



LONGFEI TAIJIQUAN ASSOCIATION OF GREAT BRITAIN



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Richard Watson making a presentation to Master Chu King Hung at ITTCA initiation ceremony in 1979.

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Letter from the Chairman...

Quote: "Karate Begins and Ends with Courtesy."

– *Gilchin Funakoshi*

RECENTLY received a gift from a karate friend; a book written by Gilchin Funakoshi with the title *Karate-Do, My Way of Life*. Gilchin Funakoshi is the acknowledged father of modern karate-do – he dedicated his whole life to the study and development of Okinawan Style Karate. Born in the capital of Okinawa in 1868.

He brought his art to Tokyo in the early 1920s and by the time of his death in 1957 Okinawan Karate had been adopted by the Japanese armed forces, introduced to the country's universities and spread to the four corners of the earth.

The book is full of great martial arts anecdotes and insights. Funakoshi makes clear connections with Okinawan karate and the Chinese mainland. This association came through the inter trading with the people of Fukien Province of South China.

Funakoshi says that Chinese Kempo was introduced to the Japanese islands and it is from this historical source that present day karate evolved. Many students of oriental martial arts understand the Japanese traditional association with the Buddhism of Bodhidharma The Chan (Zen) sect. It is interesting to note that Funakoshi equates the two schools of Okinawan karate, Nawate and Sharite with the two schools of Chinese boxing – Wudang and Shaolin.

Recognising nonsense

Recognising nonsense is the heading of a paragraph in Funakoshi's book. It deals with the so-called magic and miraculous of martial arts. He refers to the claims of exaggeration, the claims of developing the fingers to penetrate an adversary's rib cage, taking hold of the bones and tearing them out of the body. Fingers that have become strong enough not only to shatter a thick slab of wood but able also to crush with little difficulty a heavy stone or pierce the hide of a horse.

He goes on to say: "Many students still choose for one reason or another to foster such myths. For example, a person unfamiliar with the art may say to an adept: 'Tell me can you really shatter a huge rock with your fingers? Can you also make a hole in a man's belly with them?' Should the adept reply that either one of those two feats is quite impossible he would be telling nothing more than the naked truth. Perhaps, in the distant past, there were experts capable of performing such miraculous feats. To that I cannot testify but at least to my fairly wide knowledge, there is no man living who, however much he may have trained and practised, can exceed the natural bounds of human powers."

As a Taiji instructor and coach, like many of my contemporaries, I have experienced enquiries of and references to the magic and miraculous in Taijiquan. With an art that fosters the understanding of the concept of Qi and the mystery surrounding it perhaps it's no small wonder that myths arise. Stories abound on the use of empty force, remote force, the ability to dispatch someone 12ft to 18ft without touching your opponent. Personally I find this feat difficult when I can lay both hands on.

Of course there are demonstrations of this dubious skill, however it's usually performed by the protagonist upon his own students, possibly mesmerised (dominate the will) by the teacher's character. All the attempts that I have witnessed in public on subjects other than the teacher's have failed unconvincingly to produce the goods. My favourite story that I relate to my students is about the Qigong teacher who was reputed to be able to plunge his finger (full of Qi) into a cup of water and turn it into tea, but his showpiece was to turn the water into wine. A handy guy to have along on a picnic!

There will always be a section of society attracted to the extraordinary and the magical in contrast to their more mundane companions. Those of us who require to feel at ease, down to earth, at home with their environment and find a kind of magic in being healthy, fit, strong and relaxed.

This is not to suggest that martial artists are not capable of performing amazing feats of skill and strength. I have experienced being thrown forcefully back with what appears to be very little effort although from my personal reference this is a technique acquired only after years of dedicated training and hardwork. "Beam me up Madam Blavatsky".

PUSHING HANDS WITH MASTER WANG

1998 finished with another visit from Master Wang. His November Pushing Hands seminar was over-subscribed as his popularity spreads. There were delegates from around Britain. These seminars have taken on a pattern of continuity which will continue for his 1999 visits in April and November. The introduction of the two-man Tui Shou and Ta Lu routines proved very popular and are an alternative to some of the more aggressive competitive Push Hands.

