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**ORIGINS OF TAI CHI – IT BEGAN AS A PHILOSOPHY**

**FROM MASTER TROY:**

*‘Tai Chi is from China. It is an internal art. It is a martial art, an exercise art, a health art and a meditation art. Tai Chi is the art of bringing mind, body and spirit into harmony. Tai Chi roughly translates into ‘grand ultimate balance’ and finding that balance, that harmony, is the student’s goal.*

*Tai Chi is based on the Taoist (or Daoist) philosophy (not a religion) as set forth by Lao Tzu in his writings the ‘Tao Teh Ching’ in the 722-480 BC timeframe. The Taoist philosophy viewed the world based on the natural balance of Nature. They thought that to be in harmony with Nature’s laws was to save one’s own nature thereby optimizing the mind, body and spirit. This philosophy was eventually combined with physical movement and evolved into Tai Chi as it is known today.’*

**WHERE DID THE PHILOSOPHY COME FROM?**

The credit is given to the legendary figure **Lao Tzu** (also spelled as Lao Zi and sometimes also as Laozi or Lao Tze). He lived in the Spring & Autumn Period (722 to 418 BC). Usually portrayed as a 6th Century BC contemporary of Confucius but modern historians consider him to have lived during the Warring States period of the 4th Century BC.

He is said to have been a scholar who worked as the Keeper of the Archives for the royal court of [Zhou](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zhou_dynasty) of the central Chinese Zhou Dynasty in the 6th century B.C.  This reportedly allowed him broad access to the works of the [Yellow Emperor](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yellow_Emperor) and other classics of the time. His official position in the government was historiographer who was also in charge of observing celestial phenomena and consulting the I Ching for the imperial court. Lao Tzu is said to have tired of life in the Zhou court as it grew increasingly morally corrupt and he decided to leave and live a life in harmony with nature. So he left and rode on a water buffalo to the western border of the Chinese empire. Although he was dressed as a farmer, the border official recognized him and asked him to write down his wisdom. According to this legend, what Lao Tzu wrote became the sacred text called the ***Tao Te Ching*.** (Tao means the integral truth of the universe, Teh means the virtuous application of such high, subtle knowledge and Ching means serious spiritual guidance. *Source: Introduction to Tao Teh Ching*)

His name, Lao Tzu literally means ‘old master’. The book title *Tao Te Ching* can mean “The book of the Way and its Virtue” and was apparently written as a guide for rulers and in it defined the Tao, or way, and established the philosophical basis of Taoism.

It is possible that this single man was mythical and the book was actually a compilation from several authors over a period of time. But stories about Lao Tzu and the *Tao Te Ching* have passed down through different Chinese philosophical schools for over two thousand years.

Some stories have Lao Tzu traveling to India and becoming the teacher of Siddartha Gautama, the Buddha, while others say he was the Buddha himself.

**WHAT WAS THE PHILOSOPHY? ANSWER: TAOISM**

https://medium.com/@mustaphahitani/buddha-confucius-and-laozi-taste-some-vinegar-47176ff78f78

*To Lao Tzu, the harmony that naturally existed between heaven and earth from the very beginning could be found by anyone at any time, but not by following the rules of the Confucianists. As he stated in his Tao Te Ching, the “Tao Virtue Book,” earth was in essence a reflection of heaven, run by the same laws — not by the laws of men. These laws affected not only the spinning of distant planets, but the activities of the birds in the forest and the fish in the sea. According to Laozi, the more man interfered with the natural balance produced and governed by the universal laws, the further away the harmony retreated into the distance. The more forcing, the more trouble. Whether heavy or light, wet or dry, fast or slow, everything had its own nature already within it, which could not be violated without causing difficulties. When abstract and arbitrary rules were imposed from the outside, struggle was inevitable. Only then did life become sour.*

*To Laozi, the world was not a setter of traps but a teacher of valuable lessons. Its lessons needed to be learned, just as its laws needed to be followed; then all would go well. Rather than turn away from “the world of dust,” Laozi advised others to “join the dust of the world.” What he saw operating behind everything in heaven and earth he called Tao, “the Way.”*

