

Taijiquan-Lilun

Journal of the Theory of Wu Style Taijiquan



Focus:

The cultural (*wen*)
and the martial (*wu*)
aspect of Taijiquan

*For Freya Boedicker
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Taijiquan–Lilun

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In this journal (also in the citations) the official short characters and the pinyin of the PR of China are used.

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The Taijiquan Treatise

(Taijiquan lun)



In every movement, the body should be light and agile (*ling*),
and even more importantly, all one's parts are connected throughout.
The *qi* is excited and the spirit (*shen*) is gathered within.

There is no deficiency or fault.

There is nothing that protrudes or caves in.

There are no breaks or extensions.

The root of the movement is in the feet.

It is exerted through the legs, controlled by the waist (*yao*) and
expressed by the hands and the fingers.

From the feet to the legs and then the waist – this is always complete and unbroken.

In advancing forward and retreating backward, one can gain
the opportunity and the strategic advantage (*shi*).

If you do not gain the opportunity and the strategic advantage,
your body will be disorganised and confused.

This mistake must certainly be sought in the waist or in the legs.

Up or down, forward or backward, left or right, it is generally like that.

This is all connected to the imagination (*yi*) and not to something external.

When there is up, then there is down.

When there is forward, there is a backward.

When there is left, then there is right.

If the imagination is to be directed upward, then it also has to be directed downward.

That is, if you want to lift something.

Then you also have to push downward.

Thus, the roots will be broken and for sure quickly torn.

Full and empty have to be clearly distinguished.

Each point has its full and empty aspect.

Everywhere there is always full and empty.

The whole body is threaded together joint by joint,
without the slightest interruption.

Foundation and Application (*tiyong*)

"Taijiquan is the foundation and Pushhands is the application." (Ma, Xu, p. 3)

"The cultural is the foundation and the martial is the application." (*The Explanation of the Cultural and the Martial of Taijiquan*)

"You may ask, what are the criteria of foundation and application? Imagination (*yi*) and *qi* as the rulers – bones and flesh as the servants." (*The Song of the 13 Basic Movements*)

体 用
tǐ yòng

These examples show, that we find the terms 'foundation' and 'application', in Chinese *ti* and *yong*, in many ways in Taijiquan literature. Generally foundation has a yin-aspect and application has a yang-aspect. The pair 'foundation' and 'application' is also a commonly known term in Chinese philosophy and literature. It even had a special significance as a slogan in the modernisation of China from 1840 debates: "The Chinese discussion about their own tradition and the tradition of the West has taken place since the beginning of Westernization and the self-strengthening movement. [...] The principle of the first phase of the modernisation of China was: Chinese as the foundation and Western as the application (*zhong ti xi yong*)." (Geist, p. 14).

The use of the words 'foundation' and 'application' for *ti* and *yong* is only one possible translation. The following table provides an overview of different translations of *ti* and *yong*, as they are used in literature:

<i>ti</i>	<i>yong</i>
Foundation	Application
Essence	Function
Form	Function
Substance	Use
Substantial core	Instrument
Theory	Practice

It is difficult to find a full translation for the opposites *ti* and *yong* in English. The translation of *ti* is here the main problem. The first meaning of *ti* is 'body' or 'organism'. Moreover, *ti* means everything, which is an organic whole, or has a particular structure. This allows the meaning of the essence of a thing, the most fundamental or the core of something. None of the translations from the table above are able to translate the character of *ti* sufficiently or completely. There is not an appropriate word that combines the idea of a substantial body and at the same time the abstract idea of the basic core. In opposition to this is the translation of 'application' or 'function' for *yong* fully satisfactory.

In the Taijiquan-Lilun Journal we opted for a translation of *ti* and *yong* as 'foundation' and 'application', because we think it fits best within the context of Taijiquan literature. Nevertheless, the reader should always connect the technical term 'foundation (*ti*)' with the larger association of 'the body – the most fundamental – the innermost core'.

· Geist Beate, *Die Modernisierung der chinesischen Kultur, Mitteilungen des Instituts für Asienkunde, Hamburg 1996*

· Ma Yueliang, Xu Wen, *Wushi Taijiquan Tuishou, Xianggang Shanghai Shuju Chuban, Hongkong 1986*



Andreas Ferencz
Patrick Kinzler

The Knight-errant (*youxia*)

Towards the end of the 5th century BC the Zhou Dynasty fell into decay, and local rulers struggled for power in numerous small battles. This was the period of the warring states, a time condemned to distress and disruption. But this period was also marked by classic Chinese philosophy in its search for peace and order. Thus, the Confucianists reflected on the values of the Zhou Dynasty and pleaded for the rule of moral values. The Daoists, on the other hand, recommended a back-to-nature strategy, and believed in the power of non-action. The Mohists preached universal love, and the Legalists reckoned on the force of the law to ensure the power of absolute monarchy.

In the meantime, the knight-errants (*youxia*) took the law into their own hands. As solitary individuals they crossed the country, and dispensed justice with the power of their fists. They never attached themselves to one Lord for long, nor did they gather together amongst themselves. The knight-errants didn't belong to any social class either. It was their chivalrous temperament and ideals rather than their descent that distinguished them. The key values they cared for were justice, altruism, searching for individual liberty, loyalty, courage, honesty and magnanimity.

