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Han Hui Ming in the courtyard of
Yang Lu Chan's Old House

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Editors Note

Welcome to the third edition of The Journal of The College of Chinese Martial Arts.

Our first article in is about eighty year old Han Hui Ming who still teaches Tai Chi in the courtyard of Yang Lu Chan's old house.

Next we have a look at the healing benefits of the Chi Way of Moving and then finish with a study of another ancient Chinese martial arts text.

We hope you find these articles interesting and beneficial for you martial arts training.

The College of Chinese Martial Arts provides information for practitioners of all styles so that all students can benefit.

Good luck in your training

Paul Brecher

Founder & Chief Instructor of The College of Chinese Martial Arts

Han Hui Ming and Yang Lu Chan's Old House by Paul Brecher

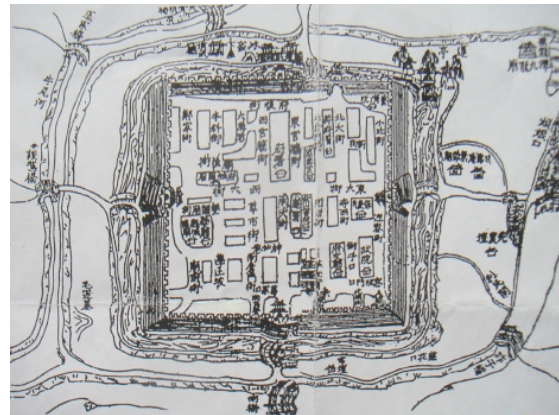
This article originally appeared in 2005 in the book,
A Martial Arts Journey Part 2

I was travelling around China with my good friend David Leffman, he is a fluent Chinese speaker and famous travel writer who has been visiting China since 1985.

I had in my possession an old map showing the walled town of Gwan Fu. The founder of the Yang style of Tai Chi, Yang Lu Chan, used to live just outside the south gate.

I was under the impression that the town no longer existed however we where immensely fortunate to have been put in touch with Mr Yang Zong Jie the editor of Yong Nian Tai

Chi Magazine by David's friend C. S. Tang the top student of Ho Ho Choy.



Map of Gwan Fu town

I showed the map to Mr Yang Zong Jie asking if it ment anything to him, not expecting him to recognize it. I was very happily surprised when he noddod his head and asked if we would like to visit this ancient walled town.

We drove out into the countryside and after a long journey of bumpy rural roads we arrived at Gwan Fu town.



The bridge over the moat

It was very, very impressive, it had huge stone walls from the Ming dynasty (1542) surrounded by a deep water filled moat. We got out of the car and walked along the bridge across the moat to reach the main gate.

When we walked through the main gate we entered a walled customs enclosure. This is an area where archers can look down from all sides on people entering and only

when it is clear that they are unarmed are they let through the second gate in to the main part of the town.

Once through the main gate we walked through the customs enclosure and then through another gate and then climbed up on to the town wall. We came to the section where you can look back down on to the customs enclosure about eighty feet below.



The customs enclosure

Clearly once a group of people had been let through the first main gate but not through the second gate and are stuck in the customs enclosure area they would have

entering a killing ground. If they where revealed to be an enemy force archers on all the surrounding walls would have rained arrows down on them from all sides.

We walked along the top of the huge defensive wall, on one side a massive vertical drop down into the moat and on the other side the town. It was fantastic, very, very rare indeed, all the buildings were the original old buildings, there had not been the destruction of war or the destruction of the frenzy of rebuilding to modernise China. This was a perfectly preserved ancient town.

Also unusually it still had its vast fortified wall, many fortified towns had their walls destroyed by the communists so that they could not be strongholds for opposition forces.

We eventually came to the south gate and descended down to street level, left the town and walked down the dusty road for a few minutes and came across a large traditional Chinese house.



**Paul outside the front door of
Yang Lu Chan's old house**

Above the door it said in gold Chinese letters on a black back ground, Yang Lu Chan's Old House, at the side of the door in

black letters on a white background it said, China, Yong Nian Province, Gwan Fu Town, Yang Lu Chan's Tai chi School.

The main doors were closed and we entered through the spirit door on the left, a spirit door means that as soon as you walk through the door you are facing a wall and have to take a ninety degree turn to enter the house. This is because according to Chinese tradition ghosts can only go in straight lines. Also I wondered if there was a more practical idea alongside this cultural one.

