

TAI CHI CHUAN

Tai Chi Tao - Qi Qong - Yoga

BOOK OF ESSENCE



by Tai Chi Uithuizen



TAI CHI SCHOOL UITHUIZEN

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Preface

This book is the handbook of Tai Chi Chuan, Tai Chi and Qi Tao Qong school Uithuizen in the province of Groningen the Netherlands. The school was founded in 2008 by Tai Chi Chuan teacher Yvonne Huizinga. So the school has existed for more than 10 years, the staff thought it was time to bring this wonderful free handbook out to the public. This book provides basic information about Tai Chi Tao and Qi Qong, Tai Chi Chuan and also about the terms “meditation” and “mindfulness”.

Many people exercise in a gym or fitness center and for such training is Tai Chi Tao and Chi Kung a good addition. Tai Chi Chuan is often seen as “meditation in motion” and is giving an optimal opportunity to come to your inner-self. It enriches the mind and body and provides the means to build strength, vitality and energy for a wonderful life.

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What is Tai Chi Tao and Qi Gong

Tai Chi Chuan, Tai Chi Tao and Qi Gong are forms of exercise for health and generating energy for all people no matter the age.

In China, Tai Chi and Chi Kung are the two main traditions that deal with health exercises, breathing exercises and energy. Thus Tai Chi Tao and Chi Kung has a positive effect on your health, stress, vitality and helps some people to get rid of pain. Tai Chi Tao is also made up of the 5 elements: earth, water, fire, wood, metal.

The 5 elements stand for energy and are connected to various organs

The Chinese often say that Tai Chi gives a human: “the flexibility of a child, the health of a lumberjack, and the mind of a wise person”.

Tai Chi Tao has many practice opportunities and therefore adapts to the individual. You can indicate your health problems on which different exercises can be done and adapted to positively influence the energy to support the healing. This pleasant aspect of Tai Chi Tao and Qi Gong makes it really an accessible way for young and old.

Sifu Jan Kraak founder of Tai Chi Tao & Qi Gong

The founder of Tai Chi Tao and Chi Kung is mr Jan Kraak. Jan Kraak developed a very accessible way of Tai Chi which people can practice easily without having to remember all the complex things.

The Tai Chi Tao & Chi Kung is a very large system. Jan Kraak taught in his teacher training: forms, qi qong, Chinese massage, resilience, pushing hands, meditative walking, meditation, operation and effects of everything within the body, self-defense and more.



Different forms in Tai Chi Tao & Qi Gong

Tai Chi Chuan, Tai Chi Tao and Qi Gong Tao have different forms and exercises. Below is a list of some forms within the Tai Chi Tao:

Some forms Tai Chi Tao:

Open the Source - Back to the Source - Cycles - Return to the Mountain – the Harmony – the Five Seasons - the Five Golden Gates - the Temple of Jade - Blooming Lotus - the Five Jewels – Open the Heavenly Gates - the Five Cosmic Energies - the Beijing form - collecting Treasures - Temple Greeting – the Pure Source - the Five Wheels of Energy

Some Tai Chi Tao Chi Kung training sets:

8 Brocades - 10 steps Tai Chi Qi Qong - 18 steps Qigong Shi Ba Shi - besides this there are of course several other Qi Qong series.

Pushing Hands sticky hands

Tui Shou i.e. Pushing Hands are present in many different types of exercises within the Tai Chi Tao. It is a concept that you practice with a partner in several ways. It is possible with one arm, with two arms, fixed position, fixed position for the first leg, or foot.

Meditative walking:

Tai Chi Tao & Qi Qong of Jan Kraak includes multiple methods of meditative walking which are great to do.

Meditation

Nowadays you get overwhelmed by terms as " mindfulness " and " paying attention " . Very often several forms of meditation are under the umbrella mindfulness. Also within the Tai Chi Tao of Jan Kraak there are various forms of meditation. Standing, sitting or even lying meditation, with eyes closed, can be half-closed or closed.

