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► Journal of the Theory of Wu Style Taijiquan



Focus:

Interview with
Ma Yueliang
1986

For Monika Ozdarska

Taijiquan Lilun

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Mental Elucidation of the 13 Basic Movements (*Shisanshi xinggongxinjie*)

The heart-mind (*xin*) moves the *qi*. Let the *qi* sink. Then it gathers in the bones. The *qi* moves the body. Let the body follow. Then it can obey the heart-mind. When the vital force (*jing-shen*) rises, one is free of worries about dullness and heaviness. This is called: The head is suspended from the crown of the head. If the intention (*yi*) and the *qi* change agilely (*ling*), one gains roundness. This is



Kit Gerould, Dan McGiff, John Doran

also called: the change of full and empty. When one issues *jin*-power (*fajin*), one must sink and relax and concentrate in one direction. When standing upright, the body is still and relaxed and supports the eight directions. Let the *qi* move as though through a pearl with nine bends. Even the smallest point is penetrated.

Apply the *jin*-power so hard and unbreakable like a hundred times tempered steel. One's form is like a hawk seizing a rabbit. One's spirit (*shen*) is like a cat catching a mouse. Be still like a mountain, move like a great river.

Store *jin*-power (*xujin*) as drawing a bow, issue *jin*-power, as shooting an arrow. Find the straight within the curve. Store up, then issue. The strength is issued through the spine. The steps follow the changes of the body.

Receiving is at the same time releasing. Interrupted and yet connected. In going to and fro

there must be folding. In advancing and retreating there must be changes. Extreme softness leads to extreme hardness. When one breathes properly, one becomes agile. When the *qi* is truly cultivated, there will be no harm. When the *jin*-power is stored in the curved, there will be a surplus. The heart-mind is the commander, the *qi* is the flag and the waist (*yao*) is the banner. First seek the open and expand, after-

wards seek the compact and the gathered, then you will reach a high level of refinement.

It is also said: First in the heart-mind, then in the body. The abdomen is completely relaxed. The *qi* is gathering and penetrates into the bones. The spirit is still and the body is calm. Keep this in your heart-mind.

And always remember: If something is moving, there is nothing that does not move. If something is still, there is nothing that is not still. In leading the movements to and fro, the *qi* sticks at the back and is gathered in the spine. Inwardly make the vital force firm, outwardly show stillness! Step, like a cat walking! Move the *jin*-power like drawing silk! Your intention relies on the vital force, not on the *qi*. If it relies on the *qi*, it would develop stagnation. If one has *qi*, one does not need physical strength (*li*). If one has no *qi*, one uses only pure hardness. The *qi* is like a cart's wheel and the waist is like the wheel's axle.

Relaxation (*song*) and Lightness (*qing*)

By Wang Pinzheng

From the club magazine No. 2, p. 8 of the Jianquan Taijiquan Association in Shanghai, 30.4.1981

One of the main goals when practicing Taijiquan is relaxation (*song*). In Pushhands relaxation is even more important. This is a fact that all know and it seems to be very easy to reach. In fact, it is not so: Although it is known that beginners do not relax easily, even a long-time friend of Taijiquan who gets involved with someone in a 'little fight' and is beaten by the other, will often hear: "You're not relaxed enough!"

You have to achieve relaxation in the entire body. Starting with lightness (*qing*) one can gradually achieve relaxation. When practicing the movements the following is important: The mouth is lightly closed. You breathe lightly through the nose. The teeth touch each other very lightly. The tip of the tongue supports very lightly the palate. You swallow the saliva very lightly. The head is erect, as if one carries a bowl and the apex is very lightly stretched. The eyes look without effort very lightly forward. For the outward movements of the hands lightness is needed, for the inward as well. In steps the leg is lifted only lightly and very lightly down again. The *Treatise on Taijiquan (Taijiquan lun)* states: "In every movement, the entire body should be light and agile (*ling*)." This is just what is written above. A picture of this is: "Step, like a cat walking".

