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## **The Master Key to Tai Chi Chuan Part One**

by Jou, Tsung Hwa

### **Editor's Notes:**

A somewhat simplified and abbreviated version of this article was published by Master Jou in the introductory issue of the Tai Chi Farm Newsletter January 1986. Master Jou explained the concepts to Jay Dunbar who wrote the ideas in English. The Tai Chi Institute of Taiwan saw the article, and they translated it into Chinese for their newsletter. When Master Jou read their Chinese translation, he wanted to add revisions to perfect the article and to rewrite in Chinese hoping everyone would understand the definition of Tai Chi Chuan. The revised article was published in the February 1987 edition of the Wudang Magazine in China. Once Master T.T. Liang read that article, he greatly admired it, and thought it would become a Tai Chi historic document. Master T.T. Liang translated it into English again, adding a different flavor and style, and honoring Master Jou. His translation was further edited by Paul Galagher, and presented to Master Jou in a very attractive book complete with a picture of Chang San Feng drawn by Master Liang. Master Jou asked Mark Bassell to review the writing and make the English smoother, helping to make it easier for Westerners to understand.

There is a Master Key to Tai Chi Chuan. It very clearly defines what the basic skills are, and it very clearly outlines the path which must be taken towards acquiring SUPREME UNIVERSAL FIST, better known under the generic term Tai Chi Chuan, or Grand Ultimate Fist. This Chinese Internal Technology, or "information" must be internalized emotionally, mentally, and spiritually, as above merely physically. Once this totality is available to an individual, if there is the willingness to practice ceaselessly, all the postures will then be mastered and we will come to an understanding of the interception of energy, or TONG CHING. We will finally be able to master an opponent without recourse to contesting their energy, but by being able to utilize it through redirection, and as is sometimes said "lead it into emptiness."

It is possible to exemplify a great many of the Classical Teachings without mastering TONG CHING, and without mastering Tai Chi Chuan. For example, let's examine a very well know saying: "A light and nimble energy should be preserved on the top of the head. The lowest vertebrae should be plumb erect. The shoulders should be sunken, and also the elbows. The thighs should be well seated with the waist relaxed, etc." All this can be done without achieving anything except a very external mastery of form and body alignment. Without TONG CHING it will never become a truly Internal Art. "The Song of The Substance and Function of The Thirteen Postures," states this quite explicitly: "if you don't investigate and examine these Principles carefully, then you will waste your time and your effort, and the quality of your practice will give you cause for remorse."

This universal set of principles which is herein being expostulated is the Master Key to Tai Chi Chuan. It does not belong to any one style or branch of Tai Chi Chuan. On the contrary it is what distinguishes Tai Chi from other Martial Arts. All of the styles of Tai Chi adhere to the very same principles, what we call The Master Key. Let us make an analogy: The branches and styles of Tai Chi can be compared to the different rooms in a Hotel. Each room has its own individual Key which differs in appearance from the others, and in a particular Lock only one particular Key will serve to activate it. So what would happen if each of the guests began to think that their Key was the

only valid Key in the entire Hotel? Certainly a problem has arisen because the external appearance of each Key really does differ, and the way it functions is in conformity to this difference. And in the same vein what happens if further, following this error, each guest begins to boast about his own Key, praising the Locksmith who made it, and criticizing the Keys and Locks of the other Guests, extending his criticism to the Grandparents of the Locksmith who made them?

This is the sort of thing that is happening among the many Teachers of Tai Chi Chuan, many of whom have made comments such as: "What I have learned is the authentic, and orthodox Tai Chi Chuan. Everything else that I see which is called Tai Chi Chuan is not real Tai Chi Chuan at all!" This is a very standard Litany from these types of Teachers. And they might pay extravagant attention to the external appearance of their key, polishing it, and hanging it on a chain of precious metals, carefully calculating the position of the feet, and the form of the hands, finding all forms of external and internal geometries, the bending and the stretching of the fingers and the palms, and causing our unified Tai Chi Hotel to degenerate into a ghetto of individually owned Tai Chi condominiums, with extensive legal disputes, and Title problems.