Chinese Massage

Massage methods belong to the Tai Chi Tao and Chi Kung methods of Jan Kraak. The ways are: knock massage, pressure point massage, meridian massages to affect the meridians for a smooth flow of Chi energy.

Tai Chi Tao and Self-Defense

What? Self-defense in Tai Chi Tao? Yes, Jan Kraak in his class often showed how to use a newspaper as a weapon of self-defense to show how effective it can be in an threatening situation He also demonstrated several Tai Chi Tao movements for self-defense purposes and assertiveness. Many Tai Chi Tao and Qi Qong schools don't do anything with it, but it certainly is a part of the Jan Kraak method.



Why Tao Tai Chi & Qi Gong?

Tai Chi Chuan, Tai Chi Tao and Qi Gong exercises will give you excellent movements and you feel fitter, more energetic and you become strong in mind, body and spirit. Tai Chi Tao is practiced with a relaxed attitude in a group.

You can practice standing, sitting and lying and support specific medical problems through Tai Chi Tao & Qi Gong training.



Training together in a group!



What is Tai Chi Chuan?

Tai Chi Chuan originated from ancient Chinese martial arts. Back in the old days the martial arts were not sports for trophies but were really meant for self-defense and protection. Today, Tai Chi Chuan - what sometimes is written as "Tai Ji Quan" – is merely practiced to promote health. You practise Tai Chi by doing a form or multiple forms of fixed movements. Tai Chi Chuan comes in many styles such as the: Yang style, Wu style, Tung style, Chen style, Wudang style, Sun style, Golden Flower Tai Chi and more.

Tai Chi Chuan has multiple components, you often see in the forms also punching, kicking and blocking techniques. Besides the form, you can also practice the movements, applications, footwork, techniques separately in the air and so on. The main objective these days is vitality and health. For people who like to train self-defense, many Tai Chi schools offer that opportunity also like they should.

For some people practicing Tai Chi Chuan memorizing a form may be the main goal. But just to it together, following the movements of a group along that knows is good enough. Remembering many movements can often be quite complex and is one of the main causes that people give up on Tai Chi practice after a while. The motivation and reason why people do start Tai Chi Chuan lie in several areas for different people. A good teacher or instructor will meet the individual needs of each individual although they are practicing in a group.

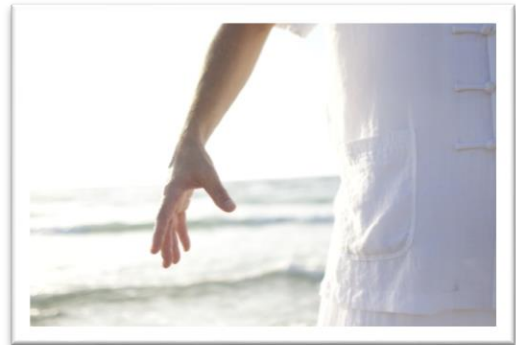
Besides practicing Tai Chi forms, the classes also should offer subjects as:

- **Tai Chi Silk Reeling:** Exercises to improve your Tai Chi movements.
Your movements have a better foundation by doing Silk Reeling Exercises
- **Tui Shou:** Pushing Hands " Sticky Hands " This is often a partner exercise in which we learn to follow each other. The way is expanding to free interaction and responding to what the other is doing.
- **Tai Chi Weapons:** Learning to handle a fan or the elegant Jian straight-sword or spear in Tai Chi many weapons are part of its curriculum.
- **Tai Chi applications:** Applications for self-defense movements we do not every that lesson but more on demand. It is certainly important to know the movements and know what they are, by practicing this way, you become more aware of this and the movements within the form will become much better.
- **Tai Chi Boxing:** Punching and Kicking combinations of the Tai Chi way of course for those who want to intensify their practice that is also possible!
- **Qi Qong:** Qi Qong are exercises for flow of energy and generating energy.
- **Meditation:** Meditation and breathing exercises are available in many varieties and can be done in many ways.

