

Tai Chi
Chuan

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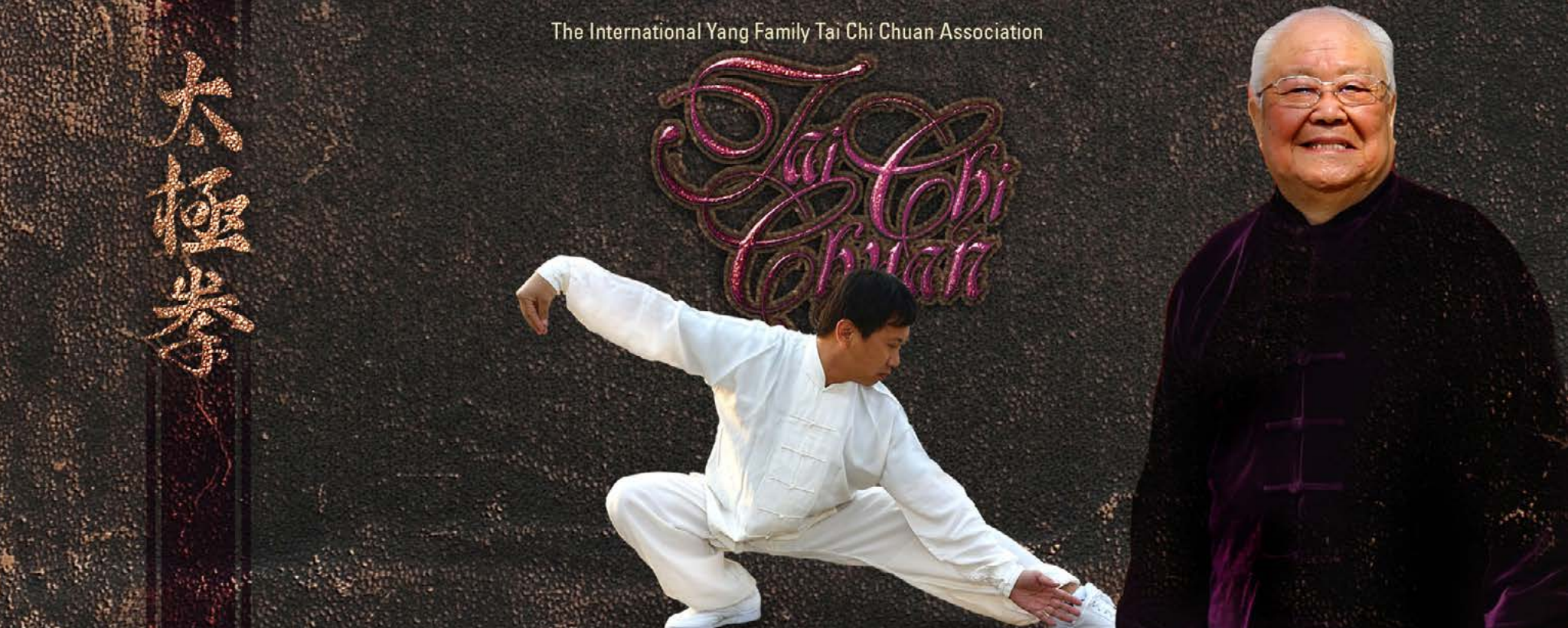
Spring - Summer
2015

國際楊氏太極拳協會雜誌

Journal of the International Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan Association

The Learning

BRAIN



All Tai Chi Chuan enthusiasts are invited to submit articles, letters, and pictures for publication. Both critical and complimentary letters concerning the form and content of this journal are welcome. Please send correspondence in electronic format to: editor@yangfamilytaichi.com

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The International Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan Association is a non-profit organization dedicated to the advancement of Traditional Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan.

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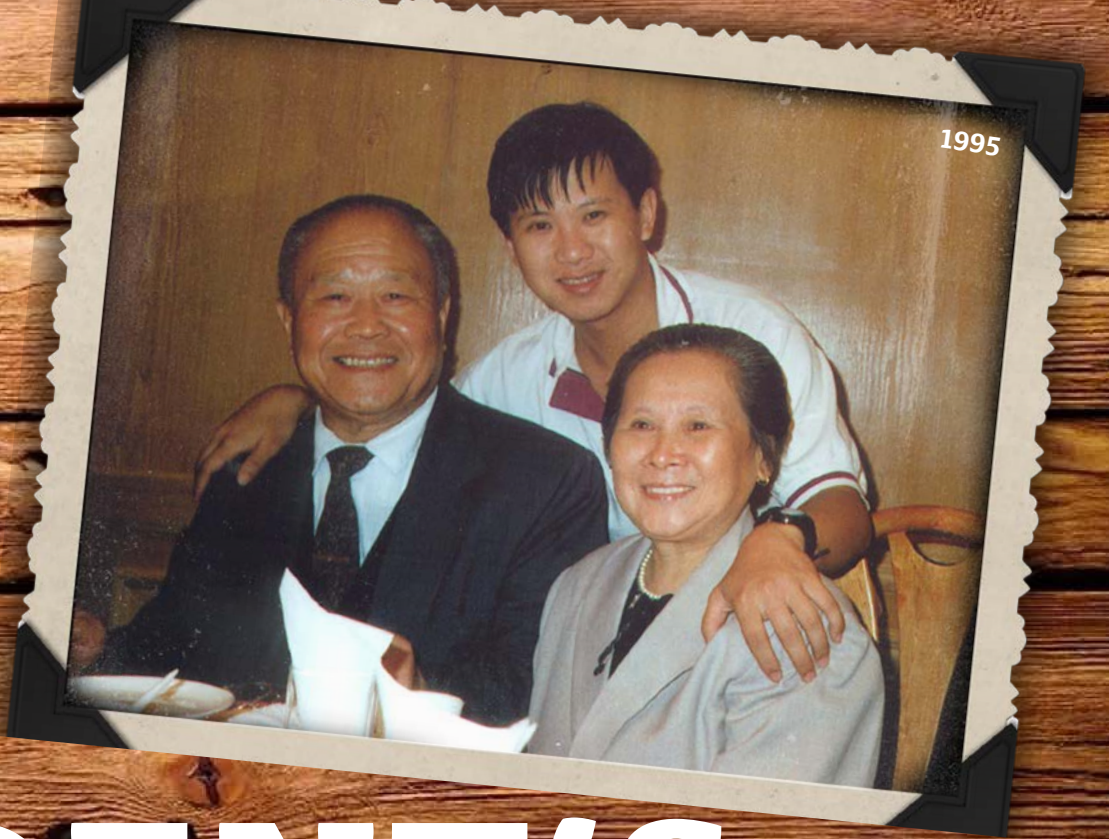
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Tai Chi Chuan

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PRESIDENT'S LETTER

YANG JUN, President

Transcribed by Carolyn Fung

Dear Member, our Association has planned an exciting trip to China this summer. This 2015 China trip will include the special celebration of my grandfather **Yang Zhenduo's 90th birthday**. I would like to share with you how very important my grandparents have always been to my life. From the time I was only 3 months old, I lived with and was nurtured by my grandparents. This was during the time of the Cultural Revolution in China. My parents were unable to take care of me so my grandparents raised me. I lived with them my whole life until I was married. Without their support, I may not have survived this younger time of my life.




Yang Jun
President

It was my grandfather who introduced me to Tai Chi Chuan. When I was 5 years old, he started training me. He taught me, guided me, cared for me and eventually led me into assisting him as he taught internationally which also gave me the opportunity to begin teaching. Without his leadership, I might not be teaching Tai Chi Chuan today. Most importantly, my grandfather was a wonderful role model for me in life and especially in the area of personal character development. Even today, he is still my role model and I often ask myself "What would my grandfather do?" when I am in some situations.

So you can see that he has played a very important role in my life and greatly influenced me both personally and professionally. I am very fortunate that both my grandparents took care of me when I was younger. I am very thankful for their love, support, and guidance. I wish them health and a long life with many more years to come. This would be good fortune for me, our family, and the **International Yang Family Tai Chi Chuan Association**.





Also on our China trip, I am excited to bring this year's travelers to visit two legendary places: Shaolin Temple and our family's hometown of Guangfu. In Chinese martial arts, we have a saying that every kind of martial arts in China has some kind of connection to Shaolin. It is a legendary place for Chinese Wushu. Also, Guangfu Town in Yongnian County is our family's hometown and the birthplace of two Tai Chi Chuan styles: Yang and Wu (Hao). The spread of Yang style Tai Chi Chuan across the world started from Guangfu Town. Just as the Shaolin Temple is the root of Chinese Wushu, Guangfu Town is the root of Yang style Tai Chi Chuan. Today, thanks to government support and promotion, Guangfu Town is very different from 15 years ago. The town's wall has been restored. There is a beautiful bridge over the water. Yang Luchan's house and the Wu family's house have been restored. Construction of the Yang Family tombs in the Yang Family Memorial Park has also been completed. I am honored to bring everyone to visit our hometown and the park. I am looking forward to this trip and hope you will join us.

I would also like to share a few new changes in our Association. First, the USA branch of our Tai Chi Chuan Teachers' Academy was established this year. The Teacher's Academy was first established in Italy, then Brazil, and then France. The USA branch will have two divisions: an East Coast and a West Coast national headquarters. We have created the organizational structures for running these two divisions. They will coordinate activities with the Division of Education, planning the running of the Teacher's Academy in the USA. The goal is to train high-level instructors. We will provide the instructors' course through our academy and also instructors' events for the USA.

Second, we received feedback on our electronic journal and found that most readers read the journal on their tablets. So in addition to a PDF format, we will also be using the ePub format which is tablet-friendly. Hopefully people will like this improvement. Having an electronic journal saves the Association money and makes possible a better journal that is more interactive with our members. We know there are areas we could improve and we are always open to members' suggestions for improving the journal.

Finally, Pat Rice will be leaving the position of head of the Judges & Ranking Department. Pat has held this position for 3 years (2012-2015) and has done an excellent job organizing and running this department. She helped the Association create the Judges & Ranking Handbook. A judge's registry was created and the organization and efficiency of the ranking system was improved. Starting May 1, Pam Boyde will be the new department head. I am confident that she will be successful in her new position. Pat will continue to assist our Association as an advisor and committee member.

The Association and I greatly appreciate her dedication and valuable contributions. 

楊華

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

DAVE BARRETT

Editor



Grandmaster Yang Zhenduo is fond of pointing out that Taijiquan is a multi-purpose exercise. It can be for some a highly sophisticated martial art. For others, it provides an oasis of calm, a respite from the many “**slings and arrows of outrageous fortune**”. It provides strategies and methods for improving our ability to regain and maintain equilibrium: both physical and emotional.

We are beginning to explore how Taijiquan nourishes both the structural and functional health of the brain. Daniel Shulz, M. Sc., PhD., is Director of Research, Laboratory of Sensory Processing and Plasticity at the National Center for Scientific Research in France. He is in a unique position to carry this work forward. As a researcher and coordinator of NeuroFRAMES, an international research network, he has his fingertips on the pulse of developments in Neuroscience.

We are fortunate that he is also a dedicated student of Taijiquan. He has contributed the first of three articles on “The Learning Brain”. This first installment lays out the basic process of acquiring motor skills, along with definitions of fundamental concepts in the language of Neuroscience.



LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



The next installment will focus on specific brain mechanisms that enhance the learning process. The third article will examine how the sense of touch has an intimate interaction with the generation of movement. The ability that we have to anticipate and react to external situations will be explored using push hands as the example.


Our goal in presenting this series is to provide a deeper understanding of how our practice improves brain health, along with informed strategies for learning, practicing, and teaching Taijiquan.

Dr. Karen Grantz, Psy.D, in her keynote address at the Symposium in Louisville, reported on increasing interest among the counseling community in using Taijiquan as an intervention in mental health treatment. She pointed out that Taijiquan helps us to adapt to stressors by providing a platform of skill sets for maintaining emotional equilibrium.

