



Taoist Arts Organisation

Li Family Style

As taught by Prof. Li Kam Chan and Prof. Chee Soo

The Taoist Arts Organisation is dedicated to promoting and preserving the purity, quality, and completeness of the LI Family System of Health and Martial Arts

NEWSLETTER : APRIL 2011

In this issue:

Technical article:

<i>The Perception of Change</i>	<i>p1 – 2</i>
<i>Course report from Scotland</i>	<i>p2</i>
<i>Spotlight on Derek Cooper</i>	<i>p3 – 4</i>
<i>Health Matters: T'ai Chi and Science</i>	<i>p4 - 6</i>
<i>Summer Course Booking Form</i>	<i>p8</i>

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Another helpful article from Instructor James Lumsden to help students of all levels understand the process of learning T'ai Chi.

THE PERCEPTION OF CHANGE

Learning T'ai Chi Ch'uan at first glance is like learning any other physical skill, be it cooking, calligraphy, football or riding a bike. However once you look at it in a little more detail you may notice little differences. Although learning the complete Form is identified as a goal, more attention is actually spent on the process of learning. Learning the whole Form is the end result of following the process, which is a much more significant goal.

In T'ai Chi Ch'uan, the Form is a set of moves. These moves are fixed and you are the one who has to change in order to learn the moves, and, how to do them well. This makes it initially hard to judge your own progress, as the means of gauging it (you) are changing while you are learning.

From being both a student and a teacher I realised that there are three things going on in a class: (1) What you think you are doing? (2) What you are actually doing? (3) What you are trying to do/learn? Problems arise when (1) and (2) are different. The first lesson to learn is to be aware of what you are actually doing. Then it becomes very much easier to figure out how to get from there, to where you want to be. It is no good having a map to help you get from A to B, if you don't know where you are to begin with. So the

first step in learning T'ai Chi Ch'uan is to be aware of where you are, by this I mean, what is your current level of bodily awareness and skill. This is the information we need to have to be able to gauge our own progress in practice.

We all have had to learn to stand up, and walk, as a child. We have learnt to do this so well that it is easy. However, it was such a long time ago that most of us have forgotten how long it took, and how many times we fell over in the process. Now you have decided to learn T'ai Chi and it requires a higher level of bodily skill and awareness to do it properly, than your current standard. You might describe this as having to go back to the beginning, as our current skill is no longer enough. It would sound less daunting if we describe it as needing to update and upgrade our skills, just as we do with computer programmes. Unfortunately, unlike most computers today, human beings don't come with an automatic installer of the latest upgrades. We still have to learn, and in the process we are going to raise our skills in body awareness, sensitivity and co-ordination, from about leaving school level (GCSE), up to degree level or more.

To do this we will have to learn to tune into our body and consciously pay attention to its subtle signals. Also we will have to practise exercises to make us aware of the principles of good alignment and how to apply them both standing in postures and moving through K'ai Men, Tao Yin or any of the forms. To explain further let us take a couple of moves of the Form to illustrate this.

We will use moves 4 - 6 or "Play the Guitar" (depending on how you learnt it), from the beginning of the Form. [4] Here we step forward into a Right Dragon and hold the hands palm up with the right in ahead of the left. [5] Then we draw back into Left Monkey as our hands go round the ball and slide off; ending with the palms vertical and the right hand still ahead of the left.

[6] Finally we turn 90° to the right and step forward into Right Dragon, as the hands circle forward, left over right and then right over left; ending up with the hands the same as in move 4, when we first stepped forward. At this beginners' level (level 1 in T'ai Chi) we are learning the physical moves. Here is where learning T'ai Chi differs from most physical activities, because this is where we start from, as we now 'know' the moves.

The next stage is to apply the ten points of external posture; both to your stances at the 'end' of each move (Right Dragon, Left Monkey and Right Dragon) and to the transitions between the end stances. Is the weight distribution between the two legs correct? Are all the nine points of the foot in contact with the floor whenever they should be? Are the shoulders over the hips? Does the knee point in the same direction as the toes? Etc. We are still doing the same move, but the perception of what we are doing has changed, because we attending to more and different things. So is it the same move or a different move? I would call it the same move, but as we are now starting to apply the principles of good posture to it, it is an upgraded and more consciously detailed version of the move (level 2 in T'ai Chi).

Having learnt the moves, and how to apply the ten points of external posture whilst moving, we can now add the next component. While doing the move and maintaining good posture am I relaxed? As I am moving, am I continuing to relax and release unnecessary tension in my body? (level 3 in T'ai Chi). As before, we are practising the same sequence of the Form, but we are doing it with increasing awareness, sensitivity, balance, co-ordination and relaxation. Is the same move or not? It all depends on how you look at it. Again I would say it is the same move, but the new, improved and updated version.