The management of the Hotel has a Master Key which can open all these tightly shut doors to all these separate domiciles. The form of the teeth on this key, however similar to the individual Keys, is designed to make all the Locks function. The complex is thus transmuted into the simple, the decayed into the regenerated, and an ordinary pain in the neck into the miraculous. This will then determine which among these differing "styles" have the superior techniques, and which among these "complexes" is in need of an adept interior re-decorator, who will further refine and illuminate the differences between Tai Chi Chuan and the other Martial arts.

We have been abstractly talking about the essential principles, The Master Key, in a simple way. the Master Key IS simple. It is so simple that many fellow practitioners of the Martial Arts laugh when they hear of it. "If one didn't laugh it wouldn't be Tao." Other people may think that it's a profound truth, but not apply it in their daily life through practice. Only a few people will really get

it on and practice a lot. Because of this LI YI YU said despondently: "Only a few Masters of Tai Chi Chuan can exist in any one generation." If this is really true then what is the use of all of this diligent practice? Since I did not create the Master Key, but have only tried to shine it up a little, and make it available to a different people, I will not use my own words, or thoughts, to explain it. I must extract the correct approach and description from the Tai Chi Classics, as written by its best masters. I must emphasize this approach so that students can acquire a knowledge little removed from the original, and that these students, who are unclear, can follow a straight and narrow approach which is simple, without being distracted by external flash. These students will then proceed into the Tai Chi antechamber and be able to use this Master Key to access the thousand doors and the ten thousand rooms of Tai Chi Chuan, and ascend up the spiral staircase directly into the inner chamber. Pay very close attention to what follows!

During the T'ang Dynasty there was a man named Hsu Hsuan P'ing who lived in seclusion on the Ch'eng Yang Mountain of Anhwei Province. He had extremely long hair, and a beard which flowed to his knees, and when he ran he looked like a galloping horse. Many times we used to see him carrying firewood on his back to the marketplace for sale. He used to chant this song to himself: "Carrying firewood for morning sale  
Returning home evenings with bartered wine  
How many have asked from whence I came  
Over the unmapped Mountains and  
Through the Clouds."

The Tai Chi techniques he transmitted were later taught by Yu Huan Tze and were called the 37 postures. With the hands enscribing the Trigrams and the feet transmuting weight through the 5 Elements. These Principles are based on the I-Ching.

During the Liang Dynasty Cheng Ling Hsi wrote about Tai Chi Chuan. Master Cheng was a native of the Hui Ning District of the Hui Chou prefecture of Kiang Man and was a disciple of Han Kung Yueh. He called his Art Hsiao Chiu T'ien. His book was named: "Looking at the Classics and apprehending the Way." In it he said: "If you want to master the art of Tai Chi Chuan you must thoroughly comprehend the theory on which the

I-Ching is based. You must mentally rehearse day and night and you must be able to express this mental understanding in physical movement. It is not the type of movement which can be contained in a form or a posture, or a series of forms and postures. It's fundamental nature is that it does not allow itself to be filled up and frozen but remains empty and elastic. It is not widely known. Only I have been able to fully comprehend it."

These two traditional Chinese stories are to be considered among the earliest explanations of The Master Key.

Chang San Feng, who lived in the 14th Century was thoroughly versed in Shaolin Boxing. By applying the Master Key he opened the Door into Internal Style Boxing. In the famous document, "The Tai Chi Chuan Classics," he said that Ch'ang Ch'uan, Long Boxing, an early name for Tai Chi Chuan, can be compared to an unending river, or to the Ocean. The Thirteen Postures are: 1.) Ward-off, 2.) Roll-back, 3.) Press, 4.) Push, 5.) Pull, 6.) Split, 7.) Shoulder-strike, and 8.) Elbow. These first 8 postures are related to the 8 Trigrams. Then there is 9.) Advance, 10.) Retreat, 11.) Move right, 12.) Move left, and 13.) Central Equilibrium, which relate to the 5 Elements.