The focused engagement of physical action and mental process opens the entire stress response mechanism to positive change. Active mindfulness, it turns out, promotes improvements in multiple areas affecting emotional resiliency: physical, cognitive, emotional, and energetic.

The concentration and absorption in challenging but manageable activities can alleviate the pressures of inner dialogue and offer a positive way to disrupt negative mood cycles.

If this is all very technical, forgive me Gentle Reader. I'd like you to consider how you would deal with a catastrophic loss. How might you balance that with a life-changing gain?

Mihai Serban, from Romania, tells us his story. I leave it to you to draw your own conclusions. Here are mine: establishing equilibrium, achieving and maintaining balance, deflecting pressures and changing a negative situation to a positive outcome are hallmarks of our practice. 

A link between the brain mechanisms underlying motor learning as described by modern Neuroscience and strategies for learning, practicing and teaching Taijiquan.

THE LEARNING BRAIN



DANIEL E. SHULZ, M.SC., PH.D. © 2015

*Director of Research at the French National
Scientific Research Center (CNRS)*





THE LEARNING BRAIN

Movement is vital for all living creatures. Evolution has gifted us with an exquisite brain mechanism for not only producing movement but for detecting movement as well. The brain is an active receiver of external stimuli, which produce a rich percept. This perception attributes qualities to the moving objects in the outside world and makes critical predictions of what these objects are and how they might behave. Our survival depends on these skills.

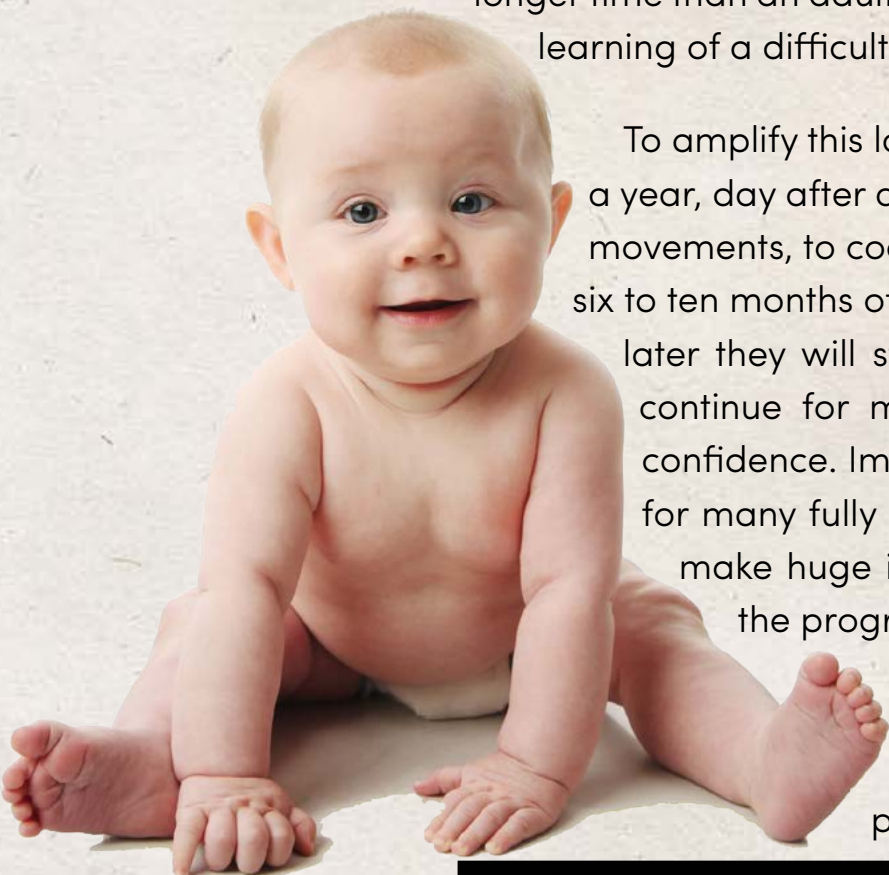
Perceiving movement is not a fully inherited function of the brain but is learned during a short post-natal period of the baby's life. That process involves changes in the brain's neuronal connectivity and functioning through plasticity mechanisms that modern neuroscience has studied for decades. Non-invasive scanning technologies have allowed us to focus with precision on these structural changes as the learning brain develops.

Let's examine a popular idea that infants and young children accomplish motor learning better, faster and with less effort than adults. The good news for us as adults is that, as it turns out, we are not that bad at learning new motor actions.

Taijiquan practitioners that start practicing early in life have a greater chance of reaching higher levels of performance than those starting as adults. On its face, this assertion seems to make common sense. However, let's explore if this is always true. First, it is clear that individuals have different predispositions to martial arts so that one young person will reach higher levels than another, even if both practice hard every day. Second, a young practitioner will not only start practicing early in life but he will practice for a longer time than an adult that starts late and who has less time and energy to put into the learning of a difficult series of "complicated" movements.

To amplify this last point, let's consider a baby child learning to walk. For almost a year, day after day and many hours a day they will practice how to control their movements, to coordinate legs and arms and to control the body's balance. After six to ten months of intense practice, they will start to crawl and only a few months later they will stand up on two legs and walk. The learning process will still continue for many months and years until the child is able to walk with confidence. Imagine if an adult were able to engage in such intensive training for many fully dedicated days, months and even years! They would certainly make huge improvements in their performance of Taijiquan, compared to the progress one can make by practicing just one hour a week.

The child's learning brain is still under construction for many years after birth and shows an amazing level of neuronal plasticity - the mechanism by which neural connections in the





THE LEARNING BRAIN

brain are reinforced by experience. This allows them to learn an enormous number of skills during their first years of life.

In the 1960's, [David Hubel](#) and [Torsten Wiesel](#) described for the first time that exposure to altered sensory environments during childhood in animals and humans modifies the way the sensory system matures. These changes have negative consequences on the way the young child perceives the world. For instance, a congenital cataract affecting one eye induces an asymmetry in vision between the two eyes. This asymmetry and the absence of clear vision of forms through the affected eye result in a functional disconnection of that eye with the part of the brain receiving visual information from the retina. Their research showed that this creates a functional deficit in the brain that cannot be corrected by glasses. In 1981, they received the Nobel Prize for their contributions to our understanding of the way visual stimuli is processed by the brain.

Conversely, a unilateral cataract in the adult will not produce a permanent effect on the brain. For many decades since that pioneering research, the scientific community working on the brain mechanisms of learning reached a consensus that neuronal plasticity was restricted to short sensitive periods during early childhood development and was not present in adults.

This consensus began to give way to change in the 1980's when several laboratories around the world, including my own in Gif sur Yvette, France, showed an unexpected level of residual plasticity in the brain of adult mammals. Here are two examples of such studies that concern the tactile, auditory and visual systems.

The adult brain can reorganize itself as a result of repeated peripheral stimulation.

Humans and Primates have an area of the brain dedicated to the analysis of the information coming from touch receptors in the skin. Our entire body is covered by touch receptors such that every part of the body is represented in the brain. For example, the hand is represented in a particular brain area and each finger has its own dedicated brain spot. If, in order to receive a reward - a drop of apple juice - an adult monkey is asked daily to place three fingers on a cord to feel a particular vibration, like a

violinist would do, the brain representation of the hand is modified after only a few weeks of training. There is an enlargement and a reorganization of the area of the brain analyzing the information coming from the three fingers. Brain imaging studies later confirmed that professional violinists do indeed have an enlarged area of the brain for the left hand - the one that presses the cords on the neck of the violin - compared to their right hand. So the adult brain can reorganize itself as a result of repeated peripheral stimulation.



THE LEARNING BRAIN

Our next example brings hope to the adult student of Taijiquan. The heroine of this story is the Barn Owl. These birds are predators that use hearing and sight for hunting small rodents. To localize the source of a sound relies on complex neural computations that translate what the owl sees and hears into representations of space. In normal natural conditions, sounds and images of the prey come from the same place allowing the owl to orient herself.

The experiments involved putting goggles on the Barn Owl. Easier said than done. These devices changed the axis of gaze by some tens of degrees to the side; the owl initially could no longer hunt because the image of the mouse was perceived in a different location than where the sound of the mouse was coming from.

Forcing vision and audition out of register with goggles



The question was: how well could the owl adapt her behavior under these exceptional conditions? Is she able, through experience, to correct for the sight and sound mismatch? Is she able to do so if no possibility is given to her to practice, i.e. just to passively wear the goggles? The results of these experiments clearly show that the young owl adapts quickly and completely to the artificial deviation of the gaze, whereas under the same conditions the adult owl does not. Moreover, the more we delay the age at which the goggles are used, the less plasticity and adaptations are observed.

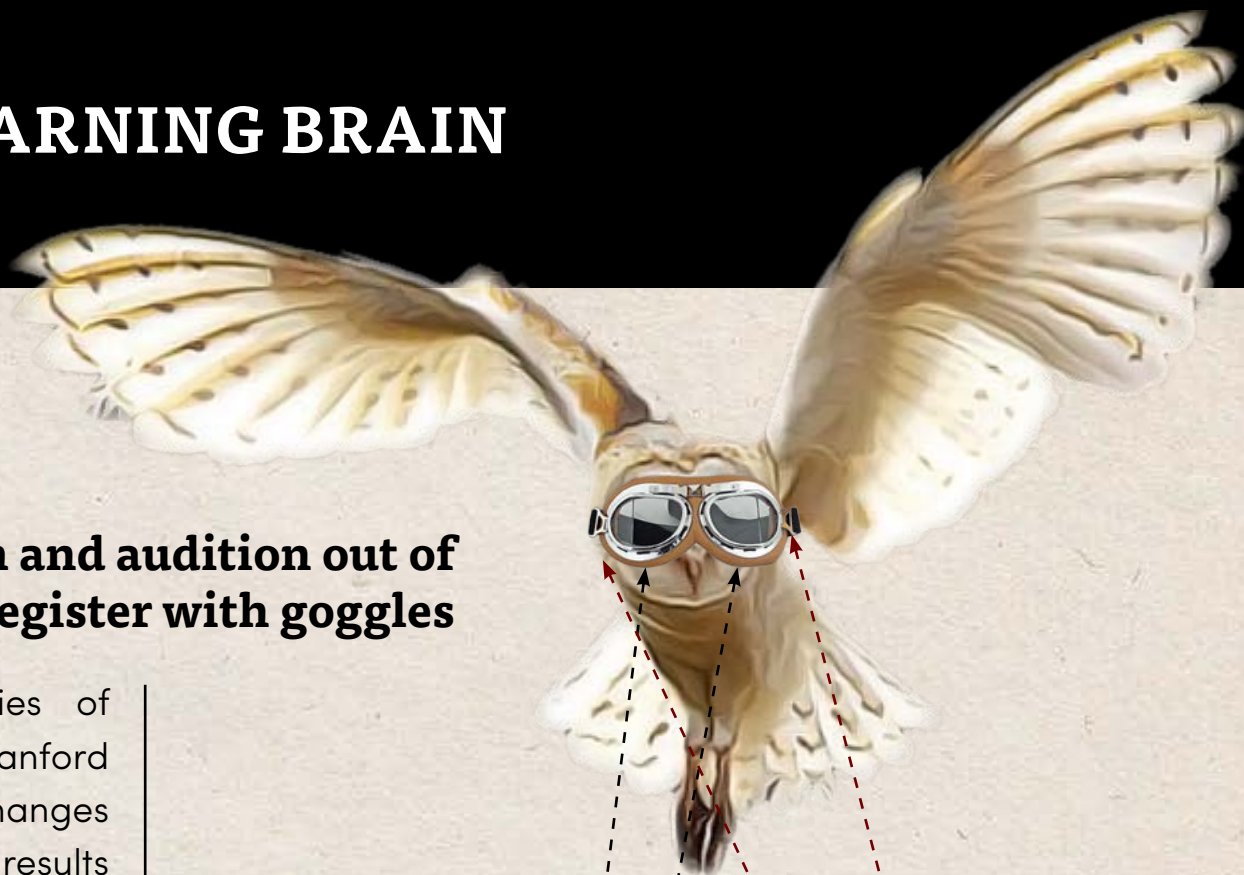
From these results one could conclude that adult animals, including humans, are unable to show adaptation levels sufficient to correct a peripheral change in the sensory input.