PROFESSOR HU XIAO FEI

IT WAS as a result of Mark Akinson's initiative that we were able to avail ourselves of Hu Xiao Fei's services in November. Mr Hu is a senior student of Professor Zhang Guande's and the Qigong System "Daoyin Yangsheng Gong." This was his first visit to Great Britain and he spent three weeks with Mark and seven days in Hertfordshire. I feel sure that all of us who attended his seminar in Codicote on 30th November will recall it with affection. Well done Mark and we hope to see some more of Mr Hu. Mark is with us on the 13th and 14th March to conduct an accreditation course on Daoyin Baojian Gong and Shuxin Pinxue Gong.

COMPETITION SUCCESSES FOR LONGFEI MEMBERS

CONGRATULATIONS to Anne Lo who gained the bronze medal at her first attempt in the Seventh European Championships. Congratulations also to Andrew Austin who came fourth in the European's in Athens. Andrew was just outside the medal awards but a fourth at your first attempt is a great result.



Anne Lo and Andrew Austin.

DAVID NICHOLSON WINS GOLD IN THE DUTCH OPEN

DAVID took first place in Sun Style competition when he took his Yorkshire lads to Holland.

TRIPLE BRONZE FOR MICHAEL GRAVES

MIKE is heading for a great C.V. in competition Taiji. In the Dutch Open he took third place in three events: Fixed Step Pushing Hands, Moving Step, Pushing Hands, Sun Style Taijiquan.

Well done all of you and thank you for flying the Longfei flag.

Dick Watson, Chairman

STOP PRESS!

Congratulations to Faye and Tarry on their new arrival, from Dick, Simon and all their Longfei friends.

Richard Watson — *a biography*

Part 1 – by Simon Watson

IN past issues the origins of Longfei have been presented through the interview with Professor Li Deyin (issues 1 and 2) and although Dick, at that time, mentioned briefly his introduction to Professor Li in 1989 and his subsequent meetings with Master Li Tianji, he has not made mention of his own connections with Taijiquan since 1973. I have suggested to our chairman that he write his own biography but he has shown little inclination to do so!

I grew up with his development and so have first-hand knowledge of some of his experience and he has filled in some missing detail for me. Although those of us who know Dick would not see him as a shy and retiring person he is nevertheless quite modest about his background – hence his reluctance to write about himself.

DICK has a wide knowledge of Taijiquan routines and more importantly he has read extensively about his subject and for a “Westerner” has quite profound knowledge of Daoist and Taiji philosophical concepts.

His martial training began in 1949 at the South London School of Judo. This club was run by two instructors he fondly remembers: George Chew and Eric Dominy. His judo training ended around 1968-69. In addition to south London his training took him to the Budokwai, the central YMCA and clubs throughout Hertfordshire. During his judo period he trained in Wado Ryu Karate with Tatsuo Susuki. However, his fondest memory is in the early 1950s when he was on the judo mat with Gunji Koizumi, generally accepted as the first Japanese to bring judo to Great Britain just after the First World War.

Dick’s introduction to Taijiquan was at the Renshuden Judo Club. This was at the time the training headquarters of the Liu Academy of Taijiquan. He only spent one year with Liu for in 1974 “Master Chu King Hung” arrived in London and introduced his school which was to be called the “International Tai Chi Chuan Association.” Dick became a student with the ITCCA in the latter part of 1974, an association which was to last till the end of 1992. Although the classes were intended to be group lessons, at the early arrival of Master Chu and with a lack of students, the lessons tended to be one to one. In their early acquaintance two lessons a week were augmented by classes at

the Sobell Centre and St Lukes Hall, at Harringay and Hammersmith. In 1976 the student body had grown and a collection of the longest serving students gathered at Chu’s house twice a week for three hours. The advanced class trained in advanced Form, Qigong, Tui Shou and two man San Shou applications. My father reminds me that in the early days of one-to-one training after spending time on form corrections, the emphasis was on blocking techniques, punching and kicking.