**WHAT DOES THE ‘TAO TEH CHING’ SAY?** (*Daodejing*) sometimes spelled Tao Te Ching

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laozi

*As with most other ancient* [*Chinese philosophers*](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Chinese_philosophers&action=edit&redlink=1)*, Laozi often explains his ideas by way of paradox, analogy, appropriation of ancient sayings, repetition, symmetry, rhyme, and rhythm. In fact, the whole book can be read as an analogy – the ruler is the awareness, or self, in meditation and the myriad creatures or empire is the experience of the body, senses and desires.*

*The Tao Te Ching, often called simply Laozi after its reputed author, describes the Dao (or Tao) as the source and ideal of all existence: it is unseen, but not transcendent, immensely powerful yet supremely humble, being the root of all things. People have desires and free will (and thus are able to alter their own nature). Many act "unnaturally", upsetting the natural balance of the Tao. The Tao Te Ching intends to lead students to a "return" to their natural state, in harmony with Tao. Language and* [*conventional wisdom*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conventional_wisdom) *are critically assessed. Taoism views them as inherently biased.*

**https://www.theschooloflife.com/thebookoflife/the-great-eastern-philosophers-lao-tzu/**

*Daoism is deeply intertwined with other branches of thought like Confucianism and Buddhism. Confucius is often believed to be a student of Lao Tzu. Similarly, some believe that when Lao Tzu disappeared, he travelled to India and Nepal and either taught or became the Buddha. Confucianist practices to this day not only respect Lao Tzu as a great philosopher but also try to follow many of his teachings.*

*The Tao Te Ching is somewhat like the Bible: it gives instructions (at times vague and generally open to multiple interpretations) on how to live a good life. It discusses the “Dao,” or the “way” of the world, which is also the path to virtue, happiness, and harmony. This “way” isn’t inherently confusing or difficult. Lao Tzu wrote, “the great Dao is very even, but people like to take by-ways.” In Lao Tzu’s view the problem with virtue isn’t that it is difficult or unnatural, but simply is that we resist the very simple path that might make us most content.*

*In order to follow the Dao, we need to go beyond simply reading and thinking about it. Instead we must learn wu wei (“flowing” or “effortless action”), a sort of purposeful acceptance of the way of the Dao and live in harmony with it. This might seem lofty and bizarre, but most of Lao Tzu’s suggestions are actually very simple.*

*First, we ought to take more time for stillness. “To the mind that is still,” Lao Tzu said, “the whole universe surrenders.” We need to let go of our schedules, worries and complex thoughts for a while and simply experience the world. We spend so much time rushing from one place to the next in life, but Lao Tzu reminds us “nature does not hurry, yet everything is accomplished.” It is particularly important that we remember that certain things—grieving, growing wiser, developing a new relationship—only happen on their own schedule, like the changing of leaves in the fall or the blossoming of the bulbs we planted months ago.*

*When we are still and patient we also need to be open. We need to be reminded to empty ourselves of frivolous thoughts so that we will observe what is really important. “The usefulness of a pot comes from its emptiness.” Lao Tzu said. “Empty yourself of everything, let your mind become still.” If we are too busy, too preoccupied with anxiety or ambition, we will miss a thousand moments of the human experience that are our natural inheritance. We need to be awake to the way light reflects off of ripples on a pond, the way other people look when they are laughing, the feeling of the wind playing with our hair. These experiences reconnect us to parts of ourselves.*

*This is another key point of Lao Tzu’s writing: we need to be in touch with our real selves. We spend a great deal of time worrying about who we ought to become, but we should instead take time to be who we already are at heart. We might rediscover a generous impulse, or a playful side we had forgotten, or simply an old affection for long walks. Our ego is often in the way of our true self, which must be found by being receptive to the outside world rather than focusing on some critical, too-ambitious internal image. “When I let go of what I am,” Lao Tzu wrote, “I become what I might be.”*

*What is the best book about philosophy one could look at? For Lao Tzu, it wasn’t a volume (or a scroll) but the book of nature. It is the natural world, in particular its rocks, water, stone, trees and clouds, that offers us constant, eloquent lessons in wisdom and calm – if only we remembered to pay attention a little more often.*