THE LEARNING BRAIN

Forcing vision and audition out of register with goggles

However, in a subsequent series of experiments, researchers from Stanford University studied progressive changes affecting the adult owl's sight.¹ The results show that there is evidence of a residual plasticity and behavioral adaptation in the adult animal as well. The study method used incremental changes. Instead of imposing a large deviation of the gaze in one step, they introduced small deviations to start with and increased the deviations progressively after the owl's brain had adapted to the previous one. This method produced an unsuspected level of plasticity that is almost comparable to the one observed in the young owl.



Visual and auditory plasticity for behavioral adaptation



image & sound




THE LEARNING BRAIN

Especially at the beginning of our Taijiquan practice, we can relate to the long-suffering goggled Barn Owl! We can sense that our motions are not like those of the Grandmasters and the axis of deviation can seem quite extreme. Correction is a necessary remedy. As we have seen with the Barn Owl, it is useless then to ask one to correct the gap in one step. Teachers should help to “remove the goggles” but this has to be done progressively, using an incremental strategy that reinforces every small improvement towards the “optimal” performance.

Certainly, Owls do not practice Taijiquan, so that one can question the pertinence of these laboratory observations when applied to humans in real life. However, as explained above, experiments have been done on mammals, non-human primates and even in humans showing previously unsuspected levels of plasticity in the adult.

Is the incremental strategy for teaching new movements sensitive to reinforcement-based feedback from the instructor? Is it useful to couple the incremental teaching approach to a reward strategy?

A very recent research project from University College London showed that reward and punishment have independent effects on the learning and retention components of motor actions in humans.² Negative feedback, which had to be clearly related to the actual motor performance, accelerated learning. The use of positive feedback did not speed up learning, but it increased long-term retention of the motor memory. These results highlight the importance of motivational feedback in motor learning and give us hints as to the potential use of negative (e.g. “no, this is still not the correct movement”) and positive (e.g. “very good, you are making progress”) feedback to improve learning and long-term retention of Taijiquan movements. It is worth noting that the traditional Chinese way of teaching includes only negative feedback whose intention is to keep a high level of motivation in the student to find the correct movement. This is achieved not by explicitly instructing the student but by showing him the desired movement that has to be apprehended by watching the teacher and by internal feelings (listening energy).³

In conclusion, learning Taijiquan as an adult takes a good long time that, as we will see in the second paper of this series, puts into play mimicking strategies. This study process requires a close partnership with instructors who should encourage every small improvement in the motor action towards a desired movement. Learning through mimicking and negative feedback (the Chinese way) and incremental learning through positive reinforcement (the Western way) should be unified in a balanced teaching strategy. Only then can practitioners reach a level of performance where they get all the benefits of Taijiquan. 

1 Incremental training increases the plasticity of the auditory space map in adult barn owls

Brie A. Linkenhoker & Eric I. Knudsen
Nature (2002)
419:293-296

<http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v419/n6904/full/419258a.html>

2 The dissociable effects of punishment and reward on motor learning.

Galea JM, Mallia E, Rothwell J, and Diedrichsen J.
Nature Neuroscience (2015) 18:597-602.

<http://www.nature.com/neuro/journal/v18/n4/nn.3956/metrics>

3 Master Yang Jun, in conversation, 4/19/15



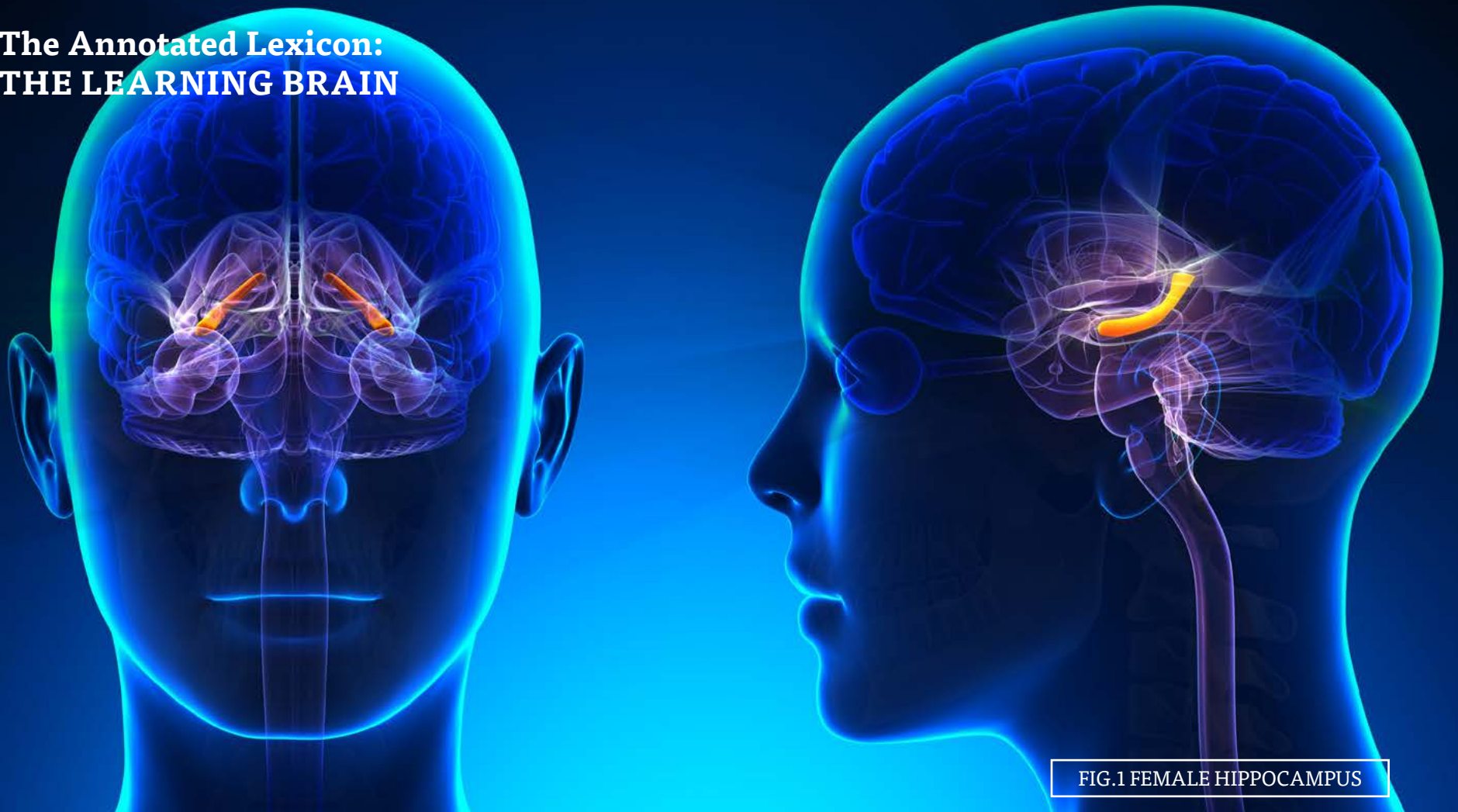
The Annotated Lexicon:

THE LEARNING BRAIN

BY HOLLY SWEENEY-HILLMAN

& DANIEL SHULZ © 2015





NEURONAL CONNECTIVITY & PLASTICITY MECHANISMS

There are two kinds of plasticity. One affects neuronal connectivity, the other one neuronal functioning. Classically, the first is referring to changes in the wiring between neurons that creates new synapses, new dendritic branches, and eventually new axons. The second refers to changes in the intrinsic properties of the neurons (the excitability or easiness to activate a neuron) or to changes in the strength of synaptic connections (long term potentiation, long term depression).

A patient known in medical literature only by his initials, HM, revealed to scientists in the 1950's the part of our brains responsible for remembering.

After HM had developed severe epilepsy at age 9, doctors removed his hippocampus, a banana shaped curl of tissue within the cortex. (Fig.1) HM's seizures stopped but he was no longer able to form new memories. He could learn new things perfectly well but within a few minutes the learning vanished from his recollection.

From the curious example of HM, neuroscientists were able to unravel some of the mysteries of learning and remembering by focusing their efforts on the hippocampus.

By the 1970's, it was understood that memories are formed at synapses, the structures that link one neuron to another.

Information, in the form of electrical potentials, travels across synapses from one neuron to another. The electrical signal stops at the synapse, allowing the release of neurotransmitters that in turn will produce an electrical potential in the following neuron. There is a synaptic cleft and the message is transmitted thanks to molecules that cross from the presynaptic to the postsynaptic component of the synapse.