Despite or indeed because of these ideals, the knight-errants led a turbulent and licentious life. They had a bad reputation for squandering their money on women, gambling and drinking, and valued their friends more highly than family or country. They did everything to achieve their own glory, and in the course of protecting personal honor, many a fight was rashly blown out of all proportion. In spite of these negative qualities, the knight-errant was generally admired and praised for the ideals he represented. A fragment

of the biography of Zhi Yun offers a glance in the life of a knight-errant:

"Zhi Yun was a native of Yunan prefecture (in modern Honan). He had a friend called Dong Zizhang, whose father had been murdered by another man from the same district. Unable to avenge his father's death, Dong became sick and was about to die. On his death bed, Zhi came to see him. Dong looked at Zhi and sobbed, no longer able to speak. Zhi Yun said, 'I know you are not sad because you are fated to end your days but because you have not brought about revenge. When you are alive, I share your grief but cannot personally carry out revenge on your behalf; when you are gone, I will personally kill your enemy and grieve no more.' Dong could only look at him. Thereupon Zhi left, took some friends with him, ambushed the enemy, and killed him. He brought back the enemy's head and showed it to Dong, who on seeing it breathed his last. Zhi Yun then went to the district magistrate and gave himself up. The magistrate, who knew and admired him, would not send him to jail, but he insisted on going, until the magistrate threatened suicide. Later, Zhi Yun became an important official at court." (Liu, p. 42)

This anecdote draws the picture of the knight-errant as some sort of generous hothead, ruled by the laws of his individual moral values. If these were in any way offended, he took up his sword and was prepared to fight for his values. He rejected any reward for his deeds, and the Chinese name for the knight-errant, *xia*, became a synonym for justice.

For almost 2000 years, until the end of the Ming Dynasty (1368 - 1644 AC), the knight-errants were a permanent element in Chinese society. In the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911 AC) they slowly disappeared. But the ideals they stood for were taken over by the armed guards of merchant traveling companies. Thus the knight-errant turned into a professional fighter who earned a fee for his work.

The disappearance of the knight-errant did not prevent the myth from living on. For ages it has been a theme in poetry, theatre and opera. Today the knight-errant is so popular that he regularly pops up in TV and film scripts.

Li Bai (701-762 AC), the great Chinese poet, wrote about him, too. No wonder – Bai himself had

been a knight-errant in his youth, and killed many an opponent with his sword. He said about himself: "I was a simple man from Longxi, who was sent to Chu and Han. At the age of fifteen I loved the art of fighting with the sword, and fell out with many a feudal lord. At the age of thirty I was able to write brilliant essays and I offended many a high officer."

Song of the Unruly Youth

by Li Bai

Don't you see

The young wandering knight from the south of the river Huai
 Plays polo and hunts by day and by night?
 He loses millions at dice without regret,
 And thinks nothing of going a thousand miles to avenge a wrong.
 The young wandering knight passes in triumph:
 Dressed from head to foot in rich silk and gauze,
 Followed by noisy singing girls as beautiful as orchids.
 Everywhere he goes, music and songs are heard.
 He tells himself not to grow arrogant and proud;
 Many another knight he has kept within his hall.
 Fine saddles, fine horses, he gave to any who begged;
 Ten thousand, five thousand, he squandered in a moment on wine.
 He spent his loving thoughts on those who appreciate him,
 And did not grudge the use of his gold to plant peaches and plums.
 Several springs have passed since the peaches and plums were planted,
 Each time the blossoms fall, each time they are renewed.
 Prefects and majors come to pay him respects;
 Princes and lords are all his social equals.
 A man should enjoy himself during his lifetime;
 Why stick to books and suffer want and sickness?
 A man should seek honours during his lifetime;
 Why stick to principles and suffer wind and dust?
 Half the richly clad officials are fighting men,
 While poor scholars live among woods and springs.
 You may have a family tree with roots a thousand feet deep,
 But it's not as good as having many friends now.
 You may have relatives all over the imperial city,
 But it's not as good as being rich and noble yourself.
 Let us take the wealth and honours that lie before our eyes!
 What's the use of eternal fame after death?

(Liu, James J.Y., p. 66)

The Explanation of the Cultural (*wen*) and Martial (*wu*) Aspects of Taijiquan

Wen, the cultural, is the foundation (*ti*) and *wu*, the martial, is the application (*yong*).

The achievement of the cultural lies in the martial.

It is applied through the essence, *qi* and spirit (*shen*) and the practice of physical training.

The achievement of the martial is attained by the cultural.

It is established on the foundation of body, heart/mind (*xin*) and found in fighting.

Further on in case of the cultural and the martial we speak of the right time and duration.

In the proper sequence it is the foundation of physical training.

When the cultural and the martial are applied in sparring, the root of fighting is in the capability of storing and exerting.

Therefore, when fighting is done in a cultural way, it is a soft physical exercise.

The sinew power of the essence, *qi*, and the spirit.

When in fighting the martial is applied, it will be hard fighting.

The power of the heart/mind and the body.

The cultural without the preparation of the martial is like foundation without application.

The martial without the accompaniment of the cultural is application without foundation.

A single beam of wood cannot provide support or a single palm, clap.

This is not only true for the achievements in physical training or fighting – all things are subject to this principle.

The cultural is an internal principle.

The martial is an external skill.

External skill without internal principle is surely only brute strength.

It has lost its true face and consequently one will be defeated when attacked by an opponent.

Inner principle without external skill is only the scholarship of tranquility without knowing the application.

But in a confrontation, the smallest error can lead to death.

In the application against others, how can one not understand the explanation of the two words ‘the cultural’ and ‘the martial’?

(explanation of taiji, p. 20, text 14, Wu Gongzhao, Wujia Taijiquan, Xianggang Jianquan Taijiquanshi Chubanxiao, Hongkong 1981)

The Explanation of the three Achievements of the Cultural (*wen*) and Martial (*wu*) Aspects of Taijiquan

If we talk about the way (*dao*) without self-cultivation,
there can not be any achievements.