*In Lao Tzu’s eyes, most of what is wrong with us stems from our failure to live ‘in accordance with nature’. Our envy, our rage, our manic ambition, our frustrated sense of entitlement, all of it stems from our failure to live as nature suggests we should. Of course, ‘nature’ has many moods and one can see in it almost anything one likes depending on one’s perspective. But when Lao Tzu refers to nature, he is thinking of some very particular aspects of the natural world; he focuses in on a range of attitudes he sees in it which, if we manifested them more regularly in our own lives, would help us find serenity and fulfillment.*

*Lao Tzu liked to compare different parts of nature to different virtues. He said, “The best people are like water, which benefits all things and does not compete with them. It stays in lowly places that others reject. This is why it is so similar to the Way (Dao).” Each part of nature can remind us of a quality we admire and should cultivate ourselves—the strength of the mountains, the resilience of trees, the cheerfulness of flowers.*

*Daoism advises us to look to trees as case studies in graceful endurance. They are constantly tormented by the elements, and yet because they are an ideal mixture of the supple and the resilient, they respond without some of our customary rigidity and defensiveness and therefore survive and thrive in ways we often don’t. Trees are an image of patience too, for they sit out long days and nights without complaint, adjusting themselves to the slow shift of the seasons – showing no ill-temper in a storm, no desire to wander from their spot for an impetuous journey; they are content to keep their many slender fingers deep in the clammy soil, metres from their central stems and far from the tallest leaves which hold the rain water in their palms.*

*Water is another favourite Daoist source of wisdom, for it is soft and seemingly gentle and yet, when it is given sufficient time, is powerful enough to mold and reshape stone.*

*At one level, it seems strange to claim that our characters might evolve in the company of a waterfall or a mountain, a pine tree or a celandine, objects which after all have no conscious concerns and so, it would seem, cannot either encourage nor censor behaviour. And yet an inanimate object may, to come to the lynchpin of Lao Tzu’s claim for the beneficial effects of nature, still work an influence on those around it. Natural scenes have the power to suggest certain values to us – mountains dignity, pines resolution, flowers kindness – and in unobtrusive ways, may therefore act as inspirations to virtue.*

*The idea that the contemplation of nature is a source of perspective and tranquility is well known in theory, but so easy to overlook because we take it for granted – and never give it the time and focus required.*

*Often our heads are filled with unhelpful phrases and ideas: things that have wormed their way into our imaginations and, by stirring up anxieties, make it harder for us to cope. For example, ‘Have the courage to live out your dreams,’ ‘Never compromise,’ ‘Fight until you win…’ These can (in certain cases) be a kind of poison, for which Lao Tzu’s words – combined with natural scenes – are the ideal antidote.*

*It would be a mistake to take Lao Tzu’s sayings literally in all cases. To rejoice in the way everything happens (a mediocre first draft, a car crash, a wrongful imprisonment, a brutal stabbing…) would be foolish. But what he says is, on certain occasions, extremely helpful: when your child has a different view of life from you but one which is full of unexpected insight nevertheless; when you are not invited out but have a chance to stay home and examine your thoughts for a change; when your bicycle is perfectly nice – even though its not made of carbon fibre.*

*We know that nature is good for our bodies. Lao Tzu’s contribution has been to remind us that it is also full of what deserves to be called philosophical wisdom; lessons that can make a particular impression on us because they reach us through our eyes and ears, rather than just our reason.*

<https://www.taoistic.com/taothemes/wuwei-nonaction.htm>

*Wu Wei*, Non-action, is one of the most famous Taoist concepts, repeatedly pointed out in *Tao Te Ching*, the great Taoist classic. We should not hurry to action, since most things in the world take care of themselves if left alone. And when we act, we should do so cautiously, or we might destroy more than we solve.