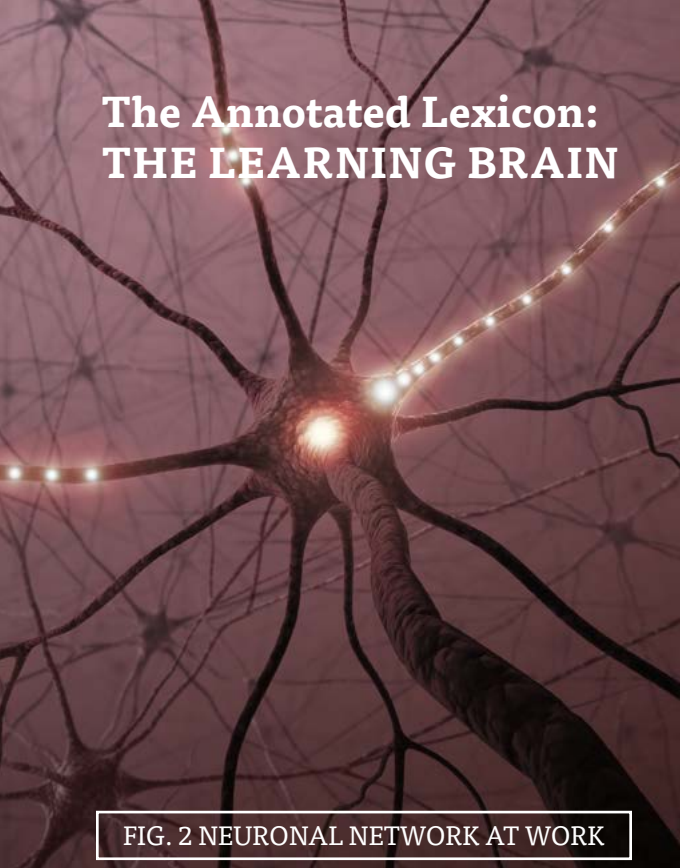


FIG. 2 NEURONAL NETWORK AT WORK

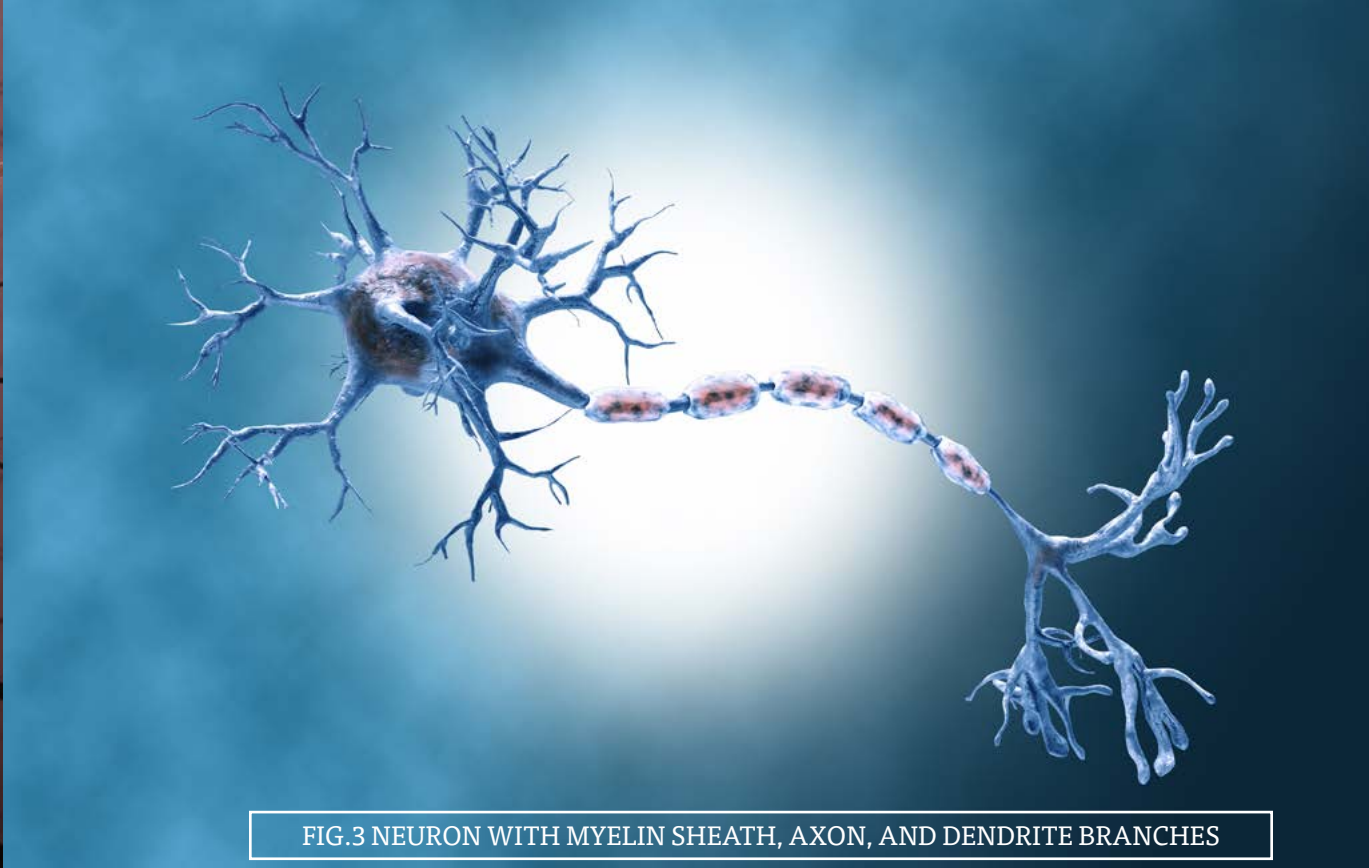


FIG.3 NEURON WITH MYELIN SHEATH, AXON, AND DENDRITE BRANCHES

Electrophysiologists could visualize on the screens of their oscilloscopes long lasting changes in the synaptic activity after they applied tiny electric shocks to slices of brain tissue harvested from the hippocampus region.

By using oscilloscopes to record synaptic activity in brain tissue, researchers discovered that repeated bursts of synaptic stimulation strengthened the synaptic connection and produced much higher voltage responses across the synapse than produced before the repeated bursts of stimulation. (Fig.2)

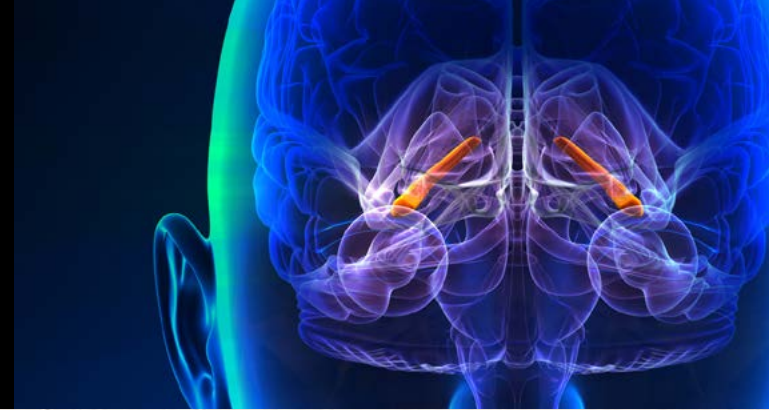
This phenomenon, “long-term potentiation”, is now understood to be the cellular basis of learning and memory. The more times a synapse fires, the more cellular changes are observed both in the amount of neurotransmitters released from the synapse and in increased sensitivity in the receiving neuron’s dendrites. Together, these changes produce a greater voltage at the synapse and a strengthened functional connection between two neurons. The key to “hardwiring” learning and memories into our brains is repeated exposure to the same stimuli, which increases neuronal functional connectivity.

See: [The Other Brain](#), R. Douglas Fields, PhD, Simon and Schuster 2010, pgs. 268-276

PLASTICITY

Lomo and Bliss did the first observations of synaptic plasticity in the hippocampus in 1973. The concept of plasticity includes the ability of the nervous system to make structural and functional changes in response to internal or external demands throughout the life span.

Plasticity appears to be greatest when the nervous system is developing. We are born with 100 billion neurons already formed and each of these neurons has the ability to make thousands of connections with other neurons via dendrites and synapses. (Fig. 3) These connections are the basis of all the myriad talents of our nervous system: movement, memory, thinking, learning, deciding, loving ... the list goes on and on.



As long as the nervous system is stimulated by internal and external demands, it will continue to adapt and develop to meet the demands placed upon it.

We know now that there is neuronal regeneration in some specific areas of the brain even in the adult. After migration, these newly born neurons integrate into existing networks of the olfactory system and the hippocampus.

RESIDUAL PLASTICITY

The term “residual plasticity” refers to the fact that a certain level of plasticity (usually functional and not structural) is observed in the adult nervous system outside of the so called “critical periods” that are short windows of time during early postnatal age when plasticity is maximal.

Many changes occur in the nervous system throughout the aging process, significantly after 65 or 70 years of age. Studies have shown that higher order areas of the brain lose more neurons than the primary motor or visual cortex areas during aging. Loss of neurons may be an explanation for forgetfulness in older adults. However, minor to moderate neuron loss may not be the reason behind decline in memory or other functional capabilities in later life.

Since dendrites and synapses retain their capability to form throughout old age, decline in capabilities may be linked more to decline in use than neuron loss. “Use it so you don’t lose it” is the mantra of residual plasticity. As long as the nervous system is stimulated by internal and external demands, it will continue to adapt and develop to meet the demands placed upon it.

See: Functional Movement Development Across the Life Span, Cech and Martin, WB Saunders 1995, pgs. 203-215

TOUCH RECEPTORS

Dr. Wilder Penfield was a surgeon at the Montreal Neurological Institute who began operations in the 1930’s, which explored the brains of living and very much awake patients.

Since the brain has no pain receptors within it, patients needed only a local anesthetic to endure their skulls being sawed open. The patients conversed with Penfield reporting to him what they were feeling in their bodies as Penfield’s electrode roamed around their brains.

The Annotated Lexicon: THE LEARNING BRAIN

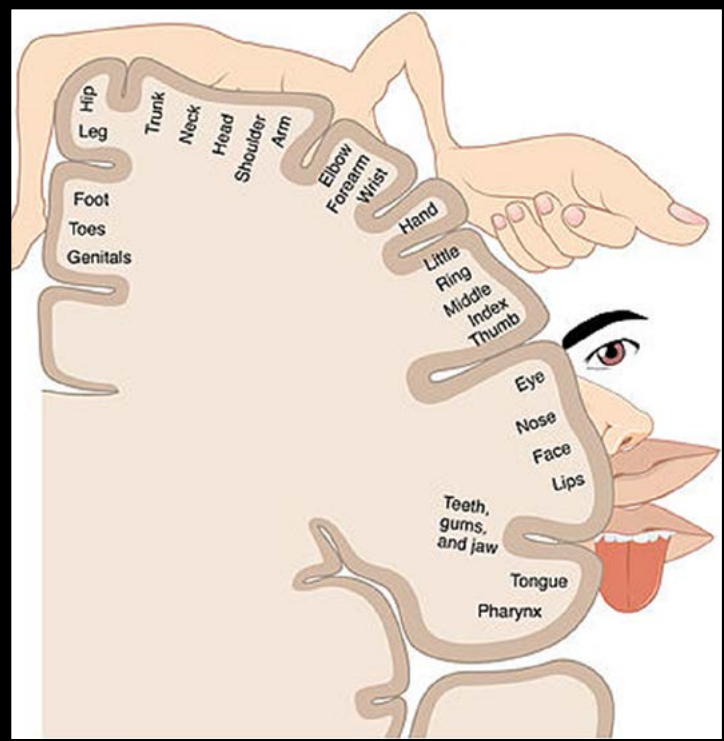


FIG. 5 HOMUNCULUS

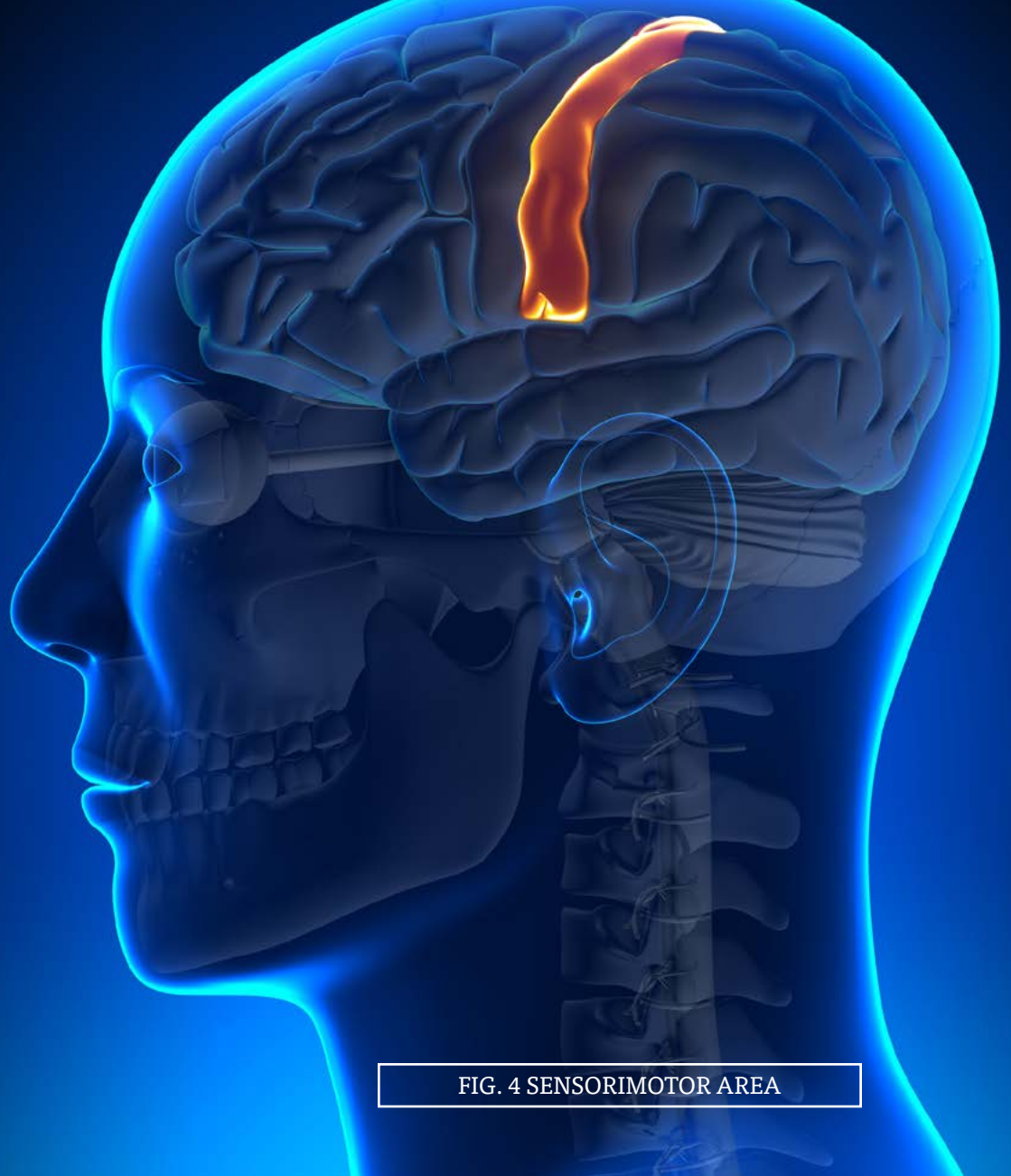



FIG. 4 SENSORIMOTOR AREA

Over 20 years of exploration, Penfield was able to draw a “body map” within the brain. Penfield named this map the “homunculus” (“little man” in Latin). (Fig 5) His was the first ever map of a human being’s primary touch map, or Somatosensory cortex, which lies along a narrow strip across the crown of the head.

