



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 : JULY 2015

Special Issue: Life with the Li-Family Arts

In the previous issue, Tony asked members to share how the practice of Li-family Arts had affected any aspect of their life. This issue is almost entirely devoted to this. Although Tony wanted us to do this as a way of focussing not on him or any individual personality, but on the Arts themselves, we have to start by reporting how the Organisation celebrated his “life with the Arts” on the occasion of the 20th A.G.M.



LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

There have been celebrations of the TAO's 20th year on the French and German Summer courses and will be more at Harlaxton, but the AGM is at the core of the international Organisation and 40 members from all 3 countries were present to mark the occasion.

The meeting included reports from all 3 countries on their various achievements and the challenges currently faced. Ideas for growing and strengthening the Organisation were shared from country to country.

Tony's report as Technical Director covered the entire history of the TAO and its achievements as, step by step, it has built to the position it is in now. He drew our attention to the fact that the TAO is exceptional in the equality of skill demonstrated over a broad range of students, rather than one or two talented ones. He wants the confidence in the system, instilled by success in the competitors and coaches, to be absorbed by

the Instructors so that more of them open classes because they are proud to having something of value to offer to people. His concern now is how we move forward from this position of strength and don't let the achievements drop or the momentum fade.

Following the meeting there were a number of speeches and presentations to Tony in recognition of his work for the Li style and achievements within the TAO. He was presented with a bronze horse, purchased with members' donations. It was inscribed with the words: *To Tony Swanson on the 20th Anniversary of the TAO for a lifetime of dedication to the Li-family Arts*. He also received the medal from Germany and the bouquet from France.

Tony has not written an account of the effect of the Arts on his life but it is written for all to see in the history of the TAO.

A.M.

SOUND AND VIBRATION THERAPY TASTER COURSE

This aspect of the Arts has never been taught before and, as Tony emphasised, the level of control required to use it as a healing tool takes a very long time to acquire. However Tony did give us some very interesting demonstrations of how vibration can be used to affect our own and other people's bodies and helped us gain the confidence to try to explore the techniques for ourselves.

The first hurdle was to overcome inhibitions about making noise at all. We worked in groups seeing if we could produce different types of effect (superficial, penetrating and progressive) in our own and other people's sternum area. As with any partner exercise, the situation changed when you changed partners and so it took most of the rest of the first day finding out what we needed to do. Just at the end we started using tones to affect the body at different levels of the spine.

The second day we continued but had gained more confidence in directing and projecting sound and by the end of the course we were working on releasing tensions in different parts of our partner's body. Tony's level of skill was so advanced that he could affect someone without touching them so he only had the air, not the bones to transmit the vibrations. He maintained that we could all learn to do it if we put in the time to learn the sensitivity of listening to the partner and the control required. However, after the taster course it was politely requested that we do not yet try this at home!

A.M.

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FRENCH SUMMER SCHOOL 2015

The summer school was held once again at Saint Avertin, a suburb of Tours. This was our fifth year of attending the school and as always the French students made us feel at home straight away, as they did our dogs.

After a round of hellos and hugs the class started with the first of a set of exercises from Tony, which would test not only our flexibility but also our understanding of Kai Men.

Over the four days of training we worked on trying to improve our understanding and abilities in the martial aspects and techniques of the Form and Flying Hands. Working with different partners or groups after some comprehensive

instruction from Tony on various details and exercises.

The school seemed to be well supported by the French students along with one German and seven British students.



We would like to extend our thanks to Tony for a great summer school. But also to the French part of the T.A.O. family for making everyone so welcome.

Evelyn Roberts

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TENCHI GRADES

Congratulations to the following who have recently attained 1st Tengchi Grade in T'ai Chi:

*Chris Kinsey
Philip Mercer
Julian Padgett*

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AUTUMN WEEKEND COURSES

Dates for your diary

Scotland: Visit the lovely Lochcarron area in autumn for our weekend course on **September 18th – 20th**. If you are a local member contact Frances or Gillian to book, if you want to join the group who are going up to visit, contact Anne.