However, the method of cultivation can be divided in three paths.

Path here means achievement.

The higher path means great achievement.

The lower path means less achievement.

The middle path means the achievement of sincerity (*cheng*).

Although the method is divided into three paths of cultivation,
the achievement is always the same.

The cultural aspect is cultivated internally and the martial aspect, externally.

Physical training is internal and fighting is external.

Those who practise the method of cultivation equally,
internally and externally, will gain great achievement.

This is the higher path.

Those who gain the martial aspect of fighting through
the cultural aspect of physical training, or those who gain the cultural aspect
of physical training through the martial aspect of fighting are on the middle path.
Those who know only the physical training without ever having started fighting or
those who want only to fight without physical training
are on the lower path.

*(explanation of taiji, p. 24, text 19, Wu Gongzhao, Wujia Taijiquan,
Xianggang Jianquan Taijiquanshi Chubanxiaozu, Hongkong 1981)*



The Cultural (*wen*) and the Martial (*wu*)

In the foreword to Ma Hailong's book, *The Basics of Taijiquan*, he writes about himself, "I was born into a martial arts family. The education I received from my family in my youth was the way (*dao*) of the cultural (*wen*) and the martial (*wu*) as a means of furthering self-cultivation. The purpose of this education is to help others and to develop righteousness. At the age of five I began to study the books of Confucius under my paternal grandfather, Ma Chanquan, a lecturer at Zhejiang University. At seven I began training in Taijiquan under the guidance of my maternal grandfather, Wu Jianquan (the founder of the Wu Style)." (Wu and Ma p. 125)

Thus the education Ma Hailong received was a unification of both, the cultural (*wen*) and the martial (*wu*). Reading as a Westerner, the chances are that such a passage will be glossed over, with no inkling of the importance this statement acquires in its Chinese context. The cultural and the martial, *wen* and *wu*, are twin concepts of huge significance in Chinese culture.

Wen and wu in Chinese culture

Wen in its original, literal meaning refers to a zigzag, to a drawing or to pattern in general. Thus the term is applied to decorations on bronzes from the Zhou period. On the wider meaning of the term, Smith writes, "*Wen* conveys a wide range of meanings, most of which derive from the basic sense of 'makings' or 'patterns'. *Wen* refers narrowly to Chinese writing and literature, but more broadly to a whole constellation of distinctive cultural attributes – art, music, ritual and so on – each which, like literature, had an expressly moral component. *Wen* was the measure of a Confucian gentleman in traditional China, the mark of true 'civilization.'" (Smith p. 2)



Wu Jianquan

That places *wen* in opposition to *wu*, the martial. The ideogram for *wu* covers the concepts 'military', 'martial', 'belligerent', 'violent' and 'fierce', 'vehement'. Significantly, it follows that *wu* can denote both man-to-man combat and a battle of many against many and so incorporates an association of war.

The twin concepts *wen* and *wu* and so, the relationship between the cultural and the martial, or between the civil and the military, is a topic that has always been a matter of fervent debate in China. Given this importance it has left its mark in the language itself. Table 1 gives an impression of the use of *wen* and *wu* in word pairs.

Table 1

wen	wu
with <i>ren</i> = person <i>wenren</i> scholar	<i>wuren</i> warrior
with <i>huo</i> = fire <i>wenhuo</i> gently burning fire	<i>wuhuo</i> violent fire
with <i>guan</i> = government employee <i>wenguan</i> official	<i>wuguan</i> officer
with <i>yi</i> = skill, art <i>wenyi</i> literature and art	<i>wuyi</i> martial art
with <i>xi</i> = play, theatre, opera <i>wenxi</i> civil plays at the Beijing Opera	<i>wuxi</i> martial plays at the Beijing Opera
with <i>miao</i> = temple <i>wenmiao</i> Confucian temple	<i>wumiao</i> temple of the god of war
with <i>jian</i> = sword <i>wenjian</i> ceremonial sword	<i>wujian</i> sword for combat
<i>wenhua</i> culture	<i>wuli</i> violence
<i>wenjing</i> gentle and quiet	<i>wudian</i> high-handed, arrogant

In China's cultural history, the twin concepts of *wen* and *wu* figure as early as in the names of the first two kings of the Zhou Dynasty. King Wen is regarded as the dynasty's founder and is lauded for his cultural achievements. King Wu, on the other hand, is said to have established the Zhou Dynasty once and for all through his military successes. The Analects of Confucius, for example, tell us that "the way of the kings Wen and Wu has never utterly fallen to the ground. Among men, those of great understanding have recorded the major principles of this Way and those of less understanding have recorded the minor principles. So there is no one who has not access to the Way of Wen and Wu." (The Analects p. 225)

Although both King Wen and King Wu are glorified, Confucianism places *wen* before *wu*. The civil always controls the military and the cultural is in all cases preferable to the martial. In Confucianism the rule of moderation and the medium is one of the main precepts. Martial altercation is an extreme to be avoided. This is not to say, however, that martial readiness is an unknown quantity in Confucianism. Thus the six arts (*liuyi*) of the Confucian scholar included archery and horsemanship alongside command of the rituals, music, calligraphy and arithmetic. "The popular image of a Confucian scholar as an over-refined and effeminate bookworm came into being centuries later, and is any case not true of all Confucian scholars even in later periods." (Liu James J. Y. p. 8).

