

# Tai Chi

The True History  
& Principles

太極

Tai Chi - The True History & Principles

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## PREFACE

Over the last 100 years Tai Chi has become increasingly popular in many parts of the world and it is practiced by both young and old. Tai Chi was created as a fighting system, but its unique way of strengthening the body and the mind also makes it popular with people who have no interest in fighting. Wisdom from Daoist philosophy was blended with the best fighting techniques to create an art form that was very different from mere violence. The old masters had exceptional skills and this inspired other people. Tai Chi became popular in broader circles and many people have benefited tremendously from the art as it was originally created. Because of this, there should be no reason to change the teachings of the old masters. It is, perhaps, just like Mozart, Bach or Schubert who created great classical music that lives on forever: A single note cannot be added or taken away without a decrease in the beauty of the music.

A recent discovery of old texts, the Li Family Martial Arts Manual, has changed the history of Tai Chi radically. Previously we had a few hints which indicated that the so-called Tai Chi classics were written by Wang Zongyue. As for the three main styles of Tai Chi, Chen, Yang and Wu, we knew that Chen Wangting's great-great-grandson, Chen Changxing, taught Yang Luchan, but we weren't really sure who taught Wu Yuxiang and his brothers. Furthermore, we knew nothing about who taught Chen Wangting in the first place.

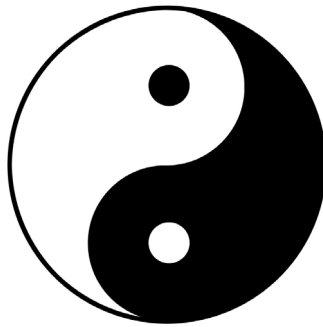
However, we now know for certain that Tai Chi was transmitted from the Thousand Year Temple in the Henan Province. And, best of all, we have the original principles of the art in the writings by members of the hitherto completely unknown Li Family. The material we already had access to wasn't too far off the mark, but now we are able to precisely determine the essence of how Tai Chi should be practiced. The names and postures may vary a bit in different styles, but there is really only one thing that can define how the movements should be performed and that is the words of the earliest texts about the art. The old masters practiced and transmitted a truly unique martial art for building a healthy body and a serene mind and we now know, without a shadow of doubt, that this art was based on Daoist philosophy.

I want to thank Donald B. Wagner who has given much advice, and also Stella Sørensen and Chi Yin Ho for correcting the manuscript.

All Chinese words, except names, are transcribed with pinyin. T'ai Chi Ch'üan is the old Wade Giles transcription, while in Pinyin the name is written Taijiquan. However, in daily use most people know the art simply as Tai Chi, and I have used this name throughout the book.

'Taiji' refers to the philosophical concept which the art is based on.

All translations are my own.



## TAI CHI LITERATURE

Tai Chi has been taught publicly for around 100 years and there exists a large amount of literature about it. The first publications in the West were important because Tai Chi was not very well known and there was a need for basic information. In fact, even in China not many people knew much about the history and original principles of Tai Chi because the country had gone through a turbulent period and much old information was lost. Tai Chi was promoted by the Chinese government after 1949, but the philosophical aspects were promoted only to a small degree. We have to acknowledge, though, that what made Tai Chi famous was the old masters all of whom who had wonderful skills based on philosophical principles. There are still masters who possess genuine knowledge but they are, unfortunately, far outnumbered by the sport-like approach that Tai Chi has turned into in many places around the world. This is why the discovery of the Li Family Manual is so very important because the written material from the old masters is really the only source that can truly define the nature of Tai Chi.

The first written material about Tai Chi is just a handful of texts which we call the Tai Chi classics and now we have the handwritten originals in the Li Family Manual, but many other valuable texts were written later on. The classics are translated in this book, if you wish to read translations of other old texts you can find them listed with references to translations (if any) at the back of the book.

