrating and remain immersed in the object of concentration. Union is realized. One attains freedom. Once one acquires mastery of a chosen "form" he transcends it through the discipline inherent within that form. For example, a pianist learns a piece of music; he studies it; and later becomes technically correct. Finally he masters it. At this level he can play the piece brilliantly and simultaneously transcend it by "creating" within the given structure of the music. This is often called "inspiration" — an unconscious surge of creativity. Now the artist is co-creating with the composer of the music and creating an interpretation that is his very own. That is why two great pianists will play the same piece of music and each will move the listener differently.

This level is difficult to attain. One needs to attain a combination of several elements: the use of Chi, by mental concentration, perfect coordination of breathing, movements of body and direction of internal force, the combination of gentleness and firmness where the soft and hard complement one another. Complete mental clarity should be achieved. It is mental concentration which controls the internal force and the internal force controls the body's movements. This direct relationship between the mind directing the force and the force directing the

body should be fully understood by the practitioner at this stage. The whole body internally and externally should be perfectly coordinated so that it acts as one, completely controlled by the practitioner's mind. Learning how to generate and use Chi, directing it by mental concentration to any part of the body, is one of the highest achievements of T'ai Chi Ch'uan. Here arms are as soft as cotton on the outside yet hard as a steel rod on the inside. Students naturally acquire "Nei Kung" an enhanced power of sensory perception, as they progress to the higher levels of T'ai Chi Ch'uan. Nei kung is an inner strength and sensitivity based on the principle of Chi, meaning that all energy in the body may be concentrated at one focal point.

"Big moves are not as polished as short moves. Short moves are not as polished as stillness."

It is common to develop a little bit of skill with Chi in an external showy manner and have the practitioner stop training at this level only to miss developing the real significant abilities with Chi, namely those abilities which truly elevate oneself and those around them.

Related Systems

Somewhere between the first and second century BC, the great Rishi Pantanjali formulated his Yoga Sutras which was the first written compilation of Yoga, the holy science.

Yoga means “union.” One aim of yoga is the union of man with Brahma, which became a religion. Another system of yoga is a method of self-discipline used to gain mastery over the self, the physical system of body exercise called “Hatha Yoga.” There are many text written on this topic.

The Japanese term “**Zen**” is derived from the Chinese word “**Chan**” meaning meditation. This too has become a religion for many, sometimes being referred to as Zen Buddhism. The goal being enlightenment through self-realization. For others, it is a tool to improve their understanding of the Self. Zen is concerned only with the present, the here and now. It has a great mistrust of books, lectures and organized systems. The only obstacle to the perception of reality is man’s own mind with its confused and distorted perceptions. Thus the state called “**no-mind**” is sought. Feedback from a trusted friend or teacher can be an invaluable aid in perceiving your illusions. A **Koan** is a device for self-inquiry. It is a question given by one’s master to bring the mind to a state of agitation that it will have no choice but to transcend itself. A typical Koan is: What is the sound of one hand clapping? What was your face like before your

parents were born? These Koans are asked in total seriousness and demand answers. Eventually after much struggle, the answers come. It is through the process of this mental struggle that greater insight of the true self develops.

Zen uses ceremonies or art forms as tools to perceive this essential reality contained within these forms. In Japan these typically are the tea ceremony, gardening and the martial arts.

*If one does not begin
with a right attitude,
there is little hope
for a right ending.*

Self Defense

正当防卫

'Zheng Dang Tang Wei'

Give up and follow the opponent.

Be alert as a hawk to seize the rabbit.

When quiet, resemble a mountain.

When moving, be like a river.

When storing energy, be as the bow with its arrow drawn.

When releasing energy, be as an arrow being shot.

If the opponent does not move, remain still.

When he is about to move, follow his intention and move before him.

The classical sequence of study for self defense is as follows:

1. The Solo form. Learning your basic movements, stances, postures.
2. Learning the applications of the postures.
3. Push hands. An exercise done by two people using ward off, roll back and press postures. The object of the exercise is two fold: yin and yang. The yin evades all pushes without stepping back or resisting. The yang perceives the center of gravity, relax the arms and upper body and moving him from his balance with your lower body.
4. Walking push hands.
5. Ta Lu, great pulling, use of the ward off, roll back, press, pull, split, elbow and shoulder.