So in order to learn the move fully, you need to learn it, and then re-learn it and then re-learn it again. We change from being out of our comfort zone in 'not-knowing' the moves; to being in our comfort zone and 'knowing' the moves. Then we get to go through that same process again and again. Each time it will be 'right', in that you will be doing it as well as you are able at that particular moment in time. But each time it will also be different, as the moment in time changes. Your practice is continually devoted to becoming more aware and sensitive, to balancing, re-balancing

and relaxing within your improving posture as you consistently apply the principles of T'ai Chi. Although the application of the principles may change, the principles themselves remain constant. The sequence remains the same i.e. 4-6 or "Play the Guitar", but your perception of what the movement within that sequence is changes constantly.

So does the Form change or not. Does it remain the same or not? It all depends on how minutely you analyse it. Each time you do it, it will be slightly different. As you progress through the levels of learning you will perceive it very differently. However it remains the same Form and if defined as a process: i.e. seeking to embody the principles within a series of movements, it is always the same.

James Lumsden

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TRAINING IN THE WEST HIGHLANDS March 4th – 6th

A great weekend. We would like to thank Anne and Kathrin for coming up to Scotland, it was really helpful to have other people to practise with. Also big thanks to Kathrin for performing the competition T'ai Chi, Sword and Fan forms, a great inspiration for us.

As always Tony's teaching was brilliant, and I would like to thank him so much for going round the class and giving everyone personal tips on how to move correctly. We concentrated on the T'ai Chi Form for most of the weekend, although we also did a K'ai Men and some Flying Hands. Everyone said how helpful it was going through the Form in such detail.

Tony helped us show the flow of the T'ai Chi Form: how, even when one hand/arm appears to be doing nothing much, it is executing an important manoeuvre, however small and unapparent. It did help us to connect the different parts of the body when moving and to improve the timing, so that the movement felt more whole and flowing.

Heather, our newest member of a few months, really enjoyed the course, even the Flying Hands, which she had never done before. She is very enthusiastic to learn more A great success!

Frances Pearce

COURSE ANNOUNCEMENTS

WEEKEND COURSES *with Tony Swanson*

Harrogate and **Lincoln** were both new venues for TAO courses, at least in recent years. Both days were really well attended and the central location attracted members from a wide area across both Northern and Eastern England. 10 clubs were represented during the weekend.

Northern UK members have an opportunity for more training with Tony on May 13th to 15th in **Newcastle**. This course will include training from 7 to 9 on the Friday evening as well as 10 to 5 on both the Saturday and Sunday. The course is well booked so please contact Anne annemanasse@blueyonder.co.uk to check places are still available.

Eastern UK members can boost their practice again this year at **Boston & Kings Lynn** November 5th – 6th. More news of that nearer the time.

Tony visits Wales for the first time in a few years on June 18th He will teach in **Newtown** on the Saturday (and possibly the Friday evening if there is enough interest). On Sunday 19th he is in **Leamington** for Midlands students to work with him. The booking for this course will start after Easter. If you are interested please make sure I have your e-mail address.

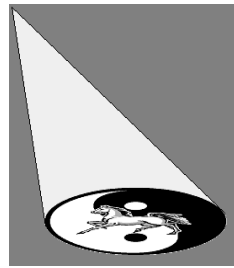
Finally, before the summer break, don't forget that **all members** are welcome to train at **Twyford** on July 16th – 17th, the weekend of the AGM.

SUMMER RESIDENTIAL COURSE

Don't forget, *for this year only* the course is in August. We plan to revert to the normal end of July slot in 2012. The booking form is at the back of the newsletter together with all the course details.

In these difficult economic times you will be glad to know that the overall cost of Summer School has gone down a little, thanks to Secretary, Keith Painter's tireless efforts to discover affordable and suitable venues.

The TAO is also facing difficult times in the recession as expenses are significantly increased. We have kept training fees constant or (this summer) reduced them, so we really hope you will come and enjoy a fantastic course at an amazingly reasonable price!



SPOTLIGHT ON DEREK COOPER

Derek is an Instructor in Kings Lynn. He studied the Arts with Chee Soo and then Tony and was a keen competitive fighter before he retired from competition aged 50.

Why did you start training?