Weapons Weekend: The third part of the Sword Form project, moves 60 – 90, will be taught in the Whitnash Centre, Leamington Spa on **October 3rd – 4th**. Contact John Z jzettaichi@hotmail.co.uk if you need help finding accommodation.

13th – 14th November: Boston, 15th November: Kings Lynn. This area has some flourishing clubs and so plenty of people to come and train with.

27th – 29th November, Newcastle upon Tyne: Hopefully many members in the North, and some visitors from the South, will meet for this last weekend course in our 20th Anniversary Year. Always a special event.

We hope to make the 2016 course dates available early next autumn.

PERSONAL GROWTH

Confidence

When I was young I didn't like school and, sad to say, I didn't like most of the teachers either. With very few exceptions, I felt that teachers couldn't teach me important things, couldn't give me what was truly relevant to my life. When I started with T'ai Chi, I had to face inner conflicts. My teacher, Hubert, and his teaching moved something inside me that I couldn't control. I felt irritated about this combination of release and discipline, about the way of thinking wider, getting more sensitive, developing more self-reflection. But through this I came to understand that my formerly fixed opinion about teachers had toppled. Fortunately!

Within the TAO, I found teachers who teach truthful and authentic things, who are calm and shine warmly to their students, even when they fail or can only change slowly. I appreciate this belief that everyone is learning and progressing at their own speed, the belief that practising the Taoist Movement Arts helps this but that the process needs as much time as it needs. This pleases me in many ways.

I also found it extremely enriching to learn that every human being has something to teach me. Knowing this makes it easier to be open-minded without losing one's own position. I work on that with joy.

When I joined the TAO back in 2005 I was a shy, introverted teenage girl. My goal was to be able to protect myself and to stay fit. What I found is so much more: I found a family and a home. A place where people finally accepted me for who I am where I am always welcome. I still learn so much, not only about T'ai Chi or Kung Fu but also about life.

Family

Today I feel confident about myself and I know that I will always find my way. This wouldn't have been possible without you, all of you!

I owe you so much.

It's been an honour! journey begins. It floats on the surface of the water doesn't it? Yes, some of the time. Other

times the tumbling waters submerge it: sometimes it spins wildly as the current flows swiftly. Perhaps it becomes pinned against rocks by the water's force, before moving on when the current happens to be momentarily less fierce. Maybe it slides into a backwater and floats: or just turns slowly in an eddy. Whatever happens, it still moves on downstream, each time regaining its balance and equilibrium. That's what Tai Chi does for me. It gives me the chance to come back to a balanced point. I may not achieve it exactly: I may find it hard to discover. Nevertheless, the opportunity is always there.

Liz Jordan

Balance

And therefore I like teachers, now

Anja Galonska



Wisdom

Understanding T'ai Chi is understanding life. Learning T'ai Chi is learning life. Loving T'ai Chi is loving life so for me - Thank you

Ellen Bollinger

Since my way was led to the Arts, Tai Chi and Chigong 10 years ago, I have learned to deal calmly with many situations in my life. Joy is conscious and sadness bearable. Releasing and gratitude has become my life motto.

Helga Schwiedel

Gratitude

WHATEVER YOUR AGE

MOUNTAIN CLIMBING, T'AI CHI & MUSIC

With hindsight over my 73 years, it seems that there is only one thing that I am good at and that is not being very good at anything. In this I am extremely successful – and I'm happy with that. I am not a mountain climber, yet I seem to have been doing nothing else. Of course, I am a 'work in progress'. With the motivation of my 'inner child', together with its qualities of naivety, sensitivity, fragility, innocence, incredible curiosity, I hit the ground running when I was born – and haven't stopped since then.

My main mountains have been (and still are): my continuing discovery of music in everything; Buddhism (mind and material distraction); Taoism (change) and the wide, diverse subject called T'ai Chi (Supreme Ultimate – using energies of mind & body to help one attain ones highest possibilities) and to meet others who are climbing their mountains.