From 1976 to 1981 the training took place at master Chu’s house in Wembley. During this period a nucleus of students came together as the advanced and longest serving ITCCA practitioners and were invited to attend an initiation ceremony and become initiates of Master Chu and the ITCCA in 1979 (*see photograph*).

Dick had assisted Master Chu at St. Lukes from 1976, taking warm-up exercises and helping beginners. By 1979 he was the ITCCA senior student and was nominated by Master Chu and subsequently elected in that role by the Advanced Class of Students. In 1981 the ITCCA moved to Drummond Street, north of Tottenham Court Road and went through a growth period with a student body of some 400 students. A number of groups were amalgamated with the advanced class creating a core of dedicated trainees of some thirty students. At this time the ITCCA was



Master Chu and Richard Watson in 1979.

enjoying success throughout Europe and Master Chu’s absence from Drummond Street placed more emphasis on the need for Dick to become involved in teaching both the advanced groups and other trainees of some experience. This training pattern con-

Continued overleaf.

tinued through 1986 with Master Chu travelling abroad for longer durations. It was during these periods that the learning process continued with monthly one-to-one lessons at Wembley.

In all, Dick trained with Chu for a period of 19 years and it was a unique opportunity to understand and experience the Yang family tradition.

With his direct connection with the Yang family transmission, it was a rare privilege to connect with Chu King Hung in 1974. Chu was one of only three disciples of Yang Sau Chung who in turn was the eldest son of this century's most famous member of the Yang family Yang Cheng Pu. I think that under Master Chu, Dick learned the very essence of Chu's Yang Style. Hours of dedicated practice, private lessons, classes and five years of Form Revision bringing an understanding of the Yin and Yang, opening and closing, spiralling arm and leg movement, sinking and turning of the centre. All the attributes of internal work of Taijiquan. Qigong were covered during the association and although many later Chinese visitors claim to be the first to introduce Zhan Zhuang, Chu King Hung was teaching many Zhan Zhuang postures way back in 1976.

My own introduction to Master Chu was in 1974 when I used to accompany my father on Sunday morning to St. Lukes Church Hall. It was on these occasions that Chu would encourage me to train rather than sit and watch!

All students that trained with Chu in the early days were intrigued by the strength and quality of his "Fajing" and "Peng Jing" ability. In the early mid and late seventies these skills were quite unique in London as were the application of the thirteen kinetic postures/applications. The internal principles of this work were difficult to learn but they are the very core of Yang Style Taijiquan. These internal methods and principles can only be received from a competent teacher and they take time, practice and patience to mature and can be improved on throughout one's lifetime.

It was some five to six years before Sword (Jian) training took place and seven to eight years for the Broadsword (Dao). Years of form practice was combined with Push Hands (Tui Shou) and Big Pull methods (Talu) application and understanding Whole Body Peng Jing. In 1978 Master Chu travelled to Hongkong and Dick joined him there for an introduction to his teacher Yang Sau Chung. He also accompanied him on teaching and training excursions to Switzerland and Belgium. Unfortunately the ITCCA ceased to function in the mid 1990s. However the legacy from this association and transmission is invaluable and one that Dick and I are both proud.

When my father retired it was his intention to train harder to cultivate his understanding of our intriguing art. In 1989 he took his first visit to China and was fortunate to meet Professor Li Deyin.

Many of you have met and trained with Prof. Li and it will be easy for you to understand why Dick was drawn to the expertise in movement, the skills in coaching, the vast body of knowledge and the passion behind these attributes and Dick's decision to pursue an understanding, albeit small, of Li Deyin's lifetime of experience.

The first visit to Beijing in the spring of 1989 was with a group of Taiji practitioners led by the late Jifu Huang. It was on

this first trip that he also met Master Wang Janji. This was also the first time he was introduced to Master Li Tianji. Although from his own confession he was only to realise Li Tianji's stature in the Taiji community at a later date.