In the '60s I used to watch *James Bond* and *The Man from Uncle* and thought I would like to be able to do some of the moves they were doing. In the early '70s my brother had been doing Karate and found out about a new Kung Fu (Feng Shou) class that was starting. He said, "Why not come along? You will probably enjoy it." So I went to my first class in January 1973 and this was the start of my journey.

What was it that got you hooked?

My first class was with an instructor called Alan Smith and he was running the first Chinese martial arts classes to start in Kings Lynn. We started with a warm up then did some break falls, wristlocks, arm locks, and strikes. I can see now that it was basic Feng Shou. I loved it from the start. I can still remember the next day waking up with my body aching all over but you do not give up at the first hurdle like people do today. The instructor was strict from the start. When he said, "Jump", we would ask, "How high?"

Have you continued training without a break?

After four years Alan Smith left to start his own system (Heaven and Thunder Fist) but I chose to stay with Feng Shou. My new instructor, Ted Bird, was not the same. I started to miss classes then I just stopped going. I had a break for about 2 ½ years, then Ted persuaded me to come back and I found I had missed it and continued for about 4 ½ years. I had to stop again for another 4 years because I changed my job and couldn't get to class and our first child was born but this time I knew I would go back as soon as possible. In my time off I tried Heaven and Thunder Fist, Lau Gar, and Wing Chun. In 1987 I changed my job again so I could make it back to the Feng Shou classes.

Soon after I resumed Tony Ellison asked me at a grading about going to Coventry to train with Chee Soo. Ted tried to put me off but I decided to go.

T'ai Chi or Feng Shou?

When I first went to Chee Soo in 1987, I was only doing Feng Shou. In November '91 Chee Soo said to me, "It's about time you started Tai Chi."

So I said, "Where is the nearest class?" He told me it was in Cambridge. A month later, I started Tai Chi.



Why do you continue training?

Two reasons: the first is Tony Swanson; as the years go by I can see I am improving under his guidance. Also that I cannot let my students down and I want them to carry on improving. If I did not teach, nobody would be promoting Li style in East Anglia.

Which aspect of the training do you enjoy most?

When Tony started the competition training and I started going to them. At first I was just judging but when I had the opportunity to compete I went for it. My first one was Push Hands: I had to carry on although I didn't win initially. When I saw the Qingda I thought, "I could do as well as them." I still remember the first time I had to prove to myself that I could do it on the mats. I didn't know if it would be fight or flight, but the adrenaline kicked in and realised I would fight.

I carried on competing regularly till I was nearly 51. Under Tony's guidance I went on to be southern champion in both Push Hands and Qingda (in the veterans). I wish I had had the opportunity to do competitions when I was younger.

What has been your most embarrassing moment in training?

I was doing break falls and forgot to put my hands down and hit my head on the floor.

What has surprised or impressed you?

I have seen quite a few ways of doing the Arts, having had the opportunity to train with (among others) Chee Soo, Tony Swanson, Ricky Gillingham, Alan Smith, Ernie Slade, Peter Warr, Tony Ellison, Des Murray, Howard Gibbons, Keith Ewers and all the TAO instructors and students. While I thank all of them, I am particularly grateful to Tony Swanson who is the only instructor who has taught me and not just shown me.

HEALTH MATTERS Science and T'ai Chi

Western science generally requires a controlled test of a definable potential cause to see if it can be demonstrated to have a statistically significant repeatable effect. This has created practical difficulties in investigating the potential benefits of holistic approaches in general and T'ai Chi and Chinese medicine in particular. If an approach is holistic then treatment is varied to encompass multiple aspects of the particular characteristics of the patient, not treating the presenting symptom in isolation but in the context of the entire person, physical and psychological. It is therefore difficult to isolate a single treatment for experimental purposes, because the holistic practitioner would not necessarily recommend the same thing for 2 people with a similar problem.

T'ai Chi is not specifically a treatment but the Taoists developed it for its health benefits along with its martial benefits and in more recent years the anecdotal evidence has encouraged some western scientists to become curious enough to try to test it by western scientific methods. T'ai Chi is holistic, or as we would say person-centred, in its approach. The principles remain exactly the same but every practitioner has a unique physiology and has to develop their own solutions to the problems of applying those principles to their own movement.

This year, there have been 2 developments in the management of health care in the elderly that arise out of research into T'ai Chi. Firstly, both the American and the British Geriatrics Society have, as a result of consistently good results in research projects, amended their guidelines to actively recommend the practice of T'ai Chi as part of a strategy to manage the risk of falling among elderly patients. Secondly, a study has published results showing that T'ai Chi can be a useful treatment for depression among the elderly. This is particularly significant because, generally speaking, elderly people are often coping with multiple health problems and tend not to respond to drug treatment. The study showed that, compared with a class giving health advice and stretching exercises, T'ai Chi gave relief in more cases and was more likely to result in a continuing remission.

