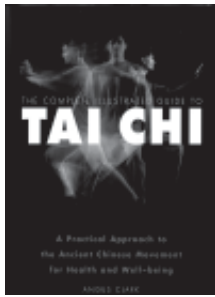


BOOK



The Complete Illustrated Guide to Tai Chi Chuan - Element Books 192 pages £18.99

Angus Clark, one of our long-established instructors based in Okehampton, Devon has just released a beautiful new book, *The Complete Illustrated Guide to Tai Chi Chuan (CIGTCC)* on Element Books. Following on the heels of their superbly produced range of titles like the *CIG to Shiatsu* and *CIG to TCM* (also by one of our members, Tom Williams from Glasgow) this ambitious publication introduces a new concept of the production of material of Tai Chi Chuan.

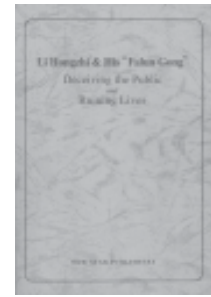
Presented in large format with stunning illustrations the CIGTCC covers all aspects the keen beginner needs to know about the subject. Each section is neatly laid out as it gently, but efficiently guides you through the history, philosophy and psychology of learning and practising this wonderfully multi-faceted art.

Whilst the teaching focuses on Angus's interpretation to the Cheng Man-ching style there is much to be gained for the serious beginner and devotees of any style. Angus provides a comprehensive history and background in a clear, comprehensible manner that lays firm foundations to a deeper exploration of the roots of tai chi chuan. He then goes on to provide an amazing range of introductory, basic exercises which will help the beginner understand the quality of movement required for effective training. The section covering the form is superbly illustrated with full colour photographs depicting each movement and the clever use of strobe photography illustrating the transitions.

The latter pages of this massive tome provide a wide range of partner exercises which look quite fun together with a range of 'Tai Chi Experiences from various students. CIGTCC finishes with a brief overview on styles and sound, practical advice on how to find a teacher.

Whilst £18.99 may seem expensive for an introductory book on any subject, anyone who is seriously considering taking the first steps towards a tai chi class would do well to invest in little more than the price of three or four classes to gain an insight and understanding that could take many years to acquire.

Ronnie Robinson



Li Hongzhi & His "Falun Gong" Deceiving the Public and Ruining Lives. New Star Publishers – China 150 pages.

Anyone with an eye on the news and an interest in Chinese Internal Arts can't help but have heard about the notorious Falun Gong organisation who have attracted much controversy around the world. Li Hongzhi has a mass following around the world and the authorities in China have outlawed the leader and his group from practising and promoting their approach to qigong.

We have heard various anecdotal tales regarding the banning of practising Taijiquan and other practises during the Cultural Revolution but anyone who has visited China can see that anyone is free to practise their skills in whatever public park they choose. So why have they taken to banning Falun Gong? "Li Hongzhi & His "Falun Gong" Deceiving the Public and Ruining Lives", graphically outlines the authorities feeling on the matter. Piece by piece, they outline a catalogue of deaths, suicides and misfortunes which they have attributed to this 'cult'. They include a historical look at the Falun Gong leader who they claim has re-written history claiming a more colourful upbringing than he actually had. They then go on to list a number of deeds the cult has carried out from doggedly pestering those who speak out against them by gathering huge crowds outside their places of work or homes for days on end to actually causing people to murder or commit suicide through their indoctrination.

Many people who have looked at the book suggest that not everything that comes from the official sources in China is reliable and should perhaps not be taken as truth. This may be the case but, nowhere is the history of Taijiquan or Qigong, to my knowledge, has the Chinese Government so vehemently denounced an individual or organisation. The fact that Falun Gong claims more members than the Communist Party is of great concern not only to the Chinese but also possibly to anyone who fears the growth of mass organisations. I have also recently heard that in China many aspects of Medical Qigong has been prohibited in hospitals as a result of Falun Gong.

Ronnie Robinson

REVIEWS



Mastering Yang Style Taijiquan
Fu Zhongwen – translated by Lois Swain
North Atlantic Books – 226 pages.