### PRINTED LITERATURE IN CHINESE

The first publication of a book containing the Tai Chi classics was in 1912 when Guan Baiyi 關百益 published *Taijiquan Jing* 太極拳經. Xu Yusheng followed with *Taijiquan Shi Tujie* 太極拳勢圖解 in 1921. Then came Chen Weiming's *Taijiquan Shu* 太極拳術 in 1925, Xu Zhiyi's *Taijiquan Qianshuo* 太極拳淺說 in 1927 and Chen Xin's *Chen Shi Taijiquan Tushuo* 陳氏太極拳圖說 in 1933. All were about Yang Style, except Chen Xin's which was about Chen Style. However, these books were far from giving a complete picture of Tai Chi. Yang Cheng Fu and Tung Ying-Chieh published *Taijiquan Shiyong Fa* 太極拳使用法 in 1931 which provided a much more complete explanation of the art and it included important versions of the classics. Another important book was *Taijiquan Jiang Yi* 太極拳講義 by Wu Gongzao 吳公藻 published in 1936. It consisted of 40 small, but invaluable, texts by the famous Yang Banhou. It was Tung Ying-Chieh who published Yang Chengfu's book<sup>1</sup> and he and Tian Zhaolin were listed in the book as the two main disciples of Yang. Tian Zhaolin did not publish a book, but Tung Chieh's book *Taijiquan Shiyi* 太極拳釋義 from 1948 added more information and more classics. Also Yang Chengfu said himself that his postures had improved over the years and these are reflected in Tung Ying-Chieh's book because he learned with Yang until his death.

Chen Yanlin's 陳炎林 book *Taijiquan Dao, Jian, Gan, Sanshou Hebian* 太極拳刀, 劍, 桿散手合編 also had some importance because it was based on an early version of Yang Chengfu's book.<sup>2</sup>

Tang Hao (1897-1959) wrote 19 books on martial arts and was the first to do actual scholarly research into the history of Tai Chi. His book created a useful overview of the material available at the time.

Gu Liuxin (1908-1991) wrote five books about Tai Chi. He was a student of both Yang Chengfu and Chen Fake and thus knew both the Yang and Chen Styles. His books were based on interviews and connections that very few other people had access to.

Old Tai Chi books in Chinese, especially the classics, are not easy to read, not even for Chinese, because they were often written in Classical Chinese. However, there have been several attempts at translating the most prominent Tai Chi classics and Paul Brennan has published translations of several of the oldest Tai Chi books.<sup>3</sup>

#### LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

The first Tai Chi teachers came to the West in the 1960's and already in the 70's it gained some popularity. Although never as popular as yoga, Tai Chi has been well known in the West from the 80's. A count of the publications in English up until 2003 shows that it was already by then beyond 300. However, there are only a few that have real value for defining and explaining traditional Tai Chi.

.....PREVIEW.....

## THE HISTORY OF TAI CHI

The majority of the 1300 people in the Tang Village in China's Henan Province descend from the Li family 李氏. In 2003 it was decided to compile a genealogy of the Li clan and the Tang Village, and Li Libing was given the task to research for material. Li Libing was told of an elderly man by the name Li Chenghai 李成海 who was said to possess some material and this was true; above the door in his house was a small room where old records of the Li family were stored. Li Chenghai was, at first, very reluctant to let anyone see his family records. The reason was that, although he was illiterate, he knew that the genealogy recounted a story of a family member, Li Yan 李岩, who was a general in a rebellion army at the end of the Ming dynasty. Li Yan is considered a hero today but Li Chenghai didn't know that and saw no reason to disclose information about a traitor in his family to anyone. However, after several attempts Li Libing was given permission, and the bunch of worn papers was indeed interesting. It had been stored there for 300 years and included the family genealogy, deeds and other interesting things, but the most interesting was an old martial arts manual. This manual had dated and signed copies of the oldest existing texts on Tai Chi and Li Libing realized at once the importance of the discovery.

The history of Tai Chi has been the subject of a great deal of research and many books have been written about it. The research is clear on most points from around 1900 and on, but with regards to the origin of Tai Chi and the so-called Tai Chi classics it has been difficult to make reliable conclusions because the available material was scarce and left many questions unanswered.

The effort and talent of the old masters, who knew the original principles for this art, made Tai Chi famous. Hundreds of thousands of people in the West, and millions in China, have been practicing Tai Chi for many decades and certainly will do so for a long time to come. For this reason, it is, of course, very important to be clear about what the original principles and techniques of Tai Chi really are.

### THE LI FAMILY MARTIAL ARTS MANUAL

The entire text of the Li family manual is reproduced and translated in the chapter on the Tai Chi classics. There are texts on the philosophy, principles for internal energy as well as names of the Tai Chi slow set, push-hands, sabre, long broadsword and lance. The texts are dated between 1590 and 1787 in the Ming dynasty. The first texts that relate to Tai Chi were written by Li Chunmao (1568-1666) 李春茂 over 400 years ago.