At the conclusion of the spring visit with the help of Jifu Huang, Dick was able to arrange to return to Beijing in the late summer/autumn of 1989. The return was to be on a one-to-one basis with Li Deyin.

When he speaks about this fortunate experience he likes to think the Karmic influences must have been favourable for him. Unfortunately the dates were fixed only twelve weeks after the Tianamen Square problems and martial law prevailed throughout Beijing – the Foreign Office were advising UK citizens not to travel to China and in particular Beijing. However, following his own instincts (not supported by my mother!) he decided to go. This adventure was to capitalise on the first trip and to learn the then quite new Forty Two International Competition Routine. This had been developed during the 1980s along with six other Wushu routines: Nanguan (Southern Fist), Changquan (Northern Fist), Dao (Sabre), Jian (Sword), Qiang (Spear) and Gun (Cudjel).

These routines had been compiled for international competition and were to have their preview in the Eleventh Asian Games. Professor Li was one of the main compilers of this routine hence Dick's Karmic feel about his Taiji training under Prof. Li's tutelage.

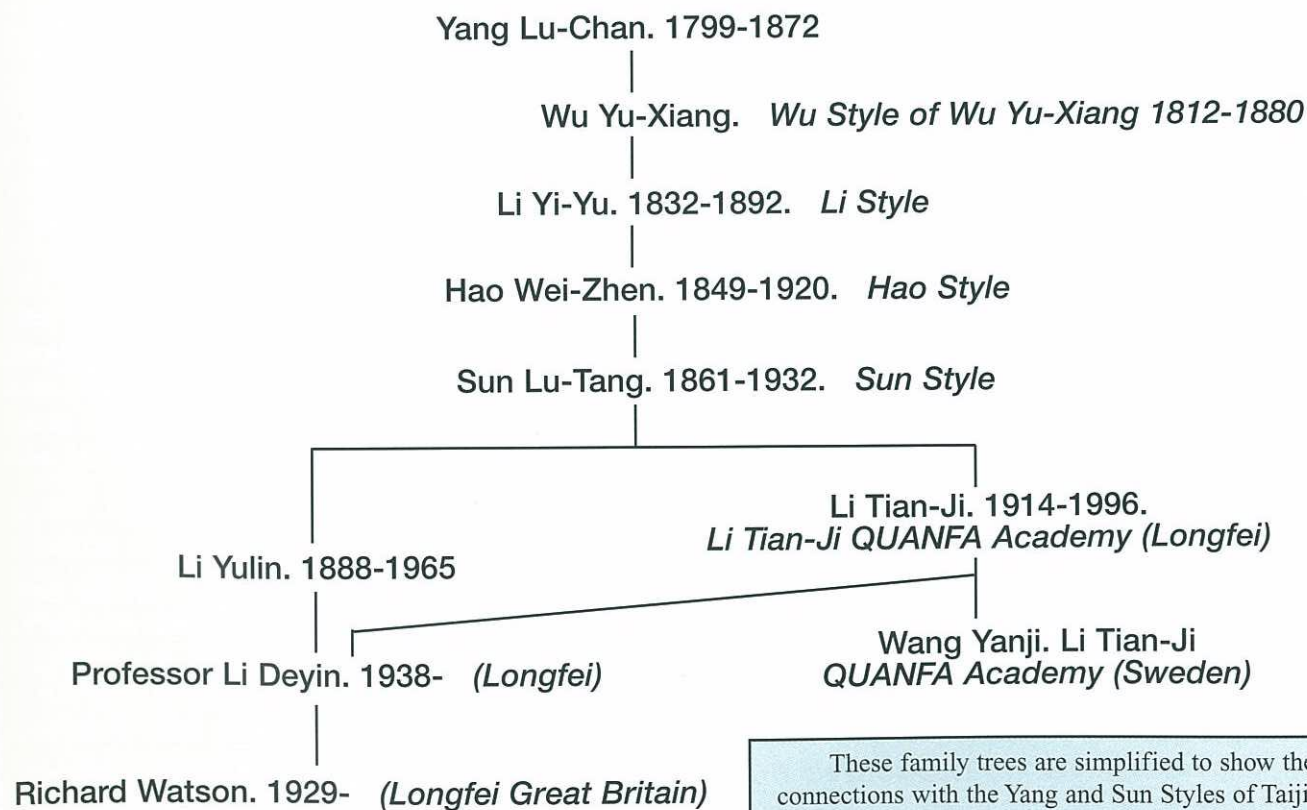
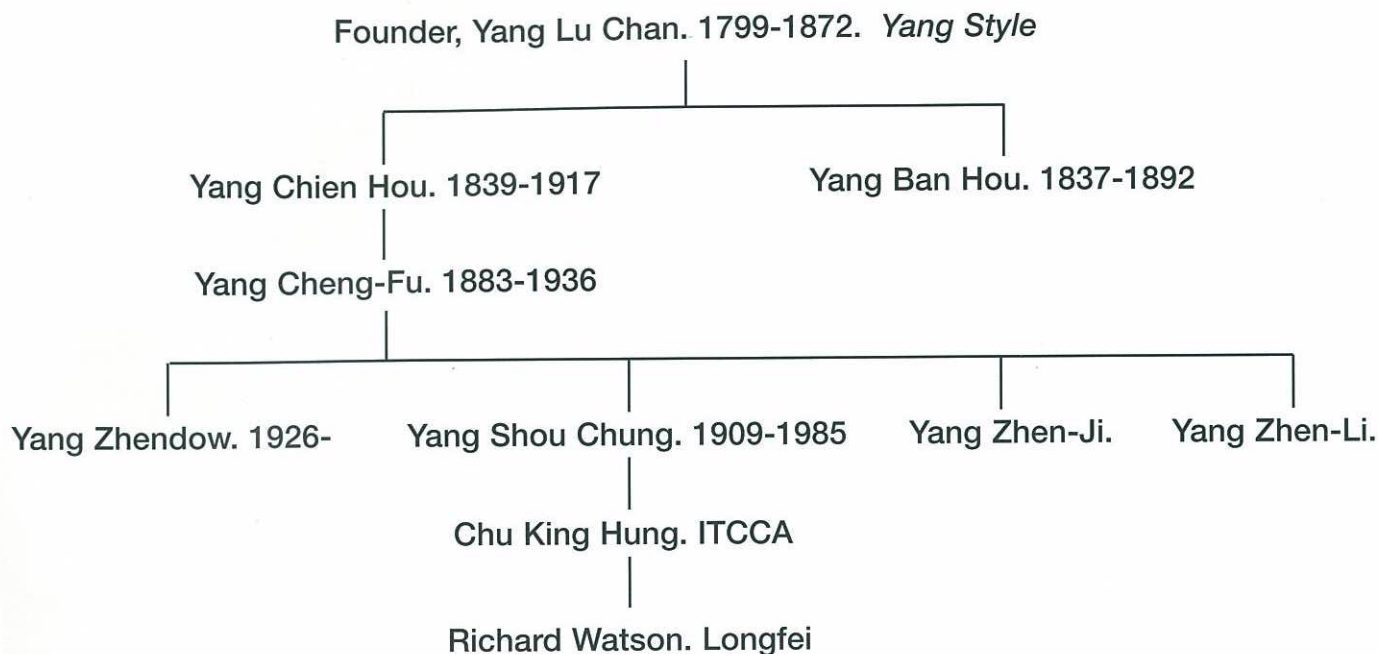
The following year, 1990, was the year for the Eleventh Asian Games and Beijing was to be host for the first time. Tickets for the opening ceremony would have been at a very high premium but thanks to Professor Li they were made available for my father and myself. So I was to get my first taste of China on a great occasion, practice Taijiquan and have our appetites whetted for Taijiquan competitions. This has been successfully noted both in the UK and Europe, but on the world stage of course, it's a veritable mountain to climb. Whilst competition and modern Taijiquan was a departure from the traditional direction of Dick's training, he feels they are complimentary and to some extent the best of both worlds.

