



Origin of Tai Chi

Naturally there are numerous myths on the origins of Tai Chi, but the “founder” seems to be a certain *Chang San-feng*, born around midnight April 9 in the year 1247.

Chang San-feng began studying classical Chinese literature at the age of twelve. Due to his brilliant memory and vigilance, he was later employed as a government official. He learned to meditate, and after the death of his parents, he withdrew from his official duties, and returned to his hometown. He studied in different ways the Buddhist martial art Shao-Lin, developed by the Buddhist monk Da-Mo to train weak monks. Shao-Lin was developed on the basis of Yin-Gin Ching (“The Muscle/Tendon Changing Classic”) and Hsi-Swi Ching (“Marrow Cleaning Classic”).

There are numerous stories on how Chang San-Feng developed Shao-Lin into Tai Chi Chuan. That he created it in his dreams at night cannot be verified. However, the French mathematician Pascal created, at the age of 16, an epoch-making geometrical theory in a dream he had after having puzzled with the problem all day. Chang San-Feng might - with his solid foundation in Shao-Lin training - have used the unconscious to create Tai Chi Chuan.

According to another story - which of course does not exclude the first theory - Chang San-Feng was living in the Wu Tang-mountains, where he one day was called to the door by an unusual sound. It was birds sitting in the trees, making a racket towards the earth, where a snake was lying with its head lifted, gazing up at the birds. A moment later, one of the birds spread its wings, and flew down to attack the snake. The snake moved a bit, yielding to the attack, but kept its usual circular shape. The fight continued like this for several minutes, up and down, back and forth - until Chang San-Feng stepped out of the door. Immediately the



Chang San-Feng

birds flew away and the snake disappeared. Thus the truth about the superiority in the yielding qualities of softness was revealed to Chang San-Feng, and he was able to create Tai Chi Chuan.

Until today, the inner core of every Tai Chi-style still builds on the profound principle of the yielding softness on the outside, and the strength and power and will on the inside. The purpose of Tai Chi Chuan is to cultivate, transform Qi - or interior energy - to Shen - or Spirit - in the human being. To use inner strength and energy, also for martial purposes.

Of course there are lots of stories on the remarkable abilities of Chang San-Feng. Many of the stories might seem somewhat exaggerated. However, if you have met someone, however, who just to some degree has demonstrated the extraordinary abilities Tai Chi Chuan can develop - naturally you have another point of view. In any case serious students can use the stories about Chang San-Feng to create individual goals. This way the stories become worthwhile and instructional - and remind you, that practise makes perfect.

When the winter was really cold and the track outside the temple, where he practiced was covered with snow, Chang liked to go out and enjoy the snow-covered landscape. Where he had walked there were no footsteps - like no one had walked there. This phenomenon even has its own term in Chinese, and it describes a very energetic, refined and mindful state for a human being to have obtained. Through his inner force he was also able to

melt the snow, when he passed it. The heat from his body could be so intense, that the path behind him would appear under the melted snow, as if it was warm and sunny. It's also said, that when he was meditating at night, his cultivated energy - the so-called Qi or Jing - would make his coat flap, and the walls around him would shake. This phenomenon indicates, that his energy had reached its peak. He had obtained the state where his Qi had been transformed into Shen or Spirit.



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