



Review

Tai Ji Quan: An overview of its history, health benefits, and cultural value

Yucheng Guo*, Pixiang Qiu, Taoguang Liu

School of Martial Arts, Shanghai University of Sport, Shanghai 200438, China

Received 4 March 2013; revised 2 October 2013; accepted 18 October 2013

Abstract

Tai Ji Quan is considered to be a part of traditional Chinese Wushu (a martial art) and comprises various styles that have evolved historically from the Chen, Yang, Wǔ, Wú, and Sun families (schools). Recent simplification of the original classic styles has made Tai Ji Quan easier to adopt in practice. Thus, the traditional legacy of using Tai Ji Quan for self-defense, mindful nurturing of well-being, and fitness enhancement has been expanded to more contemporary applications that focus on promoting physical and mental health, enhancing general well-being, preventing chronic diseases, and being an effective clinical intervention for diverse medical conditions. As the impact of Tai Ji Quan on physical performance and health continues to grow, there is a need to better understand its historical impact and current status. This paper provides an overview of the evolution of Tai Ji Quan in China, its functional utility, and the scientific evidence of its health benefits, as well as how it has been a vehicle for enhancing cultural understanding and exchanging between East and West.

Copyright © 2014, Shanghai University of Sport. Production and hosting by Elsevier B.V. Open access under [CC BY-NC-ND license](#).

Keywords: Culture; Health; Martial art; Tai Chi; Tai Ji Quan; Wushu

1. Introduction

Tai Ji Quan (also known as Tai Chi) has traditionally been practiced for multiple purposes, including self-defense, mindful nurturing of well-being, and fitness enhancement. For hundreds of years the Chinese have enjoyed many benefits that Tai Ji Quan is believed to offer. Today, people of all ages and backgrounds from around the world are discovering what the Chinese have known for centuries: that long-term sustained practice of Tai Ji Quan leads to positive changes in physical and mental well-being. As both the popularity and impact of Tai Ji Quan on health continue to grow in China and worldwide, there is a need to update our current understanding of its historical roots, multifaceted functional features, scientific research, and broad

dissemination. Therefore, the purposes of this paper are to describe: (1) the history of Tai Ji Quan, (2) its functional utility, (3) common methods of practice, (4) scientific research on its health benefits, primarily drawn on research conducted in China, and (5) the extent to which Tai Ji Quan has been used as a vehicle for enhancing cultural understanding and exchanging between East and West.

2. Historical evolution of Tai Ji Quan

Tai Ji Quan, under the general umbrella of Chinese Wushu (martial arts),¹ has long been believed to have originated in the village of Chenjiagou in Wenxian county, Henan province, in the late Ming and early Qing dynasties.^{1–3} Over a history of more than 300 years, the evolution of Tai Ji Quan has led to the existence of five classic styles, known as Chen, Yang, Wǔ, Wú, and Sun.

At its birthplace in Chenjiagou, Chen Wangting (1600–1680) has historically been recognized as the first person to create and practice Tai Ji Quan, in a format known as the Chen style.³ With the establishment of Chen style, traditional Tai Ji Quan begins to evolve both within and outside the

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: wushuxue@126.com (Y. Guo)

Peer review under responsibility of Shanghai University of Sport



Production and hosting by Elsevier

Chen family. Chen Changxing (1771–1853) broke his family's admonitions to keep the art within the family by teaching Chen style to his talented and hard-working apprentice Yang Luchan (1799–1872) from Yongnian in Hebei province. Yang Luchan later created the Yang style and passed his routine to two of his sons, Yang Banhou (1837–1892), who developed the “small frame” of the Yang style, and Yang Jianhou (1839–1917). Yang Jianhou's son, Yang Chengfu (1883–1936), introduced Yang style to the public.⁴

Wǔ Yuxiang (1812–1880), who first learned Tai Ji Quan from his fellow villager Yang Luchan, acquired a thorough knowledge of Tai Ji Quan theory from master Chen Qingping (1795–1868) and, with assistance from his nephew Li Yishe (1832–1892), combined techniques he learned from both Yang and Chen styles to eventually develop the Tai Ji Quan theory that led to the formation of his unique Wǔ style.⁵

The fourth of the five main styles is Wú, which was created by Quan You (1834–1902) and his son Wú Jianquan (1870–1942). Quan first learned Tai Ji Quan from Yang Luchan and Yang Banhou. Wú's refinement of Yang's “small frame” approach gave rise to the Wú style.⁶

The fifth and most recent style of Tai Ji Quan comes from Sun Lutang (1861–1932), who learned Tai Ji Quan from the Wǔ style descendant Hao Weizhen (1849–1920). By integrating Xing Yi Quan and Ba Gua Zhang (two other forms of Chinese Wushu), Sun Lutang developed his unique Sun style.⁷ A schematic summarizing the history and evolution of the five classic Tai Ji Quan styles is presented in Fig 1.