In Pushhands: If the other attacks with force, one is in any case not allowed to resist with hard force. You must stick very lightly at the hands of other, follow his movements and guide them forward. Then suddenly one increases the power of the other following the motto: "If a movement is fast, I respond fast" and thus the force of the other will have no chance to reach you. Only if you have lightness, you can "know the

other". If you use hardness, you "let the other know" and you will be for sure beaten by him.

If lightness is achieved, relaxation develops. The Gongfu improves and the whole body becomes light. The 77-year-old teacher Wu Yinghua has while exercising delicate and graceful postures. The already 81 year old teacher Ma Yueliang swings easily a 3 meter long lance. This old couple, the lightness of their bodies resembles that of swallows. They walk like a breeze. These 70- and 80-years old, one can not really keep pace with them.

Of course, the lightness of which I spoke has the meaning of lightness of relaxation, softness and agility, but for sure not the meaning of taking things lightly. The meaning of taking things lightly is composed of two main elements: In the form one should not practice unconcentrated. In Pushhands you should not be careless or reckless.



Wu Yinghua

Interview with Ma Yueliang



In 1986 Ma Yueliang and his son Ma Jiangbao came to Düsseldorf/Germany for the first time. The German magazine "Martial Arts" published an interview made with Ma Yueliang during this visit. The interview was published as following: "Tai Chi Chuan Wu-Stil: Ein großer alter Meister zu Besuch in Düsseldorf – Interview mit Ma Yueliang (Tai Chi Chuan Wu-style: A great old

master visits Düsseldorf – Interview with Ma Yueliang)", Martial Arts – Magazin für Kampfkunst und Philosophie Nr. 8 (1986), page 2-9, MA-Verlag, Stelle-Wittenwuth. Thanks to the generous consent of MA-Verlags/Stelle-Wittenwuth and Helmut Barthel it is possible to publish the interview again here. Thanks again on behalf of all friends of Wu-style Taijiquan.

A great old master visits Düsseldorf. Ma Yueliang – the oldest representative of this style for the first time in Germany. It was a sensation – at least for all Taiji enthusiasts of this country and other interested people – the first visit to Germany by Ma Yueliang, the last living master of Wu Taijiquan in the People's Republic of China and a great opportunity not only for the Wu stylists in our country. Ge Xianzhong, co-founder and board member of the "Society for the Promotion of German-Chinese Cultural Exchange" in Düsseldorf, had succeeded to bring the grand old man and his son Ma Jiangbao to Germany for three months, where he proved at numerous demonstrations and courses, that this art can be practiced with ease and great effect also at an old age.

Ma Yueliang, today 85 years old, has now been teaching Wu-style Taijiquan for more than 60 years, which he learned from the founder of this style, Wu Jianquan. Students of Wu Taijiquan, numbering in the tens of thousands, are now

found all over the world. The Taijiquan teacher in the Taiji Club of the United Nations is one of them. Ma Yueliang is still the deputy chairman of the Wu-Style Taijiquan Association, Taijiquan consultant of the Shanghai Jiaotong University and Vice Chairman of the Wushu Federation of the Xuhui District in Shanghai.

On the occasion of his stay in Germany Ma Yueliang gave "Martial Arts" an exclusive interview that we – except for some private comments – have reprinted in its entirety. Despite the inevitable communication difficulties – Ge Xianzhong kindly acted as interpreter – it turned out to be a lively conversation, not least because of the cheerful and good-nature of the old master, occasionally interrupted by the practical demonstrations of the master, when he spoke of the experiences from the past or when he illustrated some techniques with a member of the "Martial Arts" crew. Since then Ma Yueliang has unfortunately returned earlier than planned to China. But his son returned to Germany to continue to teach in Düsseldorf.



Martial Arts: First of all we thank you for the opportunity of this interview and want to let you know how much we appreciate that. For the beginning, we would be interested in a brief overview of the development of the Wu-style, perhaps in conjunction with the master's own history and his position in it.