In 1950, Penfield published his findings and hired an illustrator to draw cartoons of the body maps he had discovered in the brain. One of the most striking features of his maps are the comic proportions: giant lips, tongues, hands in contrast with tiny head, arms, torso. Why? The answer is straightforward. It is because the receptors located in our skin are distributed unevenly. They are densely concentrated (more than 100 per cm²) in the body parts where high acuity and dexterity is needed and sparse (less than 10 per cm²) in parts where superior sensory resolution isn’t paramount.

See: [The Body Has A Mind of Its Own](#), S. Blakeslee and M. Blakeslee, Random House 2008. 

For Further Reading: *S1 long-term plasticity*, Daniel Shulz and Valerie Ego-Stengel (2012) Scholarpedia 7(10): 7615. http://www.scholarpedia.org/article/S1_long-term_plasticity

TAIJIQUAN WEN DA

QUESTION & ANSWER



BY

EDWARD MOORE

Edward M: Yang Laoshi, Could you please answer a question about the principle 尾闾中正 (wěi lǚ zhōngzhèng)? I have often heard you mention this during class when offering corrections to students, but this short phrase can be difficult to translate into English. The characters 尾闾 (wěi lǚ, also written as 尾闾骨, wěi lǚ gǔ) literally mean “tailbone or coccyx”, but the characters 中正 (zhōngzhèng) can be a little more challenging to interpret. 中 (zhōng) in this case means centered, but 正 (zhèng) can mean several things, including “straight”, “upright”, “standard”, and “correct”.



TAIJIQUAN WEN DA

When practicing Taijiquan, we do ask you to lean forward a little bit sometimes, so we can't try to keep the body vertically upright.



Yang Laoshi: In the practice of Taijiquan we have requirements for footwork, hand technique, and also body shape. Wěi lǚ zhōngzhèng as a direct translation from Chinese can mean “tailbone centered and upright”, but this can create a misunderstanding. For instance it is sometimes assumed that the tailbone should vertically line up with the top of the head in relation to the ground. Sometimes people think that this means that the perineum (会阴 huì yīn) should be vertically lined-up to be directly under the top of the head (百会 bǎi huì). Actually, from our understanding of this principle, we are not concerned with lining up something in terms of up and down. Instead, it should be matched up with your stance, your footwork. For instance, when both feet are parallel, then the tailbone should be between the feet on the centerline. When you are in a bow stance, use the front toe direction and back foot heel position to find the center point from left to right. When practicing Taijiquan, we do ask you to lean forward a little bit sometimes, so we can't try to keep the body vertically upright. Wěi lǚ zhōngzhèng is not about whether your body is leaning forward or not or not, it is about the relationship between your footwork and your tailbone.

EM: Yang Laoshi, could you give an example of why it is important to maintain this principle?

Yang Laoshi: You need to keep the tailbone centered in order to have energy delivery from the lower body to the upper body. Wěi lǚ zhōngzhèng makes us settled and stable, and the energy can be unified. With the tailbone centered, the legs can support the transfer of energy from the legs to the upper body.

EM: Thank you, Yang Laoshi.



DEFINING OUR PRACTICE



BY ANAIS SILIVESTRU, NÉE SERBAN

Translated from the Romanian

In the current context, Tai Chi can be regarded as a shortcut, a direct path between ourselves as expression and ourselves as essence. **It provides a safe environment where we are invited to experience simplicity and silence,** beyond the complexity and diversity of the forms of expression.

We strive in the beginning to learn the movements and we have plenty of inquiries; shortly afterwards, we make the movements in fascination, lured by their beauty and by the unique sensations they provide us – then, we discover that the beauty, the simplicity, the silence, and the harmony we experience do not come from the movements themselves, but from the very core of our being, from within our own soul. And, once fully rediscovered, we never lose them again, regardless of the circumstances we may find ourselves in. Being in harmony with ourselves is the ultimate simplicity and efficiency of the human being. On the path of Tai Chi, or on any other path, why not begin this very day such a wonderful journey of rediscovery?




- FAREWELL ANAIS -

HOW TAI CHI CHUAN SAVED MY LIFE

BY MIHAI SERBAN

Affiliated School Director, Romania



Perhaps you will find this title bombastic. You should not, however, imagine a street fight where my skills as a martial artist helped me escape the attack of assailants armed with maces, knives, and guns; nor a miraculous recovery from a serious illness, achieved by the diligent practice of Tai Chi movements.





HOW TAI CHI CHUAN SAVED MY LIFE

Bear with me for a minute and you might eventually agree that Tai Chi Chuan truly saved my life, yet in a much deeper and more meaningful way than described above. Because, if you are attacked, you can ask for help; if you are ill, you can see a doctor – but when pain and sorrow invades your soul, it is only then that you find yourself really alone...

I began practising Tai Chi out of a sort of – family obligation! Martial arts had fascinated me since childhood. The Western World was discovering the manifest determination, discipline, and performance of Japanese martial arts. Being young and bursting with energy, captivated as I was by confrontation, fighting, and, above all, by victory, I successively practised shotokan karate, judo, and aikido.

My daughter Anais was born in 1977. She grew quickly and beautifully, filling my heart with joy and beautiful hopes for the future. In her education, as you may easily imagine, I also included elements of martial arts; not for competition or fighting, but merely to keep her prankish schoolmates at bay when needed.

The years went by ... I had resumed the practice of aikido, but Anais was not at all interested in this martial art. In the spring of 2000 I took a trip to Paris, and the only gift she asked me for was “martial arts films”. No sooner said than done: among the films I brought back for her there was a classic of the genre: “Tai Chi Master”, made in 1993, starring Jet Li in the lead role.

For Anais that was a moment of enlightenment. Her decision was immediate: Tai Chi Chuan was her path in life. For me, it was a moment of awakening: I found out that the world of Chinese martial arts, which we misnamed, as many Westerners did, “kung fu”, was a realm of unparalleled and fascinating diversity, complexity, and sophistication.





HOW TAI CHI CHUAN SAVED MY LIFE

After two years of intensive study and diligent practice, Anais began teaching Tai Chi Chuan in 2002. Her passion, her agreeable presence, her gracious wisdom made her reputation grow every day. The number of her students was increasingly higher, and she sought to popularize the benefits of Tai Chi Chuan by any means available.

I was a proud father, my heart overflowing with love (in a moment of confession, I wrote to her: "When I shall love you more, another sun will ignite"). After having guided her education and ascent for over twenty years, I was now looking at her with eyes filled with appreciation and admiration. I saw her as a master, who was not only teaching me Tai Chi, but was also gently steering me on the paths of life. When, disappointed with my students' lack of enthusiasm, I gave up a twenty-five year teaching career in higher education, Anais started sending me to the gym, to teach Tai Chi in her place. To my protests, she replied briefly: "You need to do this." How right she was!

Things went so fast that in 2006 we decided to set up a sports club. Anais named it "Ming Dao" ("Shining Way") and she drew its logo.

Every day she would learn something new and would joyfully share with us everything she knew. She was practising every day, and each meeting at the gym was an opportunity for new experiences, for new steps on the path towards self-knowledge. Indeed, she was the one who created the Ming Dao club's motto: "Be all that you are", thereby wishing to show how important Tai Chi Chuan could be for self-discovery, for the research and exploitation of the inner nature of each of us. She had become for me more than a beloved daughter or a valuable friend; she was a Master to me, as she had already become so much of what I was only aspiring to become...



MING DAO



HOW TAI CHI CHUAN SAVED MY LIFE



In 2007, Anais decided: "It's time to move on to serious matters. We must each of us choose a style." She opted for the Chen Family Tai Chi, I opted for the Yang Family Tai Chi, and her husband Adrian chose Bagua. My life seemed to flow on a smooth and welcoming track, and nothing seemed to overshadow the well-being that was brightening my days. At that time, only six or seven years ago, I believed I had the right to consider myself happy.

Yet very soon, out of the blue, the disaster came. In the summer of 2008, Anais started to feel strangely unwell, suffering pains that nobody could diagnose accurately and nobody could treat. After an emergency hospitalization, the verdict fell, unexpected and relentless: cancer. Burkitt's lymphoma stage 4. Minimum chances of recovery.

Then followed eight months of desperate struggle, of frail hopes, and steadfast despair. Little by little, the disease was taking possession of her young body –





HOW TAI CHI CHUAN SAVED MY LIFE

immobilizing one limb – then several limbs – marring half her face – and altering her voice, which started sounding like a hoarse little trumpet ... Seizures began, uncontrollable and painful, while she writhed in our arms, crying out: “I can’t, I can’t, thank goodness I can’t bear this anymore!” After one of these seizures, I held her in my arms and I voiced a thought we had shared for some time, but had discreetly avoided in our conversations: I would build an Academy of martial arts, where we would teach together, where we would build together both our path and the path of our numerous and enthusiastic disciples!

“You must only get well”, I told her. I thought this new hope would strengthen her powers in the fight against cancer. But the battle was lost. Shortly thereafter, on 28th of May 2009, she passed away. And along with her faded the joy and delight of my life. In the very next months, some people I had believed dependable and trustworthy showed me their pettiness of character. I was forced to leave the management of a company I had founded ten years before. My life took a completely different turn.

Only one thing brought me confidence and stability in those days: Tai Chi Chuan. As you may remember, my option had turned to the Yang Family style. As French came first among my language skills, I approached the Yang Cheng Fu Centre in Paris, contacting Philippe Denis by phone (my choice was also based on the fact that both of us, each in his own country, had published translations of the classic Tao Te Ching). In Paris, I met Duc and Carole. And Franck. And Daniel, Jacques, Thierry, Kea, Edita. Then, in a beautiful meeting under the sun of Crete, I met Claudio and Kostas. Then followed Sergio, Tihomir, Stanislav, Giuseppe, Frank, Mihaly.

Then came my friends from across the ocean: Mari, Holly, Pat, Han, Pam, Angela, Dave, Edward, Eric, Laird, Fernando, Daniel. Alongside many of them I had the honour to be part of the team representing the International Yang Association in the presentation ceremony of the Louisville 2014 International Symposium.





HOW TAI CHI CHUAN SAVED MY LIFE



A special word for Fang Hong, who from the very first moment made me feel at home in this Association, which brings us together and makes us better persons. And, of course, I should not forget the many friends I met at China Adventure 2012, whose names I could not remember, but whom my heart unfailingly recalls.

Above all, I could come closer to Master Yang Jun.

Something in his unfeigned kindness, something in his unreserved dedication, in the delicacy of his soul reminded me of my daughter. I had the opportunity of presenting him, in spring 2010, the project of MING DAO Academy of Martial Arts. I sensed him interested, compassionate, full of understanding and encouragement. At the second seminar with Master Yang Jun that we organized in Romania, in 2013, we were able to visit together the construction site of the future Academy.

Between dusty bricks and concrete, we could hardly imagine that the end result would be this!

I had the joy to inaugurate MING DAO Academy together with Master Yang Jun, as well as with friends from France, China, Germany, Bulgaria, Serbia, and Hungary. And, of course, with Adrian, who is my trusted partner and friend.