**QUOTES FROM LAO TZU – TAO TEH CHING**

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| *Being deeply loved by someone gives you strength, while loving someone deeply gives you courage.* | *Kindness in words creates confidence. Kindness in thinking creates profoundness. Kindness in giving creates love.* |
| *Do the difficult things while they are easy and do the great things while they are small.* | ***Keep on diminishing and diminishing, Until you reach the state of Non-Ado. No-Ado, and yet nothing is left undone. (1)*** |
| *If you do not change direction, you may end up where you are heading.* | *A journey of a thousand miles must begin with a single step.* |
| “Knowing others is intelligence; knowing yourself is true wisdom. Mastering others is strength;  mastering yourself is true power.” | “Life is a series of natural and spontaneous changes. Don't resist them; that only creates sorrow. Let reality be reality. Let things flow naturally forward in whatever way they like.” |
| “When you are content to be simply yourself and don't compare or compete, everyone will respect you.” | “The truth is not always beautiful, nor beautiful words the truth.” |
| “When I let go of what I am, I become what I might be.” | “Time is a created thing. To say 'I don't have time,' is like saying, 'I don't want to.” |
| A leader is best when people barely know he exists, when his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will say: we did it ourselves | “If you are depressed you are living in the past.  If you are anxious you are living in the future.  If you are at peace you are living in the present.” |
| “Care about what other people think and you will always be their prisoner.” | Stop thinking and end your problems. |
| “Nature does not hurry, yet everything is accomplished.” | “Do you have the patience to wait until your mud settles and the water is clear?” |
| Be careful what you water your dreams with. Water them with worry and fear and you will produce weeds that choke the life from your dream. Water them with optimism and solutions and you will cultivate success. Always be on the lookout for ways to turn a problem into an opportunity for success. Always be on the lookout for ways to nurture your dream.” | |
| “At the center of your being you have the answer; you know who you are and you know what you want.” | “Respond intelligently even to unintelligent treatment” |
| From wonder into wonder existence opens. |
| Be still like a mountain and flow like a great river. |
| (1) **The principle of Non-Ado is a major theme of the Tao The Ching**. It is not about what you choose to pursue; rather, it has everything to do with how you choose to pursue it. It’s about humility & simplicity. If you devote less energy worrying about how you think you ought to perform, you can devote more energy to actually performing. | |

**OTHER PHILOSOPHIES & IMPORTANT WORK RELEVANT TO TAI CHI:**

**I CHING - Also known as Classic of Changes or Book of Changes**

*Information below sourced from I Ching and Wikipedia.*

It began as an ancient book called the **Tao of I** that existed 2000 years before Confucius. It is the oldest of the Chinese classics and an influential text read throughout the word. Originally a divination manual in the Western Zhou period (1000–750 BC), over the course of the [Warring States period](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Warring_States_period) and early imperial period (500–200 BC) it was transformed into a [cosmological](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religious_cosmology) text with a series of philosophical commentaries known as the "[Ten Wings](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ten_Wings)".[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/I_Ching#cite_note-FOOTNOTEKern201017-3) After becoming part of the [Five Classics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Five_Classics) in the 2nd century BC, the *I Ching* was the subject of scholarly commentary and the basis for divination practice for centuries across the Far East, and eventually took on an influential role in Western understanding of Eastern thought.

The *I Ching* uses a type of divination called [cleromancy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cleromancy), which produces apparently random numbers. Six numbers between 6 and 9 are turned into a [hexagram](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/I_Ching#Hexagrams), which can then be looked up in the *I Ching* book, arranged in an order known as the [King Wen sequence](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/King_Wen_sequence). The interpretation of the readings found in the *I Ching* is a matter of centuries' debate, and many commentators have used the book symbolically, often to provide guidance for moral decision making as informed by Confucianism, [Taoism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taoism) and  [Buddhism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddhism). The hexagrams themselves have often acquired cosmological significance and been paralleled with many other traditional names for the processes of change such as [yin and yang](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yin_and_yang) and [Wu Xing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wu_Xing).

**HOW DOES THE I CHING RELATE TO TAI CHI?**

The main theme of the Tao of I is that everything is in a process of continuous change, rising and falling in a progressive evolutionary advancement. It also discloses that when situations proceed beyond their extremes, they alternate to their opposites. It is a reminder to accept necessary change and be ready to transform, warning that one should adjust one’s efforts according to changes in time and situation. “In a favorable time and situation, never neglect the unfavorable potential. In an unfavorable time and situation, never act abruptly and blindly. And in adverse circumstances, never become depressed and despair.” The authors are spread through history: Fu Xi, King Wen of the Zhou dynasty, the Duke of Zhou and Confucius wrote the commentaries. The contributions of these 3 sages of the Zhou dynasty bestowed significant meanings. After Confucius’s commentaries were written, the **I of the Zhou** dynasty became revered as the I Ching. Confucius’s commentary is significant because the language of the original writings had become artifact and he made it possible to understand and study further.