Ge Xianzhong: Master Ma had practiced Wushu from a very young age until he was about twenty. After this he was taught by his later father in law, the great master Wu Jianquan, in Beijing. In 1927 Master Wu moved to Shanghai and Master Ma, by profession a physician, also moved there with an invitation of the city's central hospital. There he has continued to learn Taijiquan with Wu Jianquan. In 1930 he married the daughter of his master and was at the same time quite active as teacher and assistant coach for his fat-

her in law. Then the Shanghai Jianquan Wu Taiji Association was founded, where Ma Yueliang became a teacher. Up until the present day Master Ma remains the vice chairman of this association.

Martial Arts: Is this association still in existence?

Ge Xianzhong: Yes

Martial Arts: And he is engaged with the passing on of authentic Wu-style, as it was handed down by the family?

Ge Xianzhong: Yes. Through the effort of the Master Wu-style clubs are founded all over China, for example in Canton, Changsha, Hunan, Shandong, Beijing, Henan, Inner Mongolia and

Nang So. The association also publishes a journal, not regularly, but 14 journals are already out, each with a circulation of 20,000 copies, which are sent all over China. At present Master Ma has about 600 students in Shanghai alone. In Shanghai over 5000 people practice Wu-style, but these are not all his students. He has 600 students and they are also members of the association. The son of Wu Jianquan later went to Hong Kong and founded a school there and now the Wu-style is also represented in the Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore and Canada, so virtually worldwide, and now also in Germany.

Martial Arts: Then there are obviously more representative of the family of Wu-style?

Ge Xianzhong: Yes.

Martial Arts: If I have understood you correctly, but one of the most popular Masters in China is Master Ma?

Ge Xianzhong: Yes.

Martial Arts: And he did the most to spread the Wu-style?

Ge Xianzhong: Yes.

Martial Arts: Certainly this is a somewhat delicate question, but one can assume that he stands with his skill at the top?

Ge Xianzhong: Yes.

Martial Arts: And he is recognized by the Wu-stylists in this sense?

Ge Xianzhong: Yes. He just told me that when he is at home, from morning to evening visitors come from all over China to him, sometimes ten people at once.

Martial Arts: You know the conditions in Germany and know that people here often out of ignorance are sometimes more Confucian than persons in China. Therefore also a question which is asked in other styles as well: Is master Ma recognized by the entire Wu family as a representative of the Wu-style today?

Ge Xianzhong: He is the only living representative of the family in his generation.

Martial Arts: We would like to know if Master Ma still remembers the time when he has begun Taijiquan and of the development of Taijiquan. Here Taijiquan is no longer recognized as a real martial art, which of course is a serious mistake. It is practiced more for health reasons. So it is

” It's a basic principle in Taijiquan to never resist the force of the opponent. “

always very interesting for our readers, to listen to the stories and experiences of one of the old masters from the time when Taijiquan was still an art that was really used. Could the master remember those events, and perhaps he may tell us something?

Ma Yueliang: There were many such encounters, but I do not want to talk so much. One or two I may perhaps mention briefly.

Martial Arts: I understand that this is a bit tricky and one normally would not do it, but I ask you in the name of our readers, who are very interested in things as this.

Ma Yueliang: In the 30s, 40s, I was once visited by a German journalist based in Shanghai and he asked me to show him some of my skills. Whether this journalist is still alive and whether in West or East Germany, I do not know. I then made a Taijiquan demonstration and the journalist asked me whether Taijiquan is also useful for fighting. He asked if he could spar with boxing against me. I answered: "Yes. OK." We both took a fighting position, he in the boxing one and I in a Taiji position, and when he wanted to attack me with a right hook, I made a Taiji defense and set my fist on his chin, without "hard pressure", just touching the chin. He was immediately very amazed. Then the journalist said: "I'm not quite convinced yet. I also mastered an Indian martial

art – so can we try this?” So it came to a fight again, and the reporter was trying to break my arm with the Indian martial art. It’s a basic principle in Taijiquan to never resist the force of the opponent. So I made an evasive maneuver, and he fell straight away. But he was still not convinced and without telling me beforehand what he would do, he took my hand and I thought, now he wants to thank me and say goodbye and I gave him my hand and he tried right away a throw over the shoulder. I reacted immediately and threw him to the side so hard that he sustained an injury in his foot. When he got up, he said: “Now I’m convinced.” and tried to shake hands again, but I said “No, better not.” Through the interpreter he told me that he wanted to give me his hand again, but this time, in all honesty.