What is Qi Qong?

Chi Kung, also sometimes written as “Qi Qong” are exercises that are specially designed for health purposes. And also to channel the ' Chi ' energy, “the life force”. Chi Kung comes in many varieties, so there are forms of bird Chi Kung, Turtle Qi Qong and many others. You have Qigong which is more focused on the fighting arts but in essence, most Qi Qong exercises really meant for the health and vitality aspect.

There are thousands of Chi Kung exercises, some Qi Qong is stronger than the other and the different purposes and goals also vary. Doctors in China sometimes write practicing Qi Qong as "prescription " or for support of a medical process in which a person is at the moment. Here in the West we must be careful with such statements. So always take advice of medical doctors and see Qi Qong not as the “gospel truth” cure for everything.



Qi Qong also, is in China sometimes a kind of physical education or fitness exercise from the old days in some cases. With a regular practice you can already achieve great results in your physical condition. Some Qi Qong works pretty statically, and really is a kind of physical exercise. Overall in its essence, Qi Qong truly is Chi energy-related for channeling, focus and state of mind purposes. Chi Kung exercises are often found in series, a series of exercises consisting of 8 or 18 exercises. You have them in many different numbers and series of 30 or more also. Qi Qong exercises are short and are generally a few moves, some are longer. From Qi Qong series, you can use an exercise to do, you do not always have to do a complete series.

You can practice Qi Qong only to move and for exercising purposes, but the main goal of Qi Qong is having fun. If you find something fun to do, it is better and you get much faster results of the exercises that you do.

If we look at the Tai Chi Tao & Qi Qong of mr.Jan Kraak you quickly come in contact with your Chi flow. Exercises where you hold an energy ball, or where you rub your hands hard against each other and then feel the magnetism by bringing the hands to each other and away from each other. Tingling palms or warm hands is often a sign that get reinforced by Chi flow and channeling through practicing. Chi is always there and everywhere in living creatures, The result of practicing Qi Qong is that the level of Chi in certain areas rise or fall. If you are very experienced with practice you can also raise the chi through a strong control over the spirit by channeling through mind body and spirit.

However, moving through Qi Qong generating Chi is health supporting and also these exercises are also training your muscles throughout the entire body.

Tai Chi Tao and the five elements theory

The Tai Chi Tao and Chi Kung methods of the late Jan Kraak have a major focus on the five elements. Focus itself is not the right word, the five elements are fully integrated into many things in Tai Chi Tao & Qi Qong. All teachers who have had the teacher training as a student of Jan Kraak will make use of the five element theory.

The 5 elements within Tai Chi Tao and Qi Qong and their associated organs:

Water: Kidneys and Bladder

Wood: Liver and Gallbladder

Fire: Heart and Small Intestine

Earth: Spleen and Pancreas

Metal: Lung and Large Intestine

As Jan Kraak describes it very nicely on his website and in his book " The success of the 5 elemental Tai Chi Tao and Qi Qong Methods " on page 7:

From the **void** it will be born:

From the emptiness you build it. There are six rings:

1. void, 2 water, 3. wood 4. Fire 5. Earth 6. metal.

A cycles and a process of connecting back to a new beginning:

These six rings, are connected to six other rings:

1. feelings 2. relaxation 3 cohesions 4. creating 5, feedback, 6. emptiness.

Only then will you come to refined energy to develop the spiritual enlightened energy. This way is the intention and the essence of many things.

The Five Elemental exercises have a positive effect on the connected organs associated with them. These exercises allow you become healthier through practice and result in more energy.

The differences between Tai Chi Chuan and Tai Chi Tao

Tai Chi Chuan originally, is a martial art you can observe are the martial movements that occur in the Tai Chi Chuan forms. Movements such as kicks, punches, blocks, offensive and defensive movements are all-in the forms. The movements are slow and it seems like a slow motion fight. The forms are generally longer than in Tai Chi Tao and more complex to remember in mind and body.