The two philosophical concepts Wuji 無極 and Taiji 太極 are closely connected and one of the texts Li Chunmao wrote was called *Treatise of the Health Preserving Boxing*



*System of the Endless Void* or 無極養生拳論—*Wuji Yang Sheng Quan Lun*. The text praises the beneficial effects of the Wuji-exercises. It does not mention fighting techniques directly, but the word *quan* in the title 拳 means fighting, so the system must have had fighting movements or at least a purpose related to fighting. This system, however, was not created by Li Chunmao. A rubbing of a stone tablet from the Thousand Year Temple 千載寺 was also found with the Li Family manual and it recorded that the Wuji Yangsheng exercises were created in the Tang dynasty by Li Daozi 李道子 (614-?). The stone tablet was called *The Stele of the Biography of the Monk Ten Powers of the Thousand Year Temple* 千載寺唐僧十力傳碑, Ten Powers was another name for Li Daozi. It was originally erected in the Thousand Year Temple and Li Daozi was a monk and abbot of the Temple in the Tang dynasty. The Thousand Year Temple was a temple in the Tang Village originally built in the Eastern Han dynasty (25-220 C.E.).<sup>1</sup> It was a very large temple, 36 hectares, with many departments and many buildings and pavilions. It was sadly demolished in the 1950's when spirituality became a crime, and all buildings, libraries and more than 100 stone tablets with historical records, philosophy and poetry were destroyed.



A detail of a map of the Thousand Year Temple in Tang Village with Taiji Hall, Taiji Gate and Eight Trigrams Gate.

.....PREVIEW.....

## STELE BIOGRAPHY OF LI DAO ZI

THE ACCOUNT OF THE TANG DYNASTY MONK TEN POWERS  
OF THE THOUSAND YEAR TEMPLE - AUTHOR OF THE STELE TEXT PU GUAN.

In the Great Tang Dynasty, a true Daoist came into the Li Family. His given name was Ru Zi, his adult name Dao Wu, his assumed name Ten Powers and his monk's name Dao Zi. He was born in Henan North of the Yellow River on the second day of the second moon of the tenth year of Emperor Da Ye of the Sui dynasty (614).

He became a disciple in Three Teachings Gate of the Henan Wuji Temple, in the era of Shen Long, Xiang Fan, Ma Lan Cao and Mother Dan.

He was talented, and studied the rich arts of literature and martial art, medicine, *Yi Jing* and the *Nie Pan She Thesis* and he was well versed in the *Yellow Emperor's Classic*. He brought honour to the harmonious blending of Buddhism, Daoism and Confucianism.

On the basis of the *Da Ming Du*, the *Wuji Classic*, the *Yijin Jing*, the *Dao De Jing*, the *Huangting Classic*, the *Qianjin Yifang*, Daoyin and Tunei he created Wuji Yangsheng Wugong.<sup>1</sup>

He studied thousand years of secret knowledge about medicine and preserving health.

His martial arts abilities were extraordinary, he was given the art in a dream and his abilities amazed the martial arts circles.