The I Ching was derived from simple ancient mathematics. The basic question: why are there odd and even numbers? By answering the question, **you find the basic frame of yin and yang. (Source: I Ching)**

**COMPARISON OF LAO TZU, CONFUCIUS AND BUDDHA AT A VINEGAR TASTING:**

**(from onmarkproductions.com)**

The three great philosophies of China are Confucianism, Buddism and Taoism. Curiously, all three developed at approximately the same time. Buddism originated around -500 in India and his teachings entered China aroung the 1st and 2nd centuries. Confucious originiated in China (-552 to -479). Most sources ay Lao Tzu lived at the same time as Confucius but some claim he appeared later.

**Confucianism** developed as a set of ethical and political tools that emphasized filial piety, respect for elders, social obligations and rules of courtesy that promised humanistic, rational and benevolent governance, harmonius family relationships and clear cut standards for governing the interaction among ruler, lords, vall=ssals, and common fold, between old and young, father and son etc. Over centuries it developed into an overarching set of moral laws.

**Buddism** originated in Nepal, India. At the core of **Buddhism** is the belief in the **Four Noble Truths**. Believed to have been conceived by Siddhartha Gautama, or **Buddha**, these **four truths** are The **Truth** of Suffering, The **Truth** of the Cause of Suffering, The **Truth** of the End of Suffering, and The **Truth** of the Path that Leads to the End of Suffering. Also the eightfold path - The **Eightfold Path** is part of the fourth noble truth which is the **path** that leads to the end of suffering. Buddha taught that the way to achieve enlightenment and to minimize human suffering was to live an ethical life. Buddha placed all human behavior into one of **eight** categories or paths. Buddha was born as Prince Siddhartha.

https://medium.com/@mustaphahitani/buddha-confucius-and-laozi-taste-some-vinegar-47176ff78f78

The Vinegar Tasters is a traditional subject in Chinese religious and philosophical painting. The concept of the painting depicts the three founders of China’s three major religious and philosophical traditions: Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism. The painting engulfs a huge amount of wisdom and knowledge, and an interesting allegory.

We see the Buddha, Confucius, and Laozi standing around a vat full of vinegar, each one of the three masters dip their finger and take a taste of the vinegar. The expression on each man’s face shows his individual reaction, with each man representing a philosophical and religious teaching, the vinegar representing the “essence of life, and the reaction represent each teaching’s overview towards life and its essence. The Buddha is depicted having a bitter look on his face, Confucius with a sour expression, but we find Laozi wearing a smile of satisfaction.

Buddhism, as it is practiced today, was heavily influenced and shaped by Siddhartha Gautama, who lived a very sheltered and extravagant life growing up. As he neared his thirties it is said that he became aware of all the ugliness in the world, and this prompted him to leave his home in search of enlightenment, achieving it when he was thirty-five years old. Several interpretations grew out of the Buddha’s reaction to the taste of the vinegar; one interpretation is that Buddhism, being concerned with the self, viewed the vinegar as a polluter of the body due to its extreme and intense flavor. Another interpretation for the reaction, and the one I personally favor, is that Buddhism reports the life as it is, in which vinegar is vinegar and isn’t naturally sweet on the tongue, rather it acquires an extreme bitter taste. Trying to represent vinegar, which is a metaphor here for the essence of life, as sweet is ignoring and denying what it truly is.

Confucius saw life as sour, in need of rules to correct the degeneration of people and believed that the present was out of step of the past and that the government had no understanding of the way of the universe, in which the right response would be the reverence of the ancestors and their tradition. Confucius, being concerned with the outside world, viewed the vinegar as “polluted wine”.