Martial Arts: So he was convinced?

Ma Yueliang: Yes, he was convinced. This is an old story and now I tell one from the year 1982.

” And then I threw
all six people at once
with my *qi*. “

A television crew from Hong Kong came to China to visit famous masters with a focus on Wushu and Taijiquan. They wanted to film them. I was invited to make a demonstration. And so I made a Taiji exercise with my students and then a partner exercise where all the students fall. Among the TV crew was a very famous actor, who said to my students: “This was just a good cooperation” meaning, it was just a show. One of my students responded: “This is real, this is indeed the case.” Then the actor said: “If that’s true, he should do it once also with me.” I said that I would not do it, because by experience I know, that it could hurt him badly and it would



Ma Yueliang

be serious. But if he wanted to be convinced I could make another Taiji exercise. In Taijiquan is a posture where you stand on one leg. I gathered six people, all from the TV crew, who should try to push me while I am standing on one leg. The actor was there and the director and four camera man. The six men were divided into two groups, one group right, one left, and I stood on one leg. I said: "I count to three and then you can start." And then I threw all six people at once with my *qi*. The television crew has captured the event on film. And this film is now in Hong Kong in the archives of the film company.

Martial Arts: Taijiquan is generally known to be an internal style and so is probably also the Wu-style. What is the difference in your opinion to the external styles?

Ma Yueliang: There are various definitions of Neijia [internal style] and Waijia [external style]. In general, it is said that Shaolin is the external and Wudang is the internal style. However, there are many people who disagree with this, saying

that "*wai*" emphasizes the martial aspect, so gong, the gong from Gongfu [Kungfu].

Martial Arts: Work, power, heavy...

Ma Yueliang: Yes, and when you train Neijia you train the *qi*. Our view on these is still different. From our perspective Neijia means within the family, so trained internally and not public. And Waijia means in front of the door, thus it is trained outside of the house, outside, where everyone can see it. Our Taijiquan was known 70 years ago by no one. Since 1914, Taijiquan left the door, thus it went public.

Martial Arts: Then it would thus become an external style?

Ma Yueliang: That it was published does not mean that it has become an external style. Although our Taijiquan "went out of the house," we kept for sixty years, until 1982, a form that never went out. That's the difference between the terms "*nei*" and "*wai*".



Ma Jiangbao and Ma Yueliang



Martial Arts: Is the internal style always a softer style or is it not like that?

Ma Yueliang: Neijiaquan is always softer.

Martial Arts: This leads to our next question: What meaning has the *qi* in Wu Taijiquan?

Ma Yueliang: We train Taijiquan fundamentally for the *qi*. All of the training is about the *qi*.

Martial Arts: Do you find in the training an original connection between the *qi* and boxing, which means martial art as itself? Are there also other ways to train the *qi*, e.g. Qigong. What are the differences?

Ma Yueliang: All movements in Taijiquan are coming from Wushu and one uses these movements in order to train the *qi*.

Martial Arts: Also for the use in boxing?

Ma Yueliang: Taijiquan is primarily defensive.

Martial Arts: This is my question. Today it is believed in the West and perhaps even in China, that Taijiquan has no relationship with real martial arts, because no one understands it. That's why I put so much emphasis on the statement that Taijiquan and the training of the *qi* in the end are used as a martial art or boxing, even with weapons of course.

Ma Yueliang: The *qi* comes out through the movements. In Taijiquan one usually attacks no one.

Martial Arts: Thus Taijiquan is defensive.

Ma Yueliang: Yes. The first priority is the health, the second self-defense.