Ward-off, (Peng) the symbol of which is Heaven, (Ch'ien). Roll-back, (Kun), Press, (K'an), and Push, (Li), are called the 4 Directions. Roll-back, (Sun), Split, (Chen), Elbow Strike, (Tui), and Shoulder-strike, (Ken), are called the 4 Corners. In terms of the transmutation of The Elements 1.) Forward corresponds to the element of Metal. 2.) Retreat corresponds to Wood. 3.) Look to the Left corresponds to Water 4.) Look to the Right to Fire, and 5.) Central Equilibrium corresponds to the Element Earth.

These general ideas sketch the skeleton of The Master Key of Tai Chi Chuan. Among serious practitioner Chang San Feng is still revered as the Grandmaster and Founder of the Art. We regard this as an accurate and scientific description of the origination of Tai Chi Chuan and do not look favorably on modern "revisionists" who have written otherwise. They use their "research" of Tai Chi Chuan, with no personal understanding of the art, taking passages out of context and delib-

erately misinterpreting them. This type of writing truly slanders the ancient Masters of Tai Chi Chuan.

By 1970 I had been studying Tai Chi Chuan for a short time. I met Professor Cheng Man Ching's favorite student, Chi Chiang Tao, in the Yung Ho Junior High School for a practice session. He told me that Professor Cheng stressed that while practicing that one's hands should embrace the 8 Trigrams. But since Mr. Chi wasn't familiar with the I-Ching this statement had no real relevance for him. Since he knew that I was an Instructor of Mathematics, and was also interested in the Ching, he asked me if I could interpret this from a scientific standpoint. My response to this was that since my own interest in Tai Chi was of such recent duration, that the relation of the 8 Trigrams to the hands was unclear to me. I quoted Mr. Chi a Chinese Proverb: "He who has tied the bell on the Tiger's neck must be the same person who must loosen it." and further suggested that he approach Master Cheng and request clarification. Mr. Chi replied: "I have asked him repeatedly and his answer has been the same!" — "Even if I explained it to you you would not be able to grasp all of it."

Since then there has been a lot of water under the bridge, and 15 years have flown away. "The High Heavens will not shun someone with an indomitable will." I have grasped the inner meaning of "The hands should embrace the 8 Trigrams." Now I will try to share this understanding with all and sundry. Incidentally Mr. Chi is still alive and practicing his Tai Chi Chuan in Vancouver, Canada. He is elderly and infirm but he will not forsake his practice.

Tracing the history of Tai Chi Chuan from the time of Chang San Feng to the present, one thing which really stands out is that the principles of the Master Key can transform any style of Boxing into Tai Chi Chuan. In relationship to the establishment of the Chen Family Tai Chi there is an oral teaching: "Once while Tai Chi Master Chiang Fa, (who in some variants of this story is known as Wang Tsung Yueh.), was passing through the Chen Chia Kou Village in Honan Province saw the villagers practicing their own distinctive, traditional, family-style Kung Fu in the Courtyard. He stopped to observe them. When they began sparring he could no longer contain himself, and

burst out laughing. Realizing that his lack of discretion would not have a tendency to make friends and influence people he turned away to leave. The Chen Clan, being highly insulted by this rude intrusion sent 4 of their most skilled Fighters after him to inquire into the particulars of his amusement. As his explanation met with their liking even less that the laughter, immediately they began to fight. First individually and then collectively, Master Chiang Fa dealt with this quartet so handily that the rest of the Villagers begged him to remain, so that he could teach everyone this awesome "soft boxing." Master Chiang acquiesced and this is the origin of the establishment of Chen style Tai Chi Chuan.

Although this is a traditional Chinese story, if we carefully investigate the Second Routine, the Pao Tui or Cannon Fist, of the Chen style, we find that is based on the 32 Postures of the Boxing Classic, the Chi Hsia New Book, written by Chi Kung Kuang, and incorporating a Shaolin Form of the same name, PaoTui, and a related form, The Ta Hung Tui. Without a breakthrough it would have been impossible to arrive at Chen Style, as it is practiced today, from these two forms. The First Set serves to mobilize energy and promote flexibility, while the Second Set trains to issue energy and develop mobility. If one can master both of these sets it will be sufficient to overcome a Shaolin trained opponent. A student who is willing to spend three to five years of strenuous effort in mastering these forms will personally now that the claims of superiority for this system are not false.