I thought if your house was being attacked then as the intruders broke down the door and charged in they would have their attack momentum broken by being confronted with a wall and would also be counterattacked from the side by the owners of the house.

Once through the spirit door there was a courtyard surrounded by three inward looking houses. The main house straight ahead contained a memorial statue of Yang Lu Chan.



The statue of Yang Lu Chan (as I reported in the first edition of The Journal of The College of Chinese Martial Arts, this is not what Yang Lu Chan looked like)

The two houses on either side contained photographs of various family members and their exploits

and adventures. There were photos of famous dignitaries who had come here to acknowledge the importance of the Yang family. There was also a family tree and diagrams of the movements of Tai Chi Chuan.



Paul with Mr Han Hui Ming

I got into conversation with eighty year old Mr Han Hui Ming who teaches Tai Chi in the courtyard of Yang Lu Chan's house. Mr Han Hui Ming was a student of Li Wan Chang who was the student of

Yang Ban Hou who was Yang Lu Chan's son.

I showed Mr Han Hui Ming my Old Yang Style Tai Chi Long Form I did the movements with fa jin. Mr Han Hui Ming said that his teacher Li Wan Chang used to do fa jin the same way he had seen me do it and that Yang Ban Hou did fa jin as well but that after Yang Cheng Fu started teaching the form without fa jin most people now did Yang Style slowly.

Mr Han Hui Ming then demonstrated the Yang Style Long Form with the most incredible smooth even movement I have ever seen (also on stork spreads wings he kept his front foot off the ground). It was such a well balanced very calm and quiet way of moving that it seemed as if the qualities of quietness and calm were radiating from him and filling the courtyard.



Mr Han Hui Ming then explained that this was the Nei Gung (the Nei Kung or internal work) he stressed that if you did too much fa jin you would be releasing too much energy and that it was especially important to conserve your chi (Qi) with Nei Gung practice, he then demonstrated special Nei Gung and Chi Kung (Qi Gung) breathing exercise and emphasised the importance of being Sung (having no unnecessary tension).

He went on to say that the fa jin of the Yang Family Style was still practised by people who trained in the Wu Yue Xiang Style of Tai Chi because Wu Yue Xiang was a student of Yang Lu Chan.



He then very kindly agreed to demonstrate this form, it was amazing to watch, he was eighty years old and still doing the most vigorous movements, inside crescent kicks and rushing forward and dropping down in to the movement called punch to the

ground and then leaping up into the double jumping flying front kicks.

In China it is a popular custom to exchange business cards, on Mr Han's as well as his name and address it states his occupation....Fighter !

Well I was overjoyed to be in Yang Lu Chan's house and to have seen such incredible demonstrations, I hope to as able and nimble when I am eighty !

We left Yang Lu Chan's house got back in the car and our guide Mr Yang Zong Jie directed the driver down various dusty and unpaved and tiny rural roads and paths until we eventually came to some windswept land between two villages and there it was, the Yang family burial ground.



**Paul at Yang lu chan's tomb
and grave stone**

Yang Lu Chan's tomb and grave stone was at the head of the family grave site, in the next row was his sons Yang Jiang Hou and Yang Ban Hou, then his grandsons Yang Shao hou and Yang Chen fu etc all the way up to the present day.

It had been a great adventure to find Yang Lu Chan's Old house and family grave site and a privilege to train with Han Hui Ming.

The Healing Benefits of The Chi Way of Moving in Chinese Martial Arts by Paul Brecher 2010

This information is from The College of Chinese Martial Arts Training Manual.

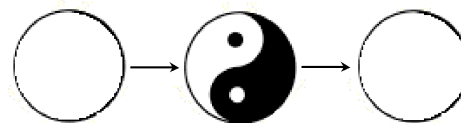
The healing benefits of the chi way of moving.

The greatest quality of the chi way of moving is the development of chi !

Before we begin any form we always stand in a still calm manner and enter into a state known as wu chi which means stillness or emptiness. This is symbolised by an empty circle which, once we start moving, then becomes filled with yin and yang and becomes the tai chi diagram.

All forms begin relatively Yin (easy) and become more Yang

(demanding and vigorous), but the last few moves of a form are always practised very slowly as a type of warm down chi kung, so that we finish feeling settled and calm rather than with a racing heart and ragged breath. So we begin in wu chi, pass through all the different combinations of yin and yang, and then once again return to wu chi.



Wu Chi → Tai Chi → Wu Chi

The chi way of moving heals the body because it contains within it principles that either directly heal

the body or encourage and enable the body to heal itself.