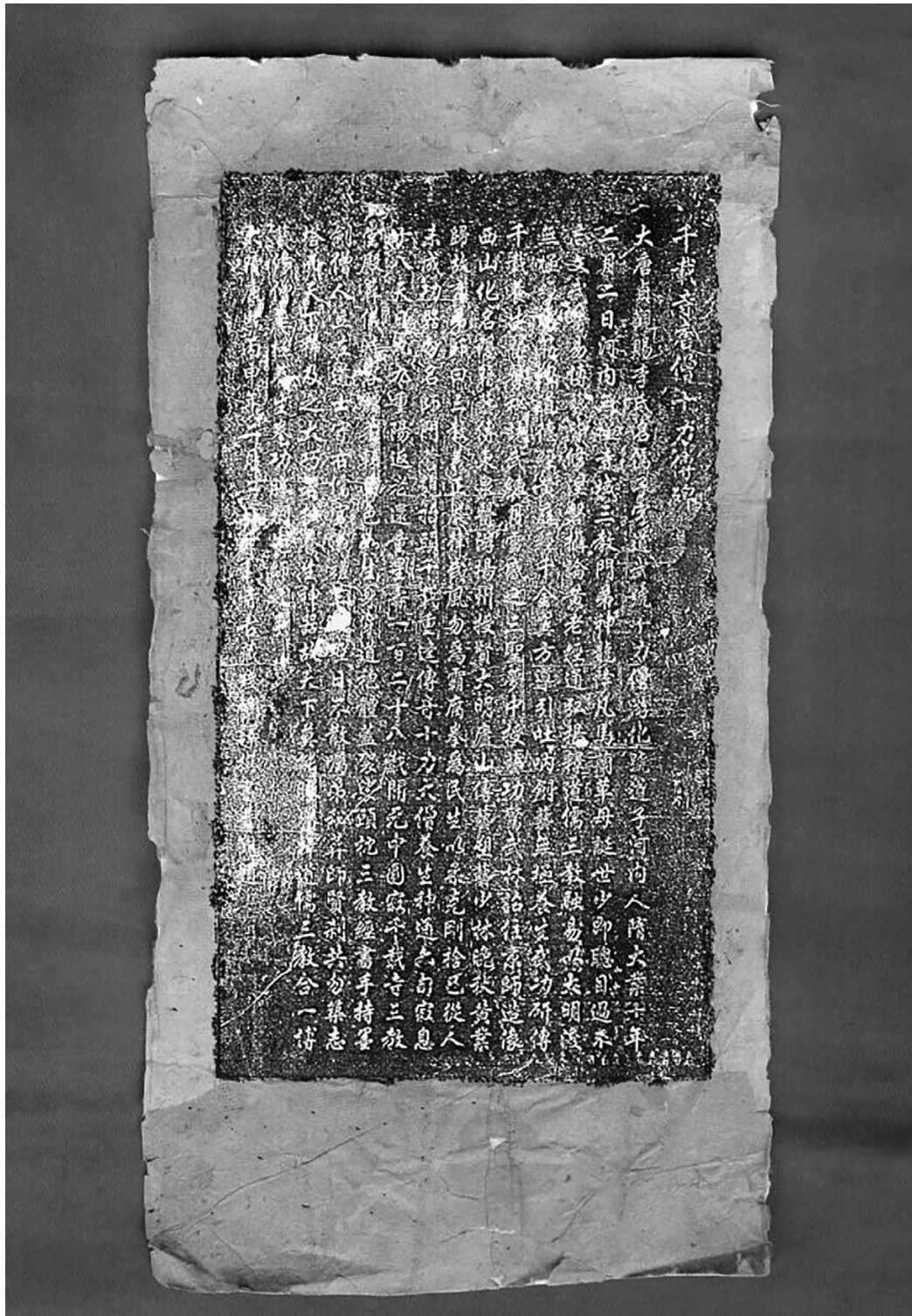
An imperial edict called him to reside in the capital, and a statue of him was built on the Western Mountain.

Hiding his fame under another name he transmitted the art in Dongquan, and travelled to Yangzhou to teach medicine with great clarity to able persons.

He taught in Lushan and he was a role model for the Shaolin. In his later days he went back to educate disciples in the temple.

The Master said: "The Three teachings are fair and just and they are strict rules guiding the way in martial arts practice: 'Non-action when dealing with bad people, and only teach martial arts to help people'. Apply soft against hard. Give up and follow people. It is not a way to get success, it is a way of no fame. The Blue Dragon raises its head, after thousand years we meet again".

Transmitting the great story of the monk Ten Powers, about his ability to preserve health with the magical powers of *Liu Xun Ji Xi*, *Shiba Tian Ri*, *Jiu Jiu Chong Yang* and *Fanlao Huan Chong*.



## The Thousand Year Temple

### 千載寺唐僧

#### IMPORTANT PERSONS MENTIONED IN THE BOOK

The list is far from complete as there were many students of each teacher

Li Daozi  
李道子 (614-?).

Li Chunmao  
李春茂 (1568-1666)

Chen Wangting  
陳王廷 (秦廷) (1597-1664)

Li Zhong  
李仲 (1598-1689)

Li Xin  
李信 (1606-1644)

Chen Youheng  
陳有恒

Chen Youben  
陳有本

Chen Zhongsheng  
陳仲甞

Chen Qingping  
Zhaobao style  
陳青萍  
(1795-1868)

Wu Yuxiang  
武禹襄  
(1812-1880)

Li Yiyu  
李亦會  
(1832-1892)

Chen Yanxi  
陳延熙

Hao Weizhen  
郝為真  
(1849-1920)

Chen Fake  
陳發科  
(1887-1957)

Sun Lutang  
孫祿堂  
(1861-1932)

Hao Yueru  
郝月如  
(1877-1935)

Li Xiangyuan  
李香遠 (寶玉)  
(1889-1961)

Chen Changxing  
陳長興  
(1771-1853)

Yang Luchan  
楊祿禪  
(1799-1872)

Yang Jianhou  
楊健候  
(1839-1917)

Yang Banhou  
楊班候  
(1837-1892)

Yang Chengfu  
楊澄甫  
(1883-1936)

(Wu) Quan You  
(吳)全右  
(1834-1902)

Yang Shaohou  
楊少候  
(1862-1930)

Dong Yingjie  
董英傑  
(1888-1961)

Wu Jianquan  
吳鑑泉  
(1870-1942)