Now we come to Laozi’s smile, and satisfactory look, with an excerpt from ‘The Tao of Pooh’ a book by Benjamin Hoff: *To Laozi, the harmony that naturally existed between heaven and earth from the very beginning could be found by anyone at any time, but not by following the rules of the Confucianists. As he stated in his Tao Te Ching, the “Tao Virtue Book,” earth was in essence a reflection of heaven, run by the same laws — not by the laws of men. These laws affected not only the spinning of distant planets, but the activities of the birds in the forest and the fish in the sea. According to Laozi, the more man interfered with the natural balance produced and governed by the universal laws, the further away the harmony retreated into the distance. The more forcing, the more trouble. Whether heavy or light, wet or dry, fast or slow, everything had its own nature already within it, which could not be violated without causing difficulties. When abstract and arbitrary rules were imposed from the outside, struggle was inevitable. Only then did life become sour.*

*To Laozi, the world was not a setter of traps but a teacher of valuable lessons. Its lessons needed to be learned, just as its laws needed to be followed; then all would go well. Rather than turn away from “the world of dust,” Laozi advised others to “join the dust of the world.” What he saw operating behind everything in heaven and earth he called Tao, “the Way.”*

*A basic principle of Laozi’s teaching was that this Way of the Universe could not be adequately described in words, and that it would be insulting both to its unlimited power and to the intelligent human mind to attempt to do so. Still, its nature could be understood, and those who cared the most about it, and the life from which it was inseparable, understood it best.*

In The Vinegar Tasters, Laozi is found smiling, why? Well, as we’ve said before the vinegar found in the allegory represents life, and certainly in reality, must certainly have an unpleasant taste, as the expressions on the faces of the other two men indicate. Yet, living in harmony and accordance with life and the Tao, this understanding transforms what others may perceive as negative into something positive. “From the Taoist point of view, argues Benjamin Hoff, sourness and bitterness come from the interfering and unappreciative mind. Life itself, when understood and utilized for what it is, is sweet. That is the message of The Vinegar Tasters.”

**HOW DID THE PHILOSOPHY GET PASSED ON AND BECOME TAI CHI? ANSWER – ZHANG SAN FENG:**

The guard that stopped Lao Tzu at the western border was Yinxi oro Mi Xi. In some versions of the tale, the guard was so touched at the wisdom of the writings that he asked to be a disciple. In other stories, he sentry asked the old master to record his wisdom for the good of the country before he would be permitted to pass

From Yinxi, the work was passed to many generations and eventually to Zhang Sanfeng who merged the philosophy with movement and created the orthodox school of Taijiquan.

*Legend proclaims that Zhang Sanfeng was a Shaolin Temple monk who was exiled and then became a Daoist, learning the concepts and theories left by Laozi and descendants there of he developed a completely new approach based on gentle internally focused skills. (source taipinginstitute.com)*

[***http://qi-encyclopedia.com/index.asp?author=Zhang-Sanfeng***](http://qi-encyclopedia.com/index.asp?author=Zhang-Sanfeng) ***Here is one of the stories of how Zhang Sanfeng discovered Taijiquan.***

*"… one day he spotted a snake and a crane in deadly combat. Chang [Zhang Sanfeng] noticed before the snake attacked, it would raise its head, bow its body, and appear to gather its intrinsic energy, ready to strike out like an arrow. In response, the crane would deflect the attack effortlessly with a downward arc of its powerful wing. From this, Chang developed an entire program of motions and responses…. The crane would retaliate by stabbing its beak down at its prey…. The snake used its flexibility to sway or dodge the strike, as in "roll back"; this allowed the snake to lash out at the crane's legs, but the crane would simply raise the vulnerable limb in a relaxed fashion so that the snake's bite could not attach itself, thanks to the "emptiness" of the bird's extremity.… This natural display of yin and yang from the animal kingdom made a great impression, providing him with the realization that yielding is more effective than using brute force still incorporated many of the martial postures he had learned from the Shaolin Monastery, but he tempered them with his own variations and innovations."*

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Other information: **http://www.egreenway.com/taichichuan/chang1.htm**

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| *FROM WAYNE PENG:*  *In the central years of the Ming Dynasty (1400AD) there lived a Daoist priest of the Wudang Monastary named Zhang San Feng. According to legend, this revered ascetic often ventured deep into the wilds of the mountains to gather apothecary herbs. During one of his journeys, he chanced upon a fight between a white crane and a snake, and the combat of the two beasts struck him with inspiration. Combining concepts from the Book of Changes (I Ching) with the Doctrine of the Mean and Neo-Confucian thought, Zhang San Feng united these philosophies with the traditional forms of Chinese martial skill to create a new style of martial art, a style that could be practiced by all ages, which would strengthen the body and teach self defense. After his epiphany, he left the monastery and gave his new martial art the name of tai chi chuan – a name that continues to be used by generations today.* |