All the moves of a form are first learnt slowly so that every detail is clear and understood. If we move slowly it is easier to be relaxed and if we are relaxed then we can have greater freedom of movement and an increased flow of blood and chi.

We have the body relaxed and flowing with a circular movement on the outside so that internally the blood and chi will reflect this and be able to circulate smoothly on the inside.



Chi

Whenever I use the word relax (sung), what I mean is that there is no unnecessary tension anywhere in the body, so there is less restriction on the flow of blood and chi.

In the Chinese martial arts we learn to physically move without any unnecessary physical tension, so we are eventually able to be physically active without any unnecessary physical tension in our daily lives.

We also develop the ability to be mentally active with out any unnecessary mental tension, and this also overflows into our day to day life. So in both our lives and our martial arts training we can be more effective with less effort.

From a martial arts perspective if we are punching and have unnecessary tension in our muscles

it is counter productive, because tension is contraction and this will shorten the arm and make it pull towards us. We want to extend the arm away from us as we strike towards the opponent. So tension is not beneficial because we end up fighting against our selves when we should be fighting an opponent.

Plus we want to avoid tension because it makes the blood vessels constrict which will restrict the flow of blood and chi. So if we are more relaxed we have more chi and blood flowing, which provides us with more power for our strikes.

So we stay relaxed before the strike and during the striking movement and only have some hardness on contact with the opponent. After we have struck we return to a relaxed state.

One of the reasons why our hands go hard on contact is because the centrifugal rotation created by our hip turns throws the blood and chi out to the extremities. We want to have the maximum amount of chi and blood packed into our hands so we have greater density in our strikes on the point of contact.

In the chi way of moving we use abdominal breathing and torso twisting, which both help to massage all the internal organs and increase their ability to function more effectively.



Breath

Each posture that we are moving through flexes a series of different

tendons and because the meridians run through them the chi of those meridians are activated and heal the internal organs that they connect to.

There is also a very subtle internal process of spiritual healing happening within the body that is best explained with a comparison.

Imagine that we are a glass of water but that the water is clouded with all our present and past thoughts emotions and experiences. This makes it hard to see clearly our true nature or the true nature of other people and the world around us.



Nature

With dedicated daily practice we find that gradually all the internal turbulence reduces and all the particles settle to the bottom of the glass and the water becomes clear once again. So we have a greater clarity of vision in our lives and are able to see things as they really are.

When we practice a form with the chi way of moving there are many things that happen which indicate that we are correctly and gradually improving our health. To begin with, blocks in the body's energy flow become apparent as physical aches and shakes and mental discomfort. Then as the chi flows more strongly, these are cleared away and there is a warm glow in the body and the mind is calm and clear.

As the flow of chi to the extremities increases so to does the

flow of blood and the palms of the hands become red and blotchy with blood. The upper body becomes light and loose and the lower body becomes very sturdy and firm. The whole body feels as if it was made of warm, glowing, flowing liquid lead and the fingertips feel full and there is a tingling sensation in the finger tips. One feels as if there was an electric bracelet around the wrists at the same place where we take the pulse in Traditional Chinese Medicine.



Water

There is a sense that the body is fixed in to the air around it, and also it feels as if one were swimming through the air as if it was as dense as a water.

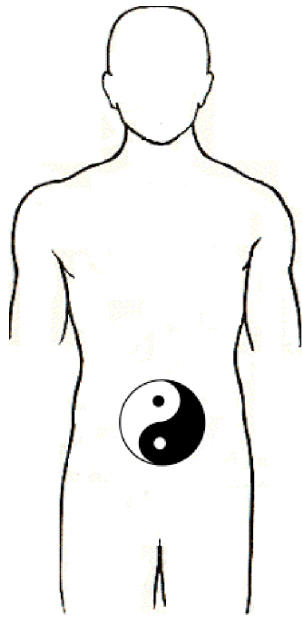
The energy flow through the body also feels like water, and one can feel the spiralling wave of chi energy moving through us. In Tai Chi Chuan the chi is more of a wave, in Pa Kua Chang it is more of a spiral around the spine and in Wutang Shan Nei Jia Chuan there is both a wave and a spiral.

This chi wave/spiral causes a very subtle physical ripple of movement. There is a movement from the feet to the hands and also a movement from the belly out to the hands feet and head. The result is that the hands are always waving, circling, spiralling and flowing.