Tai Chi Chuan teaches you to look at yourself and confronts you with your boundaries and strengths and weaknesses. With practice you can push those boundaries to new limits. Tai Chi Chuan may very well be practiced at your own level, but there always is a certain quest to improve the movements further and refine, to becoming more in balance and make the moves natural.

If we look at Tai Chi Tao there is no such thing as style in the trend of one system or a way. Tai Chi Tao is more open and has shorter forms which are much easier to do and to learn than Tai Chi Chuan sets. Within Tai Chi Tao there is no such thing as a teacher, a teacher who is above the group. Mr. Jan Kraak said there is no such thing as a hierarchy within the Tai Chi Tao & Qi Qong way.

Traditional Tai Chi Chuan is not always adaptable as it comes to stylized ways. Tai Chi Tao has some fixed ways as well but they can be changed according to the person. Tai Chi Tao therefore, works very well for people with medical conditions who have difficulty walking and can only sit. Many other medical conditions are in no way an obstacle to do Tai Chi & Qi Tao Qong. The five elements are a guide to many things in Tai Chi Tao and Qi Qong exercises. Of course accompanied by the concepts of Yin and Yang etc.

By a regular practice of Tai Chi Tao & Qi Qong or Tai Chi Chuan the life energy " Chi " can optimal release. People who follow Tai Chi practice have a greater chance of better health and agility. Tai Chi Chuan and Tai Chi Tao & Qi Qong are both taught at Tai Chi school Uithuizen in the Netherlands. Tai Chi practice is effective for medical complaints as: Stress, Burnout, Whiplash, Wear, Rheumatism, RSI, fibromyalgia, insomnia and many others.



Meditation & Mindfulness

Nowadays you get buried under the terms “mindfulness” and “meditation”, it has become a trend. Mindfulness is basically everything you do with “focus” and “attention”, focus on yourself, focus on the practice, attention on others and the world etc. Meditation is often performed in a quiet position, standing, sitting, lying with eyes closed, half closed or open. You can find inner peace, find rest, learn to let go and give yourself insights about certain things through meditation.

Many martial arts such as karate, kung fu, kickboxing, jiu jitsu mma and sometimes others also have something of meditation in the system. Also, some faiths also have something that is equal or similar to meditation

There are different ways of meditation¹:

Object meditation: One form is the Transcendental Meditation bring your attention to a point and you are so focused on that point that distractions of the outside will not affect you. This "point" could be an idea or a problem in which you are looking for a relaxation which can lead to new insights

Free of object meditation: Unity of everything, so no object or around it, but a method which particular focusses on relaxation of mind, awareness and intentions. Blank, empty but it's an all-encompassing approach in which everything fuses to oneness, but there is also no specific focus on oneness.

Vipassana Meditation: Thoughts, emotions may come up during this meditation. You are aware of them but also let them pass, you do nothing with it. You are aware of them but let them pass, the essence is release and stand firm in your power of being you.

Depending on what the way of the school is where you practice Tai Chi, you can come in contact with one of the mentioned forms of meditation, or maybe all. The best way is that you learn to do meditation in several positions. The postures must be pleasant, or after a lot of stay in a position becoming natural. Only then you can relax and go meditate.

Meditation classes in Tai Chi Chuan can be done standing up. “Stand like a tree”, is a very well-known exercise, but you can also learn meditative walking and other ways of standing meditation.

¹ Wikipedia Meditation

Simplicity is the Key

Often people begin Tai Chi with enthusiasm and hope to start a new form of physical exercise. They are happy and everything is possible. There is some discipline and a genuine desire to go to attend classes. When people often have a certain idea, or goal, immediately they set high standards, high expectations because they have something new.