6. Weapon forms. Weapons study teach students how to extend his energy into any object. The classic weapons are the sword, staff, knife, big knife, and single edged sword. The principles are the same for any solo form: relaxation, coordination, unity of movement, being centered, and extending Chi, energy. When the entire series of weapons training is learned one becomes a well rounded Artist capable of utilizing any object in his grasp as an extension of himself.
7. Two person forms. A choreographed series of movements for two people to utilize.
8. Free hands. When proficient in all of the above exercises he starts to create ad-lib situations to simulate real defensive situations. The aim is to try to defend against attacks (mental or physical) encountered without sacrificing the basic T'ai Chi principles.

Sifu Chang is credited to have said, "the true self-defense power of T'ai Chi Ch'uan is rooted in the feet. It develops into the legs, is directed by the waist and functions through the fingers. Beneath the slowly flowing external forms of loveliness there rests one of the fastest, most effective fighting systems in the world".

Remember T'ai Chi Ch'uan cannot be limited to form practice, nor to self defense. T'ai Chi is a quality of life and an art of living. When you incorporate T'ai Chi into everything you do you will be able to cope with the variables of life much more harmoniously and critically, with less tension and stress. When all the principles are comprehended and applied in all aspects of life, then one is truly practicing the Art of T'ai Chi Ch'uan.

Old Frame Form

'Chen Ji Nian Can Zhao Xi Tai Yang'

积年参照系形

The Old Frame Form will be your first T'ai Chi Ch'uan form. It is a long form with seven sets or parts. Think of it as discovering knowledge on generating energy. The form starts with basic movements, stances and hand motions then progresses to more difficult movements as your energy flow develops. Do not think in terms of "getting the whole form" from beginning to end, but rather use each piece of the form as a tool to develop you towards your own goals. Sometimes Westerners are tricked into thinking that more is better, when really, results are what you want. The applications of this form are many. It will improve you physically, mentally, develop your awareness of energy, and help you apply your energy. Self defense techniques are present for those interested. It is an exciting tool for self discovery and self mastery. Other forms will follow building upon your strengths and decreasing your weaknesses.

Following are pictures of basic stances, hand and foot positions to review with just a few examples of energy usage being described to help prepare you for your first Tai Chi form. There are many different names for each picture. Often the name of a movement, etc. has reference to common things of the area the students are from. As we practice together we will develop a common language.

These pictures will aid you, not to replace your classes — but sometimes a picture is worth a thousand words. Releasing energy from and through your body requires a stance, hand and foot positions, a place to send it and a will to motivate it for the greatest results.

Winning hearts is the best way.

Winning the castles is the secondary way.

Winning through domination is the worst way.

Master Tung Tsung Nee.

Stances

'Zhan Zi'

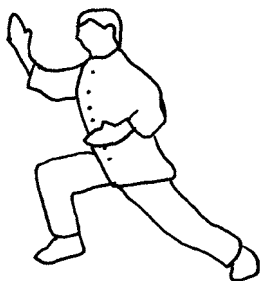
站姿

Each stance allows for energy to be gathered and directed in a different manner.

Bow Stances

High

Low



Used when focusing most if not all energy in one direction.

Cat Stance



Used to draw energy in and to prepare to release.

Crane Stance



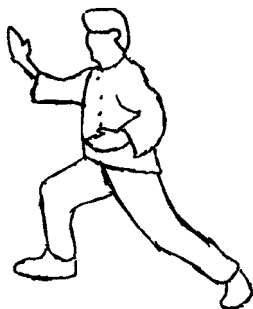
Used to draw energy high.

Front Position



A formal position to receive instruction and to start and/or end forms.

Half Moon Stance



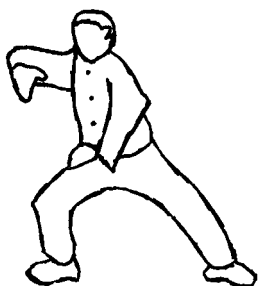
Used to anchor yourself to the ground while you work with energy from in front &/or the sides.

Press



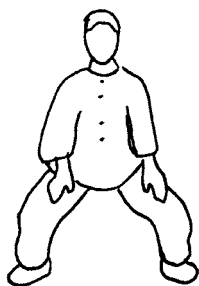
Energy is pressed from your foot through your hands.

Ride the Wheel



Energy is rolled in front of you being directed by your arms and hands.

Root Stance



Used to anchor yourself to the ground. Sometimes called a horse stance.

T Stance



Used to draw energy to waist area.

Twist Stance with double press



Energy is dropped and pressed from you.

Ward Off Stance



Used to bring energy to yourself or to hold energy away.

Whip

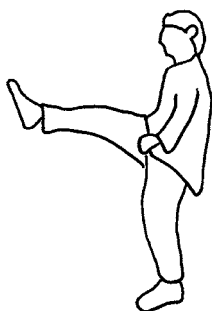


Energy is moved to your front and side.