During 1980-90 Master Dong Zenchen made many visits to the UK. Dick attended many seminars by Dong and his son Alocs. In this period he learned the Dong family's Yang Style routine, the Fast Form and Push Hands drills. Master Dong Zenchen is the third major Taiji influence on Dick's training, the other two previously mentioned being Master Chu King Hung and Professor Li Deyin. He has studied briefly with many experts visiting the UK and worked with others in the Far East.

Lastly, but by no means the least I must mention Master Wang Yanji who visits the Longfei School several times a year and from whom we learn to hopefully fine hone our Push Hand Skills and applications. His own school in Sweden is named after Master Li Tianji with whom Wang was a dedicated student. In a later issue of our newsletter we hope to present a biographical introduction to Master Wang's background.

To be continued in the next issue.

Yang Family Tree showing Longfei connections



These family trees are simplified to show the connections with the Yang and Sun Styles of Taijiquan. There are, or have been, many important Taiji teachers and personages arising from these family trees that are not mentioned here.

An Introduction to Taijiquan Teaching Materials and Competition Rules

Part 2

Concluding part of a lecture at the Wuhan International Taijiquan and Taijijian Display and Exchange Meeting, Wuhan, China, April 1984.

By distinguished Taijiquan expert Li Tianji.

A Brief Introduction to Practising Taiji Sword

Taiji Sword is one of the forms of Wushu loved best by the public, and was created and developed on the basis of Taijiquan. Its movements are gentle and harmonious, and its sword strokes clear, and it differs from other sword styles in its sequence and structure and in the degree of strenuousness.

It is a suitable choice for practice by people of different ages and physical conditions and of both sexes. With the present widening spread of Taijiquan, more and more people in this country are also practising Taiji Sword. Each style of Taijiquan has its own particular character, and there are differences between the sword styles too. But a feature common to them all is their concentration on suppleness, but with strength in suppleness, without added jumps or elaborate strokes.

The 32-form Taiji Sword prepared and published in 1958 by the National Sports Council, was put together by selection and rearrangement on the basis of the old sequences. Because of its simplicity and ease of practise, it has become popular with the public at large. This Taiji Sword sequence is divided into four sections, and from start to finish goes back and forth just twice.

The direction and sequence are clearly defined, it is easy to teach and to learn, convenient for both indi-

vidual and group practice, and particularly suitable for beginners. If one gets a grounding by means of this sword sequence, then later practising other 'Taiji Sword' or 'Taiji Sword for 2 people' sequences will be easier. If one practises Taiji Sword constantly, it will not only help improve one's skill in Taijiquan, but can also increase the suppleness and coordination of all parts of the body, and promote physical health.

Practising Taiji Sword body movement and steps.

Taiji Sword body movements and steps are practised in basically the same style as in Taijiquan, except that the speed should be a little more flexible, as all kinds of sword strokes are included. Attention should be paid to the attacking and defensive implications of different strokes, eg: chǒu, pì, Liáo, diǎn, cì, etc.

Left Hand

When practising Taiji Sword, apart from the sword strokes, body action and steps, the coordination of the left hand, in 'sword fingers' position is very important. On the one hand it helps to transmit power to the point of the sword and to keep the body in balance, and on the other it can lend harmony and grace to the movements. If the left hand is not used properly, the movements are bound to be fragmented and disjointed. In every move and form in Taiji Sword, attention

should be paid to the starting point, finishing point, and correct positioning of the left hand, otherwise the movements will appear disjointed and awkward, and the effectiveness of the training will thus be reduced.

Eyes

When practising Taiji Sword, the coordination of the eyes is also most important. Although the movements are gentle, there can be no laxness of concentration. The eyes and the sword should be directed towards the same spot, and one should aim to make “the sword and the mind combine as one.”