In summary, with its rich history and diversity of styles, Tai Ji Quan offers an exercise and/or sport modality that has long been thought to promote health, encourage cultural exchange, and help with disease prevention. Since the 1950s, under sponsorship of the Chinese State Physical Culture and Sports Commission, further modifications have occurred including varying the number of movements (24-form, 42-form, 48-form, 88-form).^{1,8} Of these, the 24-form is the most frequently used in public programs and public health promotion. Subsequent development has further simplified the 24-form routine into 8- and 16-form routines.¹

3. Functional utility of Tai Ji Quan

3.1. Self-defense

With its strong roots in Wushu, Tai Ji Quan is often practiced as a self-defense program that involves combative actions such as kicking, striking, subduing, and pushing down. These techniques must be skillfully executed through careful movement control and maneuvering rather than through overt external physical force.

3.2. Fitness-enhancement

Because Tai Ji Quan involves dynamic actions with controlled movements and coordination, long-term sustained practice is believed to improve the function of the nervous, cardiovascular, respiratory, and musculoskeletal

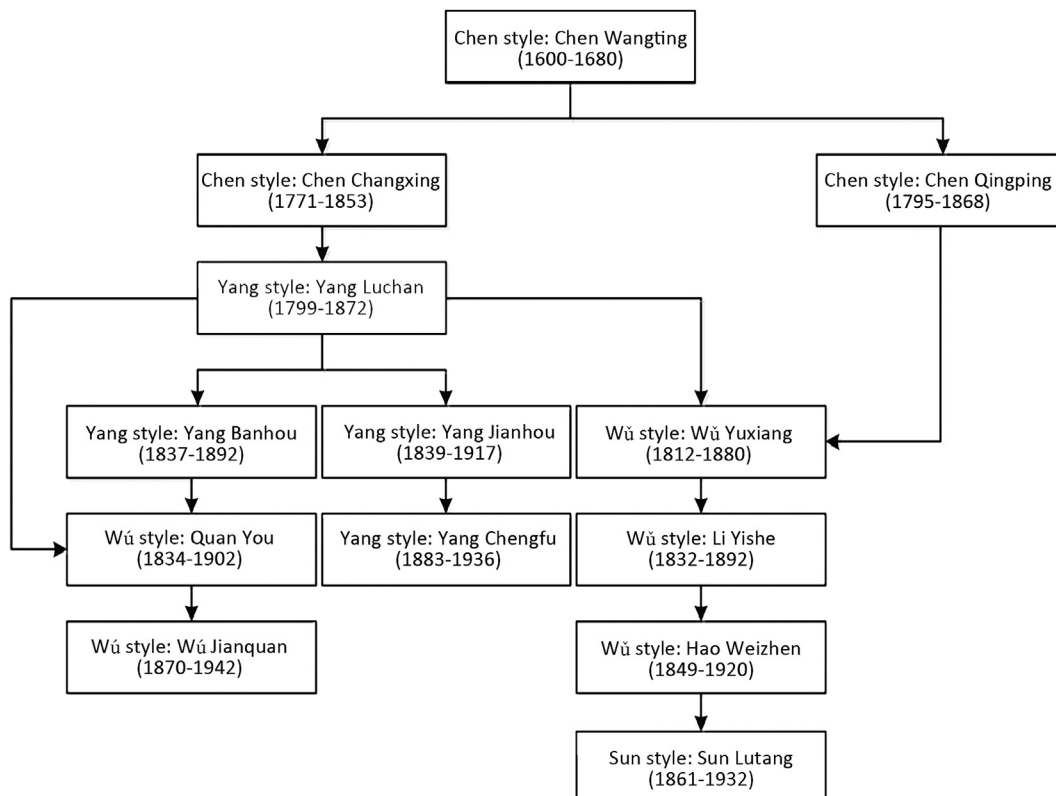


Fig. 1. Summary of the evolution of the five classic Tai Ji Quan styles.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/1084242>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/1084242>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)