While touring as a musician for six years, climbing my mountains, I discovered the arts of moving, falling, throwing people, joint locks, breathing, etc., plus traditional dojo etiquette while involved with Aikido and some Ju-Jitsu. In late 1970's, over two years, Yang style T'ai Chi. When those classes ended, I heard of Master Chee Soo teaching ten miles away in Coventry. What incredible luck, I thought, and so it was. Between 1982 and 1994 (when Master Soo died), I attended almost every class he taught. This all seemed to me to be the ideal extension to my previous Aikido experience. We all learn that 'all things are connected', that 'nothing exists in isolation' and that everything arises from what has gone before. Therefore, without Master Chee Soo and his many years of dedication teaching the Arts through his life, there would have been no Taoist Arts Organisation.

Together with many others, I was so lucky to have had the opportunity of so much instruction of the Li style arts and to be there in 1995 as the TAO was born (as usual, with some pain and happiness) and watched it grow, learn and change to become an active, twenty-year-old personality.

As time passed, I realised that I actually *did* know some 'stuff' and now, with the new man at the

teaching helm, Tony Swanson, I was learning much more and what I did know was being gradually not so much corrected but rather refined, focussed, contained and centred; adding internal and external spatial awareness. (I'm still climbing these mountains)

Since 1998, my local students and I have always been happy to welcome all enthusiastic TAO students to my Leamington Spa venues from U.K. and Europe when I host TAO weekend courses.

For me, personally, the spirit of T'ai Chi of greatest importance and the physical activities are the medium. Also, being involved with the TAO and T'ai Chi Li style has been an amazingly subtle growth experience: physically, I'm good; and I feel that T'ai Chi has helped all my music activities become much more clear and focussed in its expression. To me, music and T'ai Chi are non-different.

From my heart, thank you to all and everyone who have played with me and helped me learn something valuable over the years. And thanks to all the hard-working Committee members!!

We're still climbing – me and my 'inner child'!

A big 'Happy Anniversary to you', TAO family!
See you in another 20!

John Zetterstrom, founder member

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This year I flew to England alone for the first time for the Easter course. I traveled Cologne to Heathrow with Birgit and Renate, two friends of my mother, who I knew from German courses. In England I felt at home and it was great fun to live with all the people there. Everyone took care of me and when I had questions I could ask anybody. The training itself was a big challenge for me but it was a fun and I learned a lot. T'ai Chi isn't my favorite category but despite that it brought me forward and really helped me to find myself. I think you need to be very brave to fly alone to England because you may have to deal with unexpected problems, for instance at passport control. If I hadn't known friends of mine were going to be there, I think I wouldn't have been so determined. With friends to spend the breaks with it was great fun and I totally enjoyed spending time with all of you. Thank you Tony and everyone who supported me.

Myriam Falk aged 13

NEWCOMERS AND OLD HANDS

Hello ! My name is Anthea. I am 73 years young and attend Northumberland Heath Wellbeing Centre. For the past seven years I have been suffering from arthritis in all my joints. I decided to attend T'ai Chi classes as I had heard good reports about its' benefits. I haven't been disappointed. After 4 weeks my pain has been reduced by about 80%. I am far more mobile and flexible. The effects were felt even after the first class and progress has been maintained. Even my friends at the centre have noticed the difference in the way I am looking.

I would say to anyone - join your local T'ai Chi class. Enjoy yourself and feel better.

I wanted to learn T'ai Chi for a long time before I discovered the TAO and the Li-family style of T'ai Chi. I went to a "taster" class at a local authority venue and knew immediately that this was the style of T'ai Chi I wanted to learn. I did not envisage that the journey I would be taking would be such an influence on my physical and mental life. A severe back injury some years previously left me in constant, sometimes massive pain for which I was prescribed morphine-related drug. The drug was effective but the side effects were not pleasant, to say the least! The pain was suppressed but the problem remained.