Xu Longhou  
許龍厚  
(許禹生)  
(1879-1954)

Li Helin  
李鶴林 (1716-1808)

Wang Zongyue  
王宗岳  
(ca. 1730-1800)

## TIME LINE OF TAI CHI HISTORY

- 67 C.E. The Thousand Year Temple was built in the Eastern Han dynasty.
- Ca. 650 Li Dao Zi creates *Wuji Yangsheng Quan Gong* (assuming he was 45).
- 1716 Pu Guan writes the stele about Li Dao Zi.
- 1590 Li Chunmao writes *Wuji Yangsheng Quan Lun*.
- Ca. 1630 Li Zhong, Li Xin and Chen Wangting becomes disciples in the Temple.
- Ca. 1650 Li Zhong writes *Xinggong Xinfu Bian* (assuming he was 50 years old).
- 1787 Li Helin writes *Dashou Ge* and *Taijiquan Lun*.
- Ca. 1810-20 Yang Lu Chan studies martial arts with Wang Chang (assuming he was 10-20).
- Ca. 1820-30 Yang Lu Chan studies with Chen Chang Xing (assuming he was 20-30).
- Ca. 1840- Yang Lu Chan begins to teach Tai Chi in Beijing (assuming he was 40).
- Ca. 1840 Wu Ruqing obtains the classics in the salt store (assuming he was 50).
- Ca. 1875 Yang Banhou writes the “40 chapters” (assuming he was 40).
- 1912 Beijing Physical Culture Research Society is founded.
- 1912 Yang Chengfu starts to teach in Beijing.
- 1921 Xu Longhou writes the first published book on Tai Chi (Yang Style).
- 1925 Chen Weiming writes the book with Yang Chengfu’s first set of pictures.
- 1931 Tung Ying Chieh writes the book with Yang Chengfu’s second set of pictures.
- 1930-33 Tang Hao research all available material on Tai Chi.
- 1933 Chen Xin writes the first book on Chen Style.

## THE TAI CHI CLASSICS OF THE LI FAMILY MANUAL

There exist a number of older texts with relation to Tai Chi and the oldest are usually called the Tai Chi classics. However, this subject is not so simple because there exist many other old texts with connection to famous Tai Chi masters. Furthermore, the texts exist in different versions and have been ascribed to different authors. The oldest Styles, the Chen family Style, Yang family Style and Wu family Style each have their own distinct ways of executing movements and energy even though the postures often have similar names. The common theme is that they imitate the principles of the taiji symbol and that the movements are slow and continuous. In push hands practice and fighting application, there should never be hard against hard and sensitivity and flexibility before issuing power is the main principle when engaging with a partner.

These few common principles can be found in many of the old texts, and therefore they are important to us. But, of course, it is the Li Family texts that are the most important because they are the oldest. They are genuine and very nearly flawless. Best of all is that the authors and dates are given for most of them.

The Li Family Martial Arts Manual is very close to the texts handed down in the Yang and Wu families. There has been much research into the authenticity of the Li Family Manual and the conclusion seems to be that it is not a forgery. There are still unanswered questions, but there can be no doubt that the Li Family manual is the oldest version of the classics. However, it is quite clear that martial arts were widespread in both the Ming and Qing period and we must not forget that there can be other old texts and systems that have had influence on these texts.

This book will mostly cover the oldest known versions of the classics in the Li Family Manual and, to this end, I have translated the entire manual.

If you want to compare the Li Family texts with the Yang and Wu versions found in many other Tai Chi books I have prepared an overview in a separate chapter that includes many old Tai Chi related texts.

## THE LI FAMILY MARTIAL ARTS MANUAL

## 博愛縣李氏太極拳譜

## 無極養生拳論

無極養生功者，人未練之先，無思無意，無形無象，無我無他，胸中混混沌沌，一氣渾論，無所向意者也，世人不知有逆運之理，但斤斤於天地自然順行之道，氣拘物蔽，昏昧不明，以致體質虛弱，陽極必陰，陰極必亡，於此攝生之術，概乎未有諳也。惟三教融易，聖人獨能滲透逆運之術，攬陰陽、奪造化、轉乾坤、扭氣機，於後天中返先天。復出歸元，保合太和，總不外乎後天五行八卦之天理矣。一氣伸縮之道，所謂無極功能生一氣者是也。吾練功探感之無極養生功乃人之無意無形，聯先天極妙之主體，沖和之本始，陰陽動靜之初源也。萬物之生負陰抱陽，人之真元所從而來，靈明所從而抱，無極生太極矣。於此而與五行八卦元通，通則變，完全人身之陰陽而保此靈明者也。永人之天年，暢達人之血脈筋骨，欲從後天返先天，而衛生之術無極養生功者也。苟以異端目元遠矣，無極養生功有百益而無一害，雖以之強吾氏族也，謂世裔賢徒大功練而遠矣。謹此無極養生論焉。

大明萬歷庚寅年歲次春月於太室祠傳拳訓論

李葉蓁

## TREATISE OF THE HEALTH PRESERVING BOXING SYSTEM OF THE ENDLESS VOID

Before people start practicing the Wuji Yangsheng Gong they have no thought and no intention, no form or shape, no sense of self or others.