When starting to practise Taiji Sword, it is essential to master the basics, for if the basic skills are not mastered, then the movements will be uncoordinated and unsteady. If body and sword are not together, then the benefit obtained will not be very great. If one can learn Taijiquan before learning Taiji Sword, and then afterwards go on to study ‘Taiji Sword for 2 people,’ the results will be much better, for bare-hands work is the basis of weapons play, as weapons play is an extension of the art of boxing.

There are two main aspects to mastering the basic skills. Firstly, pay attention to training the body. The actions of the body, legs, and eyes must be mastered and also the movements and coordination of the free hand.

Through basic exercises to stretch the leg muscles and loosen the waist, one can gradually increase the strength of the lower limbs, and improve the body’s qualities of suppleness, agility, and stamina. Each movement and form requires full concentration and attention to detail, and every effort should be made to get the forms correct and the movements full, the steps steady and the body lithe.

Sword Strokes

Secondly, pay attention to practising the sword strokes. The sword strokes are the ways of using the sword for attack and defence. The strokes making up each sword sequence differ according to the different content and style of the various swordplay sequences.

Some sets of swordplay use more cutting and slashing strokes, others use more thrusts, lunges and the like; for instance, there used to be a “Wudang Taiji Sword for 2 people” which used thirteen different kinds of stroke: chōu, dai tí, gé, jì, cì, diǎn, bēng, jiāo, yǎ, pǐ, jié and xī.

But whatever strokes are used, when learning we must understand the sword action required for each movement; be clear as to the path the sword should follow, the point where power should be applied (i.e. whether using the edge or the tip of the sword), and the coordination of the free hand; and get the movements integrated with the sword strokes. This way, it is not only easier to remember the movements, but also to grasp their essential features and to get them correct and in harmony.

If one is practising Taiji Sword with a partner, both people should study regularly and coordinate thoroughly with each other, according to the requirements of “softness can defeat strength,” and of avoiding the opponent’s strength and attacking his weakness, to produce an intense and lifelike performance.

Both the above points require us to first acquire a solid mastery of the basic movements, and then through repeated practice, to integrate the actions of the hands, body, legs and eyes intimately with the sword strokes, to the point where “body and sword are one” and “sword and mind are one,” so that whether one is wielding the sword to left or right, cutting and slashing up or down, it can all be accurate and coordinated, nimble but steady, and in complete control, so as to combine body, sword and mind into a unified whole, and give the movements harmony and grace.

For the Taiji Sword performances at this meeting, five criteria have been set for awarding points:

These are:

- (1) suppleness (róu)
- (2) correct movement (fā)
- (3) use of strength (jìn)
- (4) expression (shén)
- (5) speed (sù).

All who conform to these requirements will be awarded full marks.

This time we are mainly concerned with exchanging experience.

What I have said has been very superficial, and is just for the information of our friends from every country when they come to perform.

**This concludes the second and final part of
the Li Tianji lecture.**

Classic Corner



Internal Force The Complete Chin

The *chin* of the (whole) body, through practice becomes one unit. Distinguish clearly between substantial and insubstantial. To *fa chin* (discharge) it is necessary to have root. The *chin* starts from the foot, is commanded by the waist, and manifested in the fingers, and discharged through the spine and back.

One must completely raise the spirit (pay attention) at the moment when the opponent's *chin* is just about to manifest, but has not yet been released. My *chin* has then already met his (*chin*), not late, not early. It is like using a leather (tinder) to start a fire, or like a fountain gushing forth. (In) going forward or stepping back, there is not even the slightest disorder. In the curve seek the straight, store, then discharge; then you are able to follow your hands and achieve a beneficial result. This is called borrowing force to strike the opponent or using four ounces to deflect a thousand pounds.

A brief guide to Qigong Practice

Part 1

A Personal Understanding, by Dick Watson

Many newcomers to Taijiquan, Qigong and Daoyin are overwhelmed by the subject matter and many questions arise as to the relationship between the three titles. Historical records suggest that Qigong has a background that can be traced to antiquity. As a prophylactic system of self cultivation, Daoyin systems probably grew originally from a village or family source, hence we hear there are indeed many thousands of methods and schools of health maintenance and disease prevention.