Foot Positions

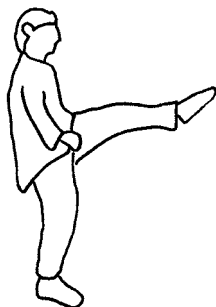
Each foot and hand position can receive and direct energy in unique ways

Front Ball



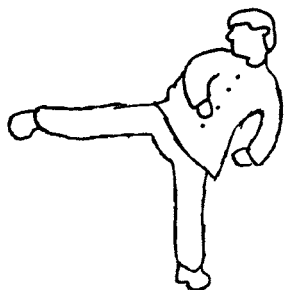
Energy is focused to the ball of the foot.

Instep



Energy is focused to the top of the ankle.

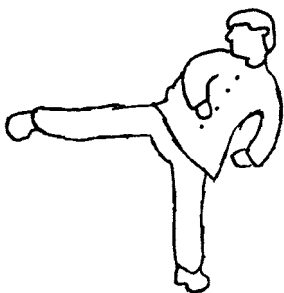
Side Blade



Energy is focused to the edge or blade of the foot under the ankle.

Snake

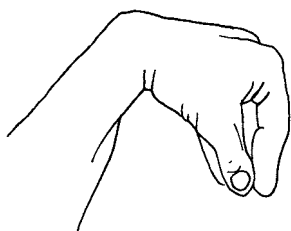
Energy is focused to the tip of the toes.



Energy is focused to the bottom of the heel.

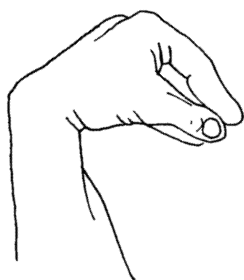
Hand Positions

Chicken Wrist



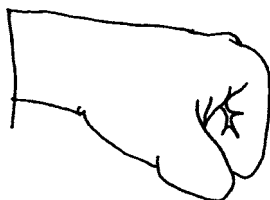
Energy is focused to the top of the wrist.

Cranes Beak



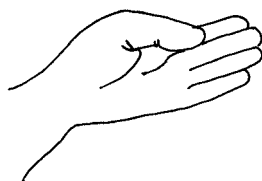
Energy is focused to the finger tips.

Sun Fist



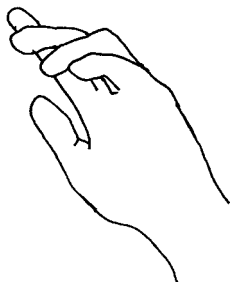
Energy is focused to the two large knuckles of the fist.
Wrist is straight with the hand and arm.

Ridge Hand



Energy is focused to the meaty section between the
thumb and index finger.

Sculpture



The hand is held so that each finger is progressively bent. The little finger being bent the most.

Sword



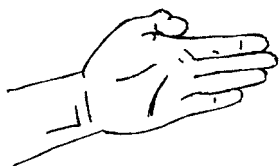
Energy is focused to the edge of the hand.

Palm Heel



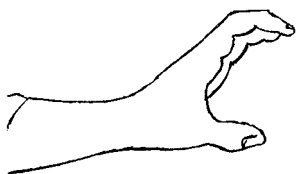
Energy is focused to the palm.

Spear Hand



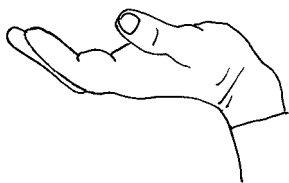
Energy is focused to the finger tips.

Tigers Mouth



Energy is focused to the area between the thumb and index finger.

Upholding Hand



Energy is focused to the palm.

An understanding of pressure points and energy fields will greatly increase your sensitivity here. Remember T'ai Chi is an art, not a hard science. Use the theories of why things work to discover how things work for you. Use of your Chi is still a road of self discovery. A good instructor will greatly accelerate you along the road we each individually must take.

*If you are offended by a quality in your superiors,
do not behave in such a manner to those below you.*

*If you dislike a quality in those below you,
do not reflect that quality to those who work over
you.*

*If something bothers you from the man at your heels,
do not push at the one in front of you.*

Appendix

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Tai Chi Classic II Treatise by Master Wong Chung Yua

Tai Chi Classic III Treatise by Master Wu - Yuhsiang

Chen Style TaijiQuan by Professor Kan Gai Xiang

Inner Bridges by Fritz Smith, MD

Tai Chi The Supreme Ultimate by Lawrence Galante.

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