When I started the Health Matters series, 3 years ago, Rachel Davies, then working with Help the

Aged in the Midlands, described how her students seemed to feel the benefits of T'ai Chi very quickly and that motivated them to want to continue and to practise regularly. She ascribed this to the fact that generally their health was compromised in some way [TAO Newsletter Feb. 2008]. Jill Hopkins, currently running T'ai Chi sessions for Help the Aged in S.E London has a very similar experience. She tells one story that illustrates how important the gentle benefits of T'ai Chi can be. After a number of sessions where she had simply been working on increasing awareness of the distribution of the weight over the 9 points of the feet, and keeping it centred for stability, one lady came and told her that she was now able to peg her washing on the line without falling over backwards. This had given her a huge boost of confidence in her ability to continue to live in her own home and she felt it was a life-changing breakthrough.

When you think about it, it is hardly surprising that T'ai Chi may help with depression. It encourages proper alignment, increases freedom of movement in joints and gradually allows the student to release chronic stresses in the body. At a time when encroaching stiffness and ill health is likely to be reducing mobility and enjoyment of life, endurance and patience become the watchwords and anything which brings relief and perhaps even creates an improvement is bound to raise the mood. The western scientist has demonstrated a psychological benefit but the Taoist would see this as inseparable from the physical practice.

Although the western scientists need to look at balance separately from mental health because of their methodology, I think any one who practises T'ai Chi understands that they actually belong together. Improved physical function will raise mood, add to that the social benefits of a friendly, supportive class and it isn't rocket science to see why T'ai Chi benefits the elderly.

However, I believe there are some more subtle reasons for the particular efficacy of T'ai Chi as compared with other low impact exercise classes. These are to do with the nature of the Arts and, because the Arts are a unified system, they are more familiar to us in the martial context.

The first is the ethos of the training, the intention of the Instructor. Standard exercise classes in the west are very goal-orientated: "Push yourself to

your limit and then try to go a little bit beyond. Next time try to go even further and build up over time to extend your limits." This does not take account of the fluctuations of mood and energy which we all experience but which are major factors in the ability of an elderly person with limited capacity. Even though western coaches would adapt their methods for the elderly, I believe the mind-set will still influence them. By contrast the ethos of T'ai Chi has the 70% Rule and encourages the practitioner to be continually conscious of themselves in the moment, it is person-centred and aims for balance in all things. All of these things encourage a student to avoid over-straining and this ethos balances the goal-orientated attitudes that we have in the west with self-acceptance and relaxation.

Secondly, when we first make contact with a training partner, to ward off a strike, we avoid pushing back along the line of their force. If we do that our opponent is triggered instinctively to adjust to respond to us. Then the interchange becomes a matter of who is the stronger. What we aim to do is contact obliquely, which does not trigger retaliation or adjustment in our opponent. We then are free to get round behind the line of their force and use it against them. Since this is a unified system this technique has healing as well as martial applications. Li style massage arts include a very gentle massage at fascial level. Because the massage is so gentle it avoids shocking the patient's system into a response (as described above) and allows the therapist to release the external layer leaving the core free to adjust and re-balance itself.

The parallel I see here is to our classes, in the way in which our Instructors interact with students and adapt exercises to suit any individual with health problems. The depression study was done in America and those studied were taught a simple system of 24 movements called Tai Chi Chih. In the TAO we adapt exercises so that, for example, students can work seated. Jill tells me she teaches the arm movements of Drive Tiger Away to seated students in her sessions and that practising these movements correctly can bring enormous benefits to those with stiff and frozen shoulders. In this way we avoid shocking or overwhelming students psychologically by giving them inappropriately complex tasks. There is nothing more demoralising; the ideal is to give everyone something they are comfortable enough to

attempt, something they can progress with and enjoy the sense of improvement and something they can enjoy while reaping the benefits.

There is a third aspect of the martial system I see reflected in our training, which is the key to why I find the western way of splitting things into separate categories so unhelpful. Within the Arts we are taught to attempt to strike in 3 places simultaneously (for example one strike with each arm and a simultaneous leg control). This is so that if 2 of them go wrong you still have something to protect yourself. T'ai Chi works on at least three levels simultaneously: the physical, the mental and the emotional. In the context of groups for the elderly, it may be that someone enjoys the company and comes back often enough to improve their physical movement; it may be that someone feels the health benefits and this lifts their mood so that when they come back they are more confident to inter-react socially. You can see all possible permutations. It is because there are so many possible variations among individuals that, by working at all 3 levels simultaneously, we have a better chance of helping any single individual find what works for them.

