



# Institut QiShen Institute

## Tai Chi & Qigong



# Master Sun Lutang

Creator of the Sun Style Taijiquan

## A Study of Wu Ji

Wu Ji is the natural state occurring before one begins to practice martial arts.<sup>1</sup> The mind is without thought; the intent is without motion; the eyes are without focus; the hands and the feet are still; the body makes no movement; yin and yang are not yet divided; the clear and the turbid have not yet separated; the qi is united and undifferentiated. Man is born between and heaven and earth, and possesses the natures of both Yin and Yang. His original qi is united and undifferentiated. However, man becomes confused by desires and this gives rise to impure qi and the clumsy use of strength. On top of this, if one does not know how to cultivate the self internally while nourishing the self externally, the result will be that the yin and yang will not be balanced, and the internal and external will be divided. When yang reaches its limit, yin is born. At the extreme of yin, exhaustion is the inevitable result. At this point, nothing can be done for the person.<sup>2</sup>

The ultimate method of cultivation is called “the way of inverse movement.” This method turns Qian and Kun,<sup>3</sup> revolving the qi until the post-heaven functions return to the pre-heaven state.<sup>4</sup> Impure qi and clumsy strength

1 “Wu Ji” is the state of undifferentiated chaos before creation. Wu Ji literally means “without extremes,” and the term describes the state in which all is combined in a homogeneous unity. The concept is akin to the Western idea of the state before the creation of the universe, before the “Big Bang.” Once the Wu Ji begins to divide into creation, the state of ultimate extremes – or “Tai Ji” – comes into being and the Ten Thousand Things have the potential to exist. The natural posture, without special intention or position, is a recreation of the Wu Ji state before intent and movement (Tai Ji) occurs.

2 Sun Lutang is referring to the practice of exercise methods that advocate the use of brute force and the development of post-natal strength. If one practices using too much force, the body will waste its energy and become exhausted.

3 Qian and Kun are two of eight Trigrams found in the *Yi Jing* or *Book of Changes*. The Trigrams are composed of combinations of three lines: solid lines (representing Yang or the positive principle) and/or broken lines (representing the Yin or negative principle). The Trigrams are symbols used to represent all the various phenomena that occur in the natural world. The Qian Trigram is composed of three solid lines and represents pure Yang or extreme positive. The Kun Trigram is composed of three broken lines and represents pure Yin or extreme negative. When combined, pure Yang and pure Yin create the Ten Thousand Things, or all that exists in the material universe.

4 Sun Lutang is emphasizing that the goal of Tai Ji Quan practice is the cultivation of the pre-natal qi, and not the post-natal acquired strength or brute force. The notion is of a “return” to the use of the strength inherent in all of us. This results in a

are transformed. The internal “fire” is led back to its place of origin and the qi fills the Dan Tian. Moreover, these changes have their applicability in the martial aspects of the “Thirteen Postures.” Ponder and seek out the way the qi expands and contracts. This is the meaning of the so-called “Wu Ji gives birth to Tai ji” (the one qi is the Tai Ji).

The Thirteen Postures are: ward-off, roll-back, press, push, pluck, rend, elbow, shoulder stroke, advance, retreat, gaze left, look right, and central stability. Ward-off, roll-back, press, and push are represented by the Kan, Li, Zhen, and Dui trigrams. They represent the Four Directions.<sup>5</sup> Pluck, rend, elbow, and shoulder stroke are represented by the Chien (or Qian), Kun, Gen, and Xun trigrams. They represent the Four Angles.<sup>6</sup> Together these eight form the Eight Trigrams (Ba Gua). Advancing steps, retreating steps, looking left, gazing right, and central stability are represented by metal, wood, water, fire, and earth, the Five Elements. The Five Elements together with the Four Directions and the Four Angles make up the Thirteen Postures. They are the names that represent the Thirteen Postures of Tai Ji Quan.

As far as the solo form is concerned, advance, retreat, look left, gaze right, and central stability are the body. Ward-off, roll-back, press, push, pluck, rend, elbow, and shoulder stroke are the use. The Eight Trigrams form the woof while the Five Elements form the warp of the Art. The entire Art may be summarized simply by the concept of uniting the internal and external into a whole, controlled by the one qi.