Martial Arts: I want to look back for the reader into the history: Is the Wu-style only developed from the Yang-style or has it elements from other styles of Taijiquan? Or is it an entirely new martial art?

Ma Yueliang: The Wu-style is a new development from the old Yang-style before Yang Chengfu ...

Martial Arts: ...the person who made the Yang-style popular.

Ma Yueliang: Yang Luchan, the grandfather of Yang Chengfu did the old style.

” The first priority is the health, the second self-defense. “

Martial Arts: There are stories and legends about Yang Chengfu, Yang Luchan and other members of the family. A classic example is that of the bird, which – as an effect of the *qi* – could not fly away from the arm of the master. Could you tell us in simple words what meaning stories like this have?

Ma Yueliang: I know these stories only from hearsay and they mean nothing to me.

Martial Arts: These are legends of the Yang family after the time of Yang Chengfu. It is also said that a servant of Yang Chengfu once threw rice at him and it flew away from his body. This effect is attributed to his huge *qi*.

Ma Yueliang: Before Yang Chengfu there were legends like this, but Yang Chengfu could not do that. In today's Yang-style Taijiquan everything comes from Yang Chengfu. Yang Chengfu has shortened the old positions to the actual standard form and for the Wu-style Grand Master Wu Jianquan developed the standard. But the descendants of the Wu family have kept an old Taiji form, which they have trained up to 1982 only for themselves.

Martial Arts: Is this an application or change to the long form, which is taught in the Wu style, or is it a completely different form?

Ma Yueliang: In the fast form one can see movements that are typical for Wushu.

Martial Arts: This leads to my next question, the question of the meaning of the form. Is the Taiji form a structure or language used between teacher and students so that the student can learn to understand or is the form also a technique that one can apply in a certain situation? Is the form primarily or even solely a tool to learn certain principles of movement and the development of *qi*, or has it also ideas of application, so that when one is attacked, one does a movement from the form, to defend oneself?

Ma Yueliang: Every movement has a meaning for self-defense.

Martial Arts: Do you learn this meaning already as a beginner or can one apply the meaning only at a higher stage of development?

Ma Yueliang: You must first pass through several stages: First, one has to learn the form, then one has to master Tuishou, and then one can explain the meaning of the form.

Martial Arts: This is a very simple way to explain what otherwise is often decorated very flowery. I sum up again briefly: First you learn the form, then you learn Tuishou...

Ge Xianzhong: ...that's a partner exercise ...

Martial Arts: ...which is also called Pushhands.

Ge Xianzhong: Yes.

” Every movement has a meaning for self-defense. “

Martial Arts: And then you learn to apply Tuishou in boxing?

Ge Xianzhong: Yes.

Martial Arts: And also the theory, if I understand correctly?

Ge Xianzhong: Yes.

Martial Arts: This ties in beautifully to my next question. Taijiquan became more sportive in the sense that there are now competitions in Tuishou, with classes in age and weight. I would like to know from you what you think of such events.

Ma Yueliang: There is now also in China a lot of development in this direction, but the rules for such competitions are still unclear.

Martial Arts: What do you think personally of such competitions.

Ma Yueliang: I think it is useful for the learning.

Martial Arts: Here many teachers are connecting the study of Taijiquan with a special breathing technique. Has a specialized form of breathing in Taijiquan any meaning.

Ma Yueliang: No, you should breathe naturally.

Martial Arts: Could you give us some characteristic features of the Wu-style, in which it differs from other styles of Taijiquan?

Ma Yueliang: Outside of Wu-style Taijiquan I have learned no other style, and so therefore I can't tell you anything. Certainly, some positions have specific meanings. But in the case of the Wu-style I can tell you something: It is light, slow, natural, uninterrupted, alive, fluid, soft and balanced.

Martial Arts: The Wu-style has a fast form. What was first, the fast form or the slow? Thus has the fast developed from the slow or vice versa?

Ma Yueliang: The fast form was first. The slow form came with the standardization by Master Wu Jianquan 70 years ago.