As the chi level increases the hands feel as if they were shaking on the inside. This is only just visible on the outside, and is called the Vibrating Palm. The whole of the outside of the body also feels

as if it has a shell of vibrating chi around it, which is the defensive chi becoming highly activated.

At the more advanced level we feel that by internalising all the principles of the chi way of moving that the lower tan tien is activated and that all our movement comes from there.



Lower Tan Tien

There is actually an experience of a very strong chi movement in the belly, not just an energy flow

feeling but a sort of internal physical belly rotating sensation as if there was a three dimensional yin yang ball revolving in the belly. It is this that actually creates all the body movement.



Yin Yang

The chi creates a warm glow around the body and the hands go soft and warm and feel like they could heal some one if you placed your hands on them.

One also feels an electromagnetic force field build up around the hands and body so that like magnets the fingers cannot touch

each other, the hands and arms cannot touch the body and the legs cannot touch each other.

The chi coming from the hands looks like heat haze or out of focus air and the whole body has a nice gentle radiating glow around it.

When practising outside one can also see the same type of glow around the trees. Also one notices in the air around us a shimmer like a haze of golden glittering light, which is a more spiritual phenomenon, not just energy.

We also have many alterations to our visual perception, and our mind expands into our peripheral vision which also seems to expand beyond its natural scope.

This is connected to an expanded awareness as if one was actually touching the air around one's self to

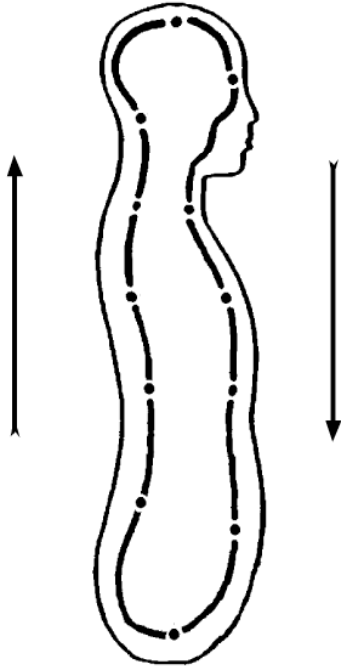
a distance of some feet away from where one can actually physically reach to.

There are also various unusual visual perceptions due to the increased chi flow through the eyes. One can see the chi trailing from the hands like the tail of a comet and there are also bright flashes.

This particular experience has two different aspects, the first is the chi crossing over the optic nerve inside our heads as it circulates along the governing and conception meridians in the small heaven orbit.

The second is to do with a type of cosmic radiation from deep space that we become aware of. Astronauts also report this phenomenon, it is apparently stronger when one is outside the

protective cocoon of the Earth's atmosphere.



The Small Heaven Orbit

There is another higher level of sensation that is beyond feeling the chi as warm electromagnetism: It is a feeling of no feeling. One is empty and transparent as air; the palms feel as if they were holding an empty space and after each expansion and contraction of the body on each movement there is a sensation of emptiness.

The movements become less and less physical and more to do with energy and spirit. You feel like you are rising into the sky and sinking into the ground at the same time. It eventually gets to the point where you don't seem to be moving at all and have a sensation of being invisible to yourself. This experience is often referred to as wu chi which is symbolised by an empty circle.

By practicing Chinese martial arts forms we bring the energy up and out of the internal organs and into the blood, muscles, tendons and skin. So after we have finished we have to return the activated energy back to the internal organs and bone's so that after our training we are left with a beneficial accumulation of energy.

This is why every form ends with the hands going down to the lower

tan tien. If we have finished our training session for that day then we also stand still with our hands on our lower abdomen, just below the navel, and imagine the chi returning to the lower tan tien and also returning into the internal organs and condensing into the bone's.

This is so that as we get older we get stronger and more powerful.

Regular training enhances our lives and can increase one's health to such a degree that we are able to resist many diseases and so reach our full and complete lifespans.

In this way we not only live to a grand old age but also enjoy good health right up to our last moment, and so are able to make the most use of our lives and enjoy our lives to the fullest.

I like to look at it in a slightly simplified way by saying that we can split our life up into three parts. In our first thirty years we don't really know what is going on. We simply have not accumulated enough life experience to really have a broad view of the big picture.

Then for the next thirty years we are working like crazy to look after our developing families. So we are strong and healthy but without much free time and with a lot of responsibilities.

The last thirty years have the potential to be our most rewarding. We have let our kids, who are now thirty and with families of their own, go off and get on with their lives, we have accumulated sixty years of life experience and we have more free time.