In fact, things military have proved to be an astonishingly intense, continual preoccupation throughout Chinese Philosophy. "It is a seldom-advertised fact that many if not most of the classical Chinese philosophical works contain lengthy treatises on military thought: the Master Mo, Master Xun, Master Guan, the Book of Lord Shang, the Spring and Autumn Annals of Master Lü, the Master of Huainan, and so on. In addition, other central texts such as the Analects, Mencius, Laozi, Master Han Fei, and the recently recovered Silk Manuscripts of the Yellow Emperor contain extended statements on military thoughts." (Ames p. 39)

In China's classical period there were two groups for whom martial issues were a particular concern. The first were the strategists. They would advise princes and kings in matters of war. Yet even given their profession, war for them, too, was only ever a last resort and to be avoided as far possible. It always represented a high risk and even in the case of a victorious outcome, devoured resources in great quantity. One of the greatest of these strategists, Sunzi, wrote, "War is a vital matter of state. It is the field on which life or death is determined and the road that leads to either survival or ruin, and must be examined with the greatest care." (Ames p. 103).

This stands in stark contrast to the attitude of the knights-errant or *youxia*. Politics would not rouse them; what they rose to with fervour was

man-to-man combat. Whenever justice and renown were at stake, the sword was drawn. This made the knight-errant the incarnation of the martial.

What amounted to an anarchist desire for independence in these wandering knights also characterised the Daoists; but the latter favoured the principle of non-action (*wuwei*) and of absolute spiritual liberty, whereas the knight-errants found sufficient fulfilment in social freedom. Thus Laozi Daoism would reject both the cultural and the martial principle. With reference to the cultural, Laozi verse 18 narrates:

It was when the Great Way
declined that human kindness
and morality arose;
It was when intelligence
and knowledge appeared
That the Great Artifice began.
It was when the six near ones
were no longer at peace
that there was talk of
'dutiful sons';
Nor till fatherland was dark
with strife did we hear
of 'loyal slaves'.
(*Laozi, p 37*)

And, regarding the martial (Laozi Verse 31):

Fine weapons are none
the less ill-omened things.
[...]
And he who delights in the
slaughter of men will never get
what he looks for out of those
that dwell under heaven.
A host that has slain men
is received with grief and mourning;
he that has conquered in battle
is received with rites of mourning.
(*Laozi, p 63*)

One should picture the early Daoists as recluses and independent farmers who eschewed social contact and thought that everyone could coexist peaceably if they were only left alone and without the constraints of a government or other kinds of social organisation. Even so, Laozi-Daoism

does not entirely exclude military power. But how is it to be applied? Liu writes, "The answer can be found in the classic Daoist writings, which develop an original and remarkably wise way of dealing with the problems and dangers of military confrontations, an approach that follows naturally from basic Daoist principles." (Liu Da p. 39).

Such principles are reflected for example in verse 30 of the Laozi:

Therefore, a good general effects
his purpose and then stops;
he does not take further advantage
of his victory.
Fulfil his purpose and does not glory
in what he has done.
Fulfil his purpose and does not boast
of what he has done.
Fulfil his purpose, but takes no pride
in what he has done.
Fulfil his purpose, but only as a step
that could not be avoided.
Fulfil his purpose, but without violence.
(*Laozi, p 61*)

In Huanglao Daoism, which developed later, *wen* and *wu* are encountered as a mutually complementary principle: "Heaven has a season for life and death, states have policies for life and death. To rely on Heaven's seasons of life to nourish the living is called *wen* (Patterning); to rely on Heaven's season of killing to attack the dying is called *Wu* (Martiality). When both [*Wen*, patterning] and *Wu* martiality are carried out, then the world will follow and obey." (Yates p. 63)

The field of tension acknowledged in classical Chinese philosophy as *wen* and *wu* ultimately finds expression in imperial Chinese society itself. *Wen* is accorded primacy, and as far possible, the civil principle is to prevail. For emergencies only, there is *wu*, the military. All of society is structured according to this ideal. There is a ruling bureaucratic state which controls the military sphere. Glorification of war was unknown and the attitude to the army was based on three premises: "... firstly, a low esteem of all things military: '*hao ren bu dang bing*', 'a good person will not be a soldier', a saying familiar to all Chinese has it. From a Confucian point of view the soldier per-

forms a function as dubious as that of criminal law: it is a practical necessity, but it is only grudgingly acknowledged as it is an indication of the failure of the Confucian moral code. Popular tradition has its notorious generals and at their head, Guan Yu, later elevated to the status of God of War, but even he distinguished himself less by heroism than by his pronounced shrewdness. It is no coincidence that he is also revered as the tutelary god of traders. To foil one's opponent, political means are preferred to military, for example by forming 'alliance with the far away in order to combat what is close by' in placating one's foe with gifts or in recourse to the tribute system to 'civilise' the 'barbarians'. In such concepts a second tradition is already implicit, namely that of the strict monitoring of the army (*wu*) by the civil mandarin (*wen*). Throughout the course of history, it was *wen* elements that proved to be both the state-upholding and the integrative forces, whereas, whenever the armed forces gained control, disarray was in the offing.