” The Wu-style is light, slow, natural, uninterrupted, alive, fluid, soft and balanced. “

Martial Arts: Has the slowness of the form a special meaning, for example one can learn better that way?

Ge Xianzhong: Yes, for better learning and to make the form accessible for young and old people, so for everyone.

Martial Arts: This is a simple straight answer which one rarely gets, and it demystifies much of what is otherwise hidden in mysteries, for example, you could slowly build up *qi* and with quick movements it would not be possible. The fast form is therefore the more original and the



Ma Jiangbao

slow form comes from it. Only the slow has been taught in public?

Ge Xianzhong: Yes.

Martial Arts: And the fast form has remained in the family?

Ge Xianzhong: Yes, until 1982.

Martial Arts: What was the reason to open the door and let public see and learn the fast form?

Ma Yueliang: That has happened to an order of the government. All Chinese Wushu schools should publish their secrets, so that the endowment of our country will not get lost.

Martial Arts: And this was accepted by many?

Ma Yueliang: Yes.

Martial Arts: I have another question, somewhat beside the point, but the German reader is always interested in it. The teacher-student relationship in China is a very specific one and it is often a relationship within a family. Here many people call themselves shifu [master] as if it were only a title of honor. But the way I see it, it means in reality an obligation, such as the role of the father in the family, certainly connected with respect and esteem, but also with an obligation. Does this tradition exist today in China and is it still valid within the family?

Ma Yueliang: In China it is hard and complicated to define the word “master”. For example I learned ten years every day with the Master and now I have been teaching for 50 years and that’s a fact, that’s how it is.

Martial Arts: But will this tradition – the top is the shigong, then comes the shifu, then the next student, as in a long chain – is this tradition today maintained or has perhaps such a tradition never existed?

Ma Yueliang: Yes, yes, and this tradition continues even today. In this tradition there is also little difference between students and disciples.

Students come to study and later they leave to studying something else. To be a disciple means to me that someone is working with me for a lifetime.

Martial Arts: Well, that's the old tradition, isn't it?

Ge Xianzhong: Yes.

Martial Arts: And you make a difference who you teach what?

Ma Yueliang: Yes, there is a slight difference.

Martial Arts: You are in Germany only for a few days and certainly need a little time to see the full a picture. Nevertheless, I would like to ask the next question: You have seen the efforts of your student Ge Xianzhong and his students and you will almost certainly have a feeling for the

quality of Taijiquan in Germany. Is there something special you can tell to the students who learn Wu-style Taijiquan (also those you will not meet)? What advice can you give them?

Ma Yueliang: We came to Germany with the hope to teach students in a limited time the form as good as possible, so they can later continue to work on it. That is the goal of this trip.

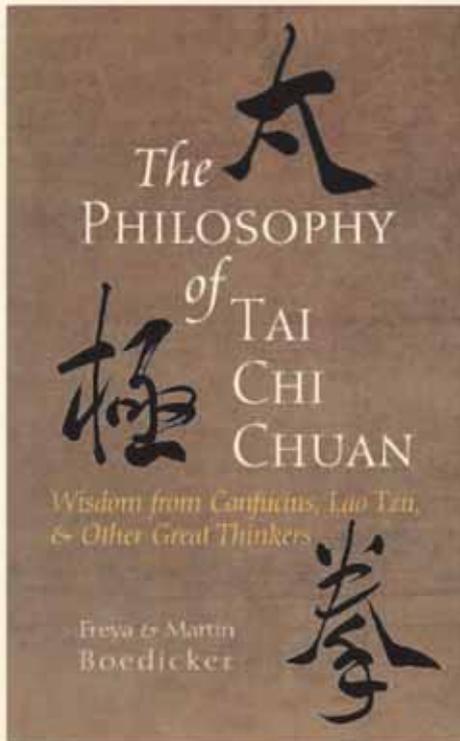
Martial Arts: Except with your closest students, do you think that in the two and a half months that you are here, it is possible, to teach students something so essential that they can make a real jump forward?