Over the years in which I have practised the art of Tai Chi, this problem has improved and I have learned techniques to manage the injury and the pain. My posture, pain tolerance and planes of movement have all improved, a win win situation! I no longer take morphine related medication which is an enormous step forward for me.

This cameo of just one of the advantages of my practising T'ai Chi with the TAO is succinct. It has given other advantages to my mind, body and spirit – but this newsletter is not all about me-it is all about the TAO and it's Arts. I now cannot imagine life without it.

Sue Davies

Twenty years seems a great deal of time to a neophyte like me who is still measuring his T'ai Chi journey in months rather than years but, hey, I have moved on from weeks. :-) Having stumbled upon Tony's Belvedere Class through an old friend I have found a very supportive and knowledgeable group of individuals who seem to somehow have an innate understanding of the "challenges" faced by a beginner. :) Still very early days for me but I am enjoying my classes and I have found the regular exercise and initial "difficulties" a definite plus to my general well being. Just wish I had started twenty years or perhaps even longer ago!

John Amor

Learning to monitor standing on the nine points of the feet and stack my bones straight has helped my posture and I'm sure it's reduced joint strain. I practise every time I have to queue, wait for my dogs and whilst washing up. The wisdom of optimum stances and critical distances fascinates and amazes me as I seek balance in life.

Just after setting up the T.A.O. Tony came to Newtown, Powys, and one focus of his session was breathing. He explained how a full, 3 section in-breath provided 'a column of air to augment and support the spine and skeleton.' We practised deep breathing for grounding and experimented with releasing sections of breath to enhance flexibility. I regularly resort to deep, grounding breaths during times of stress and upset. When I'm sad or feeling a bit defeated I sag and the sense of life's pressures increases. Practising 3 section breathing, paying particular attention to the top of my chest, contradicts the feelings of weakness and defeat. The practice energises and calms me. I feel stronger for filling up against collapse and more able to cope after a few full tanks of air.

One time I wanted to cheer loudly was when I heard Tony say to the person next to me: "It's not about waving your hands about and believing the

chi's moving. It's about geometry and physics not belief. If you get your stances, timings and movements right, it'll work." Being 'metaphysically challenged', I found this extremely motivating and empowering. I like to think that the 'miracles' that sometimes come through the Arts can be achieved without mysticism or supernatural intervention.

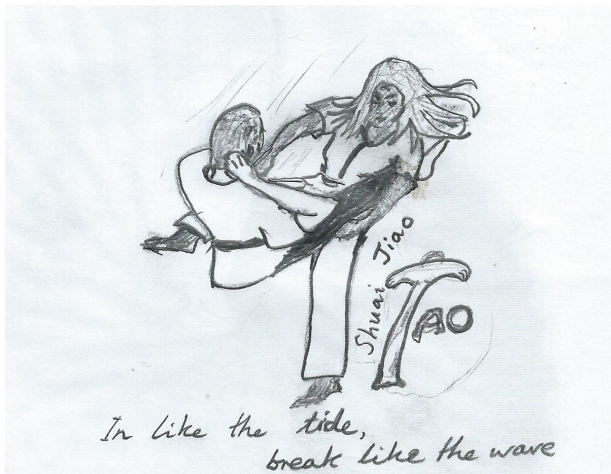
I love the way the system embraces the contradictions and paradoxes of life e.g. that 'less is often more'. I've enjoyed working through the tensions, which come with concentration and 'trying', in order to achieve effective or even devastating 'ease' some of the time. I'm getting more insight into some of the ways I work against myself by thinking too hard and striving. I find the Arts an inspiring antidote to competitiveness and some aspects of the Protestant work ethic, which I find to be quite strong and oppressive in British culture.

I'm so glad we're now learning the martial applications of the Form – it inspires me to know that it's so much more than a dance or mere decorative sequence and that such elegance can come from ward-offs, splits and strikes.