So, while it is very good that science has found a way to measure the health benefits of T'ai Chi so that evidenced based medicine can accept it as a valuable practice, I would not want their analytical approach make us lose sight of the beautiful unity and interconnectedness of the system.

Anne Manasse

This article was prompted by the news reports sent me by Paul Garnett – thanks Paul. If you are interested the links to the original reports are <http://newoldage.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/02/17/new-advice-on-preventing-falls/?ref=health> and <http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/03/18/tai-chi-eases-depression-in-elderly/?hp>

TAO YIN BOOKS 3 AND 4

These books are now available for purchase at £8 each or £15 for the pair. These two books complete a set of 4. All are illustrated with photographs of TAO members performing the exercises. The exercises are explained in detail, specifying the muscle actions required and the health benefits.

Order via the website shop or through your Instructor.

RECENT TAO SUCCESSES

TENGCHI GRADES

At the end of the Scottish course **Roni Miller** achieved 1st Tengchi grade in T'ai Chi. Congratulations Roni!

BCCMA COMPETITION

NOVICE SANSHOU

27th March 2011

The TAO fielded a team of 5 young men and women who qualify for this category. More than half of them won medals. Congratulations to the entire team.

Julian Darda	Bronze
Kathrin Meier	Gold
Adrian Merville-Tugg	Silver

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The TAO - now on Facebook and You-Tube!

Thanks to the hard work of Tony and Gareth Pryce, we now have a selection of videos of TAO students on You-Tube to illustrate the quality of our work and show the world how beautiful Li style T'ai Chi can be.

There has also been a TAO Facebook page for a little while. Adam Wood, who is running it, would like more people to link to it and post comments. It has posts about courses, competitions and anything else that is happening, so it is a perfect way of keeping up to date with what is going on in the UK, France and Germany.

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Many thanks to contributors to this issue and to Derek for agreeing to be interviewed. I am going to use the same questions to run a series of profiles on various TAO members, to try to show people what a wide range of people are training and how many different things they get out of it. If you would like to nominate someone to be profiled, please just let me know.

The next issue will come out in June so please send contributions to me at the address below by 28th May. And if you attend one of our courses for the first time and would like to let us know how you found it, please email me (as well as posting on Facebook of course!).

Anne Manasse 7 Gowan Terrace, Jesmond, Newcastle upon Tyne NE2 2PS. 0191 2816476. email annemanasse@blueyonder.co.uk

2011 Summer Course Booking Form

COURSE DETAILS

Venue	Ardingly College, Haywards Heath, West Sussex RH17 6SQ
Date	Sunday 7 th to Friday 12 th August, 2011
Course Instructor	Master Tony Swanson, T.A.O. Technical Director
Costs	
Training	£150 non-refundable booking deposit and Training Fee required to secure your place on course. <i>In UK please make cheques payable to TAO.</i>
Full Board and accommodation (supplied by Ratcliffe College)	£191 (or £140 if camping) Please pay in cash on arrival at the course
<p>To Book: Everyone send completed booking slip <i>and</i> email to James Lumsden, please. Deposit to be paid to James Lumsden or Marie Hartshorn in the UK, Annette Böffinger in Germany or Dominique Gantier in France. There is a limit of 60 places available. Single rooms will be allocated on a first come first served basis. Closing date for bookings 10th July 2011</p>	
<p>For further information : Please contact the James Lumsden giving him as much notice as possible. He can assist those with special dietary needs and any other queries or requirements.</p>	
<p><i>Course Organiser: James Lumsden: 10 Lawford Road, London, W4 3HS, UK.</i> <i>Email : jhlumsden@btinternet.com</i> <i>Tel: 020 8995 4752 Mob: 07738004731</i></p>	

Booking Slip

Please reserve me a place on the TAO 2011 Summer Course.
 I enclose / send separately my payment of £150 and I understand this to be a **non-returnable** deposit.
 Board and accommodation costs £191 indoors or £140 camping, payable in cash on my arrival at the course.
I understand it is my responsibility to ensure that my insurance is up to date before participating in training.

Name : _____ T.A.O. Membership No : _____

FULL Address : _____

E- mail Address :

I require a single room Yes / No

Dietary Preferences	Normal	Vegetarian	Other (please specify)
Breakfast			
Lunch and Dinner			