Ma Yueliang: Yes, that's possible.

Martial Arts: Thank you – on behalf of all our readers – so much for this interview.



Ma Yueliang, Helmut Barthel, Ma Jiangbao



The Philosophy of Tai Chi Chuan

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Freya and Martin Boedicker

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A praise of the East Asia scientist Dr. Rainer Landmann on the "Philosophy of Tai Chi Chuan":

The German version of the "Philosophy of Tai Chi Chuan" was issued in 2005: A great step for all people who are interested in Tai Chi Chuan or in Chinese philosophy.

Tai Chi Chuan Teachers are often asked what to read in order to deepen knowledge, to get background information and to become better acquainted with the ideas behind this art.

It is indeed a difficult question, but Martin and Freya Boedicker were able to answer it in a fascinating way by publishing this masterpiece.

Of course Lao Tzu or the I-ching or Sun Tzu's Art of War are always worth reading, but the question is which translations should be chosen, which parts of the books are important for a deeper understanding of Tai Chi Chuan.

Only a few people spent the time and the patience to gain the necessary knowledge (in theory and practice), which is needed to be able to study the main works of Chinese philosophy. But Martin and Freya Boedicker did so and were thus able to identify the essential passages related to Tai Chi Chuan. They chose the most important parts of a dozen of classical writings, made new translations, brought them together with a brilliant short history of each work and added an extremely useful glossary.

To summarize briefly: The philosophy of Tai Chi Chuan is a clear must for everyone who is interested in Tai Chi Chuan, Chinese Martial Arts, Chi Kung or in the Chinese way of thinking. And it is absolutely fascinating and great fun reading it.

Dr. Rainer Landmann (Hamburg/Germany)

How did Taijiquan get its name?

By Zhou Huasong

From the club magazine No. 10, page 9 of the Jianquan Taijiquan Association Shanghai from 30.04.1984

All styles of Wushu have both, their own peculiarities as well as their own names. This manifests in a special character. How is it with Taijiquan – why it's called Taiji? There are reasons.

Wang Zongyue's *Classic of Taijiquan (Taijiquan jing*, see Taijiquan Lilun Issue 2) describes the meaning clearly: "*Taiji* is born out of *wuji*. It is the origin of movement and stillness and the mother of yin and yang." We know from our own deep experience, that this sentence explains the two Chinese characters *taiji* correctly and through the use of the word *taiji* it declares that this martial art is based on the principle of yin and yang, stillness and movement. Taijiquan is also called "Long Boxing". It is stated in the *Classic of Taijiquan*: "Long boxing flows continuously like a long river and the sea." Taijiquan got this name because this describes the movements of the form well, which are flowing uninterrupted like a long river and the sea.

But how to use yin and yang, stillness and movement while practicing Taijiquan? When one starts Taijiquan with the "Preparation (*yubeshi*)", you have to strive to stand with a still heart-mind (*xin*). Both hands hang down and the whole body is relaxed. One uses no force and is not thinking. This beginning is a state of *wuji* [i.e. without polarity] (see Taijiquan Lilun Issue 1). Then starts the "Taiji Beginning Form (*taiji qishi*)". Through the movements of the hands one distinguishes between left and right, as well as inside and outside. The left leg steps out of *pingxingbu* and the right leg supports the body weight. This dividing course in the movement means that *taiji* is born from *wuji*. The body, the feet and the hands are moved through the mid-

le of the axis of waist and hip. The centre of gravity is shifting to the right foot. Thus the left leg is empty or yin and the right leg full or yang. After this comes "Outline the Sparrows Tail (*lanquewei*)". From then on this rule is in force. In all movements, yin and yang, as well as full and empty are differentiated and the movements are performed without any interruption. When one does Taijiquan like this, then one will certainly understand the name "Taijiquan".

The term "Long Boxing," as it is stated in the *Classic*, explains how we practice Taijiquan. It describes the movements of the entire form. One movement follows into the next. This is the rule for all movements and within them is the mutual change between yin and yang, full and empty. Everything is combined into a continuous single movement. In names such as "Cloud Hands (*yunshou*)" it becomes clear how the movement flows continuously from beginning to end, like a long river and the sea. [...]