Then, If you notice that the high demands will not be fulfilled by the time that was given by the students, you see people give up again. The key to start happy at a new school is, keep it simple. No expectations, just join, no real plans, just join, put your thoughts away and just participate.

If you like it then, you also establish and comply with certain goals later. Do not make things difficult for yourself, but keep it simple right from the start.



Keep it simple, this also happens in the classroom!

Keep it simple also applies in doing Tai Chi Tao, Tai Chi Chuan and Mindfulness. Are things difficult, we make it easier the exercises so it goes. The strength lies in the simplicity and building skills from easy to more difficult. If the simple things are under control you can become part of the next step.

The body must be in Motion

The human body is a movement apparatus; the body is made to move. So to keep your body fit and healthy, exercising is a crucial need for a longer and healthier life. The daily minimum recommended amount of practice is about 30 minutes. Besides doing Tai Chi and Qi Gong you can also do other things such as: use the car less, take a walk more, running or exercise in the gym. Having fun and if you like it are basically the most important conditions to keep doing something. So find something you really like and enjoy.

Doing sports and exercising can help to reduce stress, it can improve your cardiovascular system, ensuring strong bones, good sleep and more. It gives you much more vital energy and healthier muscles.

Tai Chi and self defense

If you look at Tai Chi Chuan we are talking about a “martial art” because that name is given. Martial Art is what it is, but you see that the people who follow Tai Chi classes in most cases practice for health benefits. Most schools also, do teach Tai Chi Chuan or Tai Chi Tao for health and relaxation. Tai Chi Chuan people are peaceful in nature and have no intention to fight. Yet, self-defense is an essential part of the original Tai Chi so that's why we also talk about it in this book.

Traditionally, there has always been something like self-defense or martial arts in China, it according to some traditions goes back to the period of the Yellow Emperor. Probably there were already forms, breathing exercises and fighting techniques at that time.

In self-defense today, the main goal is to have fun in practicing these arts. If it is fun to do, the practice goes better and you become much better in the techniques. If the techniques are better trained than you will learn them better. As they become more natural in your system and muscle memory they will eventually be there as a reflex, would you need them for self-defense.



Every situation is different and the street is of course very different than a sports context. There are people who have won a lot of kickboxing and MMA related sports but still cannot defend themselves on the street. Others can do that very well and can apply the skills learned in a self-defense situation. Nothing in terms of self-defense is a guarantee, and nothing is certain when you are in a life threatening situation.

The Tao of Tai Chi Chuan is very soft, but soft can be very hard as well.

Within self-defense in relation to Tai Chi i mean Tai Chi applications, one needs to know what each movement is and how they can be applied. Once you know what a movement is about you need grinding the techniques and adapt them to something that really works. Resistance training therefore is most important, an opponent that gives strength and counteracts gives you more tools and insights to what is working or not.

It basically does not matter what style of martial arts you do. If we talk in terms of fighting and self-defense the things you do must work period. If something does not work, you must change it to something else that does. Good footwork is important, good movements also. It are the moves that pop up in an instant that determine whether you are safe or not. Remembering hundred techniques is not a good way in my view. Keep it simple!

Although self-defense is something serious, it is fun to do and training as real as possible is important. You need to enjoy it and train many reality based situations as much as possible.

Interaction between Heaven, Earth, Person

We as Tai Chi practitioners want harmony in our practice of Tai Chi and that harmony can be better understood through the earth, man, heaven principle. We as human beings are connected with the earth, the earth gives us our basic needs, we need oxygen, food etc. In addition, we have a connection with heaven. The earth, but also life forms like humans, need sunlight. We in Tai Chi Chuan believe that the interaction between heaven, earth, and person is ultimate and can be enhanced by our Tai Chi Chuan and Chi Kung practice. Everything will flow better and we have more harmony in our lives but also in our Tai Chi Chuan and Qi Qong practice.