The mind is utter confusion, all is but muddled ideas and the mind has no direction.

Common people do not know that there is a reason for unlucky fate, they merely witness Dao running its natural course in everything.

Their qi is limited, their material circumstances are shabby and they are dim and ignorant.

The result is a weak constitution and poor health.

Extreme yang must be [balanced towards] yin, extreme yin must be gotten rid of. In this art of conserving one's health how could we not be well aware of this?

Only the doctrine of The Three Teachings blend and exchange [the best from each school], only the wise person can decipher the mechanisms of bad luck.

Embrace yin and yang. Strive to create good fortune.

Interchange Qian and Kun. Turn the qi so it changes from After Heaven and returns to Before Heaven. Come back to the origin and keep the unity of the Great Harmony.

After all, was there ever anything but the Heavenly principles of After Heaven, the Five Phases and the Eight Trigrams?

That the Way is at one time expanding and contracting is the same as when we say Wuji Gong can create complete qi.

We do the Wuji Yangsheng exercises to explore the sentiments so people's lack of intention and form can connect to the larger perspective of the great wonders of Before Heaven which is the original beginning of the dual harmony — the very start of yin-yang movement and stillness.

The creation of all things bears yin and holds yang, humanity's true origin thus comes from this.

When the spirit is clear it can grasp 'Wuji creates Taiji'. In this there are also the Five Phases and the Eight Trigrams which are the very first that comes through [from Wuji to Taiji], [after] they have come through then



they change to become the yin-yang of the complete body and keep the mind high-spirited.

It perpetuates the lifespan of men and it cleanses the blood vessels, flesh and bones.

If we want to shift from After Heaven to Before Heaven then [use] this art of health, the Wuji Yangsheng Exercises.

If you carelessly apply false methods, the purpose will be far from the original.

Wuji Yangsheng Gong has 100 benefits but not a single harmful effect. So I employ it to strengthen my clan. We can now say that many devoted disciples of our fine clan have trained this great exercise [and have come] far.

Therefore, I sincerely present this treatise of the Health Preserving Exercises of the Endless Void.

The second spring moon of the Geng Yin year (1590) in the reign of Great Ming Dynasty Emperor Wan Li. Instructional treatise first time presented in the Great Hall of the Ancestral Temple.

*Li Yezhen (Li Chunmao)*

### 十三勢行功歌

十三總勢莫輕視，命意源頭在腰隙。變轉虛實須留意，氣遍身軀不少滯。靜中獨動動猶靜，因敵變化是神奇。勢勢存心揆用意，得來不覺費工夫。刻刻留意在腰間，腹內鬆靜氣騰然。尾閭中正神貫頂，滿身輕利頂頭懸。仔細留心向推求，屈伸開合聽自由。入門引路須口授，工夫無息法自修。若言體用何為準，意氣君來骨肉臣。想推用意終何在，益壽延年不老春。歌兮歌兮百四十，字字真切已無遺。若不向此推求去，枉費功夫貽嘆息。

大明萬曆庚寅年歲次春月太室祠創傳十三勢拳歌訓論

李春茂

### POEM ON THE PRACTICE OF THE THIRTEEN MOVEMENTS

The set of the thirteen movements should not be taken lightly  
The fountain from where its purpose well, is in the waist.  
Carefully pay attention to the shifts and turns of empty and full,  
Qi must be in the entire body without the slightest deficiency.  
In stillness on your own moving like you were still,  
but the opponent shifts and vary so this is a marvel.  
Each and every move has design and purpose,  
but it will not come without consciously spending time and effort.  
In every moment keep your mind on the waist,  
Be relaxed and quiet in the abdomen, then the qi will rise.  
Hold the lower regions centred and straight, then the spirit passes  
through to the top of the head.  
The whole body light and sharp, holding the head as suspended from  
above.

Give full awareness to that which you want to learn.

Bend, extend, open and close should be natural.