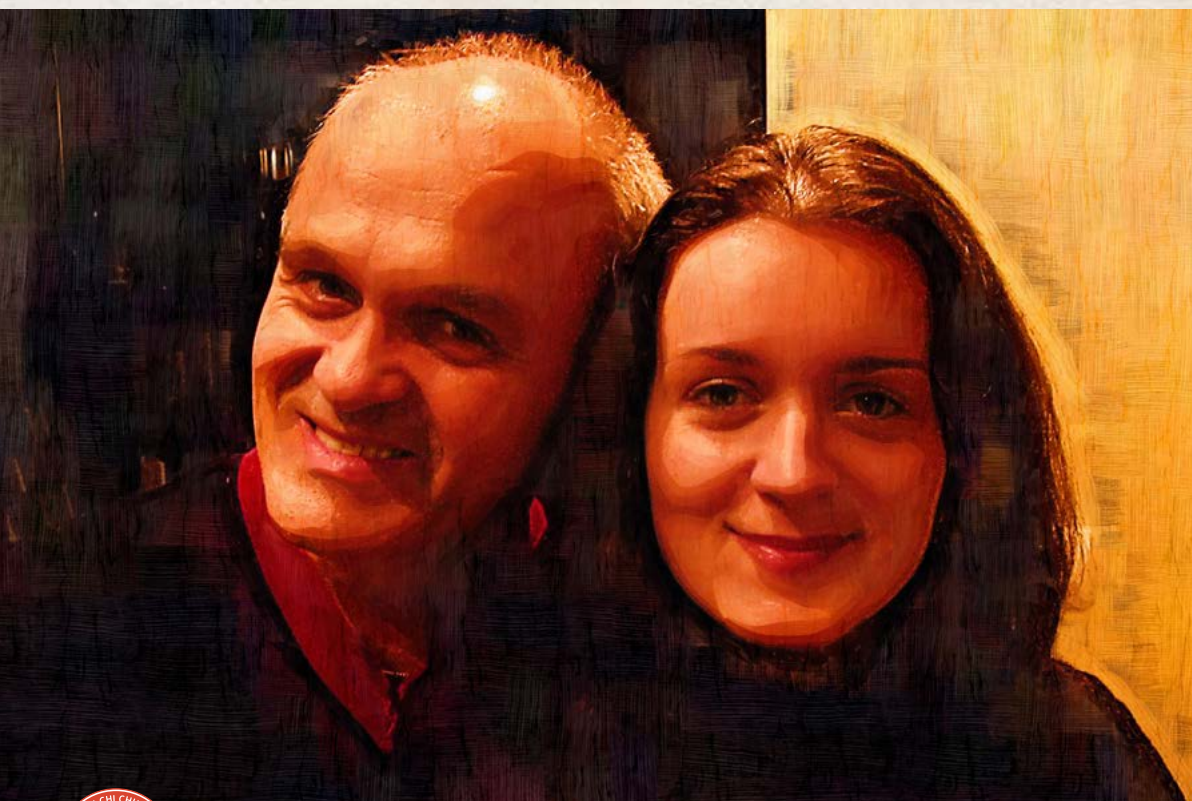





HOW TAI CHI CHUAN SAVED MY LIFE



I dare say that my journey in life is now decided. After a lifetime of performing various activities and functions, of having various offices and premises, of writing books, building houses and making residential improvements, and having tried in vain to build that family my heart desires, I now have found a haven where, as my wise daughter taught me, I can try "to be all that I am". And this means no more, and no less, than what Confucius wanted for himself: "To comfort the elderly, to deserve the loyalty of friends, to kindle the affection of the young."



Perhaps you understand by now why I said that Tai Chi saved my life. Because it brought me friends and mentors I could not have obtained in any other way. Because it gave me a sense of belonging, of a welcoming family I could not have found in any other place. Because it gave me a purpose that boosted my powers, whose achievement will brighten my days from now on, until my parting with this world.

And one that shall endure even when I, as my dear long-lost daughter, shall exist only in your memory... 

Our mission is to promote health and longevity to mankind through Tai Chi Chuan

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Transition from Falling Flowers, Five

Pick up left leg, stepping out to the left with the toes pointing straight and the left arm forming a down circle forward. At the same time, rotate the sword with the tip pointing straight ahead.



Fair Lady Works at Shuttles

Shift forward and turn the body, thrusting the sword down. The tip of the sword is at knee level. At the same time, raise the curved left arm to cover the head. The right toes turn in towards the corner.



Shift back slightly, turning the left toes in. At the same time, the sword stands vertically on the left side of the body, sword fingers sitting at the wrist.



Step out with the right foot to the corner.



Shift to the right, turn the body and strike forward: circle the sword from left to right, while the sword fingers sit at the chest. Look in the direction of the sword.



The head turns left and the eyes focus forward.



White Tiger Swings its Tail

While focusing on the sword fingers, show your spirit and push the fingers straight out.



Open the left toes to the corner and swing the sword fingers open.



Tiger Covers its Head

Stand up, raising the upper right leg with the toes pointing down. At the same time, the arms close in to the center of the body.



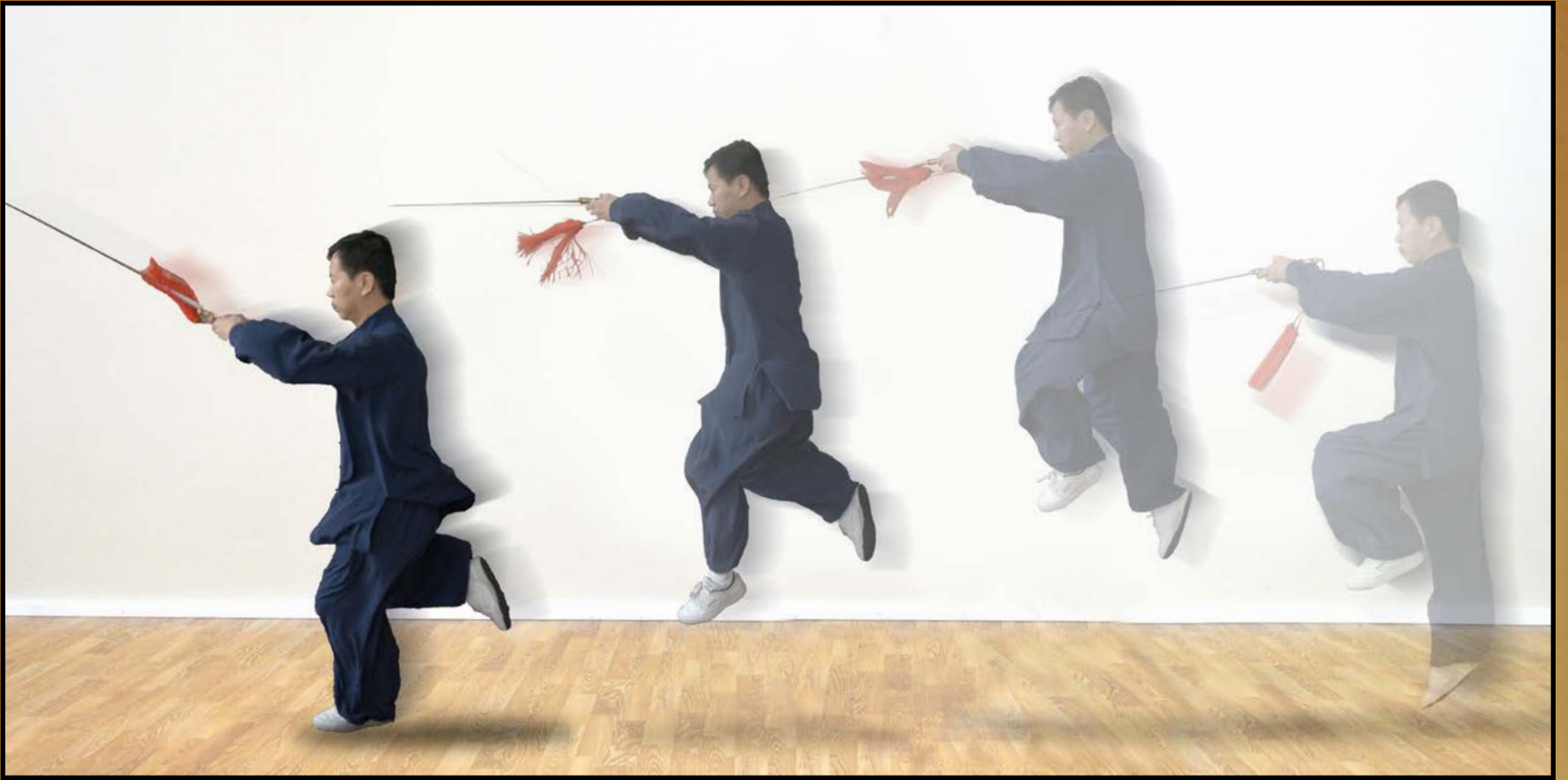
Drop the right leg down and swing it forward.



Sink down and step forward onto the right leg. Center the body over the right foot.



Jump up off the right foot and land on the left foot.



Following the jumping motion, the sword moves up and down.



Drop the right leg down and swing it forward.



Move forward; bending the knee and thrusting the sword; arcing from up to down using both hands. The tip of the sword reaches to knee level.



Shifting back, the left arm circles down and out. Open the body to the left and rotate the sword with the sharp edge facing up.



**Black Dragon Twists
Around the Pole, Left**

Continue shifting back and pick up the right leg. At the same time, slice with the sword circling up and to the left, and then down.



**Black Dragon Twists Around
the Pole, Right**

Step out with the right foot to the corner and the sword continues circling. Shift forward, turning the body to the right, keep circling the sword from down to up until the sword is level, tip pointing forward.



Left foot steps to the corner, while at the same time the left arm circles to the front. The right arm, keeping the sword level and the tip straight, drops down to the side of the hip.



Step out with the right foot and rotate the right arm to turn the sword: right palm now facing up.



Fairy Points the Way

Moving forward, bend the knee and thrust.
The sword should be at shoulder level, with the knee
and the toes in one line. The left arm opens to corner.
The torso opens to the diagonal and leans forward.



Shifting forward, pick up the left leg.



An Incense for Heaven

Step out with the left foot pointing
to the corner and bring the sword
up.



Bend the knee into a bow stance
towards the corner. At the same
time, the sword comes down from
the upper position, on the left side
of the body. Keep the sword
vertical, sword fingers at the side
of your right forearm.



Rotate the right arm and level
the sword in front of the body.

6
of 8



Shifting to the right, circle the sword to the right. At the same time, turn the left toes in towards the corner.



Shifting back onto the left leg, circle the arms: the right arm continues to the right and then moves back. The left arm circles forward.



Shift all the way back onto the left leg. Continue circling the arms, when you pick up your right leg, the arms should cross.



Step out with the right leg, right toes open to the corner. The arms continue to circle.



Shift to the right and continue to circle and open the arms.



Plum Flowers Being Swept by the Wind

Keeping the arms open and the weight on the right leg, swing the body clockwise for three quarters of a turn, with the left leg open, until the body faces straight to the front. The left leg stays open and lands behind.



Rotate the arms and swing the sword to the back, keeping it level. Do not flip the sword over from the front to the back.



Step back with the left foot open to the corner, and at the same time, circle the arms to the front of the body.



Shifting back, pick up the right leg, and at the same time bring the arms to the side of the hips.



Step out with the right foot, toes pointing straight.



Step out with the right foot, toes pointing straight.



Presenting the Tablet
Shifting forward bring the right foot parallel with the left, shoulder-width apart. Keep the knees slightly bent and the body centered. At the same time, thrust the sword out with the arms straight and the tip of the sword at throat level. The arms and the sword are in one line



Stand up gradually while at the same time the arms go down in a circle.



Continue circling down the arms to the open position.



Circle the arms from down to up to open. Change the right palm to shape the sword-fingers, rotate the sword under the left arm.



Push the arms down until they are by the hips.



Open the sword fingers, sitting the right palm by the side of the hip.



Return the Sword to its Original Position
Bring the right foot in next to the left foot.



