

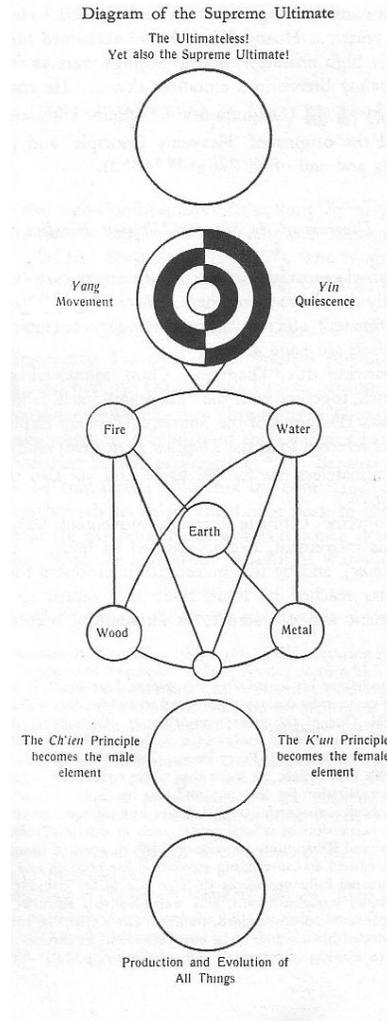
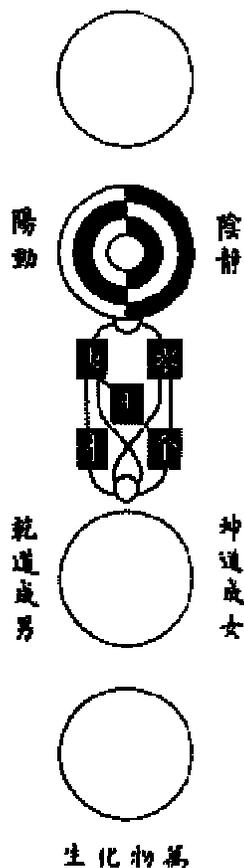


Guelph Tai Chi for Health
Linda Kearns, Instructor

What are taiji and wuji?

Taiji is most often translated as "supreme ultimate", the origin, the great primal beginning that gave birth to the two primal forces, yin and yang.¹ **Wuji** is the stillness before movement, the nothing before there is something.

Look at the taiji diagram -below, left - developed by philosopher Zhou Dunyi (AD 1017-1073), and beside it an English translation of the symbols.



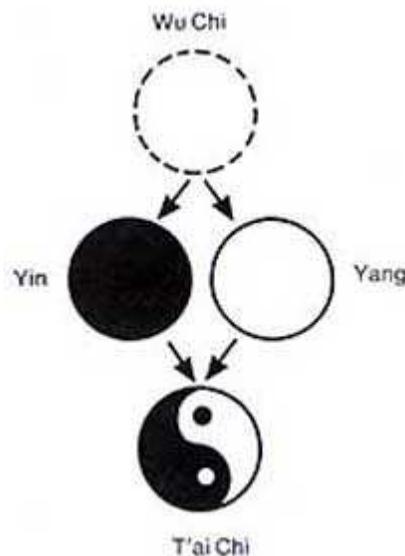
¹ We will explore yin-yang theory, Taoism and the five elements in upcoming papers. A wonderful book that explains much of this theory is Barbara Davis' The Taijiquan Classics : An Annotated Translation. Berkeley, CA : North Atlantic Books, 2004. (It is available in paperback from Amazon.ca).

From Barbara Davis' book, The Taijiquan Classics... we get this translation of the text that accompanies this diagram:

Wuji, then taiji. Taiji moves and give rise to yang. When movement is at its ultimate (ji), it then is still. Stillness then gives rise to yin. When stillness is at its ultimate (ji), it returns to movement. Movement and stillness are at each other's root (gen).²

If we examine this diagram in terms of our tai chi practice, the large ring at the top is the opening, where we rest and gather from nothing our intention to move (*wuji, then taiji*). Throughout our movement in the form we alternate between movement and stillness. In the second circle we see the yin-yang cycle. (*Taiji moves and give rise to yang. When movement is at its ultimate (ji), it then is still. Stillness then gives rise to yin. When stillness is at its ultimate (ji), it returns to movement.*) The result of taiji movement is the production and balance of energy - depicted in the diagram of the five elements. When the five elements are balanced they form pure yin and yang - heaven and earth (the 4th circle), and pure yin and yang produce the supreme ultimate - taiji. The goal of taiji practice is to refine the body so that the mind and soul may reach a heavenly state independent of the body. As we reach the end of our taiji practice we return to wuji, stillness, and then the cycle begins all over again with the commencement of a new taiji practice. In life we complete our taiji practice at death and return to stillness, hopefully having reached a divine or heavenly state where our liberated soul/spirit is free to begin life again in a new body.

At one level, practicing the tai chi form can be compared to a method of repeatedly re-enacting the formation of our universe or the human life cycle. For this reason, the tai chi form is considered by many who practice it more than just an exercise form. It becomes not just a method for realizing good health and sense of physical well-being, but also the way (the Tao) to personal enlightenment and spiritual fulfillment.



² Barbara Davis' The Taijiquan Classics : An Annotated Translation. Berkeley, CA : North Atlantic Books, 2004. p. 61.