Go through the gate and seek guidance, the teaching must be word of mouth. Exert yourself ceaselessly and study the method on your own.

If you ask what the principle for the body is,

the intention and qi is the ruler, bones and flesh are the subjects.

If wondering about the final purpose, it is to prolong life and stay youthful.

This is my poem of one hundred and forty characters,

word by word clear and distinct, nothing omitted.

If proceeding without heeding these words you will waste your effort and have cause for sighing.

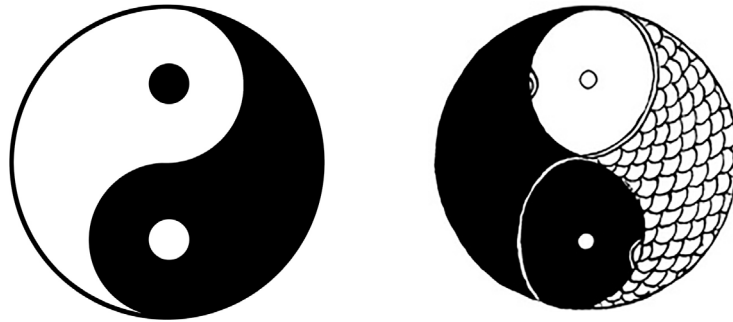
The second spring moon of the Geng Yin year (1590) in the reign of Great Ming Dynasty Emperor Wan Li. Instructional poem on the thirteen boxing movements. First time presented in the Great Hall of the Ancestral Temple.

*Li Chunmao (Li Yezhen)*

.....PREVIEW.....

## THE PHILOSOPHY OF TAI CHI

The Tai Chi classics talk about *circles*, *yin* and *yang*, *Taiji* and about the thirteen basic moves which corresponds to the *five phases* and the *eight trigrams*. To know where these concepts arose from, we have to go far back in China's history. Reading the Tai Chi classics, it is obvious that Tai Chi's textual tradition has been inspired by Neo-Confucianism. But certainly also by ancient Daoist classics like the *Dao De Jing*. Besides the concept of The Way (Dao or Tao), both traditions have at their core a narrative of the creation of the world — how everything came from a single common core that evolved into everything under the sky through myriads of transformations. This can be understood as a cosmological explanation of the universe, but it can also be seen as the internal rise and transformation of the life force of human beings.

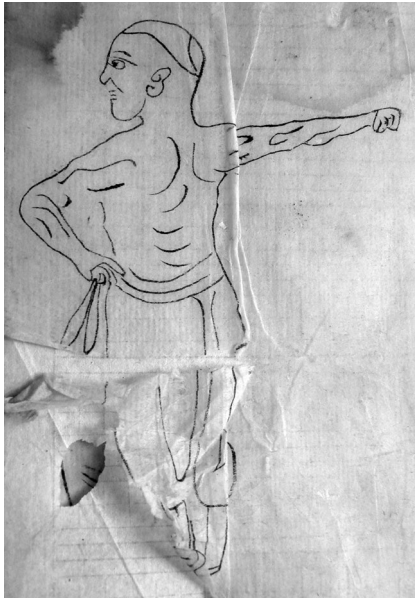


### AN EXPLANATION OF TAIJI 太極

The Taiji symbol 太極圖, sometimes called the “Double fish symbol”, is without doubt the most well-known symbol from Chinese philosophy. In both China and the rest of the world it is known as the symbol of the duality of all things. In the West it is often mistakenly known as the Yin-Yang Symbol. Duality is found in every aspect of life: There cannot exist dark without light, soft without hard, male without female and so on and so forth because nothing can be defined without a contrast.

The origin of the diagram is unknown and there exists no original explanation of it. Most people associate it with yin and yang, but that is only a part of the explanation because there are also the two dots and the circle itself.

Everyone agrees that the two “fish” are the dualities yin and yang, but it is much harder to find an explanation of the two dots and the circle. I find it logical to assume that “the eye” is a tiny new seed that appears from nothing and becomes the one side of a new Taiji where the duality is between the dot and the fish which together form a new Taiji. Now the symbol can be divided into two independent Taiji symbols which again can be further divided indefinitely. This fits well with the traditional Chinese cosmology where everything under the sky is coming from one source and still carrying the original dual-



Drawing of Lan Za Yi or Lan Que Wei from the Xinyi manual (left) and from Qi Jiguang's manual (right).

In Tai Chi the name Needle to the Sea Bottom is written the same way everywhere. However, in the Xinyi Boxing manual, the name is written with four characters 海底撈針, which means *finding a needle in the ocean*. This could likely be an older version because this expression is quite common in Chinese. It is the equivalent to *finding a needle in a haystack*.