GRANDMASTER YANG JUN SEMINARS

VELIKO TARNOVO, BULGARIA

Hand Form: Apr 25-26, 2015

Saber Form: Apr 27

Push Hands: Apr 28

Contact: Tihomir Todorov

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Push Hands: May 25

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ROME, ITALY

Theory: May 28, 2015

Hand Form: May 29-31

Saber Form: Jun 1

Push Hands: Jun 2

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TAIYUAN, CHINA

Hand Form: Aug 6-8, 2015

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DATONG, CHINA

Push Hands: Aug 10-11

Contact: Shengwu Li

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NEW YORK CITY, NEW YORK

Hand Form: Sept 26-27, 2015

Push Hands: Sept 28

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ROME, ITALY

Instructors: Oct 16-18, 2015

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CAMBRIDGE, UNITED KINGDOM

Push Hands: Oct 23, 2015

Hand Form: Oct 24-25

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KIEL, GERMANY

Push Hands: Oct 29, 2015

Hand Form: Oct 30-Nov 1 . . Push Hands

Hand Form . Contact: Jens Ammermann
and Thilo Krienke

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Website: <http://yangtaichikiel.de/>

.....

SAO PAULO, BRAZIL

Hand Form (Fang Hong) : Nov 13-15, 2015

Tui Shou (M Yang Jun) : Nov 13

Sword (M Yang Jun) : Nov 14-15

Instructors (M Yang Jun) : Nov 16-18

Contact: Angela Soci

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angela@yangfamilytaichi.com

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WENZHOU, CHINA

Hand Form: Dec 1-3

Contact: Jincong Zheng

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STEALING BOXING

- CHAPTER 8 -

AN ANONYMOUS LETTER UNCOVERS A CONSPIRACY

BY GONG BAIYU

Translated by Mui Gek Chan
Emended by Edward Moore


Marco Gagnon '15





STEALING BOXING

AN ANONYMOUS LETTER UNCOVERS A CONSPIRACY

The characters were beautifully formed with a thinning brush on a cheap piece of paper. Though the characters were not very well written, power showed through the strokes. Master Chen looked at the unfamiliar message and read it out in a low voice:

“To Brother Zishou: My brother, you unfortunately got involved in this incident and you were almost implicated by these bad people. Because of our teacher’s efforts, you were very lucky to escape jail time. However, the perpetrator is still at large, and is creating a public scandal. There is a lot of speculation about this incident going on and this will tarnish your name as well as ruin the reputation of our style. I was incompetent and did not help at first, but for the past several days I have been digging around and trying to get to the bottom of this. I found out that the killer is a bad person named Xiao Caisan who lives in Dongwang village. He is now hiding at the Wei residence. His associate, Li Chongde, is the one who wants to implicate you. Brother, please inform our brothers as soon as possible and explain this in detail to our gracious teacher. Also, try to devise a way to get Crooked Neck Xie, the low life from the brothel, to testify. With a little coercion, you can definitely find the truth. I have already found out that he is not happy with the brothel, so with a little bribe, he will definitely break his silence and tell the truth. When the truth is revealed, it will vindicate you of any suspicion and clear the name of our style. Make haste! Otherwise, the perpetrator may slip away. I had to hurry here to tell you and there is no time to explain. I wish you the best of luck.” Signed:

“Your brother, remaining anonymous.”

Master Chen looked up and said, “Who wrote this letter to you? Is this reliable? This person addressed you as a brother, which one is he?”

“I don’t know.”

“You don’t know? How did this letter end up in your hands?”

Fang Zishou answered: “Just now while I was sleeping, someone rapped on the window. When I came out, he was gone. He left this letter which he delivered through tear in the paper window.”

Master Chen held out the letter, “This is not a joke, what if this letter is part of your enemy’s scheme? Zishou, sit down and tell me how you got this letter. Did the person who delivered it say anything? It’s too bad after learning for seven years that you allowed someone to come and go without even seeing his shadow.”

Zishou bowed his head and did not answer. When the person delivered the letter, he was undressed and sleeping with his wife. By the time he put on his clothes, the person had long gone.



STEALING BOXING

AN ANONYMOUS LETTER UNCOVERS A CONSPIRACY

Fang Zishou began to tell the story to Master Chen. Earlier that evening before the letter had been delivered, Fang Zishou, like his teacher Master Chen, was not in a good mood. He had been sitting in a chair with his head tilted upward, staring blankly. His wife He Shi asked him, "How do you feel? Not feeling well?"

Fang Zishou had replied nastily, "Not really."

He Shi came over and sat next to him, trying to comfort him. Knowing he liked to drink dry white wine, she prepared some dishes to go with the wine. She said to him, "It's boring just sitting here. Why don't you drink some wine to cheer up?"

Fang Zishou could not turn her down, so both of them had a few drinks. He Shi noticed that he was getting drunk and advised him to go to bed early. After cleaning up the dishes, both of them went to bed. Not long after they went to bed, He Shi had fallen asleep but Fang Zishou was still tossing and turning while the terrible mystery of the brothel ran through his head.

Around midnight, while slipping in and out of sleep, he heard someone rap twice at the window. Fang Zishou awoke with a start and suddenly sat up, "Who is it?" he said in the direction of the noise.

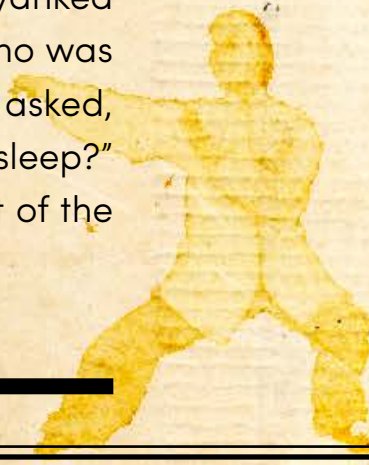
A quiet voice gently replied from the other side of the window, "Older taiji brother, it's only me, don't be alarmed. Because you are in trouble and our master's reputation is at stake, I have put in considerable efforts into investigating the truth behind this evil plot and find out who the real murderer is. As your younger taiji brother, I bring you this letter which can reveal the truth."

Fang Zishou was so startled that he could not tell who was speaking to him in the darkness. He quickly asked, "Which one are you?" while grabbing his clothes and jumping out of bed. The man outside answered, "You don't have to get up brother, once you read the letter you will understand."

Fang Zishou was even more surprised to see a letter appear before his eyes as it was pushed through a small tear in the paper window. "Who the hell are you?" he said, "Please come in!"

"There is no need, see you later." the voice outside replied, as it moved away from the window into the night.

This happened rather quickly. Fang Zishou hurriedly rushed to the door, yanked it open and went outside. He Shi, who was sleeping on the bed, yawned and asked, "What are you doing? Can't you fall asleep?" Fang Zishou had already sprung out of the house and rushed down the steps.





STEALING BOXING

AN ANONYMOUS LETTER UNCOVERS A CONSPIRACY

It was cold and drizzling outside. Fang Zishou had hastily pulled his clothes on and put on one of his shoes. He rubbed his eyes as he saw a shadow towards a low wall at the narrow alley in the east. The mysterious man was small but agile.

Fang Zishou shouted, "Hey! Wait a minute, who are you?" He lifted up his leg to put on his other shoe and quickly gave chase. He saw as the man ran to the base of the wall, bolted over it and was on the other side in a flash. By the time Fang Zishou got there, the person had gone out of sight. Fang Zishou reached the wall, pulled himself up and peered over it. The man flew down a small muddy path, disappearing into the night.

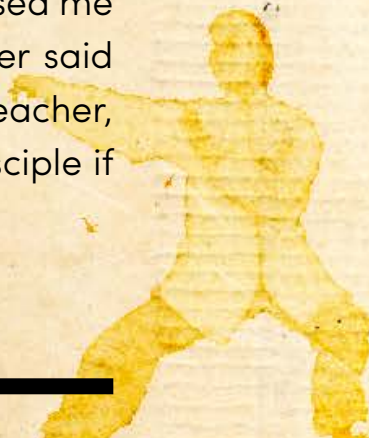
Fang Zishou straddled the wall, wanting to give chase, but he hesitated. By now, his wife He Shi had awakened. She sat up and asked, "Shou ge (older brother), Shou ge, you're not sleeping. What are you up to?"

Fang Zishou sat there and thought for a while before deciding to come down from the wall. He headed back to the house.

His wife lit up the lamp by the bed and was about to put on some shoes in order to come and find him. As he walked in, she stared at him with tired eyes and asked, "Why did you go out in the rain? You didn't even put on a coat. Aren't you afraid of catching a cold? Whom were you talking to?"

Fang Zishou shook his head and did not say a word. His eyes scanned the windowsill. The letter still sat where it had been pushed through the tear in the paper window. He quickly took the letter and ripped it open. As he moved into the light and read the words, his anxiety slowly changed to happiness. The letter seemed to solve all of his troubles. He sat back and thought about who could have written it. He felt that the letter meant well, but frowning again to himself, he wondered why the unknown messenger had addressed him as a brother. Since when did he have this brother? Could this be a trick played by the 5th disciple? He decided that this could not be true because the 5th disciple could not write such characters. This mystery was agitating him even more than before.

Although he could not solve the mystery of the stranger, the letter still seemed like good news to Fang Zishou. While looking over it again, he said to himself, "The letter clearly indicated that the murderer was Xiao Caisan. This is great! Everyone knows that Xiao Caisan is a pervert who likes prostitutes. That's right, the perpetrator must be him. That prostitute must have accused me so I could be blackmailed. The letter said not to delay. I must quickly find my teacher, and at the same time ask the 5th disciple if he wrote this letter."





STEALING BOXING

AN ANONYMOUS LETTER UNCOVERS A CONSPIRACY

Fang Zishou made up his mind and hastily told his wife He Shi. She was so scared that she tried to prevent him from going. Fang Zishou impatiently said, "I'm just going to ask Master for advice, what is there to be afraid of?" They argued back and forth for a while, but he was resolved to go to Chenjiagou that same night and she could not change his mind. Fang Zishou woke up his servant and told him to get the donkey ready so that he could set off immediately in the rain.

This was the story that Fang Zishou told Master Chen. Now he stood dripping wet while his master studied the letter. After reading through it, Master Chen shook his head and asked the 3rd disciple, Geng Yongfeng, "Do you think Laowu wrote this?"

"Unlikely."

Master Chen said, "If he had this letter, he would have told me. Why would he play a trick on a dark and rainy night?"

Master Chen pondered for a while. He concluded that the messenger was probably a martial artist who wanted to see justice served and managed to find out the truth, but did not want to reveal himself. It was also possible that someone was trying to manipulate the situation and have Fang Zishou tricked a second time. Master Chen had the wisdom of experience and refused to be rushed. He said to Fang Zishou, "Tonight you are going to stay here. Tell me

something: before you left, did you let your parents know where you were going?"

Fang Zishou did not dare to tell the truth, and quickly lied, "I told my father and he asked me to talk to you, old master."

Master Chen nodded his head and said, "Okay, don't worry about this letter. Go home tomorrow morning and don't tell anyone about this. Stay at home and don't go out. Don't try to find out anything about Xiao Caisan. Just pretend this didn't happen. I'll deal with it." Master Chen urged Fang Zishou to sleep on the bunk bed in the living room.

After returning to his own room, Master Chen was unable to sleep. Instead, he thought about the situation for a while in silence. Finally he arose and went into the study where 3rd disciple was staying. Master Chen quietly told the 3rd disciple something, gave him some money, and then went back into his room.

In the morning, Master Chen did not do his usual routine. Instead, he told Fang Zishou to go back home, saying "If I don't ask for you, don't come. Take it easy and don't go out!"

On the fourth day, there was a rumor circulating at Fang's village: The murderer, Xiao Caisan had been arrested! He was caught at Wei's residence...



STEALING BOXING

AN ANONYMOUS LETTER UNCOVERS A CONSPIRACY

After receiving the anonymous letter, Fang Zishou had followed his master Chen Qingping's advice, and waited at home for the news. He did not go out or say anything to anyone about what happened.