This third of our lives may be our last but it should be as enjoyable as the other two. Unfortunately for many people poor health steals their opportunity to make the most of this last thirty years.

Now if we start practising Tai Chi Chuan, Pa Kua Chang and Wutang Shan Nei Jia Chuan when we are children then when we begin the autumn of our years we would already have stored up sixty years of accumulated energy and internal power. So we can maintain our health and be mentally and physically active right up to the moment that we leave.

My choice of three thirty year periods was for convenience to illustrate a point. It could be that you were born with the potential for a life span longer than ninety years.

Whether it is longer or shorter it is definitely more enjoyable if we have a healthy body and mind. The regular practice of Chinese martial arts can contribute towards this, though of course a balanced lifestyle and good diet are also essential.

Everything you think, feel and do, are also all contributory factors to your everyday health. So remember The Golden Rule created by the famous Chinese philosopher Confucius (551 BCE - 479 BCE).

Confucius said - It is the word shu - reciprocity:

Do not do to others what you do not want them to do to you.

Try your best to treat others as you would wish to be treated yourself.

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Chinese Martial Arts Historical Texts by Paul Brecher in 2010

This information is from The College of Chinese Martial Arts Training Manual.

Yang Lu Chan's main teacher Chen Chang Xing also spelled Ch'en Chang-hsing (1771–1853) wrote a book called Important Words on Martial Applications. So to understand The Old Yang Style we must study and contemplate every word of this text with great care.

In fact this text is so key to understanding the Chinese martial arts that any practitioner of any style would gain a deeper understanding from contemplating the words of Chen Chang Xing.



Chen Chang Xing (1771–1853)

Important Words on Martial Applications

By Chen Chan Xing

Fist follows Intention,
know one's self,
know the opponent,
adapt to changing conditions.

Attack where he is not prepared,
hit where he has no Intention,
take advantage of attack and hit,
take advantage of hitting and attack.

If multiple opponent's surround you,
appear strong like a living dragon or tiger,
then attack one opponent,
with a power of big cannon booming straight.

Advancing is dodging,
dodging is advancing.
Protecting is striking,
striking is protecting.

The ancients said:
The body is like a bowstring,
the hands like arrows.

Hands move fast like flash of lightning.
Strike the enemy like rapid thunder.

Move to the left and attack their right,
move to the right and attack their left,
your hand strikes should penetrate his heart,
your feet leave the ground when you strike.

Taking step,
toes grasp ground.

Hands should only clench into fists when reaching the opponent.

Whole body bends and extends,
like loading a cannon,
the tighter it is loaded,
the more power the explosion has.

Writings on tactics say:
no matter which strike,
use whole body.

When fight first move body to clever/favourable position,
be ferocious when striking, otherwise the strike is of no benefit.

Feet and hands must be alive.

Fa jin fierce and courageous like a raising eagle,
rude and brave, no fear, no hesitation,
be awe-inspiring with invincible might,
breaking waves,
in stillness like a mountain,
in movement like thunder.

Observe opponent's position and movement,
step forward with your side to the opponent,
first bend body,
then raise one's chi and hit.

When opponent kicks lift your knee,
use hand to strike, on short distance use elbow,
on long distance kick, on short distance use knee.

If one wants to get upper hand in fighting,
defeat enemy like smashing a weed.

Writing on tactics, those good at fighting say,
first look at the opponent's footwork,
only then strike with hands.

Strike their throat and strike their groin.

Striking from close range,
strike from within one inch.

Important formula says:
practice as if enemy in front of you,
fight as if there was nobody there.

When hands rise feet should fall,
when feet fall hands should rise.

Your heart and mind must take the lead,
your Intention must conquer the opponent,
your body must attack him,
tan tien must move your body,
your body must be one coherent whole.

Move first before the opponent,
advance do not retreat.

Practice all the time,
move and transform everyday,
it is difficult at the beginning,
after a long time it is natural.

Philosophy of fist art ends here.

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End Note

I hope you found the third edition of The Journal of The College of Chinese Martial Arts interesting and I hope that your martial arts training brings you good health, self defence and self development.

I wish you great success and hope that this journal can contribute information that will be helpful to you on your martial arts journey.

More interviews, articles, analysis of ancient texts, discussions about various styles and principles in the next edition.

Good luck in your training

Paul Brecher

Founder & Chief Instructor of The College of Chinese Martial Arts

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