A third notion had to do with the 'educational' uses of the army. Territorial gain or the securing or protecting of economic advantages were exceptions as far as the chief aims of military action were concerned. Rather, their usual purpose was 'punitive and educational campaigns' against 'disobedient' and in-subordinate neighbours; which, in passing, was still the view in the campaigns against India in 1962 and Vietnam in 1979." (Weggel p. 139)

Wen and wu in Taijiquan

The twin concept of *wen* and *wu* is also a highly important feature in Taijiquan and is an explicit topic in various works of the classical literature. In Taijiquan, *wen* is endowed with the qualities of yin and *wu* with those of yang. In line with the theory of the *taiji* (cf. Taijiquan-Lilun 1), Taijiquan endeavours to unite yin and yang or, in this case, *wen* and *wu*. This has been part of the practice of Taiji-masters since

ages past, but for Chinese society it is certainly out of the ordinary. Thus one finds Sun Lutang reflecting in 1915, "There was a prejudice in the old days. Literates despised martial arts as martial arts were short of literary learning." (Sun p. 60)

In Taijiquan, *wen* is applied in a narrower sense to physical education (*tiyu*) and in a wider sense to classical Chinese or, later, modern education. By virtue of their education, Taiji-masters not infrequently attained posts as state officials or became university lecturers. Li Yiyu, a nephew of the founder of the Wu (Hao) style, Wu Yuxiang, is an example, rising to the post of Governor of Henan; another is Ma Yueliang, who was a pioneer in the establishing of laboratories for blood tests. The *wu* aspect would come to light mainly as military service and this mostly as an officer or in a post as martial arts instructor for members of the armed forces. Masters such as Chen Wangting would apply their skills in battle, or, like Wu Jianquan, to train the higher generals in

Table 2

	Higher grades of occupation in the civilian sphere	Occupation in the military sphere Chen-Stil
Chen Wangting	x	x
Chen Changxing		
Chen Fake		
Yang-Style		
Yang Luchan		x
Yang Banhou		x
Yang Chengfu	x	x
Zheng Manqing	x	x
Wu-Style		
Wu Quanyou		x
Wu Jianquan	x	x
Wu Gongyi	x	x
Ma Yueliang	x	x
Wu(Hao)-Style		
Wu Yuxiang	x	
Li Yiyu	x	x
Sun-Style		
Sun Lutang	x	x

the army. Table 2 offers a summary of the professional profiles of some Taiji-masters.

The end of Imperial China in 1911 and the introduction of modern Western weapons technology meant that traditional combat techniques would no longer be as relevant as they had been. At this turning-point in the history of martial arts, it was the achievement of several masters of Taijiquan to have modernised what had been until then a secret martial art. "In 1911, the head of the Research Society for Physical Education in Beijing, Xu Yusheng (1879 – 1945) was already supporting traditional techniques of physical training. In 1912 he issued invitations to renowned Taiji-masters to teach at his institut in Beijing. That was Taijiquan's 'coming out' – its first emergence out of a restricted private sphere into the public at large." (Boedicker, Sievers pp. 47 f). With its wider dissemination, the practice of Taijiquan was changed. Fast movements were replaced by slow ones and complicated positions were simplified.

Along with this development, the art of Pushhands (*tuishou*) as an application of the combative was also given new prominence. Thus a tenet in modern Taijiquan says, the (*Taijiquan*) form is the foundation (system, body; *ti*) and pushhands is its application (*yong*), and therefore the martial. In this way Taijiquan has succeeded in preserving its roots and in establishing them in the modern era.

Table 3

Yin and Yang Aspects in Taijiquan

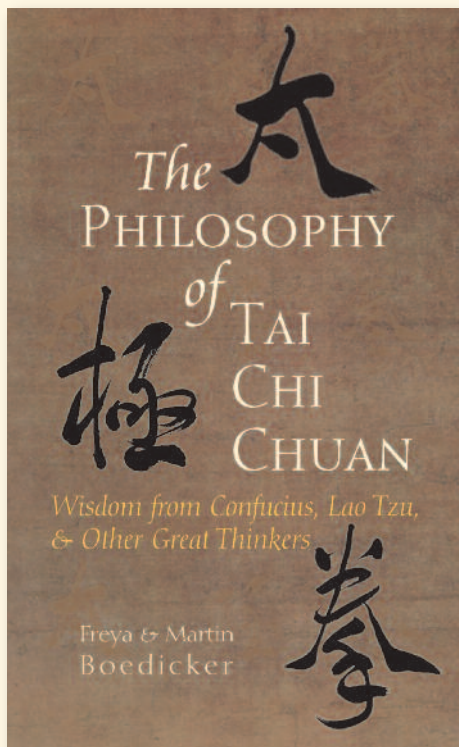
yin aspect	yang aspect
The cultural (<i>wen</i>)	The martial (<i>wu</i>)
Physical culture (<i>tiyu</i>)	The fight (<i>wushi</i>)
The foundation (<i>ti</i>)	The application (<i>yong</i>)
Inner (<i>nei</i>)	Outer (<i>wai</i>)
The Form (<i>taijiquan</i>)	Pushhands (<i>tuishou</i>)

It is the reciprocal stimulus between the form and pushhands that gives Taijiquan such an appeal both as a form of physical training and as a martial art. The term 'martial art' itself conveys the fact that its concern is not self-defence alone,

but that it requires an art that is founded on China's cultural heritage. The name Taijiquan implies the challenge to apply to martial art the idea of the *taiji*, i.e., to develop in Taijiquan a mutual penetration of yin and yang. If *wen* is the yin aspect of Taijiquan and *wu* its yang aspect, then the practice of Taijiquan in its ultimate form will consist in the interpenetration of these aspects. Ma Yueliang elucidates: "A characteristic of the movements is that they are a manifestation of slowness without the use of force. This is the exercise of the cultural (*wen*), the cultural being the foundation (*ti*). In this respect the basis points to the manner of activity of body and heart/mind (*xin*) and to the regularity of the circulation of *qi* and blood. To practise the foundation simply means the acquisition of elementary skills. This seems obvious enough, but in practice the path is long. Only training can make it part of one's own nature.