While he was hiding at home, Fang Zishou was as anxious as ants on a heated pan. It was very difficult to stay so quiet when his whole life hung in the balance. Even so, he patiently waited until the fourth day when news circulated regarding the arrest of the real murderer, Xiao Caisan at the Wei residence. Although Xiao Caisan was known to frequent prostitutes, he did not seem like a brute. Now everyone knew that he had taken three lives! Once the Fang family servant found what happened, he quickly ran back to report the news to his master. Fang Zishou's parents were overjoyed after receiving the news, saying, "This big stone has finally fallen to the ground!"

Well-to-do people are the most afraid of getting involved in a lawsuit. Fang Zishou was very anxious and wanted to go out and point out whom the culprit was. He ran to Master Chen's house, but Chen Qingping kept calm and sent him home. Instead, he immediately summoned the 3rd disciple Geng Yongfeng and said, "Your brother, Zishou got into this mess and our Taiji name is at stake. I have been unable to eat and sleep properly because I have been trying to find out the truth. Despite spending so much time investigating, I have been unable

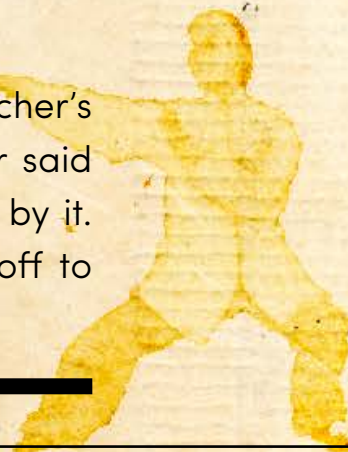
« If we can get Xie to reveal the truth, he won't dare to recant. »

to get to the bottom of it all. Fortunately, there has been a recent turn of events. I feel we need to get to Crooked Neck Xie directly, either by intimidation or enticement. I want you to find Zhou Longjiu. He is an outstanding, clever, and reliable person who is influential in both official and private matters. Let him know the whole story and have him find Xie's associate. If we can get Xie to reveal the truth, he won't dare to recant."

After hearing this, Geng Yongfeng did not quite understand, so he hesitantly asked, "So who is supposed to find Crooked Neck Xie then?"

Master Chen replied, "Just get hold of Zhou Longjiu. Don't worry about anything else. When the time comes, someone will deliver Crooked Neck."

Geng Yongfeng knew his teacher's temperament very well, if the Master said something, then he needed to abide by it. He took the money and quickly set off to Zhou Longjiu's place.





STEALING BOXING

AN ANONYMOUS LETTER UNCOVERS A CONSPIRACY

Zhou Longjiu, the 7th Master Zhou, was a well-to-do scholar, well-liked and known to both official and private sectors. In times of conflict he acted as a mediator, so merchants praised him as a person of good character. For unscrupulous people, the thought of Zhou Longjiu gave them a headache. They did not dare provoke or offend him out of fear that he would come after them with a vengeance. Although he was a scholar and did not appear to be physically well built, his eloquent and courageous personality had the power to make things happen.

Outwardly, Zhou Longjiu and Chen Qingping seemed to be opposites. Zhou Longjiu was a gentle looking scholar, and Chen Qingping, a physically robust martial artist. The personalities of the two respected men were also quite different, but both had good intentions that they showed in their own unique ways. Despite being very different, each one greatly admired the other.

« If we can just get a confession out of Crooked Neck Xie that would be enough. »

Geng Yongfeng went to see Zhou Longjiu, carrying some gifts and his master's name card. In the past, Master Chen had helped Zhou Longjiu in some way, and the two Masters were on good terms. Zhou Longjiu waiting for Geng Yongfeng in the inner living room since the house was filled with guests. He was dressed in a simple shirt with a pigtail, and was squatting on an armchair while holding a water pipe. When Geng Yongfeng entered, he jumped down like a monkey from the armchair to greet his guest and listen to his message. Geng Yongfeng carefully whispered what his teacher had entrusted him to say from beginning to end.

After listening these words, Zhou Longjiu said, "This is quite a job to heap on our own people. Older brother Chen should have said this earlier. From my point of view, I say don't waste any more effort, just beat the crap out of that low life and that will be it. What rumors? Listen to what?"

Geng Yongfeng looked up in surprise. This old scholar was rather blunt. Geng Yongfeng said, "Master Chen just wants our name in the clear, we don't have to take any drastic action. If we can just get a confession out of Crooked Neck Xie that would be enough."





STEALING BOXING

AN ANONYMOUS LETTER UNCOVERS A CONSPIRACY

Zhou Longjiu thought for a while, "Since older brother Chen makes this request and has no wish to hear further rumors, fine, I'll follow his wishes." He asked his servant, "Come! Prepare something to eat. I'll drink two cups with Geng Laodi."

Geng Yongfeng was unable to turn him down and was treated to a sumptuous feast. Other guests in the house were also invited to participate. After most of the guests had dispersed, Zhou Longjiu kept Geng Yongfeng company over some hot, fragrant tea while waiting for Crooked Neck Xie to arrive.

Back at the Chen house, Master Chen had thought for a long time about the situation and finally made up his mind. He wanted to personally visit the brothel. He waited until the second gong had struck and his family was asleep. When leaving, he decided not go out through the main gate or alert his servants. Instead, he quietly vaulted over the west wall and walked through the darkness alone. The night was still except for occasional barks of wild dogs in the distance.

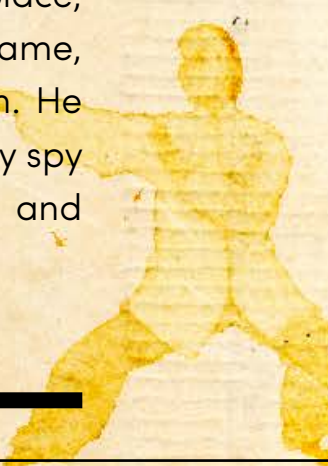
Though it was dark, it was not hard to find the old town's alley. Master Chen arrived there in the time it took to brew a cup of tea. When he got to the prostitute's door, he looked around and determined there was no one about. Looking over

the house, he noticed that it was a simple building made of mud and grass.

Master Chen climbed up to the rooftop and looked down. There were two courts. The front only had north-south rooms, with four rooms and a screen door. The back court had three east rooms and a wing on each of the north-south sides. The front court was very dark, with no light whatsoever, but the paper windows in the back court were brightly lit. Although the people from the countryside usually went to bed very early, the prostitutes kept different hours, and their lights were shining brilliantly.

Master Chen moved lightly and swiftly to the back court. He did not have to get very close to the window to know what was happening; he already heard laughter coming from the room. It sounded like several women and men gambling, drinking, cursing and using obscenities.

Master Chen was a famous and honorable martial artist and normally would not even step near this kind of vulgar place, but in his effort to clear his good name, he had no choice but to find the truth. He decided that he did not want to secretly spy on the brothel, so he turned around and went inside the north wing.





STEALING BOXING

AN ANONYMOUS LETTER UNCOVERS A CONSPIRACY

A light was on in the north wing and the voices there did not seem as chaotic. Master Chen could hear a woman's voice above the rest. She sounded both evil and disturbing, groaning out, "I have to say, aren't you really messed up? My injury hasn't fully healed, how can I deal with your crap!" A man's voice laughed salaciously, "You're not healed, who believes you? Let me feel it." That lady scolded, "You damn, short-lived ghost. I'm suffering and you just want to push it. Keep doing this, and when the master comes back, don't be surprised when your crap face is calling out for your mom or your granny."

Master Chen knitted his eyebrows after hearing this. He was about to leave when he heard the man say, "Don't use Xiao Caisan to scare me. I'm not afraid. He's long gone. He's not coming back to die is he?"

He heard the woman said nastily, "You stinky fish, with your foul mouth, spewing garbage. The gambling bunch hasn't left yet. You keep talking nonsense, so fuck off." Then the same woman repeatedly yelled out, "You wicked thing, you're damned! Get lost, get lost!" The man just laughed.

After a while, that man loudly yelled out, "Xie Laosi, Xie Laosi!"

The woman hurriedly said, "Why are you calling out? Crooked Neck has long gone to bed, what are you doing?"

The man said, "My stomach feels empty, ask him to bring me some dim sum."

The woman snorted, "Dim sum, eh? You really know what to get. Lately, Crooked Neck doesn't want to move. Yesterday I asked him to go to town to get some things. He didn't want to go and preferred to stay put. He's unhappy with the brothel. He'll glare at you if he hears you calling for him. Ever since this incident happened he has the upper hand. Instead of working, he spends his days lazing around all day in his well-kept dog cage of a south room. It's that dog, Li Chongde's great idea, the plan to extort someone. Instead, it ended up giving him the leverage. Fang Zishou has been released, but can he easily forgive? I'm still wary. We also don't know if Crooked Neck will hold his tongue. Ahead waits the wolf - behind paces the tiger. Come to think of it, I wish I could get rid of him myself, but I'm not a man."

After listening to this, Master Chen felt that he had heard enough. He had not come in vain; just one trip and he had what he needed. Now he knew that Crooked Neck was obviously not happy. He also heard where he lived at the south part of the house. This must be the front court's south room. The woman must be the prostitute who was injured and the man was called stinky fish. He had heard a lot, but he still didn't know who broke the paper window in the night and ran away.



STEALING BOXING

AN ANONYMOUS LETTER UNCOVERS A CONSPIRACY

The door to the room opened and out walked two people. Master Chen had sharp ears and eyes, and in a flash like a bird in flight, he flew out of the outer yard onto the house, hidden out of sight.

All he heard was a gambler swearing away while walking to the latrine, "Not good, not good!" yet he headed back to the gambling den. Later someone yelled for Crooked Neck, but he did not reply and started snoring. This man cursed a bit more and then stopped.

Master Chen came down when there was no more movement. He made his way to the outer court's south room. All was silent except for the sound of Crooked Neck snoring.

Master Chen listened for a while, then gently tapped several times on the window-pane. The snoring stopped and a sighing coarse voice said, "Who is it? I'm sleeping; it's the middle of the night. Who is deliberately trying to wake me up?"

Master Chen altered his voice and said, "Lao Xie, your good friend is here, why don't you come out?"

Crooked Neck pulled on some clothes in a daze and said, "Who are you?"

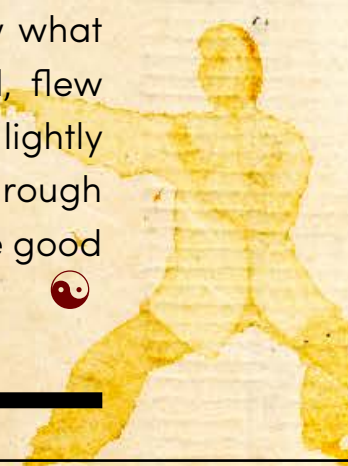
Once the door opened, Master Chen managed to drag him outside easily. He used his left hand to grab him and his right

two middle fingers to press his yamen acupressure point. Xie started choking and wanted to yell out but could not make a sound.

Master Chen quickly carted Crooked Neck off like an eagle catching a finch. Before long he was near the low wall and got to the middle of the street. Poor Crooked Neck could not even make out who it was that had caught him. Master Chen trussed him up like a duck, moved quickly and got to the south gate just before the third gong had struck.

After arriving in front of Zhou Longjiu's gate, Chen Qingping set Crooked Neck down and massaged him to clear his blocked acupressure point. Before Crooked Neck was fully awake, Master Chen quickly got to the south wall of Zhou Longjiu's house, and leapt over the wall while still holding the scoundrel tightly. Zhou Longjiu's outer living room was pitch black, but the inner living room was lit and there were two people talking in there.

Chen Qingping held onto Crooked Neck, opened the door suddenly, and gently threw him into the room while saying, "Witness delivered, Longjiu brother, you know what to do." After saying this, he turned, flew over the south wall and landed lightly outside. Master Chen headed back through the night to Chenjiagou to wait for the good news.





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