(In the next issue this article will be concluded. There will be much more specific detail about "8 Trigrams in the Hands," and "Five Elements in the Feet." Do not miss it!) ■

## **Important Announcement**

### **Chang Sang Feng Festival**

The 17th annual Chang San Feng Festival will be held on June 2, 3, and 4, 1989. This is an advance ahead to attend this special event. This weekend is a time of learning and exchange for Tai Chi students and instructors from all over the U.S. and Canada. It is also time for all Tai Chi players to

show respect for the founder of Tai Chi Chuan, Chang San Feng. A ceremony in his honor will be held on Sunday afternoon (June 4) followed by demonstrations of Tai Chi.

A current trend among Tai Chi players is an interest in participation in forms competition and push-hands tournaments. The intent of the Tai Chi Farm has always been to encourage cooperation and open-mindedness for the benefit of spreading the practice of Tai Chi. In consideration of this, another feature of the festival will be a "No-Lose Competition." How is this possible? This competition is intended to be open-minded and educational. Anyone can enter, and participants will have the opportunity to be judges, too. The intent is to familiarize Tai Chi players with the rules of competition, and to help individuals make improvements. Some participants may use this as a practice session before joining other competitions; others may use it as an opportunity for receiving constructive criticism to enhance their personal development; and still others may use this to gain experience in judging competitions. Everybody wins and nobody loses!

The festival has become a reunion to gather Tai Chi players together with an opportunity to meet the Masters and learn from each other. This year we expect visiting Masters of Taiwan. If you have an interest in demonstrating or leading workshops for the Festival or if you would like to contribute help or suggestions, please contact the Tai Chi Farm address to "Attention: Chang San Feng Festival."

Watch for further information, including schedules and registration, in the March newsletter!

### **Tai Chi Tour**

There will be a Tai Chi Tour of China this year, on the condition that at least 10 people are committed to go. (This allows for cheaper group rates.) The tour is planned for October and will last 20 days. Approximate cost will be \$3,000. Anyone who is interested should notify the Tai Chi Farm no later than March 15th, 1989. ■

## **Workshops**

### **The Master Key to Tai Chi Chuan**

Instructed by Master Jou, Tsung Hwa. The course will be held June 16 -18 and July 14 -16. He will teach the "Silk Reeling" exercises, which express the 8 trigrams in the hands, and the "Power Released" exercises, the "Fa Chin," which express the 5 elements in the legs. This will relate to all styles of Tai Chi Chuan. They are the key to open the door to improvement in all aspects of your internal practice.

### **The First Chen Routine**

This course will run June 19 - 24. The first routine expresses many techniques associated with external styles in a more flexible and internal manner. The form expresses the Chan Ssu Chin, or silk cocoon energy, and promotes flexibility and strength, in the abdomen and lower body especially. This is a good form for serious Tai Chi students to learn for developing energy and applying the master key. The entire form will be taught during this intensive.

### **Pao Tui or the Second Chen Routine**

This course will be held July 17 - 21. Pao Tui is an important bridge between the first Chen Routine and hard external martial art. It emphasizes internal energy, used to burst or Fa Chin. All hard style players want to change their strength to internal energy, or Tai Chi players feel lacking internal power. All have to learn Pao Tui.

### **Master T.T. Liang will be Here Again!**

The highlight of the summer program will once again be the appearance of the dynamic and ever youthful T. T. Liang. This is scheduled for August 7 - 11. We are once again pleased and honored that the oldest living master of Tai Chi in the United States will instruct a week of Push Hands, Yang Long Form, Weapons forms, and Taoist Philosophy. Master Liang, who is a very flexible 89 years old, will astound you with his vitality, imagination, and informative teaching. Do not miss this one! ■

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by Jou, Tsung Hwa

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