Chris Kinsey, Founder member

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SHUAI JIAO WEEKENDS



Dave Howarth, Founder Member

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20 YEARS IN THE TAO

I originally started training in 1979, my first experience of structured learning was one of Tony's classes in Plumstead, South East London. Not long after, I was travelling up to Coventry with Tony to train with Chee Soo at weekend courses. That was with the International Taoist Society (ITS). These courses moved to Wales, Ebbw Vale, where a summer course at the Steel works was one of the last times I saw Chee, it was at this course where he told me and Vince (McLaren) what a beautiful art the Li style is and, looking at people practising in their lunch time, and remarked "Look at them, they just do not understand it".

At 2 o'clock one morning in 1994 I was awoken by a phone call, it was Tony, to tell me that Chee Soo was dead, I could not believe it. I went to the Funeral in the chapel at Ebbw Vale, it was packed. Tony was one of the pall bearers with other senior students - an emotional day and the end of an era.

Shortly after this I was invited to Tony's house where we discussed his idea of a new association, it was an excellent idea and well thought out - with the ITS splintering it was the best thing to do to continue the style with undoubtedly the most knowledgeable and able of Chee's students at the helm. I remember the first training weekend - we were going to learn the style properly from the bottom up. It would be difficult but, for those who could stay the course, well worth it. The first lesson was detail on posture and understanding our centre of gravity - the beginnings of a long journey of discovery.

We started the teacher training weekends and worked hard on posture, stances, rooting and how to teach in a consistent and coherent way. We learnt how to spot problems with all we had learnt in our students and how to put them right. For the person keen to learn it was Gold, for those who did not want to learn, or thought they already knew, it was too much and some fell by the wayside. Soon the transition of an annual summer school began, with a week at Monkton Wyld in Dorset, it was great but turned out to be too small for our needs so we moved to Gaunts House near Wimborne and spent many happy years there training in the hot wooden outbuilding and straight into the pool after to cool down. This tradition has continued around many venues to find the right one, which we may have found in

Harlaxton Manor, everyone should do one summer school in their lifetime - stick it on your bucket list!

In all this time we have started regular Easter schools, a German summer school and a French summer school. I went to the fist French and many German summer schools and had a great time with our partners in training. However, I did have to miss a few years while I concentrated on my degree (as it also had a summer school which often clashed). Then in 2011 I could not get the time off from work for the degree course so at the last minute (the day before) I contacted James and he got me booked in to the summer school, when I turned up it was the most warm welcome from everyone, like a long lost friend returning - I don't mind telling you I was moved - so I have been every year since.

Around 1999 Tony mentioned doing competitions; not many were keen on the idea - more through nervousness of the unknown than anything and also an totally unfounded lack of confidence in ourselves. So off we went to our first competitions, and we were winning but most of all finding out that our style was good and stood the test of other styles in competition. However, the biggest win was that of other styles view of us. Tony has worked long and hard in this area and has succeeded because, now, the Li style as a recognised and respected style. Such is other martial artists view of our style and Tony, that he is chairman of the BCCMA.

Now, 20 years on, we have a strong core of good people who really know the arts well. We have proved ourselves with our peers and keep on increasing our profile around the world (See Hubert's account of the world championships Tai Wan from the December Newsletter) and it is a fantastic achievement.

Now we must protect our investment and increase it. I can now look back and confidently feel that if Chee Soo looked on our training and our level of understanding he would say "This is a beautiful style and these people understand it". We are now in a very good position.

We should certainly celebrate this massive achievement but also remember that we have a responsibility for helping sustain and continue to develop the TAO in the future.

Nik Kerwin, Founder Member

REFLECTING

In editing this issue, I was faced with a mass of material on the subject of the effect of the Arts in people's lives. The contributors were at all stages in their life and T'ai Chi journeys. The things they described are all hard won victories in life's struggles with physical and emotional inadequacies in the face of the vicissitudes of life. The ways in which these achievements are expressed and the spheres in which they are experienced are different for each person.