Thus to train the foundation is to train self-knowledge. The martial (*wu*) is its application (*yong*), i.e., its use against someone. Thence to learn push hands is to train the knowledge of others. The cultural without the martial is like the foundation (body) without application. The martial without the fundament of the cultural is like having a theory but without a body. It is asking overmuch of a single beam to be a support and a single hand will not resound! (Ma, Xu p. 12)

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The Philosophy of Tai Chi Chuan

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Freya and Martin Boedicker

- Book of Changes
- Confucius
- Laozi
- Sunzi
- Zhuangzi
- Wuzi
- Inner Training
- Great Learning
- Book of the Mean
- Sun Bin
- Huainanzi
- Liezi

The rich philosophical thinking of old China has fascinated the West for centuries. Those who practice Tai Chi Chuan can experience these ideas in a very special way, because the movements mirror basic concepts of Chinese philosophy. After studying this book the reader will have a better understanding of the world of ideas of Tai Chi Chuan. And he/she can approach his/her training with new inspiration.

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)

Hand Technique – *an*



Robert Rudniak and Martin Boedicker

In Ma Jiangbao's Pushhands teaching, *an* is the second of the Eight Hand Techniques (*bamen*) to be learned. *An* can be understood as a complement to *lü*, which is the first hand technique (see Taijiquan Lilun Issue 2). As a translation of *an*, the word 'push' is usually used. However, this often results with the student just trying to push the partner with pure force. But this is not *an*.

Ma Yueliang explained: "*An* is an obvious strength. When applying *an* it is essential that one uses

one or both palms to push at empty (*xu*) points of the other. If the other, for example, presses with *ji*, I can push down. This leads the attack in an oblique line downwards. When applying *an* the movement should be made in an undulating form, like the ups and downs of a wave. Thus, the posture of the other is shaken and he will lose his balance. The astonishing effect of *an* can be compared with the downward flow of water. In its softness lies hardness and there is no opening into which it does not penetrate". (Ma, Xu, p. 10)

The association of flowing water is surely inspired by the *Secret Song of the Eight Methods (Bafa miju)*, where the symbol of water is in the foreground:

”How do you explain
the meaning of *an*?
Its application is like
the movement of water.
In its softness lies hardness.
It is a raging torrent, one can barely
resist its power (*shi*).
When encountering something high,
it swells considerably.
When encountering something low,
it flows down.
Heavy waves move up and down.
There are no holes
that cannot be entered.“
(*Wu*, p. 102)

To understand the concept in its full depth, it must be remembered that *an* is one of the Thirteen Basic Movements (*Shisanshi*). *Shisan* is the number 13 and the second *shi* means 'Basic Movement' (see *Taijiquan Lilun* Issue 2). But in *Tai Chi Chuan* *shi* has also a different meaning which originates in Chinese strategic thinking. Here *shi* means 'strategic advantage' or 'power', as it is also used in the *Treatise of Tai Chi Chuan (Taijiquan lun)*: "In advancing forward and retreating backward, one can gain the opportunity and the strategic advantage (*shi*). If you do not gain the opportunity and the strategic advantage (*shi*), your body will be disorganised and confused."

In Chinese, strategic thinking *shi* is often explained by the picture of water, for example by Sunzi: "That the velocity of cascading water can send boulders bobbing about is due to its strategic advantage (*shi*)." (Ames, p. 118)

Sunzi wishes to say that the power of water is not inherent in the water itself, but in the height from which the water is falling. Therefore this height is the strategic advantage and gives the

water its power. The height is the real 'strategic advantage', without it the water is not in a position to unfold its power.

But *shi* is not only just a strategic advantage. *Shi* is the manipulating of circumstances – the way to create a strategic advantage as an alternative to the commitment of brute force. When the strategic advantage reaches a certain level, one can change the situation to one's own advantage. In Chinese strategic thinking, real power is not the unfolding of force, but gaining the ability to obtain a strategic advantage. "A failure to cultivate *shi* will surely give the upper hand to the enemy." (Lau, Ames, p. 88)

This concept has to be applied to *an*. It is not a question of when to push the other simply with great strength. Instead, it is to lead the attack and to gain the strategic advantage. From this favourable position not much strength is needed to push the other off balance. Exactly this situation, to gain the strategic advantage and then strike back, describes the *Song of the Striking Hands (Dashouge)*: "No matter how strong he attacks me, with the use of four ounces one can easily deflect a thousand pounds. Divert the attack into emptiness, the counter-attack follows immediately." (see *Taijiquan Lilun* Issue 1). Through leading the attack into the emptiness and thus weakening the body structure of the other, the strategic advantage is gained. When the counter-attack is a push, one speaks of an *an*. So *an* is not just a simple push, but a highly sophisticated strategic concept.

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Confucius – China's Great Teacher

Look into China in general and Chinese philosophy in particular, and you will inevitably encounter Confucius (551–479 BC) and the philosophy named after him, Confucianism. The Confucian school (*rujia*) was originally just one movement competing with the other 'Hundred Schools of Thought'. Only later, at the time of the Han Dynasty (206 BC–220 AC) would Confucianism, as state Confucianism, become a means of preserving the country's power relationships. From that time on, it became important to distinguish between Confucius and his ideas on the one hand and the doctrinal dogma of State Confucianism on the other.