There exist several other name lists for sets of other kinds of martial arts training movements in the area around the Tang Village. They are far from being identical, but it is interesting that they have many names in common with both the Chen Style and the Li Family Manual.<sup>7</sup> This proves only that martial arts were wide spread in the area and that people were altering and creating moves themselves. An attempt to sort the names out would be fruitless because, in fact, we simply don't have any further documentation that can help us determine which names are the oldest.

The name 抱虎歸山 *Carry Tiger and Return to the Mountain*, which is common today, is written 豹虎推山 in the Li Family manual and means *Leopard and Tiger Push the Mountain*. However, 虎豹 are reversed in the version from Yigou Village 义沟村 and this would be meaningless with 抱虎<sup>8</sup>. In other words, no one would reverse 抱虎 and this means that it is highly likely that 豹虎推山 is the original name.

The name Gao Tan Ma 高探馬 means *Mounted Scout*. It is nearly always translated *High Pat on Horse* or *Pat High Horse* because the hand movement could resemble patting a high horse, but this is not correct. Hanyu Da Cidian gives the definition for *tanma* 探馬 as *Mounted Scout*. 高探馬 means *High Mounted Scout* which can mean that the scout is

.....PREVIEW.....

## THE THIRTEEN MOVEMENTS FROM THE LI FAMILY MANUAL

起勢	Starting posture
攬雀尾	Grasp Sparrow's tail
單鞭	Single Whip
提手上勢	Lift Hands
白鶴亮翅	White Crane Shows its Wings
樓膝拗步	Brush Knee in a Crossed Stance
手揮琵琶勢	Play the Pipa
樓膝拗步	Brush Knee in a Crossed Stance
手揮琵琶勢	Play the Pipa
進步搬攔捶	Step Forward Deflect Block and Punch
如封似閉	Sealing Off
豹虎推山	Leopard and Tiger Pushing the Mountain
攬雀尾	Grasp Sparrow's tail
肘底看捶	Beware the Fist Under Elbow
倒擡猴	Repulse the Monkey
斜飛勢	Slanted Flying
白鶴亮翅	White Crane Shows its Wings
樓膝拗步	Brush Knee and Bend Leg
海底針	Needle to the Sea Bottom
扇通背	Fan Open from Back
單鞭	Single Whip
攬雀尾	Grasp Sparrow's tail
雲手	Cloud Hands
高探馬	High Mounted Scout
左右起腳	Lift the Foot left and Right
轉身蹬腳	Turn the Body and Kick
進步栽捶	Step Forward and Punch Down
反身二起腳	Turn Around and Double Kick
披身踢腳	Punch the Body and Kick
轉身蹬腳	Turn the Body and Kick
上步搬攔捶	Step Forward Deflect Block and Punch
如封似閉	Sealing Off
豹虎推山	Leopard and Tiger Pushing the Mountain
斜單鞭	Diagonal Single Whip
野馬分鬃	Wild Horse Parts its Mane
單鞭	Single Whip

.....PREVIEW.....

## NAMES OF WU YUXIANG STYLE

The oldest available source is Hao He - *Wang Zongyue Taijiquan Lun* 郝和 - 王宗岳  
太極拳論

懶扎衣 Lazily Tying Clothes  
 單鞭 Single Whip  
 提手上勢 Lift Hands  
 白鶴亮翅 White Crane Shows Its Wings  
 樓膝拗步 Brush Knee Crossed Stance  
 手揮琵琶勢 Play The Pipa  
 樓膝拗步 Brush Knee Crossed Stance  
 手揮琵琶勢 Play The Pipa  
 上步搬攬捶 Step Forward, Deflect, Block and Punch  
 如封似閉 Sealing Off  
 抱虎推山 Carry the Tiger and return to Mountain  
 單鞭 Single Whip  
 肘底看捶 Beware The Punch Under Elbow  
 倒擡猴 Repulse the Monkey  
 白鶴亮翅 White Crane Shows Its Wings  
 樓膝拗步 Brush Knee Crossed Stance  
 三甬背 Three O'Clock [arms from the] Back<sup>1</sup>  
 單鞭 Single Whip  
 纒手 Circle Hands  
 高探馬 High Mounted Scout  
 左右起腳 Kick to the Right Side – Left and Right  
 轉身踢一腳 Turn the Body and Kick  
 踐步打捶 Jump Step and Punch  
 翻身二起 Turn around and Double Kick  
 披身踢一腳 Drape the Body Kick

.....PREVIEW.....