Subtitled 'An Authentic Handbook' here we have the first translation of Fu Zhongwen's handbook on Taijiquan. Fu Zhongwen was a close disciple of Yang Chen-Fu and, as such, was obviously close to the original source of the now hugely *varied Yang Style Taijiquan system*.

There are strong feelings in the taiji world about what constitutes 'real' taiji and how authentic a performance of a particular style is. Competitions around the world look for different qualities and, as long as one is adhering to the principles of the art, marking can allow for 'personal interpretations of a style or system. However, it is of course interesting to look at original material but little is actually available. What we have here is the entire Yang Style Hand Form painstakingly illustrated and detailed with clear line drawings of Yang Chen-Fu himself to illustrate each posture. Each illustration was drawn from photographs of the master and the amount of description for each transition is mind-boggling!

So who is this book for and who would stand to benefit from this much detail? My first thought is that perhaps Fu Zhongwen himself would gain much benefit from having this much information regarding his teacher's style, but anyone else dipping in to these fastidious notes, could end up with a sore head. Those searching for a frame-by-frame, form-by-form, replica of the authentic Original Yang Style will have much to study and analyse but for those who want to just 'feel' inside what Taijiquan really is I suggest they treat this handbook as an interesting and fascinating historical document. Yes we must try to perform correct forms, and yes the original styles are how it is really supposed to be, but we can't possibly recreate what Yang Cheng-fu, or anybody else for that matter, really felt when they performed these styles. Ultimately what you do is what you do. No matter how much you examine the external form, there comes a time when it really must come from within. Forms are simply not achieved by following a greatly detailed script. The methods are there, the shape and form and principles must be adhered to, but ultimately only



The Feng Shui Kitchen
Master Lam Kam Chuen with Lam Kai Sin
Gaia Books 160 pages £12.00

Master Lam Kam Chuen is well known for his books on standing meditation and his publisher, Gaia Books are renowned for quality presentations in whatever they turn their attention to. Feng Shui is this year's big thing and every time you turn the television on you are bombarded with cookery programmes. It is therefore very easy to greet the Feng Shui Kitchen with more than a little pinch of sea salt. However there is much in store for those who want to improve their diet, their well-being and their presentation of meals.

This clearly presented, high quality publication introduces us to the 'Energy of Food' looking at creating a natural balance in our eating habits. Then Feng Shui Essentials considers the all-important cooking and eating environments and part three deals with the mechanics of preparation and cooking.

The final section of the FSK provides us with a selection of appetising but easily prepared recipes for each of the seasons from spring to winter. If you have recently become bored with your food and, as a result have become listless and low with energy from eating a less than healthy diet, you can do a lot worse than re-stimulating your taste buds with the Feng Shui Kitchen.

Ronnie Robinson



Tuina Massage for a Healthier, Brighter Child - Maria Mercati
Gaia Books 96 pages £9.99

There was a time, not so long ago when cuddling and touching your off-springs was uncommon and the act of indulging in massage techniques with your children was positively off-the-wall! With today's technological temptations physical contact between adults, let alone adults and children is in danger of diminishing greatly as we (and they) become increasingly dependent on television, computers and other non-human diversions.

Tuina Massage re-introduces us to the almost lost art of relating with our children through the most reassuring sense, that of touch. All other animals stay close to their young allowing them to feel their presence constantly, before they are able to take these first tentative steps into the big, bad world. Maria Mercati has produced a wonderful guide to using a range of Tuina techniques to stimulate the energy system of children to strengthen their immune system or to help prevent a range of common ailments. The photographs, of which there are many, are in full colour and are easy to follow. By working gently with care you can lay a strong foundation for the future development of your child in many ways, other than the purely physical. An excellent introduction, for those with an interest in Chinese massage techniques, who also have young children.

Ronnie Robinson

you can know what your taiji is. No two performances of a playwright's lines are the same and no two performances of a hand form can possibly be the same. Within these pages are a clearly drawn framework, which should allow you scope for your own future growth and development within the art. Take what you need but don't get too drawn into the detail. Think about it, consider the points carefully, and then step back from it and just practice.

Ronnie Robinson