Confucius: his Life

Confucius or, in Mandarin, Kongzi, was born the descendant of an impoverished family of the lower military nobility in the principality of Lu in 551 BC. His boyhood was spent in straitened circumstances: he was largely self-taught. Tradition has it that he was appointed administrator of the public granaries of Lu at the age of twenty and at this time began a paid career in teaching. Later, Confucius as the first 'travelling scholar', he travelled the country with many of his disciples and attempted to win over the feudal lords to his theory. He did not meet with great success, however. Confucius died without a written legacy in 479 BC.

Although Confucius did not live to see any great success in the dissemination of his teachings, he became a pioneer for generations of scholars and philosophers. As Fung explains: "Confucius was the first man in China to make teaching his profession, and thus popularize culture and education. It was he who opened the way for the many travelling scholars and philosophers of succeeding centuries. It was also he who inaugurated, or at least developed, that class of gentleman in ancient China who was neither

farmer, artisan, merchant nor actual official, but was a professional teacher and potential official. (Fung p. 48.) Thus, Confucius was not only the first professional teacher in China, but also trained his pupils as teachers. This created the new social class of the scholars (*shi*).

The scholars and their new way of life met with strong resistance. They were accused of being unproductive and in consequence, totally dependent on society.



Thus, Han Feizi wrote: "The literati [Confucians] with their learning, throw the laws into confusion. The knights-errant, with their pugnaciousness, transgress the prohibitions. ... Now if one pursues literary studies and practises the arts of conversation, one has none of the labor of cultivating the soil and has the actuality of possessing riches; one has none of the dangers of war and has the honour of noble position. Who, then, would not do this?" (Fung p. 52). Despite this criticism of their way of life, the scholars were able to gain a foothold. It was the beginning of a radical change in Chinese society.

The Old Zhou Recalled

Confucius perceived his era as one of rapid decay. The Zhou Dynasty (1122–481 BC) had to all intents collapsed, the country had disintegrated into numerous principalities and was in the grips of discord. The desire for stability drew Confucius's thinking in its foundations back to the early Zhou period. In the collection of statements his pupils garnered from discussions with the master as the *Analects (Lunyu)*, we read in this respect: "The Zhou Dynasty looks back upon two dynasties. Consequently, its entire education has been refined. I follow the Zhou." (Wilhelm p. 54).

With that avowal Confucius stands resolutely against his times with an invocation of times past. It is consistent that his doctrine is not a creation of something new, but the attempt to preserve or rouse to new life the old moral and ritual concepts. He characterises his own attitude with the words: "To transmit and not to do, to be loyal and to love antiquity" (Wilhelm p. 81). As a condition for restoring the Way indicated by Antiquity, Confucius recommended a patriarchal society in analogy to the hierarchical relationships within families, with clearly assigned roles. "Let the prince be a prince, the servant a servant, let the father be a father, the son a son." (Wilhelm p. 125).

Some Essential Terms

In contrast to the Classical philosophers of the West, Confucius is little concerned with metaphysical or epistemological enquiry. His eye is chiefly on shaping human relations. With that aim he develops three essential concepts and elucidates how these are to be regulated:

- 1) "To regulate by instilling morals, i.e., by taking to heart the „right“ standards of behaviour;
- 2) to regulate by ritualising roles and patterns of behaviour; and
- 3) to regulate by the rectification of names." (Weggel p. 21).

仁 components of 人 and 二
 rén rén (human) èr (two)

- 1) Regulation by moralisation is represented by the term, *ren*. The word does not translate directly, but the two components of the ideogram consist of that for '(hu-)man' and that for 'two' and so immediately invokes a context of human relations. The translated literature duly renders it as human kindness, humanity, morals and the like. But none of the translations covers the entire scope of *ren*. *Ren* should be understood as the sum of the interpersonal virtues demanded in Confucianism. They include, for example, filial piety (*xiao*), trust (*xin*), conscientiousness (*zhong*), honesty (*cheng*), altruism (*shu*), the re-establishment of rites (*li*) and justice (*yi*). *Ren* is inherent in human nature but must be brought out by education and guidance. Confucius does not satisfy his disciples' requests for definitions of *ren*, but illuminates different aspects from case to case. Thus he says, for example,

"It is to love your fellow men."
 "The firm of spirit, the resolute in character, the simple in manner, and the slow in speech are not far from ren."
 "Ren is the denial of self and the response to the right and proper (*li*)" (Fung p. 69f).

礼

lǐ

- 2) *Li*, the rituals, ceremonies and standards of the Zhou, are the second aspect that Confucius advocates as a governing principle in human relations. Performing the rites as accurately and appropriately as possible is seen as a way of making social life a predictable quantity. Purely performing the rites to the letter is not the main goal, however. The crux is to be inwardly wholly at one with the rites in order to become a gentleman (*junzi*).

"He made offerings (to the ancestors) as if in their presence.
 He made offerings to the divinities as if in their presence.
 The master said,
 If I am not present
 when I give my sacrifice,
 it is as if I had not sacrificed at all." (Wilhelm p. 53)

正名

zhèng míng

- 3) Another fundamental rule of Confucianism is the accordance of names and truth to names, so that the king or father, for instance, behaves as one might justifiably expect of a king or

father. By following this rule Confucius is in accord with the expectations implicit in the names and creates a state of order. This is important, as the society thus shaped will be one built on calculability and predictability. Thus, after Confucius, it is a ruler's duty to rectify the names (*zhenming*). In the Analects we read, "For, truly, if the prince is no prince and the servant no servant, the father no father and the son no son: then, though I have my revenues, can I partake of the benefits?" (Wilhelm p. 125).