I had to try to find some themes and commonalities in order to present the material interestingly and not just as one piece after another separated by a " * * * * ". I wanted to ensure that the significance of the contributions was brought out by the presentation, not lost in a confusing mass of material. I am not altogether sure that I succeeded which is why I am allowing myself this little explanation.

We are trained to yield but not lose our structure and these habits affect our emotions as well as our physical bodies. The result may be a slightly subdued account that masks the deep personal significance of what is being said.

Living with the Arts is never a superficial experience. The practice of the Arts confronts you with yourself at ever-deeper levels and so your experience of life is continually integrating these increasing depths and subtleties.

As I re-read these accounts and reflected on them, I was increasingly struck by the deep personal problems which were being addressed and helped by the practice of the Arts; also by the enormous courage it takes to put those very personal experiences down on paper and share them with each other.

So may I ask that you do not let the brevity of some of these articles divert you from seeing what lies beneath. Relief from long standing pain; feelings of acceptance and self-confidence after long periods of emotional difficulty and low self-worth; wisdom and guidance when faced with painfully difficult and complex situations in life; all of these are key tools to maturing and building the best life possible despite life's adversities. And they are not easily grasped, which is why the practice of the Arts has been so valued by those that describe them. I hope more of you will write on this for future issues.

A.M.

20th ANNIVERSARY MERCHANDISE

As advertised on the June Noticeboard we have 20th Anniversary souvenir mugs, pens and t-shirts available.



T-Shirts come in sport grey or light blue and are front and back printed as shown in the photo.

They come in ladies (pictured) or unisex styles and cost £8 each.

SIZE CHART

Style	Size	To fit
Unisex	S	chest 34 – 36 ins
	M	chest 38 – 40 ins
	L	chest 42 – 44 ins
	XL	chest 46 – 48 ins
	XXL	chest 50 – 52 ins
Ladies	S	UK dress size 8 – 10
	M	UK dress size 10 - 12
	L	UK dress size 12 - 14
	XL	UK dress size 14 - 16

The pens are metal cased ballpoint pens and cost £2 each.



11 oz mugs with a choice of blue scissor or red dragon figure are £5 each.

All product will be on sale at Harlaxton but for any further orders after that please contact Jane Frew, jfrew2001@yahoo.co.uk

CAN YOU HELP ENSURE THE FUTURE ACCESSIBILITY OF THE TAO?

This issue is full of heartfelt accounts from members about how the practice of the Arts has become a key part of their physical, emotional and intellectual life and how the TAO functions like a family within which they feel supported and accepted while making that journey.

This is a tribute to what Tony has achieved through his exceptional dedication and leadership. He places people above profit and the TAO policy is to keep training fees as low as possible so as many as possible can have access to this experience. However, it is not an easy to sustain this policy in the current economic situation.

Some members have kindly offered to make a regular monthly standing order into the TAO to cushion its finances and help keep the TAO training experience accessible. The committee have suggested that there may be other people who can more easily afford their training and might be willing to help keep the cost of it low for others who can't.

If you would be willing to do this please contact our Treasurer, Marie Hartshorn, mariehartshorn@btinternet.com and set up a standing order into the following account:

The Taoist Arts Organisation - Publications Account

Sort Code: 30 96 31

Account No: 03037862

TO ALL UK INSTRUCTORS

You are required to refresh your NVQ level 2 Coaching Qualification every 3 years as a condition of your insurance. Chris Ellerker has been invited to Twyford to deliver the refresher on Saturday 31st October. He will also deliver the full course to anyone needing to take the qualification for the first time.

Thanks to all the many contributors to this issue. Hopefully we will continue to feature accounts of the effect the Arts have had in your lives. The next newsletter will be in November, Please send your contributions including those for Tony's new series by mid-October to Anne Manasse, Tel 0191 281 6476

annemanasse@blueyonder.co.uk