The study of Qigong is made difficult as it has enjoyed varying degrees of popularity in recent years. During the earlier part of this century the occupation of Chinese territory by colonial expansion saw the Chinese intelligensia adopting all things Western as a way forward to industrial and political influence. At this point in history the cultural development and philosophy took a backward step. After the establishment of China's first republic (Sun Yat-Sen) in 1912, and the ending of the old empire the disintegration of China, far from coming to a halt merely gathered momentum. The forming of the Kuomintang (the people's party) by Sun Yat-Sen, signified his disenchantment with all things Western and the turning of his back on his erstwhile supporters from the middle classes.

At the time of Sun Yat-Sen's death, China's cultural heritage was slowly disappearing, as the disintegration of China's mandarin-based society took place. By the 1920s Chinese thought was feeling the religious urge we all experience in times of chaos and stress. A need to re-examine the past arose – could a new interpretation of past metaphysical systems, Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism awaken China's religious instincts. That the culture of the past still had a magnetic appeal for many Chinese looking for stability in their society is signified by the fact that the constitution of the "Republic of China" proclaimed in 1917 that "Confucius was to be held in reverence."

During the cultural turmoil of the 1920's all the famous lines of Western philosophy were examined for solutions although coloured with suspicion and feelings of love hate for everything spawned by the accident. The disenchantment with the West and its loss of prestige was to some extent pronounced by the upheavals of World War One.

The vacuum provided by the lack of direction was to be filled by events of World War One and the October Revolution. The concepts of Western democracy were put aside as was its political imperialism and its scientific power structure. The communism of Lenin was to be the spark to an explosion of xenophobia and nationalism. An alliance eventually developed with the communists and the ruling Koumintang took place until growing anxiety and anti-communist feelings culminated with the

coup of March 1926. Chiang Kai-Shek asserted his full control of the Koumintang and removed the communists from all positions of influence. This was to be the prelude to bring to an end the persuasion of all Marxist, Lenin doctrine, within the Koumintang. The seemingly downcast communists were far from downcast or finished. Following the long march and Mao's climb to supremacy there followed the formation of the so-called Soviet China. By the late 1920s the Koumintang and Chinese Soviets with different agendas, the Koumintang controlling the field armies, the communists, the behind the line guerrilla warfare. On the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese war 1937-1945, these formidable forces joined in harness and were to bring victory to China.

The war had reduced the powers of the Koumintang within itself, whereas the communists working in northern China gained greater control over several hundred million Chinese. The European war had reduced the West's influence on Chinese affairs. Japan's unconditional surrender and loss of military might, power and influence created a tremendous vacuum. A vacuum that could not be filled by the previous colonial powers of Europe. While Japan lost their own war they nevertheless won it for colonised Asia. By the end of World War Two the communist influence had grown; undoubtedly the Russian help had been most effective.

At this stage the Russians had no idea of their real strength. As the strategic advantage moved to the communists the writing was on the wall for the nationalist armies of the Koumintang led by Chiang Kai-Shek. From the end of 1946 the gradual decimation of China's social fabric proceeded at an alarming pace wherever the communists continued in power.

The history of the communist rule in China since 1949 is well recorded. As soon as they gained government the party's activity shifted from the countryside to the cities. The country folk whose discontent was a major force in bringing the communists to power were to be relegated to the second division.

The purpose of this brief excursion into the 20th century turmoil in China is the realisation of the difficulties experienced by the developers of modern Qigong. At almost every throw of the political dice there would be vibrations affecting the growth of a scientific approach to investigating and finding acceptance of Qigong methods.

It's a strange contradiction that it is the communists who have sown the seeds of logical and scientific examination of Qigong and related subjects. It would appear also, that they are determined to uncover sharp practice, expose charlatans, eliminate myth and mystery surrounding what they consider a part of traditional Chinese medicine.

*The second part of this article will be continued
in the next issue.*