In the Beginning there was Study

"The master said: "To learn and at due times to repeat what one has learned, is that not after all a pleasure?" (The Analects p. 2)

The above initial statement in the Analects highlights one of the essential aspects of Confucius' teaching: "Day by day to recognise what knowledge one still lacks, and, month by month, to ascertain what one has mastered to date. Only those who learn unceasingly will remain on the right path (*dao*)." (Weggel p. 182).

Here the love of study (*haoxue*) is defined as a desire fulfilled only by an enduring process. According to Confucius, learning takes place in a close teacher-student relationship in which the student shows the teacher respect and the teacher's attitude to the student is one of love, emotional warmth and attention. The teacher is not to treat all students alike, but each according to his qualities.

As to what form this learning should take, Confucius aimed not at the acquisition of certain techniques, skills or practical know-how in the sense of professional training. The sole aim of study is moral refinement. This is the path to the state of a gentleman (*junzi*) as distinct from the common man (*xiaoren*).

"The master said: "The gentleman has morality as his basic stuff and by observing the rites puts it into practice, by being modest gives it expression, and by being trustworthy in words brings it to completion. Such is a gentlemen indeed!" (*Lau p. 134*).

"The Master said, "The Gentleman makes demands of himself; the common man makes demands of (other) people." (*Wilhelm p. 158*).

By constant self-refinement, the gentleman develops a particular position that in Confucius's eyes places him even above the classical nobility.

"The Master said, "Whosoever does not strive assiduously, I shall not aid him in his progress, he who does not struggle for the expression, I shall not reveal it to him. If I show a corner and he cannot transfer it to the other three, I shall not repeat it." (*Wilhelm p. 83*).

The didactic method practised by Confucius demands a high input from the student. Weggel elaborates: "Regarding Confucius's teaching methods, they were designed above all to promote intuitive understanding, that is, not to present the cardinal principles in abstract terms but to illustrate them in examples again and again." (*Weggel p. 185*). Combined with the ideal of perseverance (*mo*), this teaching method leads to sure learning results and independence in action.

As a philosopher of statehood, Confucius certainly did not enjoy any great success during his own lifetime; but as an educator and as a model for all teachers, he entered the cultural history of his country. To this day, joy in learning is a particular characteristic of the Chinese. Horst Hensel is among the writers to have been struck by it, writing on modern Chinese schooling in 1997: "Chinese schoolchildren seem fundamentally to approve of school – including the mental effort

inherent in the process of education. School is socially acknowledged and receives considerable kudos." (*Pädagogik 10, p. 85*) Love of study and respect for its institutions is a legacy that remains alive and well to the present day.

Taijiquan and Confucius

Just as he endowed Chinese society in general with the love of study, Taijiquan without doubt absorbed this bequest too. Do we not read in "The Song of the Thirteen Basic Movements (*Shisanshi gejue*)": „Ceaseless practice (*gongfu*) is the method of self-cultivation" (Taijiquan-Lilun Issue 2), or as Ma Yueliang specifies: "Whether or not the weather is cold or burning hot, you should train regularly. It is a process of testing the character and strength of mind of the student." (*Wagner and Klüfer p. 13*). But elements from his teaching are not the only connection with Confucius to be found in Taijiquan. The Taijiquan classics also quote him directly or allude to him. The *Taijiquan Classic (Taijiquan jing)* has this: "Recognise it silently, try to explore it until one is free to follow the desires of the heart (*xin*)." (Taijiquan-Lilun issue 2). In the *Analects (Lunyu)* we read: "At fifteen I set my heart upon learning. At thirty, I had planted my feet firm upon the ground. At forty, I no longer suffered from perplexities. At fifty, I knew what were the biddings of Heaven. At sixty, I heard them with docile ear. At seventy, I was free to follow the desires of the heart; for what I desired no longer overstepped the boundaries of right." (*Analects p. 10*)

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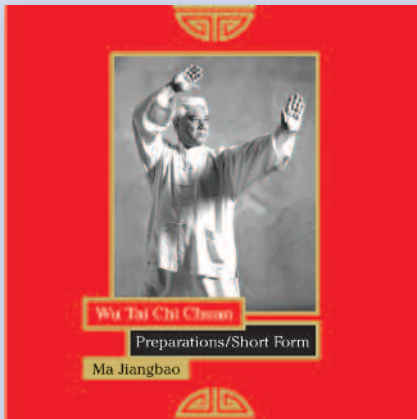
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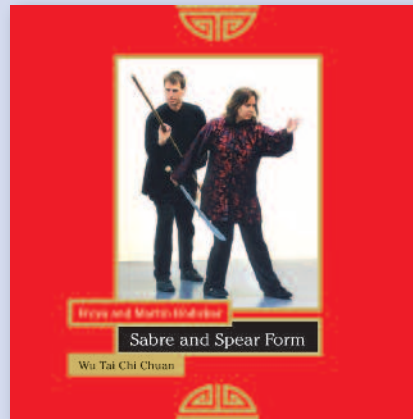
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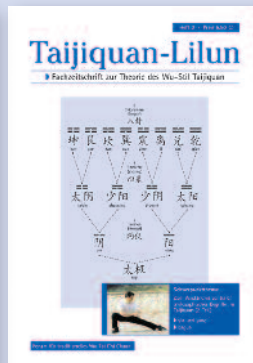


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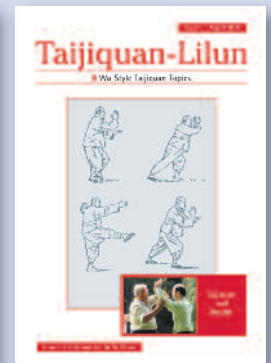
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