In fact, *taiji* is a specific scientific technical term from ancient times. Its meaning includes yin and yang, full and empty, stillness and movement, to advance and to retreat, front and back, top and bottom and left and right. This use is reflected, as is well known, in the *taiji* graphic. *Taiji* moves without interruption, forming a harmonious whole. With it one can explain the whole cosmos, physics and also the techniques of Taijiquan. [...]

Starting from the name Taijiquan to the knowledge of the fundamental aspects of Taijiquan, one reaches a method for the training of Taijiquan and recognizes the requirements for the practice of Taijiquan. Truth is what is in accordance with the name. Become familiar with this rule and master it fully. Those that study Taijiquan according to this and progress in this way will certainly achieve much.

Hand Technique *lie*

In Ma Jiangbao's Pushhands teaching, *lie* is the third of the Eight Hand Techniques (*bamen*) to be taught. Within written literature in the West about Taijiquan can be found numerous and differing translations for the word *lie*. The most prominent translations are "split", "spiraling" or "twist". In a Chinese dictionary, similar to *lü*, the character for *lie* can not be found. This word is a creation of the Taijiquan masters and expresses a complex strategy. A detailed explanation of *lie* can be found in the *Secret Song of the eight methods (Bafa mijue)*:



Robert Rudniak and
Martin Boedicker

捌

lie

How does one explain
the meaning of *lie*?

Circling as a flywheel.

When you throw something on it,
it is easily thrown 10 feet away.

Don't you see the whirlpool?

The whirling of waves is similar to a spiral.

A leaf that falls on it,
will sink immediately.

(Wu, S. 102)

Thus *lie* has two qualities: It behaves like a turning wheel, from which something is being thrown away and it behaves like a whirlpool which sucks things inwards to a spiral. It is precisely this double quality, which makes *lie* so effective. *Lie* allows one to draw and twist an oppo-

nent in as a whirlpool does. Thus his centre of gravity will be broken.

Here *lie* has the quality of spiraling. Turning around one's own body axis brings the opponent to a circular path on the outside. Due to the resulting momentum, it is then easily possible to sling the opponent away. Ma Jiangbao explains: "If the opponent loses his centre of gravity due to *lie*, he can not resist the centrifugal force and will fly away like a piece of clay that is thrown on to the edge of a spinning wheel."

Lie can be done with one hand or with two. In the case of using two hands, the force of the opponent is separated in two different directions, thus the association of splitting arises. As you can see the various translations for *lie* only partially reflect aspects of *lie*. Therefore it is best to leave *lie* untranslated. Also the Taijiquan masters developed *lie* as a technical term on its own.

· Wu Gongzhao, *Wujia Taijiquan*,
Xianggang Jianquan Taijiquanshi Chubanxiaozu, Hong Kong 1981

An Explanation of the Correct Practice of Taijiquan (*Taiji zhenggong jie*)



Taijiquan is round.

It does not matter if it is inside, outside,
up, down, left, or right, it never departs from roundness.

Taijiquan is square.

It does not matter if it is inside, outside,
up, down, left, or right, it never departs from squareness.

Enter and exit with roundness.

Advance and retreat with squareness.

Back and forth between squareness and roundness.

Squareness stands for opening and expanding.

Roundness stands for tightening and contracting.

Squareness and roundness are the highest ideal.

Can anything fall outside this ideal?

When you have reached this ideal, your hands follow the heart-mind (*xin*).

The more you look up at it the higher it appears –

The more you bore into it the harder it becomes.¹

It seems unbelievable – visible and yet invisible.

It exists without end.

¹ Compare Confucius, *The Analects* 9.11

(*Explanation of taiji*, S. 21, Text 21, Wu Gongzhao, *Wujia Taijiquan*, Xianggang Jianquan Taijiquanshi Chubanxiaozu, Hongkong 1981)