Connection with Nature

The harmony between earth, life form and heaven are a connection with nature. Often, many adults are so far away from nature that, we really need to learn to get back and more connected with nature again.



The connection with nature can be seen as something holistic to connect the qualities humans with their natural origin. Going back to nature can occur in many ways, being nice to others, make yourself feel better through joy, assertiveness from your heart, etc. Feelings are key essence in going back to nature.

Also within the Tai Chi we try to move like water, we learn from smooth flowing quality of water. Or terms like "Be like the wind", "feel like you are levitating" and others are essential characteristic of our basic nature.

" Look deep into nature, and then you will understand everything better "

- Albert Einstein



How often do you Exercise?

Tai Chi Chuan you can practice when you want to. Sometimes it can be more often and other times less. But if you translate your goals to discipline you may be doing Tai Chi and Chi Kung on a daily basis. It is good if it becomes a daily habit, like eating, breathing and other things you do during a day.



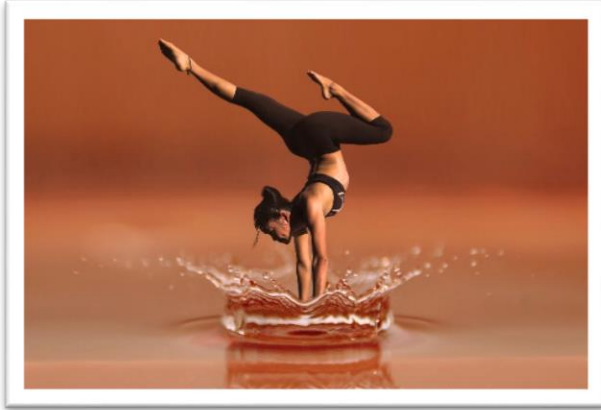
The same rule applies to all sports, that you should do it if you like it. However, if for example, you do Tai Chi Chuan competitions and want to participate in different contests it is important that you force yourself to hard training for optimal development to reach the right competition level. Participating in competitions is always good because it develops you optimal and you learn in a good way to deal with stress and pressure.

For practitioners, which are practicing just for fun and conditioning is when they feel good about themselves through the practice enough.

If you want to maximize the effect of your Tai Chi Chuan or Tai Chi Tao training you will need to take at least regularly weekly classes. Tai Chi Chuan, Tai Chi Tao & Qi Gong can be practiced until a very old age and is also very accessible to people who have never done Chinese martial arts. Starting at an older age is always a possibility, just follow your instinct and practice by heart.



Tai Chi and Yoga



Thousands of years ago Yoga originated in India. Yoga is designed for balancing mind and body to achieve a certain harmony. There are different types and lineages of Yoga. You have Yin Yoga, Ashtanga Yoga, Bikram Yoga, Raja Yoga and others. Any form of yoga has its own specialization and exercises to achieve harmony between body and mind.

So just like Tai Chi the main objective is to achieve a harmony between mind, body and spirit, but also to make the connection with nature. Nowadays you see that Yoga and Tai Chi are so huge in and become more and more popular. The term mindfulness is everywhere and everyone should come “Zen” according to current trends.

Tai Chi, Chi Kung, and Yoga classes are two forms of exercise that are fine to practice, but also good to practice together. In Tai Chi you use external factors such as the forms and your body for internal development and bring the Chi in motion and channel it. Through Yoga Asanas, poses for flexibility and strength for development in mind, body and spirit. You also have the famous Sun - Greetings within Yoga which are very good exercises you should try them.

Tai Chi Chuan and Yoga are two wonderful arts of which one comes from China and the other from India. There are so many similarities that the two arts are very close together in what can be achieved through practice.

Do you practice Tai Chi and Qi Qong? Also try yoga! Do you practice Yoga? Also consider Tai Chi and Qi Qong! Experience the similarities of both arts yourself.



Use the beautiful old knowledge to come more to yourself and to make the connection with nature yourself in mind, body and spirit.

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