The goal of solo form practice is to deepen one's level of understanding of the self. Two-person “push hands” practice is designed to deepen the ability to understand others. When practicing the solo form, one's internal essence, qi, and spirit should fill the entire body without the slightest deficiency. When practicing techniques, the movements of the hands and feet coordinate with the whole body in an agile manner without the slightest impediment. Practice diligently, morning and night, and engage in practice with others frequently. Over time you will come to understand yourself and understand others. You will then be able to control others without yourself being controlled by others.

### **The “Wu Ji” Posture**

Begin facing straight ahead. The body is straight with the hands hanging down by the sides. The shoulders hang naturally; do not use force to press the shoulders down. The toes are turned out to a ninety-degree angle as in the picture. The toes must not grip the ground with force. The heels must not be pressed down or twisted with force. Stand as if you are standing on sand.<sup>7</sup> There is no conscious control of the hands or feet. Your body and mind are not yet aware of any opening or closing movements, nor is there any conscious attempt to lift the crown of the head. One stands and flows with what naturally occurs. Internally, the heart (mind) is “empty” of consciously controlled thought. Externally, there is no conscious focus of the vision. There is as yet no hint of any movement whatsoever.<sup>8</sup>

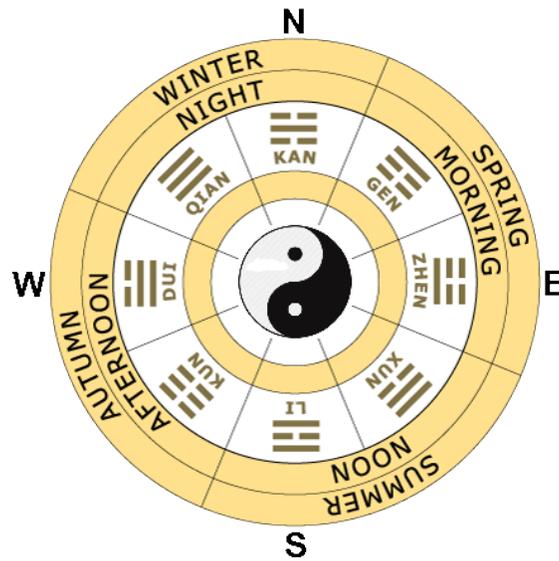
Text source: Sun Lutang, *A Study of Taijiquan*, North Atlantic Books, 221 pages, ISBN: 1-55643-462-6, pp. 51, 69 to 72.



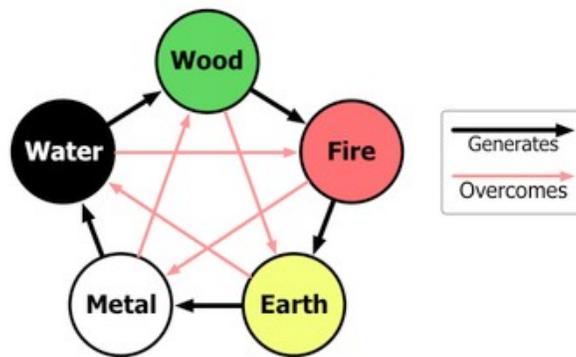
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balancing of the energies of the body and a return to natural health.

- 5 The energies of ward-off, roll-back, press, and push are represented by the “Four Directions” and comprise the primary techniques of the Art.
- 6 The energies of the Four Angles (of Four Corners) – pluck, rend, elbow, and shoulder stroke – comprise the secondary techniques of the Art. These eight energies, which power all the techniques of Tai Ji Quan, are associated with the Eight Trigrams of the *Book of Changes (Yi Jing)*.
- 7 The idea is to stand with the weight distributed gently and evenly along the soles of the feet.
- 8 This is the Wu Ji Posture. It is important to note that in most schools of Tai Ji Quan, the time spent standing in this posture, without the use of force or focused intent, is considered to be the most important part of the form. Although Sun Lutang does not recommend a set amount of time for maintaining the Wu Ji Posture in this work, many teachers of the old schools recommend remaining in this posture until one “enters stillness” (ru jing), obtaining a feeling of physical stillness and mental calm. Others offer a set amount of time, with twenty minutes being the average.



**The Eight Trigrams**



**The Five Elements**



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